

'An invisible red thread connects those who are destined to meet regardless of time, place or circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle but will never break.'

~ A Chinese Proverb

'Archangel Cassiel watches the events of the cosmos unfold with little interference. He is the angel of solitude and tears and is said to preside over the moon, karma and time.'

~ Author unknown

"In the muddy human world, pearls and fish eyes are jumbled together."

~ Li Hongzhi

I plot my escape from the crib.

This earliest memory is colored pewter, pussy willow
bud fuzz and powdery blue.

I hear the breeze suck in the window shade that feigns
dusk, then exhaling, reveals in outline, the unmistak-
able incandescent glow of summer afternoon.

I don't want to nap any more
I want to go to the park.

But, everyone is asleep this Saturday.

The wooden chair that my mother has painted glossy
turquoise at the end of my crib should suffice, my
accomplice, accessory, and liberation participation
invitation.

I straddle one foot over the bar, leveraging my body
across the top bar. Oooeeee!, Painful between my little
legs as I hoist myself-

over

the

edge.

One foot onto the chair, now just a hop-slide down
onto solid floor from here.

Eyeing my younger sister, still asleep in her crib across
the room that we share, I glide out the door, a stealth
provocateur.

Now to wake up my father who promises to take me to
the park after naps.

I'm free!

Sort of.



All of the belongings of an elderly woman in my first
Boston apartment, who has just died, are heaped onto
the Commonwealth Avenue curbside; a lifetime scat-
tered on pavement.

Rushing to catch the trolley, or T, to my morning
painting class, I pause and pay homage to this life I
never encountered. Her possessions, the compilation
of a life lived, considered, grieved, cherished, reconciled and savored, are now strewn for the picking. So I do.

Rummaging through her things, I discover a formal
wedding party photo with a somber groom in a WW
II uniform that will become a large painting with a
disturbing sense of military, matrimony and memory,
depicted in rose and steel grays. I slip the black and

white mat photo into to my bag.

I also salvage a small, carnation pink, leather address book- its lines unmarked. This little book, pages yellowing and brittle, the frayed binding now secured with packing tape, is filled with the significant names of my life, and each time used, recalls the women I never met and the single pink thread that stitches the stories of my life to her hers, and now, to all the others.



My jubilee birthday quickly approaching, I recall and compile these stories, the contents of my life.

As such, I am lead on a mission to gather and liberate ghosts with an ever growing awareness that we are all connected. I navigate the thorny and humbling landscape of relationships, society, and the unseen realms, all processed through varied creative undertakings, on canvas, with words, and as viewed through a camera lens, turning life into art, and art into a life.

These stories are spun like a web, honoring a chronology of impressions, designs and pattern in circular and spiraling fashion, to the rhythm of a meteorite shower.

I flicker in and out of the space like a swimmer in but-

terfly stroke, in and out of being caterpillar and butterfly, in and out of time and space, like these stories.

Some moments I am drawn into another realm, where past memories of love and sorrow, lessons and yearnings, with golden dust-like strands, forge the place where this book lives and is being written.

Perhaps, it's the same place where the phrase 'fisheyes and pearls' is coined, in an ancient book of internal alchemy. It prompts me to ask, in this world veiled in illusion, how do we discern the precious from the common or worthless? And, then, how might we transform the ordinary into something extraordinary?

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CHAPTER ONE

six degrees

There are different cafés for different moods and tasks depending on the time of light. This is especially important during New England winters when pure sunlight is at a premium and little should be squandered in a dark atmospheric establishment. It is also a meager defense against the melancholia that comes with the first autumnal frost that lingers until a window can be safely cracked open on occasional April nights.

I had well observed at what time of year the sun would stream into the large south side windows in the airy Carberries Cafe on Prospect Street, or filter in down the stairs of the European French Patisserie in Harvard Square. The window tables at the Trident Cafe on Newbury Street maximize indirect light offer ideal people watching, concurrently.

Similarly, there are copious cafe options to choose from in Berkeley.

Soon, however, there will be one cafe that will become home base, the center of all social life, and in some cases antisocial life, theatrical stage, school, production company, soirée, editing bay, salon, existential prison, a microcosmic mirror.

But not yet.

Even the perfume I wear is a cafe-

Cafe Rose

Top notes: saffron, black pepper and may rose.

Middle notes: turkish rose, Bulgarian rose and coffee.

Base notes: Incense, amber, sandalwood and patchouli.



Having not painted since the Berkeley move, I don't know how to re-enter my work.

Start at the beginning, I deduce, return to my first painting crush, my first artist love with whom I feel

akin- French post impressionist painter-Pierre Bonnard.

At Moe's Book on Telegraph I scan the Bonnard collection downstairs, pouring over the pages as I had done in art school.

The borrowed library book, always propped up against the foot of my easel, open to a color print that never came close to capturing the luminosity of the original, now splattered with turpentine drips in Bonnard hues. One of his still-lives could beckon me, with its shimmering color, from across a museum. And it has.

I pen poems.

Flesh rainbow,
 an arching back
 across canvas like an opalescent
 bridge, connecting corporal form
 with the inner-envisioned world
 of ideas and spirit.
 Patterns and jutting edges,
 ambiguous red
 and vulva pink angle,
 pushing up through the corner,
 tightly arranged
 like sitar strings,
 A series of verticals,
 vibrating with color.
 A bent knee, a foot

extended in a marine like haze
 where the contours of a
 Woman emerges
 From this deep
 Prussian
 blue.

leaning figure
 balanced on two violet
 legs, vanishes to a point
 where female figure poses
 beside a porcelain tub –
 brown
 in the shape
 of dog
 against white.

Images,
 hues like abalone shell
 reveal the shimmering
 interiors of intimacies,
 a life.

This is the life I admire and desire, identifying with
 Bonnard's aesthetics evident by his choice of subject
 matter- Marthe, his lover, in the bath, dressing at an
 open window, or sitting amidst a bowl of ripe fruit.

His love of the intimate lives in me too and I yearn for
 the relationship they seem to share, bonded by these

moments, forever captured in radiant pigment.
 A realization, would soon however, challenge my per-
 ception, change my course. It would pass so quietly, yet
 would shake foundations.



As I bend and twist at the edge of my bed, buckling my
 suede ankle boots, the worn post card of a Bonnard
 print hanging across the room above the light switch
 by the door, catches my eye.

A revolution ensues.

Everything has to be reconfigured. My usual cafe will
 not do - too many distractions.

At La Batou Evre, with it's salmon pink linens and
 classical music wafting, a cafe where I am anonymous,
 a story will be conceived, gestate and birthed.



Sculpting with words, at the La Batou Evre, I craft a
 story.

Marthe and Pierre

Marthe, the model and later wife of the French painter, Pierre Bonnard, was a sensitive woman. Easily offended by the vulgarity and harshness of Parisians and most people in general, she withdrew from social life. As a defense against this predisposition, she created a beautiful world in which only she and her husband lived. In fact it was such a place of refinement and simple profound charm that Pierre surrendered willingly to her insistence that he remain home with her. He was happily seduced into her magical universe, content to render and record its moments and subtle movements.

Occasionally he would sneak out to the café, the dog as a pretext, hoping to meet Matisse or some other friends. The other painters were not altogether understanding of his allegiance to Marthe and the severe restrictions on his freedom. Many gossiped that she was 'unbalanced.' To an artist, balance and beauty are synonymous and certainly, Pierre, a Libra, knew balance, and Marthe knew beauty – she lived in it and he lived for it. Their life together was like a brilliant gem, created and held in a masterfully designed ring, set upon a finger, perfectly contained unto itself. Their home, the center of their life and backdrop to all events, was a cathedral of light. The dining

room table was an altar, complete with goblets, wine and sacrificial flowers. The bath was Marthe's sanctuary. With steam rising like incense, she submerged herself in warm baptismal waters, and meditation. This is where she found solace.

Pierre's painting was his favored form of prayer-an extension of his own soul- stirrings and yearnings. So, like a devout parishioner, he portrayed her in devotion, ritually robing, anointing herself with fragrant oil, or setting the fruit offering on the table by the open window.

He not only succeeded in capturing the quality of light around them, but as he created, Pierre had the wondrous ability to add to it. He was known to mutter as he worked- 'It's still color, it is not yet light.'

In fact, there was so much luminosity in this place that even angels were attracted to linger. And they did.

It happened at this time that I too was living in the world of spirits. It was late summer, when the air is heavy with the scent of tuberose, honeysuckle and jasmine and the garden is saturated with lustrous color, boasting fucias, violets, oranges, buttery yellow, purpleberry and red.

Together they had morning coffee, only the

sound of birds could be heard.

Marthe would perform the daily bathing rites, a ceremony that could take hours, as Pierre followed with easel and pallet to worship by her side. He set up his new canvas which he had prepared the night before.

This new painting seemed to compose itself with remarkable ease. Each color mixed, resonated, shimmered and glowed like fiery embers as each stroke was gently laid against the other, seemingly effortless, yet executed with exacting intention.

In spontaneous celebration of the day's triumphant accomplishment, Pierre took his wife passionately in his arms and danced her to the feather bed in the next room. Tenderly, they made love in a rare moment of demonstrative affection and openness between them.

The intensity of light was so great that late summer afternoon that I was somehow drawn down into their lives. There, for a brief moment, a beautiful few weeks, I was their union, their celestial collaboration, delicate tendrils of DNA creation. Their child.

But, like the cut wild flowers on the nightstand, it wasn't to last. It was revealed to me, shortly

thereafter, that this was not my time to incarnate into human form- I was called back to the other side.

I was deeply sad to leave Marthe. Although I had to abandon her corporeal body, I remained hovering near by as long as I could.

Is it possible that the lost pregnancy only aggravated Marthe's already sensitive nature, propelling her to retreat further into herself and into the rituals which comforted, soothed and sustained her?

Perhaps too, Pierre's seclusion was in part feeling responsible for her sorrow, or his own unexpressed grief and loss which kept him devoted. Perhaps he needed to connect to her and her pain in order to feel his.

Sadly however, portraying his companion in those intimate scenes and exposed manner, was the only way he knew to express his own vulnerability. Maybe it was really himself floating in the bathtub, expressionless, submerged in amber speckled indigo paint.

Pierre accepted that this was closeness. A canvas always between them, keeping him emotionally exiled from the woman he yearned to know and, in some intrinsic way, from himself.

So, despite all of Marthe's efforts to avoid loneliness and isolation, she remained painfully alone, her partner never able to enter her world, only able to describe it in radiant detail.

That which we most want is what we push away, and that which we are most determined to keep at bay, we invite in.

They never spoke about the miscarriage, but I believe they both sensed my presence. I recognized myself in Pierre's work as if he had depicted my very essence. Sometimes I appear as a vibrant violet surrounding Marthe like an aura. Other times I am the golden green ochre atmosphere in Pierre's self portraits. I was delighted to be recorded in their lives.

Decades later, I was offered the opportunity to take earthly form. Yet, so strong were my impressions and memory of Pierre and Marthe that I awoke driven to construct a life of poetic duality, cherishing the simple pleasures, while finding the sacred in the mundane, the holy in the profane, and elevate it all.

The curious revelation, sitting at the edge of my Berkeley bed, buckling my boots, was the sudden response to my direct view of a Bonnard's print above the light switch- it was never Pierre's aesthetic or sensual sensi-

bilities that I had shared. But, rather those of Marthe! It was Marthe all along.

How had I not see this before!

I would still however, need to learn something it seemed they had not- to merge while maintaining self, supple, yet solid, able to oscillate in and out of forms, expressing in multiple modes. To sing, harmonizing with the choir, or solo center stage in a scarlet chiffon gown with a symphony, or acapella, or dressed in a black tailed suit, the conductor - blending the extremes of piccolo, flute and oboe to bass clarinet, bassoon and tuba in a glorious monsoon of sound.



After college I take extra work as an artist's model. Being both artist and model, I am highly attentive to what would yield suitable compositions from every angle, how impeccably still I must sit to compensate for the students' inexperience. So, I become like marble for the burgeoning talent.

At the Boston art school, I slip out of the silk robe and take my place on the gray model stand. While in a long

pose, I amuse myself with the thought that the more empty I am, the more affective I am. Ideas, emotions, ambitions, irrelevant and cumbersome. Less is more. I am potent in non-action, non-thought, not doing. Still-ness. Still-life.

This will be my *modus operandi*, proving efficacious in many arenas.

Soon I will receive a copy of the *Tao de Ching*, as I attempt to scale the scaly relationship between artist and model, Pierre and Marthe, man and woman. Because scales are smooth or rough depending on the direction the surface is stroked.

Marthe and others, will each become salmon pink threads woven into this tapestry. Principal of yielding yin.



As I write about the Bonnard's, the picture of their relationship fans out before me. I cringe with embarrassment as if I have eavesdropped on a private moment, a door slightly ajar.

Maybe these insights are real, or, perhaps, just the machinations of imagination.

And would it matter?

Such is the dynamic between fact and fiction. The metaphor, the story, is the essential, like Jacob's ladder. Make believe. Believe and make. The intersection of art and life.

Some artists live at these coordinates, others just shop on the corner.

Henry lives at the intersection.

I watch my first Henry Jaglom film, *Someone To Love*, at the Nickelodeon. One of my friends works here, so I feast on art house films. This film lingers in my mind long after I leave the theater, along with the name 'Jaglom.'

I will come across his name years later and will actually meet and get to know this creative maverick, witnessing the intricate personal and professional relationship between he and Tanna, another male and female creative duet.

Interviewing Henry is like being in one of his movies. Even the cafe and table we are sitting at will appear in his films. Lines blur.

Interview with Henry Jaglom and Tanna Frederick
The filmmaker and his Muse

Epoch Times News Paper By Masha Savitz.
LOS ANGELES—The subjects of creativity and show biz

are certainly matters about which Henry Jaglom can claim expertise, as he has worked as an actor, writer, editor and director. And after decades in the business the pioneering indie filmmaker has known and worked with legends, including Orson Wells, Jack Nicholson, Greta Scacchi, Dennis Hopper, and Vanessa Redgrave.

I met Tanna and Henry at their usual haunt in Santa Monica, California, joined by Ron Vignone, the film's award-winning editor, who also plays Gio in *Queen of the Lot*.

We discussed the genesis of expression, with Talmudic intonation, and the paradoxical nature of some actors who feel most themselves or authentic when playing another character, and whether this is, therefore, their true authentic nature (very Talmudic).

Tanna, revealing a tender vulnerability, explained that she identified with her character Maggie, who says, 'It's not the Hollywood hype that scares me, it's being in the kitchen and eating dinner that scares me. It's the little things.'

The moments of her life that she recalls most vividly are the ones in which she is performing, reflects Tanna. The times she spent by herself she describes as feeling naked.

'The people I know feel more authentic on stage or in a role. They give themselves permission to express themselves through another medium... They know that character better than they know themselves,' explains Tanna, addressing the matter of actors always being 'on.'

'I feel like I'm floating in a strange void when I have no character to latch on to. I feel very uncomfortable with who I am.' Says the woman who, movie website *New York Movie Guru* lauds as a 'sexy, charismatic, and immensely talented actress.'

Nonetheless, Tanna wonders if she might not suffer from 'a defective personality trait.'

Redirecting the subject, she describes Henry as 'a puppy trying to stay warm, like puppies through a store window. His films are like a whole bunch of people trying to stay warm emotionally, through words.'

Henry, touched by the analogy, acknowledged that films were a way to create a home in a world where he didn't quite feel he belonged.

'Home is what my movies were to me—finding home in my mind, imagination, and dreams.'

'I'm allowed fiction now. It doesn't all have to be autobiographical because I satisfied the other thing, (not having a sense of home) I have this in real life. I don't need to create a home,' Henry says of personal journaling and of his films as he points to Tanna across the table.

'I wanted endless traces of myself—it was the only way I could understand life.' Recounts Henry of his need to write in order to feel or ensure his existence. 'I only stopped keeping a journal when I met you,' he says to Tanna, 'I feel

seen—I feel seen and known.’

‘Now I’m looking outward,’ asserts Henry, adding that his most recent projects reflect ‘what I have learned and seen around me. I have a great vehicle to express it—Tanna.’

When I inquired about what contributed to his evolution into the comic realm, he surmised, ‘A reflection of my being happy.’

Henry and Tanna. Pierre and Marthe.

My life informs my art, which informs my life in an ongoing conversation, leading me to examine my own biological parents and ‘this’ life.



Renee and Herman.

Artist and Rabbi.

With the same heat sensitive lens that I viewed the Bonnard, I turn my gaze upon my blood parents. What is it to be the product of a rabbi and an artist?

Like Herman Hesse’s, Narcissus and Goldmund, my parents are the next puzzle pieces to understanding myself.

I peek, peer into the obvious and come close to the

mysteries. Sometimes I peer into the mysteries and come close to the obvious.



I scrawl in the bathtub:

In this life, I must synthesize the fragmented existence of oppositions - love and freedom

Reconciling desire and disappointment, creating, not just a painting, but a life- colorful, sublime, complex, balancing and transmuting tensions from the chaos, from the yearning- into light.’

‘It’s still color, says Pierre, ‘it is not yet light.’

As the water pours a steady stream from the faucet, I soak and float in the amniotic waters of my claw foot bath- sea salts and oils in musky, woodsy and floral fragrances by my side, remembering and reinventing my life.



I had left all of my paintings, the series of Urns, Genesis Women, and many more, in the Boston studio-freedom always exacts a price.

It is a big warehouse, once a recording studio, at the end of the Red line that I rent with art school crony, Molly, a statuesque red head who wears turquoise and olive to offset her hair, but only once my ex has moved out.

'I wouldn't get a studio if I was you,' he warns, 'you can't afford this.'
His way of keeping my feet bound, china cup small.

I knock down walls and rebuild, my way of defying immobilized teacup feet, with the guidance of Tania who works at New Words Bookstore in Central Square and is handy with power tools.

I parlay a green velvet couch from the antique store on the ground floor and Molly contributes a mini-fridge and hot plate from our college dorm days.

The gloaming gray skyline from the huge wall of studio windows washes me in despair- intense longing, utter loneliness, yet a certain comfort, a strange joy mingles with this emptiness.

Maybe this is Hope, or just the compensatory satisfaction that comes with truthful freedom.

Minstrel, mystery, mysteria,
Wisteria- climbing woody vines
Purple and white flowers
Wistful.
Winsome. Loose some.

The Portuguese have a word for this 'saudade,'
sadhappy.

Always wistful. In a perpetual state of longing for something in the future that reminds me of something in my past- or someone else's.

We throw memorable parties at the loft studio. I still have photos somewhere. My champagne colored dress, champagne, and the green couch, smiles. Yet this smile, unlike so many other photo smiles, is real, because I know my life with W is done.

Molly has won a Fulbright to study in Ireland. I will set out to get full of bright, and sit in an Irish bar draped in plush curtains pretending to be in the Celtic isle itself.



Some days I have the studio all to myself.

I blast the music, sing along, loud:

Companion to our demons, they will dance, and we will play

With chairs, candles, and cloth making darkness in the day.

The picture needs to be unified. I mix paint with mostly terps that I dab on the top of the canvas, streaks rain down in translucent color

It will be easy to look in or out upstream or down without a thought and if I shed a tear I won't cage it.

I stand back. Evaluate.

*I won't fear love
and if I feel a rage I won't deny it.
I won't fear love.'*

Sarah McLachlan's song is known to leave me on the studio floor in a state.

Music makes significant contributions to regulating emotions, pacing for maximum potency and delivery.

Sometimes I dance around the easel with brushes in hand, praying that I might paint like this singer who composes with sounds of bells and birds, breaking glass and genres, anything for texture and emotion,

bold, tender, fertile.

*'And how we'd wished to live in the sensual world
You don't need words--just one kiss, then
another.' ~ ~ Kate Bush*

I might stand intently in front of the large beveled edge mirror balancing against the studio wall. Face contorting, eyes squinting to simplify forms by distinguishing shadow from light. I study myself, shifting weight and twisting torso. My gaze sharpens, forms swell creating shapes via their contradiction of beautiful negative shape.

This day, I cross the room and collapse into the stained ochre armchair with faded floral print, positioned in full view of the self-portraits. These images are rendered in a myriad of gestures- nude, in black bra and trousers, antique slips, or donning a dragon print robe loosely draped over shoulders exposing a pale breast.

Particular about what I wear even at age three, I insist on white lace tights- North Eastern freezing temperatures don't dissuade. I'm a warrior for my aesthetic, undeterred by pleading parents, seasons or fashion.

When I am four, a pair of ruffled baby bloomers embellished with lace on the backside, feels painfully tight at the elastic. I try to deny this metamorphosis, but it appears that I am growing, growing right out of them.

Horrible. I am crushed by this inevitability. I wish so hard to halt the mushrooming, so that this favored garment will still fit, but I can't arrest such a persistent process.

I lose the battle to this force, but I will later discover that grown-ups also have many options for lacy silky under things. This will serve as a fine reason to grow up, along with getting to stay up as late as I want, wearing white go-go boots and irony.

And sometimes my childhood wishes *do* come true. When I look out into the world, my seven year old perception sees Marlene Davis, a curvy mom of four in my suburban NJ town in my periphery, shepherding her small flock.

'Nope,' I think, 'I never want to grow up to be this.'

I learn that some wishes made with a child's purity and fervor can indeed come true. I never grow up to be 'that.' I don't have children or a house, a mate, or even a carrot peeler. I do have an easel, gold leaf sheets and Kings Blue oil paint. Sometimes I wish my wish was not quite as efficacious and thorough. *Some* of 'that' might have been nice.

My work fills the studio wall. There are pencil sketches, ink drawings, some composed on the pages of a discarded encyclopedia, volume 'J', found on the curb in a blue recycle bin. Among the obsessive collection are energetic acrylic finger paintings made on the studio floor as well as large oil paintings on canvas, a symphony of layered pallet knife strokes arranged like jeweled mosaics.

Hypnotized, I stare at the deluge of self portraits, that resemble myself in varying degrees. Thoughts wander. I fidget with a kneaded eraser while contemplating coffee, sunken deep in the worn cushions and wooden arms of this found and cherished chair.

The faces on the wall stare back at me. One peeks behind an easel, another figure strikes a confident pose, others take humble squatting positions.

So many occasions I have removed clothes and stood naked hoping to uncover something, a truth, my essence.

Surveying my body in detail, witnessing and recording like a topographer, endeavoring discovery.

I wait like a true disciple, believing that a cryptic message like a biblical verse would be revealed, the meaning of my existence, my purpose, a sagacious aspect not yet seen.

Cleaving to my reflection, as if peering into a placid lake, ready to dive and merge with the reflection, submerge, then emerge as one, like an infant who experiences herself in a mirror for the first time, I am enticed, intrigued, engaged but ultimately disappointed by the impenetrable unyielding surface- the canvas itself.

I am an artist struggling with the limitations and contradictions of creating depth on a flat plain, an illusion of space.

I lay down paint and scratch into the textured work, digging in with the thin wooden end of my brush.

How deep can I go, determined to invoke revelation? I am model and painter, Pierre and Marthe, victim and voyeur, captive and captivated, driven to express my own subjective existence through a preoccupation with 'objective', calculating observation.

The petulance of youth!



It has been my intention all along to go back and retrieve my paintings from the studio once settled in the Bay Area. However, the building was sold six months later and I lost all of my work.

The phase of life called 'letting go' is lasting longer

than anticipated.

'One day this will all reverse.' I think, easing the grief of my tenacious Cancerian self. But I am very wrong, it would never reverse. The relationship of creating or having, is entirely contingent on my ability or willingness to let go- emptiness and nothingness, of which I seem to have in spades. Blades.



My second year in art school, I meet on the trolley car, one of the more talented students who has just graduated. I am eager to hear her great adventures beyond the school walls, her experiences out in the world as a painter.

'I don't paint much, I'm working as an undercover shopper at Saks Fifth Ave.' She reports.

I nod smiling, "That's cool".

That is *not* cool

Note to self: 'Don't do this.'

I am determined that following graduation, I will not fall into this trap. I must continue to paint and construct my own structure.

Upon getting my degree, I move into a painting studio in East Boston, requiring of myself twenty to forty painting hours per week, calculating this to equal a part time job. I keep a log, hire a model, schedule drawing nights where other artists come to sketch.

I never need to log hours after this. I successfully internalize this rhythm that becomes as natural and consistent as bathing. I approach all creative endeavors as a job, guarding and respecting this time as a work commitment, it serves me well through painting, writing, and filmmaking and living an artful existence.

You see, I'm only half talented. Talented enough to not give up, not talented enough for it ever to be easy. So, self discipline is a most crucial attribute.



Aglaope, called, Agi, a girl with the name of a Siren, who perhaps bares the same fate and function as the beings who lure sailors to their death with their irresistible voices, is one of my hired models. She is a Taurus with long brown hair and soft round features, and her obsession with small animals makes me wonder why she identifies with vulnerability.

After Agi rejects the blonde sales clerk at the bookstore cafe with blue eyes and pointy features, he takes his

own life by jumping off a building, only after buying her a most extraordinary exotic flower arrangement. She becomes my roommate.

Franz Kafka in 1917, the same year Bonnard meets Renee, writes, 'Now the Sirens have a still more fatal weapon than their song, namely their silence. And though admittedly such a thing never happened, it is still conceivable that someone might possibly have escaped from their singing; but from their silence certainly never.' Agi is rather silent about many things.



Looking at loft space in downtown Boston, I am introduced to a couple, filmmakers with their baby girl Anushka, full of grace, in tow, asleep in her stroller.

In this abandon warehouse space I find a Super 8mm camera left behind on a door knob in its worn black leather case. I take it home and keep it for years without having an inkling of what to do with it.

Anushka will grow up to be a character in my first screenplay, "Weight of Light".

After bringing the camera to each new home and city, I finally pass it on to a young film student who shares an

office in the same building as me in Venice.
I too will become a filmmaker, but not until I give the camera away. Such is the principal of loss and gain.

Irony from certain angles is lyrical, and from others, just cruel.



Cambridge, where I often imagine E.E. Cummings walking down cobblestone streets in chilly moon lit nights, is where my neighbor Liza, married to a beautiful Frenchman, Stephan, who plays the accordion, lives in the adjacent building. The interior of their home is painted red and resounds with laughter, table banging and singing at dinner parties where red wine amply flows.

Liza wears *Femme du Boi* and speaks perfect French.

I buy myself a bottle too, but am never good at French.

je t'aime mon chéri
je t'aime je t'aime

Stephan will gift me a pen and ink drawing of symbols of the sea, like elegant ancient calligraphy from a Lumarian court in the Indian and Pacific ocean, an aquatic language of his own making, a cherished piece of art.

Our apartments are connected by fire escapes in the rear of the building. I don't consider it as a fire escape, but rather a fetching balcony.

I badly want a porch to perch and write, but really what I need is an escape.

Femm du Boi

Top notes : orlynge blossom, Turkish rose, honey and beeswax

Heart notes: violet, plum, peach, cardamom and cinnamon

Base notes: clove, vanilla and musk.

The languid bottle is the color of dried rose petals.

The fragrance will be recreated years later by designer Serge Lutens, now called *Feminite du Bois* that I sample in a Beverly Hills department store while delivering a DVD to an actor for possible narration in my documentary.

Not allowed upstairs at the Hollywood talent agency, and still needing to add a note, I seek out a place to jot one. I descend a floor to find at the end of a long hallway, a barbershop with a small floral print couch in the reception area. With permission, I sit a moment. An animated and attractive hairstylist comes by and strikes up a conversation. Soon I am hearing about his

own long time documentary project, a film about the famous Hollywood hairdresser, Jay Sebring. Sebring was a revolutionary of men's styling for clients like Jim Morrison, Steve McQueen, Dennis Hopper and Elvis Presley. Sebring, along with his dear friend Sharon Tate, was murdered by Manson and followers, on a bloody August night.

The hairstylist I am talking to wants to redeem his uncle's name from the media frenzy that celebrated Manson while vilifying his kin.

The actor will pass on this project, but my voice will end up working well for narration after all. And all it was! - a difficult and frustrating day of recording the voice over with plains flying overhead, boardwalk ruckus, barking dogs, and thumping neighbors above my tourist attraction Venice boardwalk apartment. We huddle in my bedroom against the back wall reading off Red Reign's narration lines, heart wrenching and dire:

'In 2002, a witness, an armed police guard, working for the public security system, participated in illegal arrests and torture of Falun Gong practitioners. He gave this first-hand account about a female practitioner. He said, 'She had wounds and scars covering her entire body after a week of severe torment and forced food intake. Then, while left fully conscious, given no anesthetics, whatsoever, they cut her chest with a scalpel. Blood gushed out. She shouted out in pain, saying, 'Falun Gong

is great.' Then she said, 'You killed me; one individual. You won't kill us all.' At that moment, the doctor hesitated...but he continued to do the veins. The heart was carved out, first, then the kidneys. When her cardiac veins were cut by the scissors, she started twitching. It was extremely horrible. It sounded like something was being ripped apart. Her mouth and her eyes were wide open. I don't want to continue.'

I didn't want to continue. It was a difficult day, an emotional day. Finn's strength and firmness proved valuable and yet challenging to my raw senses.

Finn and I, nonetheless will be pleasantly surprised at the results when we upload the audio files later that day at the cafe.

I start trusting that this project is directing me more than I am directing it, trusting my process in art and of life, trusting that I will understand why I am just three degrees separation from Charles Manson.

I ponder on Sharon Tate's husband, French born Roman Polansky.

Roman Polanski is a filmmaker from Paris, home of my metaphoric ancestors, and a Polish Jew, place of my biological ancestry. He is a child during a genocide, the Holocaust, where many Jews, Gypsies and vulnerable perish.

And one day, a Jew and a Gypsy, Finn, and myself, will make a movie about a genocide, championing the vulnerable.

So ghosts remain as they do for Polanski.

Some will become the living/walking dead, yet others use the whole of their lives to redeem the dead and the ghosts they carry, remembering, honoring, transforming them through art and action.



Living in Los Angeles seems to truncate the idea of 'six degrees of separation' first introduced by Frigyes Karinthy, down to a mere three, or often just one degree.

How am I connected to Hungarian Frigyes Karinthy? Connected by profession (we are both writers), by astrological or blood type, (both Cancers) geography, geology? By mission or vision, passion, fashion, religion, decisions?

Invisible threads.

'An invisible red thread connects those who are destined to meet regardless of time, place or circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle but will never break.' Says a Chinese Proverb



Turning, or returning, to my own biological lineage, affirming the unexplored facets of my spiritual nature, I begin the quest to reconcile other infamous chasms or what Carl Jung might call archetypes, in a process he calls alchemy.

Weaving my threads:

Pierre and Marthe,
Herman and Renee,
Narcissus and Goldman.

With those yet to come:

Rodin, Rose and Camille,
Lilith and Eve.

Rational and intuitive,
Love and freedom,
Ich und du. I and Thou,
Fisheyes and Pearls.



Four portraits from my blood line~

Gert:

My grandmother Gertrude, or *Gitle* in her native tongue, meaning good, and grandfather Sam, were both very much from the 'old country'; I knew would never survive without each other. And it was so.

Every evening they sat at the formica kitchen table together, while she expertly peeled and sliced apples that they would share in exquisite rapport. She would pass him a slice between her thumb and the knife's blade, an apron across her round sack of potatoes body, their custom every evening.

They lived on the green line- not far from the Boston University campus, so I made brief appearances after class and she would wonder why I dressed like a gypsy and ate like a rabbit.

'I don't understand, when I grew up all I ate was some greens that grew by the house,' she tells me, suspicious of my then macrobiotic diet.

"But that *is* macrobiotic!" I explain.

When Mr. Kaye gives my painting class a portrait assignment, I take a sketchbook and pastels and ask *Bubbe*, grandmother, to sit for me. I portray her round smooth face with warm tones, purples around the creased eyes, wearing a white blouse flecked with primary colors.

Professor K, who wears a button down blue coat,

notoriously blunt and critical, hates it and grades it a C- , too warm, too glowy he grumbles. He clearly doesn't know her.

The portrait gets framed and hangs in their apartment all the same.

Gert has a bad heart and will need surgery. She, who grew up without a mother or shoes as a poor farm girl in Poland, is terrified and strongly opposes the operation.

She gets her way and dies only hours before the next day's scheduled surgery. When I see her at the hospital that last night, she has a pleading expression on her face, a ventilator taped to her face.

I never see her again.

Sam:

Zaide, grandfather in Yiddish, always wearing a dark overcoat regardless of season, is sparse with words- except to tell a joke or to convey some bit of anecdotal wisdom He answers the phone exuberantly, then quickly passes it on to my grandmother, *Bubbe*.

A dedicated assistant in the synagogue across the street, he is there faithfully everyday, handing out prayer books to all who enter. His father and his son are both rabbis. But his is a place of humble service in between them, supporting his older brothers in their

esteemed professions.

When my chatty grandmother dies early that winter, the taciturn man begins to talk. A lot. He doesn't stop. Not until that summer, when he dies of stomach cancer, six months hence.

While he is in the hospital, I am asked to go and sketch his portrait, too. Having absorbed the reprimanding from my teacher, Mr. K, of my grandmother's portrait, I am careful to portray my grandfather with great accuracy, unsentimental.

When I am done, he asks to see it.

I hold up the rendering from my chair at the foot of his bed.

He shudders, gasps and jolts to one side, stunned by gray Lucian Freud skin tones drawn over a gaunt structure, horrified by the mirroring image before him.

Embarrassed by my skills, which now seem only haughty and insolent, I petrify from guilt and shame.

Maybe Mr. K would have graded me favorably, but I have failed.

'Its Okay.' My grandfather retracts having digested the reality. Then, in his love and wisdom responds, "Sometimes you just have to tell it like it is."

He dies shortly thereafter, late July, my father's birthday.

He has given me this gift -permission to tell the truth even when it's painful.

I never forget the sting of his reaction. Perhaps it will later inform my choices while making RED REIGN, the gruesome truth will be told with great care for the viewer, but the truth will be told nonetheless.



The press release will read, *'Red Reign examines the shocking evidence of forced organ harvesting of China's prisoners of conscience, the practitioners of Falun Gong. Filmmaker Masha Savitz zeroes in on the efforts of Nobel Prize nominee David Matas, who wrote the book 'Bloody Harvest: The Killing of Falun Gong.' David Kilgour, a former member of the Canadian Parliament, alleged that Falun Gong prisoners were being killed in order to harvest their organs for the lucrative government-run organ transplant business.'*



Syd:

My maternal grandparents lived in a Payne's Gray ranch house on Oxford Street in New York. I am in art school when my grandmother Sadie, who prefers to be called Syd, falls into a coma from an aneurism.

She likes me to choose outfits for her when I am ten years old and visiting her in Florida, matching blouses with slacks and accessories.

I most enjoy raiding her storage closets for vintage coats and dresses which I love to wear. She is amused that a teenager finds her old discarded clothes so appealing- a floral print dress with rhinestones around the neckline and scattered around the body of the frock, a fur lined mocha colored jacket, purple stripy sandals, a black cocktail dress with sheer draping around the shoulders and neck line. I have a photo of myself wearing it, together with a yellowing photo of her from the 60's in the same dress. She is posing in front of a portrait of herself over the piano.

My peers often ask to borrow my wardrobe for costumes for school plays and other themed events. 'But these are my regular clothes!' I wince at this request.

It's early spring and I am terrified for the funeral. What if I don't cry, something nearly impossible for me to do since my brother became fatally ill when I was twelve years old. If I don't cry the family will know that I am cold after all, cold and detached, a position I am

appointed in my adolescence.

If I don't cry, maybe they're right about me. Maybe I *am* cold and unfeeling. This would certainly confirm it. I am panicked.

The night before the funeral I stay with my grandfather in their home on the golf course in Westchester so that he will not be alone.

That morning is cool and rainy.

Grandpa Lou offers me Grandma's galoshes.

'No thanks Grandpa, I'm Okay' I decline.

'You should really wear the galoshes.' He holds them up to display.

'No, really, I am fine.'

He snickers and walks away.

The service takes place.

Tears fall.

Relief.

We are driving to the cemetery. I ride with my dad in the front seat. My mother is with her siblings in the limousine. The sun breaks through the rain clouds with a spectacular display. I had always seen my moth-

er as emotional, at times, uncomfortable by her emotive nature. She is known to cry at commercials. Now my father is telling me that I'm just like her. WHAT? He tells me that when they began to date she never showed emotion. It wasn't until years later, that she became emotional.

We get to the cemetery. I gather with the large extended family around the gravesite. As the burial ceremony concludes, everyone disperses heading to their cars. I feel myself inch closer to the grave. I don't want to leave her. A surge of irrational grief overtakes me.

'I can't leave her here by herself.'

I am sobbing.

'I can't leave her here, I don't want to leave her.'
As if from slightly above, I see myself, hands cupping my face, amazed at this extreme and rather out-of-control dramatic behavior, and think, 'How wonderful!'

Each of my parents swiftly clutches one of my arms and leads me out of the cemetery.

My grandfather, Lou, remarks to my oldest cousin, leaning into her ear, 'I told her she should have worn Grandma's galoshes.'

Lou:
My grandfather on my mother's side is Lou. The old-

est of fourteen children, though only twelve survive to adulthood, is proud and forthright, sometimes cruel in his comments. 'You gained weight, your ass looks big.' He is strict and if you leave your shoes in the wrong place you will hear about it. Everyone will.

When he dies, my father eulogizes him demonstrating the mastery of his rabbi craft- my father tells the truth about Lou, the man who was always antagonistic towards him, but in a way that leaves everyone appreciating his cantankerous nature, smiling with wry affection, 'Oh that was Grandpa alright.' There is a great opportunity for healing as the conflicted and difficult feelings are transmuted by the shared experience of those in attendance. Ah, the power of language, words, intention.

I am on my way home from college for winter break. I stop to visit grandpa where I spend a rare few hours alone with him. He asks me when I am going to give up painting, did I have a date in mind, a plan for abandoning ship, renouncing life as an artist?

In the kitchen he tells me that when he was a young man in Europe, he was offered a scholarship to study art. He goes down to the basement to retrieve an elegant pen and ink drawing of a figure, portrait that he made as a young man.

'Art school? You want to be an artist like those men in white flouncy shirts with long billowy sleeves who sit

at the cafe all day?’ his father, my great grandfather, had harangued him.

Lou becomes a business owner of a pharmacy with the Americanized family name on the awning, and passes on the same limitations to my mother, who comes home to tell him one day that she wants to be an artist. ‘An artist? Absolutely not - you can be an art teacher.’ He tells her.

She gets her degree in art education, something she would never use.

This all begins to explain a lot.

I had always been encouraged to follow my creative nature, encouraged to apply to art school, so I am completely dismayed when on Thanksgiving of my junior year, time to declare a major, the conversation goes like this:

‘Have you made a decision about a major?’ My parents ask eagerly at the holiday table.

‘Painting.’ I answer.

‘That’s not a decision,’ my mother quips sharply.

As the conversation with grandfather continues, I recognize the line of artistic leanings and the parental thwarting, which has now come to me like an ancestral karmic relay. It is my chance to take the baton, pass it, or break the cycle and use it to conduct a symphony, or

as a magic wand.

After hours of Lou trying to convince me to give up painting that winter night, it is time for me to leave. We are standing at his front door, in a last attempt he asks, ‘So when are you going to give up painting?’

‘I am too talented to give up painting, Grandpa.’

He throws back his head, letting out the heartiest laugh of delight.



There is a bridge that Pierre and Marthe could not build, but that I must. Then traverse, or become.

It won’t be for many years until I realize that I will also have to reconcile the shattered life of sculptor Camille Claudel, Rodin’s lover, and all other women artists like her, like us, a story once too frightening to approach, now my mission.

How to begin?



Like most of the human species, in a tug-o-war

between opposing selves, my Leonean dramatic ascendant and a Cancer Moon, shy and receding, checks and balances, limits and expansion, aspects of opposites, like South node in Sagittarius, my wild untamed self, and a North Node in Gemini, calling me to refine and communicate. So, I will fall in love with a refined and wild Sag communicator. I protect my fierce need for both an independent and creative life, while taming a desire for love and intimacy.

Once I understand the gap between Pierre the artist, and Marthe the wife and model, I reflect on the ways that I am them.

It is years later, while writing at the cafe on a rainy January afternoon, that I will smile with the sublime realization that I AM EVERYONE.

After writing the story about Marthe and Pierre, I never make another self-portrait.

Painting created the bridge from a non verbal reality. I owe my life and deepest joys to painting. But, it is through the written word that I communicate specific ideas. It is verbal language that yields insights into the nature of my existence, offering access into worlds, both my own and ones I will create.

Through writing I can explore and share my emotional and spiritual inheritance. Although, I had occasionally wondered if I should

become a rabbi, the notion always left as quickly as it came. But, this time it persists.

I know that this five year graduate program will require gymnast like hoop jumping.

Should I jump the many hoops academically, religiously, socially?

I am thinking about this on the way home from dinner at a friend's house when I come across a card lying on the ground in the street. The card has just one word written upon it . 'Jump.' I do.

I am off to the seminary.

I have been an artist, like my mother, embracing form and color, Aphrodite of prismatic expression. And now I will travel my father's path as clergy. Service, in neutral austere colors and cerebral inquiry like the two different paths of Herman Hesse's, *Narcissus and Goldman*. One a holy man, scholarly Narcissus of father sky, and the other, Goldman, pursuing the experience of mother earth's sensual offerings.

On Finn's recommendation, I read *Narcissus and Goldman*, which will elucidate the polarities within me. I reflect both of the characters in this story of two men who meet at a cloister in medieval Europe. They develop a profound friendship, but their different temperaments take them on different life courses, though they

are always united by their commitment to experiencing their true nature fully.

And it will lead me to alchemy.

“Art was a union of the father and mother worlds, of mind and blood. It might start in utter sensuality and lead to total abstraction; then again it might originate in pure concept and end in bleeding flesh. Any work of art that was truly sublime, not just a good juggler’s trick; that was filled with the eternal secret, like the master’s Madonna; every obviously genuine work of art had this dangerous, smiling double face, was male-female, a merging of instinct and pure spirituality.” ~ Hesse

This story articulates my past and portends my future, as does many of the recommendations from this friend. My close connection with Finn will prevail as pivotal.

Because after duality would come consummation.

CHAPTER TWO

art war love porn



Perhaps it is the mounting pressure of Saturn in the eighth house, ruling birth death power sex, taking the form of an impotent marriage, fueling and catapulting me across the patchwork of states to the shores of the other ocean. The ringed planet completing its return around my natal chart. The opportunity for reinvention, as my friend Pamela constantly educates me on the choreography of the planets and their dance in our lives.

In those days, either protesting my circumstance, attempting retaliation or redemption, I paint what some would later call, to my horror, malady and regret, 'porn.'

My ex-soldier husband, W, suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, a term I don't yet know, and

a litany of other textbook dysfunctions, all well earned, refrains from any display of affection towards me, and it seems, it was only me.

He hands me a copy of 'To Know A Woman', by Amos Oz, one of the few books I read is an unsettling account of an Israeli espionage agent who retires following his wife's accidental death.'

Was this intended as a warning, a call for help, foreshadowing?

I was naïve then, a trait that drew him towards me.

The thought that he works for the Mossad always remains in the back of my mind.



We were opposites attracting. But the color wheel and color theory teaches me a truth about this 'opposites attract' dynamic.

Opposite colors, that is, complimentary colors, together can be bold, pop, all contrast. Varoom! But, when mixed together however, they will eventually create flat gray.

Orange mixed with blue will neutralize the orange

detracting from its vibrancy. And so it goes with all complimentary colors.

It seems to me the ideal romantic match is one in which the combination creates a third color.

The primaries, when combined, create a secondary. A mate should share similar interests and qualities, but also have a set very different.

Yellow and blue make green, red and yellow, orange, and red and blue produce purple.

An ideal couple will each vibrate at its own frequency, yet create something together—a family, a business, a dynasty, a farm, a home, garden, foundation, a movie.

Or all of the above.

Like Tanna and Henry, from collaborations further colors can be formed. Blue-Violet, Red-Violet, Red-Orange, Yellow-Orange, Yellow-Green, Blue-Green.

Pairing with another that is too similar will not ignite dynamism or foster growth, even in the re-creation of self. Then again, a field full of daisy's is resplendent. Monochromatic and homogenous has its place, but not so much with creators.



He didn't speak as a child, W tells me, he refused. No medical reason, just sheer will.

What makes an infant decide to withhold communication while other babies live to please and bond, imitating their parents' sounds and gestures with coos, gurgles and giggles?

He withholds love, communication, connection.

He has twenty-five years to perfect this modus operandi. I don't have a chance.

W uses the silence tactic with me as well, punishing me for days at a time without explanation. This experience teaches me that to enter the mind of a mad person, in hopes of understanding them, is to tread on madness oneself.

I imagine the weeks before he is born, ingesting the bitter waters of his mother's womb, cortisol flooding her frail system. The young woman, a survivor of the Holocaust, miscarries five other children that cannot remain in the amniotic fluid of terror. But he is different, fierce and strong, and would grow and thrive on code red distress.

W is born with penetrating teal eyes and with a bad taste in his mouth, a bitterness that becomes part of his constitution and orientation. He will grow addicted to the adrenalin release, to the flavor of chaos, only

exacerbated as a soldier.

He refuses speech for his first five years. His father, Joseph, a linguist mastering many languages, translates books. So, in spite, W rejects language.

His mother, Riza, is controlling and needy. So W refuses to need her, or anyone else and is irate when she needs him.

Riza has neglected to care for him, spending all her time at the hospital bed of his father, her dying husband, who slowly deteriorates from war wounds.

After Joseph's death, Riza attempts suicide. Social services will intervene when a teacher finds young W stealing an apple from another child- he has no lunch.

I first meet W on a farm in Israel where his foster mother lives. She, a spirited petite dark haired woman, with a collection of pine cones and other natural treasures that she turns into decorative crafts, animals and such, cheerfully displayed on a table in her modest house. She had lost a son in an accident, but gained a foster son in W.

'I want him to ask me to marry him.' I tell my sister before I even know his name.

This falls into the category of lessons called- be careful

what you ask for.

He moves to Boston and in with me.

Eager to make him feel welcomed and part of my circle, I encourage him to spend time with all of my friends which he will take to a nefarious level. This act of good faith will turn on me as seeds of suspicion and mistrust are first planted here.

Our second year is contentious.

He gets a call that his mother is dying, her condition, more advanced than he knew.

'Do you want me to come with you?' I ask, as he needs to fly back to Israel right away.

'You don't need to come.'

'I know. But if you want me to come, I will.'

'Yes, I want you to come.'

Turbulent weeks follow.

My parents had planned a trip abroad. We take the next plane from the East Coast. We are on the same flight as my parents. They bring my grandmother's engagement ring, 'Just in case.' My mother said.

Although I can speak basic conversation, asking the time and ordering a cup of coffee, *eem filter*, or falafel

bevakasha, please, my Hebrew skills are not suitable for the delicate circumstances of picking up subtle clues and cues in a hospital, and during serious conversations regarding visas and embassies.

A social worker helping with Riza concludes that W and I need to get married for his visa.

Outside the hospital room W puts the ring on my finger.

'Aren't you going to ask me?'

'Only wimps ask.'

I'm engaged.



I rub scented cool white hand cream onto the effete hands of my soon to be mother in law.

I spread out the sheet onto the bed thinking, 'the unfolding, this is the unfolding.'

T h e u n f o l d i n g .

The stress filled days are spent managing medical

emergencies. Riza needs oxygen or falls out of bed. There are tense Visa related trips to the embassy in Tel Aviv. Everything is slipping out of my grasp in foreign tongue and on foreign soil.

I am a minor character in the wedding that is being planned- my own.

Trying to be supportive, I lilt, powerless, swept up in a force I can't quell as I am given a mauve lace dress to wear at the nuptials.

With bearings lost, I have lost my north and track of time.

We are out buying flowers for the ceremony. It's the day of the wedding. It suddenly occurs to me- it is April 1!

A fantastic cosmic April fools joke. W and I agree. We will laugh silently under the *chupah* canopy.

I can relax, appreciating the humor amidst crisis and trepidation for a moment, one sun filled moment picking out flowers at the farmers market this early spring.



Following the fool's day wedding, I return to the USA and to work.

Riza dies the next day. W, still awaiting his visa, is called back into the military reserves and back into active duty. He doesn't tell me. He fears it will make him vulnerable. Instead, I am.

When he arrives into my life months later, he is full of soldiers' secrets, burdens, and restlessness.

The complicated resentment toward his mother transfers to me like debt, my inheritance along with some gold and diamond jewelry.

This combination is a one-two punch.

I'm out, but stumble back to my feet.

To Pearl Paint, an arts supply store around the corner from my Prospect Street studio.

Using Gamblin's silver, black and all shades blue- Ultramarine, Prussian, Cobalt - I paint myself in silhouette with army boots floating above my head, titled, 'Black and Blue.'

The next painting is large, red and black, female body-parts and army boots in sectioned boxes - 'Dreams from the Front Lines.'

'V is for vortex, vagina, velocity- the shape your army boots make in the corner of the room,' I scribble in my journal by our bed where he has a carving knife protruding from the floor boards in case of intruders- what I have become to him.

He casually informs me one day that the smell of gunpowder can make a man aroused, that this was a well known fact.

It was Alchemist Wei Boyang, of the Eastern Han dynasty, who was the first known person to have documented the chemical composition of gunpowder. Ironically, the Taoist lived secluded in the mountains, spending his life creating an elixir for immortality. The yin and the yang.



W calls escalators 'moving flight' and mixes up prepositions saying, 'I worked my butt out.' He can make me laugh when I'm not limp, with my life force spinning in reverse.

I refer to him as 'Hyperbole Man'- extremely good looking, extremely smart, extremely charming, and extremely intense with a tendency toward extreme hostility and a perpetual craving for cortisol in mouth and blood. His or another's.



Despite the fact that we had every state-of the-art device, cell phones, pagers, etc., with which to communicate, there must first be the desire to reach, know, and touch another. Otherwise it's useless, flamboyant, insulting.

With cell phone, computer, home line, work line, he is impossible to reach. Because when one wants to be accessible, telepathy will do just fine. And sometimes the best way to communicate is still a smile. A hug. Listening.

I have the desire to connect on primordial levels, but will need to assimilate hard drives, learn aperture settings, understand the components and function of treatments (a screenplay blueprint), log lines, by lines, and tag lines, which will increase my face lines, as foretold in my palm's life line. All with the hope and belief that it is possible to surpass the delineating lines of our existence, transcend the edges, reach beyond the delimited boundaries of me, my, skin, I.

New lexicons to learn, playing matchmaker to form and content as I will later try to make sense, and art of this story, in the unfamiliar language and structure of screenwriting which begins with FADE IN.

I will introduce scenes with terms like INT., interior or EXT., exterior.

But, this is my interior attempting to become exterior, sculpted into the shape of story, chiseled with the likeness of humanity, polished to the sheen of grace and redemption. At least this is the idea.

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Screenplay:

BLOOD of EDEN

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S BACKYARD, LATE AFTERNOON

Young neighborhood kids are playing in the yard of a suburban middle-class home, there is laughter and joyful shrieks as they chase each other through October leaves.

A little spotted dog, tied to a tree with a chain, is barking.

One of the young girls, Maggie, five years old, with pig tails, moves slowly towards the dog.

The other kids form a semi circle behind her.

LITTLE BOY

Don't go near
Toughie, he'll bite
you, ya know.

In slow motion she keeps moving toward the jumping dog.

OLDER GIRL

Yea, don't go near
Toughie....

Maggie has a determined air of calm assuredness, knowing just what he needs.

LITTLE MAGGIE

(Voice Over-audience
hears)
He just needs love.

In the background the kids continue to shout in protest, warning her.

She is unmoved and steadfast, approaching the barking dog in slow motion.

Toughie leaps up growling and bites

her on the hand.

The kids react with surprised faces, outbursts, laughter, and pointing.

She covers her wounded and bleeding hand to minimize any evidence of her betrayal while holding back tears.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE. DAY

The girl is sitting on the examining table, her Mom watching on.

The doctor prepares a tetanus shot. Maggie stoically prepares for her immanent fate. As the shot is administered, the pain and humiliation are too much to bear- betrayed by love.

She lets out a mournful howl.

CLOSE UP OF GIRL CRYING CROSS FADES TO:

25 years later-

INT. LOFT. BATHROOM

Maggie is cleaning the bathroom. She is wearing an old black slip, barefoot,

a scarf holds her hair back pirate-style. She is scrubbing the old claw-foot bathtub and singing along to the background music, Seal's CRAZY.

She finds a stack of magazines under the tub.

Soberly, she opens the pages and stares blankly at the pages before her.

She sits on the lip of the tub pausing with the discovery.

INT. DOORWAY. EVENING

Maggie waits at the door while Ron comes home from work- She plans to scare him playfully when he walks in the front door.

MAGGIE

Boo!

He has her up against the wall in a split second ready to break the neck of the invading thief.

He realizes it's Maggie.

RON

Never do that again.

Do you understand?
Never.. do.. that
again.

He walks away leaving her there against
the wall stunned.

INT. BATHROOM. NIGHT

Ron is in the shower and Maggie is
washing up at the sink.

MAGGIE

Hey Ron

No answer, silence.

RON

Yeah? What?

MAGGIE

Ya know when I was
cleaning, I found a
bunch of magazines...

RON

Yeah...the guys at
work gave them to me.

MAGGIE

So you don't mind if

I throw them out..

Ron grunts indifferently.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY

Maggie tosses the magazines into the
garbage.

INT. BEDROOM. DAY

While changing the sheets, Maggie
finds more magazines under his side of
the bed.

INT. STUDIO. NEXT DAY.

Maggie is talking on the phone while
she gessoes new canvases in the studio.

LIZZIE

Well his sun squares
your 8th house
planets!

MAGGIE

I don't feel like
I can tell him he
can't look at this
stuff, I'm not the
mind police, that's

the CCP's job! At the same time, I know this is destroying us.

LIZZIE

As long as he has this outlet, a disembodied woman, he doesn't need to deal with a real one, and Maggie, you are a real one alright.

Maggie sighs.

INT. LOFT STUDIO. DAY

She stares at the warped images in the magazine.

Maggie methodically squeezes slippery color from tubes of paint in systematic order around the glass palette: warm yellows, oranges ochre, reds and alizarin crimson, the purples, and cool blues.

She mixes a solution of turpentine and linseed oil in a jar and sits an old can of brushes, and rags.

With conviction, she begins to paint the images in the magazine, huge, on a mission.

She paints a large scale image impressionistically with warm colors, pink, lavender, oranges...

) ((●)) (

Discovering stacks of porn magazines hidden while I clean the house, something W doesn't count on happening too frequently, I confront him with the unsettling findings.

I approach him awkwardly. W is busy on the computer in the spare room.

"The guys at work gave them to me," he shrugs. He doesn't lift his head from the computer screen.

"So, you don't mind if I throw them out?"

"No, go ahead," eyes fixed ahead.

I toss out a pile, only to find a new crop hidden behind my dresser or under the claw foot tub.

Sitting on the tub rim with magazine in hand, I study

the images with fierce concentration, transfixed, feeling into each pixel for information.

Women in mini nurse uniforms. Where are they? Are they numb to feeling at all, or are feelings submerged like fault lines, or do they spark on the surface, a fire hazard?

What does a collection of these images do to a man's mind, to his heart?

Do connecting sinews get severed between the two?

I wonder what he sees when he looks at me.

He won't talk to me. Only lies, excuses and blame, blaming me to keep the focus off of him. So, I go off spinning and losing my center.

Rumination on indignation.

Limit fantasy?

It seems absurd, but it is undermining an already fragile, tested, and battered marriage.

Where is the root of this poisonous plant and what is the poison's antidote?

There is only one thing to do. I bring the magazines to my studio, determined to make the cold and detached images of women and coitus as beautiful as possible. This mission to (re)elevate and hallow sex leads me on a journey that will last years.

I layer paint.

I bring the first painting home- four ft' by four ft' of warm orange, pink and violet glowing penetration that I will hang in the living room directly across from the front door entrance.

W comes home that night and never responds.

Months pass.

No response.

Everyone else certainly does.

He has still not responded.

BLOOD OF EDEN, Continued

INT. GALLERY, NIGHT

Bartender is serving complimentary glasses of wine.

Ron looks handsome and is charming Maggie's friends. He plays this role in public well.

Gwen, Maggie's sister, is there with her husband. She clings to him, feeling out of her element, compensating

by drinking lots of wine.

There are strong and mixed reactions to the art exhibition. We are looking down into the crowd from above.

Facial expressions show, hands to mouth, eyebrows raise, hands on hips, beard stroked, smirks, grins, giggles, throats clear.

CROWD

Oh, ooh.

An attractive woman, 30's. is whispering to a female friend beside her.

WOMAN

You know, I have been raped, and these paintings are very healing to me.

MAN IN HIS 50'S

Very erotic,
provocative.

ANDROGYNOUS WOMAN

These paintings are violent.

ASIAN MAN

So Aggressive.

WOMAN

(in a white turban)

Holy.

) ((●)) (

Over time, the painting series I will eventually name Come/Union, becomes as much an exploration of visual relationships as human relationships. Are there negative spaces, what is the space between them? Are their edges boldly defined or an ambiguous merging of color and flesh, are these tones similar or contrasting?

How do the elements relate?

The compositions of only genitals in the act of intercourse fill the space of the canvas.

There are no faces to convey expressions, no indication of age, no context nor clues as to whether this depiction of making love is making a baby, or make up sex.

Is this a one-night stand, a man with a mistress, a woman with a student, lovers reuniting after many years, a rape, or silver wedding anniversary?

No paraphernalia, just penetration.

I paint with two intentions- represent male and female balanced on the canvas, and make it beautiful, as I will try to do in life. But paint is easier to move than civilization.

I research Tantric culture, which employs sacred sexuality as a form of cultivation to get closer to the Divine, evoking the divine in self and in the partner. Conversely, sexuality in our society seems to move us further away from divinity, from the self and other, twisting ideas of Tantrism to feed and engorge lust, greed, detachment, inadequacy, competition, I could go on forever. I almost do.

Once, invited to a Hindu ceremony, a Puja, celebrating erotic love, I observe how the appropriation perpetuates discontent- the desire for 'soul mate', the 'one.' More workshops to attend, more ways to wet the collective appetite, more ways to inflict a sense of not enough.

'I want to worship the goddess in you,' says a well presented man at the event.

Which goddess is that, I wonder, Kali? She will turn you into a three headed toad.

Or Hestia, who focuses on her inner sanctuary as a Virgin Goddess? Yes, worship at her temple!

It would feel more truthful had he made some direct sexual advance, no matter how crude.

Sacred language to cover up lust is rather revolting. Sad for the poor searching souls.

When I get home that night, I feel as if I had been contaminated by some pervasive collective darkness. I have. But, it calls itself light. Neon flashing red.

Such is my quest for understanding the nature of intimacy, with Chiron and Saturn in the eighth house, suggesting a deep inquiry and a healing of the issues of sex, death and things hidden.



A Korean stock trader tells me he thinks my paintings are aggressive.

Jules thinks I just paint penises. People read many things into the paintings which seems to reveal more about themselves - but they will be projected onto me.

I hadn't counted on such reactions. Interesting, sure, but I seem to be producing, in many cases, the opposite of my intention. This seems to be backfiring.

Instead of creating harmony and balance between the sexes, I must recognize how single I am in my personal life.

The act of making the paintings only affirms the reality as I surround myself with grand and vivid odes to union.



Is art a consolation prize for misery, or is misery just the price?



Before I leave Boston I find a book, 'The Woman Who Slept with Men To Take The War Out of Them.'

Though dyslexic and disinclined to reading, I inherit my fathers love of books, and the pleasure of prowling bookstores, drawn to image, font, running my hands over covers, feeling the texture of the book jacket against my responsive fingers. I too am seduced by books and collect them. And sometimes I even read one. I don't get too far with this one however, but I do enjoy the title, and imagine the contents...

I grow to understand many things from what I don't read, and what is not said.

Like things not said by the husband, product of policies set by men who are also suckled on cortisol, acting from fear, which sometimes looks like pride or protection.



'Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak.'

But Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' The man asked him, 'What is your name?'

'Jacob,' He answered. Then the man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.'

Changing the name of one who is sick to confuse the angel of death grants good fortune. Name changes appear often in the Jewish tradition.

Perhaps a new name, a renewed identity, can be considered for Yisrael (Israel) meaning: struggles with

God, to Yizrachel, meaning 'Shines light with God.'

Some change their names to change their fate, or too, according to the Talmud, a change of address can bring a change of luck.

I am changing address.

This time, from Kendel Street, Cambridge Massachusetts to Carleton Street, Berkeley, California.



Because, after the marriage ends, there is work to be done, or perhaps more precisely, ease to be experienced, repose to be relished, levity lived.



If my first love had broken my heart, the marriage broke my spirit. Others will later break my faith, will and hope, respectively. But, I will become accustomed to moving through life with the broken bits, precariously balancing my body to keep the shattered parts in place- certainly not alone in this jangled posture. It may be a comment on our culture, or merely the mark

of humankind.

And when there is nothing left to break, except stubborn patterns, I will turn into light and radiate, and this is probably the purpose all along.



A Tarot card pulled at the wooden kitchen table in my Cambridge apartment depicts a woman in a lilac colored lake- the Star Card, portending hot tubs and the scenic seascapes of Northern California. Though hard to imagine at the time, I will later recall the card in a hot tub on a February night surrounded by lush gardens under a starry canopy in a Berkeley backyard, northern California.

Three months prior, I visit college friends, Sila in Oakland and my dorm roommate Belle, now Sila's roommate. Sitting at an outdoor table at Café Mediterranean, I perceive a message clear as Genesis's Abraham, '*Lech l'cha*, Go forth.' There is a window that will not remain open for long. Here is a place I can recuperate and recreate. Go forth. So, I move to Berkeley.

In this crystalline moment, I finish the last sip of the

cafe au-lait, and saunter down Telegraph Avenue to a vintage clothing shop.

With my 'Boston clothes' stuffed into the black and neon pink plastic bag, I exit the shop, donning my new old garments which resemble my old old clothes in every way, yet feeling thoroughly altered, unencumbered. Free.



While in San Francisco's Deloris Park I wander into a knife store where knives line the paint chipped walls of this dimly lit building. Seeing no one behind the counter, a brief moment of dread overtakes me, gory scenarios irrupt.

Uncharacteristically, I buy my soon to be ex-husband an antique sword decoratively engraved along the blade. He has always been fascinated with weapons, I have always been fearful of them.

Now I need one to cut our chords, cut my losses.

In other dimensions I wield a sword but have forgotten all this- it would be a few years before I will begin to remember who I really am.



I try to remember.

According to a myth, before we are born, an angel taps us on the top lip to wipe clean our memory that we forget from where we came- the reason for the small indentation between our top lip.

I am compelled to know my true self, separate from social conventions and conditions, so when I move into my first apartment near Kenmore Square, endeavoring to act free of predisposition, I refrain from mechanically organizing according to norms. Instead, I place cleaners on the top shelf, the canned goods under the sink, my clothes are stacked in milk crates.

I come to find however, that sometimes there is acumen to be gleaned in things tried and tested.

This would begin the long and arduous process of sorting out which was which.

Wisdom, perhaps?



Not yet wise, I'm living out a Clash song.

W feels betrayed by those he has loved, so he pushes me away, testing me, protecting himself. If I leave, it confirms his notion that you can't trust anyone and he will always be betrayed. If I stay, his respect for me will erode, for I must be weak and put up with the abuse, which will make the abuse more severe. I betray myself.

Street smart and culturally savvy Lorraine, a friend from Boston, with teased black hair and red lipstick, who appears on page twenty-one of Nan Goldin, the famed still photographer's collection, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, puts W's Alder Wood acoustic guitar in my hands and teaches me three chords.

I'm lit, composing songs that sound Nashville born, despite having no exposure or particular interest in this genre or style.

At this point I am still struggling with 'Should I stay or should I go?' regarding W.

I am hanging on. Hanging in. Hanging.
I'm the hanged one.

I write a song. Chords E, D, A

Hanged Man.

Trying to untangle
or is it to unleave
from everything I've held on to
with clenched tiger teeth

Anticipating separating
from all that I have known
to be your loving wife
or to be on my own?

I'm suspended, new perspective,
As I'm swinging in the breeze,
everything looks different now
way up here in the trees.

(Chorus)

I'm the hanged one the unnamed one.
and I'm hanging in a deck of tarot cards.
I'm the hanged one the unnamed one.
and I'm hanging
in a deck of tarot cards.

The Empress is full of grace,
the Fool very dear,
the devil keeps us in chains
paralyzed by fear
I'm the hanged one the unnamed one.
and I'm hanging
in a deck of tarot cards.

But me I'm surrendering
to a life gone in reverse
to what can be called rebirth
some would say a blessed thing
and some would say a curse

So as death comes
a breath comes
that fills my lungs a new
with pure possibility
of all that I might do

(Chorus)

I'm the hanged one
the unnamed one.
and I'm hanging
in a deck of tarot cards.
I'm the hanged, count the pain one

unashamed one
defamed one
renamed one
blamed
un tamed

Reinvention resurrection
I have another chance,
before this song is over
and before the last dance.

A mournful steel guitar to accompany lyrics.

Ooooo, steeel gutar.

) ((●)) (

I sing, write and paint, but I can't always talk.

To silence me, to keep me from asking or stating, W's
first tactic is anger. It usually works. As a backup, he
resorts to shame and guilt.

Shame tells me that I am incompetent, unintelligent,
undesirable.

Guilt says, 'If you leave me, I have no one.'
Ouch! That usually slays me.

But, one day I softly utter, 'That doesn't seem a good
reason to stay married.'

Guilt fails. Truth prevails. Karma paid. Spell broken.

) ((●)) (

After years of exhausting myself to make the marriage
work and then trying to end it, because he resists me
on both efforts, I will finally, while reading a Buddhist

inspired book on my Green-line commute to work, disengage and politely go about living my life, to which he will respond one evening saying, 'I think I should move out.'

'That's a fine idea.' I concur.



Upon my return from the North West, I gift W with the ornamental sword.

'This is unlike you,' he acknowledges in the car ride back from the airport in our sporty blue jeep.

'Yes.'

I'm across the country three months later.



There is a short term of uncertainty before making a definitive decision to leave Boston.

I ask the sales help of my frequented local art store,

Pearl Paint, if they are also located in San Francisco.

'No, we're not on the West Coast.' The answer throws doubt into the trajectory.

If a sign was what I needed, however, a sign is what I got.

Handwritten in red marker, a week later, upon arriving at the art store entrance, a note on the door spells 'Moving to San Francisco.' Confused and shocked, I read and reread the print three times before comprehending. There are bags to pack.

Before I leave, W and I meet for a beer at The Bristol Café. A little treasure with warm inviting woods and music for cold northern nights. It is across the street from where we have lived for two years. We have never been in, at least not together.

I ask jokingly for a reference for the position of wife.

'You get an 'A,' he says.

This ironic comment and sentiment is unsatisfying and ultimately beguiling.

Such statements by other men will later plague me.

A familiar song keeps playing in my head as we say

goodbye in front of the apartment we once shared.

'Give me one reason to stay and I'll turn right back around. Said I don't want to leave you lonely, ya gotta make me change my mind.'

He didn't give me a reason.
I didn't turn around,
or change my mind.



When the husband moves out, it is late autumn in New England. The trees are already stark, the season of death has commenced. I sit for a while on a red chaise lounge at a friend's gallery opening, in shock from my new found freedom, then check my bank account which adds up to just enough money to purchase a big bright red vintage wool coat and a bottle of French perfume. The coat is Cadmium Red Light, and the perfume, Angel, its box, King's Blue, Rembrandt.

Angel

Top Notes: melon, coconut, mandarin orange, cassia, jasmine, bergamot, cotton candy.

Heart: honey, apricot, blackberry, plum, orchid, peach, jasmine, lily of the valley, rose.

Base: tonka bean, amber, patchouli, musk, vanilla, dark chocolate, caramel.



Later I write him a poem, but as communication is not a factor in our equation, he will never see it, and it probably was never really meant for him anyway.

August

I first saw you
in overalls and shirtless, on a tractor, in the
heat of Israel's August
against the fecund northern landscape.
'I want to marry him.' I say to my sister.
After dinner, You were contrary, testing me.

But the following day, sitting by the
turquoise pool, you twist
color thread into my long hair,
then in a small bedroom your guitar playing
makes me cry.

We make love
on the bed by the large
open window.

Years later, we are in the same bed,
but you don't touch me.

You do not want me there, send me out,
then you call me back, we are here
for your dying mother.

After days with no sleep,
barely lucid,

you ask me to open the window so that yo
might 'night flight', astral travel
to the hospital room,
where you describe the ghost of your
father at the bedside of your mother.
speaking in Yiddish, and English
and languages I don't understand.
Agitated, thrashing-- I try to console you,
telling you that
angels are with you and will watch over,
a soldier, afflicted by combat, but not from
opponents.
We married a few months later,
but I think you mistook me for a spy.
Now, I am leaving through my own

open window, speaking in languages you

can't understand.

I hope the angels are still watching

over you.

I no longer can.