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JADE

Jodi Lundgren

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

April 1993

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ABSTRACT

JADE

Jodi Lundgren

JADE is a novella told in the first person from the point of view of a young university student, Jade, who becomes sexually involved with a professor, Cam Nott. Obsessed with literary theory, which she writes about in a journal, Jade exhilarates in the deconstruction of such hierarchies as "professor/student" and "virgin/whore." However, the power imbalance between her and Nott cannot be theorized out of existence, and it overwhelms her. Jade's behaviour grows increasingly strained and desperate in an apparent exhibition of "madness." She is eventually taken to a psychiatric hospital by police officers. Jade's experience of psychiatric abuse forces her to "normalize" but does not help her to heal. After her discharge, she realizes through writing about her experience that she is an incest survivor. Dreams and memories of being sexually abused follow, and Jade begins to move tentatively in the direction of healing.

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Night

The waterfront parking lot next to Merlin's is full, and I circle it twice without seeing Ysult's white Toyota. She may have parked elsewhere--should I check the bar, or just go home? Red tail lights flash and an engine revs. In front of me, a jeep is vacating a spot under a streetlight. I take it.

Two steps from the car, I'm halted by the weight of my leather jacket--gift from my parents, Coat of One Colour, it's too precious to entrust to the smoky darkness of a nightclub. I slip out of it and lay it across the back seat, where it sprawls, purple, the slit of the zipper parting to reveal the silky fuchsia lining. Exposed to the night in a thin cotton blazer, I hug my chest and clack across the asphalt in my bubblegum pumps, aiming for the door with the swirl of stars.

Someone is entering the nightclub just ahead of me: I know the curly head of hair, the springy walk that affirms life with every step. "Hey, Cam Nott!"

"Hey, hello, you," he responds, spinning around with the quickness of a dog chasing its own tail, not wanting to be caught out.

"What are you doing here?"

"I was at a dinner party and the guys from my soccer team conned me into giving them a ride. Designated driver,

you know."

When I ask him about my essay, he faces forward again. "Yes, I've marked the papers, but I'm not going to tell you your grade on a Friday night at a bar--not after midnight, anyways!" His upper back stiffens as he amplifies his voice to a hollow resonance.

I sidle into the bar, facing Cam, who walks straight ahead. Half a term's pent-up attraction fuels my chatter. I can't tell whether he's listening until finally he inclines his head towards me like a tolerant parent, somewhat amused, and offers to buy me a drink.

At the bar, empty glasses hang upside down above our heads like microphones on a film set. Gem-coloured bottles of liqueur glint from their nooks as our conversation unfolds. I say our society tries to force people into molds, dumb jock or geeky intellectual (thinking finally, my equal), and he says "Yeah, I could have been an Olympic tennis player."

"No you couldn't have."

"Yes, I won the B.C. Open and---"

"Tennis isn't an Olympic sport."

As he puzzles I seize my advantage: "Every time a student says something in class, you appropriate it and paraphrase it and act like it's nothing new to you, just something you've thought through before. You always have to be in control. I'm not going to teach like that, I'm not

going to appropriate student discourse."

"Norman O. Brown says--"

"I hate him!"

"You both love and hate him," Cam insists.

"No, I neither love nor hate him. You can't push me into a binary--what about the freeplay of meaning? As a woman, I can't be contained by the virgin/whore opposition."

"You mean you want to be both?"

"No! Neither!"

"Then you don't want to signify?"

"Yes, but not according to your terms."

"How do you know what my terms are?"

"You're a white middle-class male, aren't you?"

"Actually, my great-grandfather was a farm hand. And I do have a Hispanic sister-in-law...."

"How dare you deny the material influence of class, race and gender on your subject position!"

People jostle us as they squeeze past on their way to the crowded dance floor. Cam places his lips close to my right ear to be heard through the blaring rock music.

"My name is Nott--cipher, the empty signified."

"So, Zero, do you dance?"

"Dance? I like talking to you."

"You just don't want to be seen," I assert angrily, meaning, "seen with me." His features betray nothing. Only his eyes change: pupils huge in the dimness, they soak up my

emotion. Our legs have been digging into each other under the bar, but now I'm sliding off my stool and fumbling for my purse. He touches my elbow. "I like dancing to slow songs," he concedes.

"The d.j. just announced that this was the last fast song, dummy, that's why I was asking you."

We edge our way onto the dance floor, where odours of sweat and spilled beer mix into air thick with cigarette smoke. "You know how you said that in 'Ozymandias,' the decayed and forgotten monuments figure the universal desire for immortality? And that we all want to last forever? Well, we don't! That would be stasis, death. I like life, sorry!"

"Everybody wants stasis." He clutches me tight, still, murmurs, "Stasis, baby!"

"Static cling."

He bends his head down so that the bridges of our noses touch. The first time, bowled over, I don't respond, but the second time he nuzzles me, I turn my face up for a liquid kiss. Looking over Cam's shoulder, I'm gratified by the sight of one of the guys he came with, grinning at us broadly.

"Listen to the lyrics!" I cry when the slow song starts. George Michael croons, I will be your father figure, put your tiny hand in mine/ I will be your preacher, teacher, anything you had in mind. "Father figure! I don't

need another one!'

My professor holds me tight and responds in a purring tone, "Yeah, listen to the lyrics!" George adds, All I wanted was to feel you warm and naked, by my side.

The paternal metaphor seduces: to be held, taken care of, made secure. I play into it, thrilled to be desired. At the end of the song, I clasp my hands around Sam's neck and angle my groin into his. As we leave the dance floor, I turn my head back over my shoulder and, catching his eyes on my ass, say, "Can I get a ride home with you?"

He nods.

I excuse myself to the washroom. While there, desperate for guidance, I consult strange women. "I was just slow-dancing with one of my professors and he kissed me! He's marking one of my essays this weekend! What should I do?"

"Depends whether you want an A on your paper!" the first woman answers in a harsh voice.

"But he's not old, I'm attracted to him."

"Then go for it!"

The second woman I ask, who's gripping the counter and leaning forward into the mirror, stops teasing her moussed, straw-coloured hairdo and turns to me, still bent at the waist as though with stomach cramp. She bats her vacant blue eyes. "I don't know what to say!"

"I mean, you can't think about the wife, can you? That's his responsibility, isn't it?"

She shakes her head, clearly at a loss. I return to the bar where a fresh glass of wine and another beer have appeared. His teammates have gathered, and he kisses me in front of them.

"I don't particularly admire parents; kids are just an extension of your own ego."

"But there are two types of people you can bring into the world, those who would push The Button and those who wouldn't."

"What Button," I say, scornful of this dangerous myth.

"Any button," he says. As we cross the parking lot, he adds, "I like talking to you. Can I do that?" He rubs my back.

"Sure!" I worm my own arm under his leather jacket and encircle his waist--the warmth of his flesh radiates through his cotton shirt. He still doesn't know my name. We arrive at a ramp and pick our way between cross beams and wire mesh to the wharf, then we're alone among sleeping boats and restless waves. We neck, pressing our bodies together. I hoist myself onto the balustrade, yank up my long skirt, and wrap my legs around him. He says, "We can either go to your place or get a hotel room downtown. As for my place...."

"Yeah, I've got a credit card," I say, pulling it out of my wallet. "This is in my name but it goes on my parents' account." As he bends to read it, I add, "Come in

from the heath, Lear, everything I do is to my parents' credit!"

CLANG CLANG CLANG bursts into the air around us, a steady hammering of metal on metal. "We can go to my place," I say.

CLANG CLANG CLANG CLANG.

"What is that?" I shriek.

"I don't know. Let's go."

"Sounds like an alarm," I mutter, crossing my arms as I follow Cam up the ramp.

We travel in Cam's family-sized station wagon, leaving my car--and my purple jacket--downtown for the night. I pick up a pair of woman's sunglasses from the dashboard and ridicule their ugly flowered case. When he says, "They're my Mom's," the irony tires me. There's no chance of a happily-ever-after being bred tonight, and without the propulsion of that old boy-meets-girl narrative, we twirl on the surfaces of sense.

I insist on taking Dallas Road and following the curves of the shoreline home. Across the street from my house, we lean against the car for awhile. "I can't sleep with you, it's not safe!"

He pulls open his jacket like someone selling hot watches on a street corner. "I gave Brian some of these for his birthday tonight--French safes!"

I still hesitate and he says, "Another time, maybe."

"Oh, no, I want you to come in."

"I'd definitely like to see more of you."

"Wait here while I go in and check things out. Then when I flash my light on and off, you come--"

"Right then?"

"And I'll ope' the casement."

I enter, kicking off my shoes. In the kitchen I grab a Tupperware glass and fill it with Hochtaler from the keg in the fridge. Then I go to my room and lock the door. I peel off my grey skirt and my pink nylons as if getting ready for sleep. When I let Cam in the window, he fixes his gaze on my Calvin Klein briefs. He stands by my desk with his hands in his pockets and keeps staring while I sit down on the bed. At last his gaze embarrasses me and I reach for a blanket to cover myself. That's when he pushes me onto my back.

When I close my eyes I forget who I'm with and opening them surprises me. Our clothes come off. "You have lovely skin, you're so--"

"Smooth and sleek," I suggest.

"Smooth and sleek," he agrees. "There's just something about your presence--"

"My absence."

"That's right, there's something about your absence... you are Desire, aren't you, as Woman?"

"Perpetually deferred."

"Tell me what you like," he says, and then he plunges his finger inside me and slides it back and forth in a creamy-dreamy motion.

"Mmm, I like that." Dark chocolate and coffee in the back of my throat.

"So, how do you feel about invagination?"

I suck in my breath as he touches my clitoris. Between kisses, I murmur, "I don't know, I've never done it before. How does Derrida say to go about it?"

"Empirically. Shall we?"

"I don't know, I don't know. I don't--. No."

His penis chafes the lax flesh of my inner thigh, fast, faster....

"An ellipsis in poetry is always an orgasm," he said earlier. "Always."

"That couldn't have been very much fun for you," I say, shifting out of the wet spot on the mattress.

"You kept saying, 'I don't know,' so I decided--"

"You could have come in my mouth."

Cam dresses with brisk movements as though trying to erase the memory of a doctor's cold instruments against his skin. His fingers fly over his shirt buttons--it's four a.m. by my bedside clock. I pull on my blue fuzzy pajamas with the snowflake pattern, the ones my mom gave me for Christmas. When he stands to leave, I leap on to him and wrap my legs around his waist for a good-bye kiss. Opening

the window to let him out, I send my Tupperware cup clattering to the floor. I imagine I hear the uneasy shifting of bodies in my parents' room.

In the morning I buy grapefruit juice at the corner store to drink on the beach. My stomach has shrunk into a fist and refuses food. The inside of my head feels dry and hot, as though it's under a sun lamp. I lean back against a log and shut my eyes. I want to write but it's too soon. The surf sloshes forward, drags back. I have to let the experience wash over me.

At night my parents go out to the opera so I pilfer the sherry and call Cam at his office (he's working late Saturday night). "I'd like to be outside with you," he says. We descend the beach stairs, mount the gutter outlet, and survey the sea as from the prow of a ship. He embraces me from behind. "Where are you going in a relationship like this?"

Does he mean "you" generally or specifically? I shrug for both. "I was involved with a married man before." Liar! Who?

"What was it like?"

I shrug again. "It wasn't right."

As we climb the weathered steps, he hooks one Levi's belt loop with a finger and spins me around for a kiss. "I

think we should do it," I say.

"What? It, the ambiguous referent."

"Sex!" I exclaim peevishly. Arms crossed, chin jerking, I almost stamp my foot. Instead I untold my arms and stroke his crotch. The vine-covered banks on either side of the staircase exude the mustiness of winter sleep. He slips a hand inside my jacket and through the armhole of my tank top to clamp my breast. "Shall we go to my office, then?" He breathes low.

At the top of the staircase, we see someone on the lawn with a flashlight, searching below the sundeck. He cocks his head at us but we're shadowed by a tree. "Is that my dad looking for the cat with a flashlight?"

"I think so," Cam says.

"Let's just keep walking." We head up onto the road. "Are we going to your office?"

"No, I don't think so. Seeing your dad there really did something to the old hormones."

"I know what you mean."

"No, I mean, it made me realize something about you."

"What? You think I'm a kid!" Indignant. "Come on, I can't go in there and face them right now, let me just come along and keep you company for awhile. Please?"

Gritty English Department carpet scuffs my knees. We've struggled awkwardly out of our clothes, my jeans too

tight around the calf, the dilemma posed by his socks disconcerting us both. Gloom chills the office. Books sag against each other and display their spines with reluctance. Cam kneels stiffly a few feet from me. His penis has filled with blood and risen with no apology. I fall forward onto my hands, take its mushroom tip in my mouth. He lets me suck for just seconds before he raises me by the shoulders and we tumble to the floor. He rests his weight on his elbows and looks down on me without kissing me, says, "I like to watch." In tandem, my palms trace a path on his body, rise over the hump of his buttocks, curve around his waist, push up his smooth chest, encircle the trunks of his arms. When I stretch my arms above my head, he draws my wrists together in his hand.

"I don't understand it. I see you lying under me, so beautiful, but...I don't...too many commercials, I guess." He tries to write it off to our lack of birth control, but when he moves his head, the campus lights glimmering through the uncurtained window play over his face and reveal his puzzlement.

"It's easy for you," I cry.

"Oh, is it?"

"You've got a sex life."

"No, I'd love to be inside you right now," he insists.

"And I want you around me, too."

"Yeah," I say from deep in my throat.

But as he pulls away, I cry out, "When?" It's dangerous to release all those hormones and not climax, that's two nights in a row now--that's also two drunk nights in a row. Stumbling out of the building, enveloped in the softness of an early spring night, I begin to talk aloud to my god. "I know you're there. I feel you around me. I've been following my path, listening to my instincts and trusting coincidence. I'm going to listen to my heart rather than some preset societal moral code. This encounter happened for a reason. I sense your Presence in the darkness."

Turning my head I see Cam (who insisted we exit separately). "Is that you?" I call. He has heard me talking to "myself"; he says carefully, "I just wondered if you remembered where we were parked?" I've been walking in the "wrong" direction far away beginning the mystic plunge as I listen to all the voices. But it's not a Sylvia Plath suicide dive, it's discovering patterns in the world, patterns that were already encoded in the language.

When he drops me off, he says, "I think I'll sleep reasonably well tonight."

"A hell of a lot better than last night." After he left my room, I listened incessantly to John Cougar Mellencamp on my headphones and didn't sleep at all. His glance darts to my face at this admission.

"It's given me something to think about, anyways," he says.

"I'll see you on Tuesday. Don't worry, I'll act very normal." I kiss him, but his lips don't yield, his face is boarded up against me.

As I open the front door of the house, my mother flies down the stairs in her nightgown. She approaches me with outstretched hands and searching eyes. "Are you alright?" Her face looks peeled without its layer of make-up. Her high-necked, long-sleeved flannel nightdress is edged at collar and cuffs with lace. The hem touches the floor and her stockinged feet peep out from underneath. "Where have you been? What happened?"

The doormat is my island in a sea of cold pale tile. I shift my feet in suede ankle boots, bury my hands in the pockets of my leather coat. "Nothing, Mom."

"We came home and the back door was wide open! The stereo and all the lights were on. It looked just like someone had broken in the front door and you'd run out the back!"

"I went for a walk on the beach. I left the door open because Alvin had got out and I wanted him to be able to run inside if any raccoons tried to get him."

"You've been out walking all this time? By yourself?"

I look down at my brown shag liferaft.

"Obviously you weren't by yourself," she says, half-accusingly. She draws back a little. "Your dad said I

shouldn't worry." As her jaw begins to relax, the corners of her mouth turn down. "Are you really okay?"

"Yes, Mom, I'm fine. I'm sorry for leaving the door open."

My mother hitches up her gown to keep from tripping on her way back upstairs. I kick off my boots and leave them stranded on the doormat.

*

Sunday Feb.21

Last night in C's office: I wriggle under him and he releases me with curiosity--it's right/love this time I want to let him (k)now I wrap my legs around him, twist my feet and squeeze he gasps (a triumph to make him emit a sound) and says "should we?" I breathe "Yes--" yes I said yes I will Yes. And he refused to penetrate. He said, "I want you around me." He's the perfect feminist man with a decentred subject position. He has transcended phallogentric sexuality. I want to be his non-monogamous partner in revolutionary sexual practice.

When I am born the pairends.

Weekdays

In jazz dance class the teacher, Aristotle, calls, "Jade--be a bird." I test out my still-wet wings, slowly flapping them up and down until they dry and I gain confidence in my ability to fly. I rise on to my toes, feet in fifth, and bourré on the spot with the frenetic energy of a hummingbird. Then I take off in flight, leaping in grand jetés across the room. The whole flock follows my lead and we swoop like starlings trying to choose a tree to land in, swayed by a communal will, which emanates, for the moment, from me, or through me.

In another exercise, we pair up and stand side by side. Slowly one person leans into her partner, contours fitting into contours, so that she bends, too. Eventually, the leaner reaches the point where she would lose her balance and fall down without the support of the other, and so she must let go of her instinct for self-preservation, and trust. She can trust her partner not to hurt her because she knows that she doesn't want to hurt her partner. Conventional physical boundaries corrode as it ceases to matter where one body ends and the other begins. The dancers play off the centrifugal force. Limits vanish.

We retreat to the inner studio for linked-body stretches. The warm wooden walls draw close in the dim light as African drums faintly menace. A dozen or more

dancers, mostly lithe teenagers, grip each other's thighs, cradle backs, grind pelvises into the floor. Aristotle manipulates the hips of a pubescent boy. Someone rises to leave, arm bent across her belly, hand supporting her head. Aristotle talks to her in a low voice, resting his tan fist on her shoulder, but she insists on leaving. Afterwards, he turns to the rest of us and explains, "She was nauseous. It's very natural to have to throw up when you're doing this; I encourage people to just go to the bathroom and then come back. We're stirring up rhythms and feelings that go deep into your gut. We might be unlocking some doors in your body that you have kept sealed off for years, even from yourself."

After class we form a crescent on the floor while Aristotle explains that we've been experimenting with vulnerability. When we break through the shell of defenses, we discover the self which is the source of expression. A girl behind me says she feels like hugging everybody.

"So that's the meaning of life, then!" I exclaim. "We all have something to say!"

A few people glance my way uncertainly but Aristotle confirms my zeal with a smile. "That's what I think it is."

After class I tell him, "What we were doing today relates to what I've been studying at university."

He nods. "It's in the air."

"But everyone says you can't live deconstruction. It

failed in the Sixties--the hippies were into tearing down structures and breaking boundaries and promoting love and connections between people-- but then they all got too into drugs and turned inward."

"You know what happened?" he says. "The revolution is like mercury. Cup it in your hand and it stays put." He demonstrates with such conviction that I can almost see the viscous, pewter blob huddled in his palm. "Open your hand and it spreads out. Shove it and it's malleable, but clings together." I visualize the slinky race of mercury. "Bang it with your fist and it disperses into droplets. The revolution didn't disappear, it just went underground and diversified so it couldn't be stomped out. Even now, if someone tries to pull authority, I just talk to the child in them until the child comes out. We all have that potential."

Deconstruction breaks down academic/personal
the dualisms work/play
that split mind/body
my personality thoughts/feelings
that segregate my qualities abstract/concrete
that divide my energies theory/praxis
that keep me "sane" what I say/what I do

Cam communicates with me while lecturing on Keats' "Endymion." He says, "The way to ideal love is through physical love. The narrator is overwhelmed by the maiden that appears to him, so he thinks it over, and, obviously, decides to pursue it." He punctuates this last sentence of the lecture by propelling himself backwards from the lectern with his chest (hands in pockets) and sliding along the adjacent desk, leaning forward, until he's level with me. Our eyes meet and our faces mirror each other with a smile broad enough to enlighten the whole campus.

On Thursday, when Cam has office hours, I venture to see him around quarter to twelve. He's talking to another of his woman/girl students, so I squat on my heels in the hallway. I hear her laugh and say something about herself-- they're not talking about English, she's flirting with him. I deny myself jealousy: I have a theory about human relationships that would eliminate jealousy, I just want the chance to communicate it. I hear him say, "Is there anyone else waiting to talk to me?" When she says, with a throaty chuckle, "They're just pounding down your door," I can't help rising and muttering, "Forget it!" I dash out of the building, nearly colliding with a frail-looking, white-haired prof as I round a corner.

I want to drive off somewhere to be alone, but I'm carless. I crouch in the lee of a cedar sapling, my eyes

filling with tears, until I remember that the bar in the SUB opens at noon. I toss back two glasses of watered-down white wine, glancing at the just-printed student newspaper. In the personals, I notice a rhyme:

Ooh, baby, what you do to me
Your eyes beckon to me from across the sea.
I enjoyed our walk by the waterfront lot,
Just wait til I give you what I've got!
Love you, Pr.

After my theory class, I climb the stairs once more. When I enter the hallway, Cam is talking to another prof outside his office. An electric current shoots back and forth between us. He points to his office, raising his eyebrows. "Yes," I say, "I'm coming to see you." It's the first time we've spoken since I kissed him goodbye, but this isn't going to be a selfish conversation: there are epic proportions to the personal. "I have something to say. Deconstruction is incompatible with Romanticism and you have to realize that to achieve your own liberation." He invites me in to sit down in his old, overstuffed armchair. "You've been lecturing that the way to ideal love is through physical love, when ideal love is unattainable! If people could give up the attempt to possess the ideal, their relationships could persist and grow instead of collapsing. The Romantic myth that we can achieve self-completion in another person has been incredibly damaging. People need to realize that subject formation necessitates lack: it is as

a baby becomes aware of separation that she learns to say
'I.'

"Yes, that's what I was trying to get at with the quote
from Byron: 'I want a hero.'"

There is a knock on the door--Cam says, "Come in." A
secretary enters and checks an item of business with him. As
the secretary leaves, a student appears at the door to
collect an essay. She neglects to shut the door behind her
and for a moment I long for alone time with Cam, for a
private facet to our relationship. "Lack stimulates desire
which generates language," I continue. "So lack is integral
to language, to the human condition. Awareness of this fact
can free us from enslavement to the myth of Romantic love."

"How is awareness going to free us, if lack is integral
to language?"

"We can find better ways of acting on our sense of
lack."

"Such as?"

"Writing, for one."

"But language always fails--that's what most of
Shelley's poetry is about."

"That depends on how you define failure--language only
fails because it doesn't pin down meaning. That's also a
liberation."

Cam nods. "Until the reading community fixes meaning
with conventions."

"Conventions? Conventions are a bunch of people squeezed into a square room glaring each other, not realizing the walls are made of paper until somebody punches one in frustration and rips through to the universe outside."

Cam swivels his chair to the window, putting a finger to his chin. "Why do I feel like you've just described my house?"

"Because the same thing applies to the nuclear family! We're all constrained by convention. We live our lives by it."

"But you don't," Cam says, swivelling to face me, his eyes gleaming.

Is he mocking me? No, smiling in admiration. "I've had my eyes opened," I say, looking into his.

After an hour, I glide satisfied into the hallway and let the cosmic tug pull me where it will.

Family Names--Excerpts from the Notebook

I am J.L.ed by my identity until etymology unlocks meaning. In the literal translation of my surname, copsebranch, the whole embraces its parts. And though the "cop's branch" is his phallus, when "cops branch" they cut paths through the power structure, with a sincere desire to help.

Pregnant with me, my mother moved to British Columbia and fell in love with a local rare mineral, highly prized for its beautiful colours of light green or lilac. Commonly called jade. Highly prized, I was the first daughter born to my parents.

Who don't read dictionaries.

Jade (n): A broken-down, vicious, or worthless horse.

A disreputable woman. A hussy (used contemptuously or playfully).

(v.t.): to wear out by overwork or abuse.

[<Spanish (pedra de) ijada (stone of) colic; pain in the side (because jade was thought to cure this) <Vulgar Latin iliata, ilia, flanks, groin.]

A broken-down old mare. Overworked, abused. A slut, a cocktease--they say playfully. Or with contempt. They love

me, they despise me; I'm a flirt, I'm a whore. A pain in the side. And in the nether reaches of language, the darkest root, I'm ass, gash.

What of the beautifully coloured jewel?

I'm worthless. I'm a cunt.

Jade, as a name? Diminutive of Judith? Praised, a Jewess (highly prized)...but close to Judas, betrayer of Christ? The vowel "u" is open, you could stab vertically into a "u," you can rape the word "cunt." My highschool French teacher taught us to put the circumflex on *août* over the "u" to keep the rain out. Apparently God is protecting his little Judith by covering over the vulnerable spot. Not "u" but "a." If you put a hat over the "u" in "cunt" it becomes "cant": u can't get into the space.

Danish immigrant Granddad, my father's father, was named Oscar: "divine, spear." The divine (grand)Father holds the spear, the phallus, the power in this patriarchal world. My father's name is Gerald: "spear, rule." To reject patriarchy and capitalism, must I also reject my grandfather and my father? How can I overthrow the heritage that produced me? What if they "held the spear" without using it harmfully? But the very act of holding the "spear" harms others through intimidation. It wrests away privilege and monopolizes it. And power corrupts. How many

patriarchs, encouraged by the system to view the women and girls in their family as possessions, don't assert their "property rights"? Paterfamilias: I want to shatter your stone image and raze all the abuse your structure leads to.

My mother's name could be said to complement my father's--Gerald/ine--yet seen another way, it both contains and exceeds his: (Gerald)ine.

the female space can't be appropriated punctuation seems to fix the space but in the wilds outside the symbolic the Medusa laughs

Barefoot Wanderings

On Friday my best friend Yseult and I take a long walk through the Uplands, an exclusive neighbourhood snuggled against the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the rest of its perimeter marked by stone gateposts capped with spherical white lamps. We pass "Raven's Nest," home of an Evangelist preacher named Roland Stump. The name is engraved in gold-painted letters on a large wooden sign outside the gate. Intercoms are built into the granite wall on either side of the sign. Someone has stuck up a small placard saying, "Beware of the Dog." "Ha! Someone's done that to make fun of him, you know! Because he is a tax-evading, drug-dealing dog! And because his notion of God is twisted and inverted." Fearless, I spit out my words at the intercom.

Then I wonder: perhaps Roland Stump placed the sign there himself as the final insult to a gullible public? Stump strolled onto our waterfront property a few months ago, just after we'd moved in. My mother and sister were picnicking on the balcony. Rinsing grapes at the kitchen sink, I saw him sizing up the house through the window and wanted to scream, "Why don't you shave your head so we can see the 666?" His balding crown would soon reveal it.

We have passed the mansion. "Punctuation attempts to control and nullify the female space. Especially apostrophes. They indicate that the female space is the

property of the male. So the apostrophe in Raven's Nest is the possessive apostrophe of capitalism, materialism, male dominance."

"Doesn't it refer to the nest? The nest belonging to the raven? Are you saying the nest is a female space?"

"That's a good insight!" I exclaim. "But I was talking about the whole network of discourses reproduced by that sign."

"But basically it all comes down an apostrophe?"

"That's the most insidious form of punctuation in terms of appropriation of space, yes."

"Well, I hate to tell you this," Ysult says, crossing her arms in front of her red sweater and watching the toes of her shoes march up the hill. "But there was no apostrophe on that sign."

"What? Are you sure?"

"I'm positive. I always notice things like that ever since I worked for a sign-painter that summer."

"Then I was right! He did put that 'Beware of the Dog' sign there himself. He's making fun of language theory. He thinks he's appropriated it. Maybe he has appropriated it!"

"How do you mean?"

"I'm not sure I can put in into words yet, Ysult. I think I've got to try writing."

We've reached my house, where her Toyota Corolla is parked. Ysult starts it up and we say goodbye through a

cloud of carbon monoxide.

After she putters away, I crack open the royal blue cover of my thick spiral notebook.

Roland Stump has mastered the discourses of Christianity and capitalism--and he uses his mastery to exploit and oppress others. He knows this authority is arbitrary, because he's a fake, a shyster, a crook. And yet he succeeds in manipulating people, because they believe in the authority he lays claim to.

I can liberate people from the notion that authority exists in language. There is no basis for authority, for fixed meaning, because language resists ravens nest Stump has tried to appropriate that resistance

but the repressed return the semiotic revolts
and cannot be spoken for from without
only from within

The last of the daylight gleams orange on the calm ocean water when I look up from my desk. Across the bay at the Yacht Club, wharf lights have sprung on, soft, like fireflies. I shudder with the sudden chill, shrug into a wool cardigan and pull a cord. My blind clatters down to shut out the night.

On Saturday morning, I caper on a log in the brilliant February sunshine, blood singing through my veins. The sun is dancing on the surface of Cadboro Bay, and people in wetsuits are already plunging into the water with their windsurfers. I smile at them and continue on my way to the University.

In the library I closet myself in a carrel to write in my Notebook.

The stock market crashed on my twenty-first birthday, signalling the approaching death of capitalism and the advent of the Marxist/socialist utopia! They named it Black Monday. Am I the Messiah?

The smell of ageing books plugs my nostrils. The drone of fluorescent lights engulfs me. I burst out of the carrel and rush down the stairs, out of the library. The courtyard is empty, too, but the open space reassures me. Fresh air and sunshine revive me. No, not Messiah. At most author function in an important social change.

I stretch out on a bench, face-down, and prop myself up to write:

Nothing is obligatory: I am neither a virgin NOR a whore: "I slept with a guy for fourteen months without sleeping with him"--> I rejected the obligatory slide to em-body the word. We were perpetuating stereotypes, we hadn't reached the point of liberation. I was confused about my sexuality because I couldn't accept society's terms--I didn't want to be "deflowered, penetrated, entered, violated"--I wanted integration, interpenetration, an en/unfolding, invagination. I needed to create my own word before "sleeping" with anybody: infisexual.

I rise and rub my elbows where the ribbed stitch of my cotton sweater has dug grooves into my skin. I adjust the legs of my pale blue Levi's, which are pinching my thighs, and wander in the direction of the cafeteria, contemplating peppermint herb tea. I encounter Yseult on a bench outside.

Her head is bent over the Norton Anthology of English and her high ponytail flops over one ear.

"Yseult! I'm working on something that could save the world from nuclear war." I show her the last page I've scrawled: "WE ARE ALL ACTORS & ENTERTAINERS, COMEDIANS, DANCERS, SINGERS, SCREAMERS, LOVING, INFI-SEXUAL BEINGS!"

"What's 'infi-sexual'?"

"It's my vision for the future of sexuality. All human encounters are sexually-inflected, but sexuality can be expressed in an infinite number of ways. You redefine yourself at every encounter. Human sexuality can't be fixed, can't be chained to the service of some ideal like marital monogamy."

Yseult tucks her book into her nylon shoulder bag. "Are you coming to aerobics?"

"Why do you ask?" I say, miffed that she hasn't acknowledged my brilliance.

"It just seems like exercise would do you good. You know, remind you that you've got a body supporting that head."

"But my body is structured by discourse! That's exactly what I'm trying to do--reinvent the body."

"Have you been remembering to eat?" Yseult asks, getting up from the bench and brushing off the seat of her red track pants.

"We live in a capitalist system, we've been taught to

overconsume."

"Look, I just wonder if this affair with Cam is the right thing for you to be doing."

"Marriage is an institution but you can't say that we've transgressed the arbitrary laws because he hasn't put his penis inside me, therefore he hasn't been unfaithful to his wife. We're also inside the institution of the University and transgressing the behavioural codes for professors and students, and yet not, for the same reason."

Ysult is walking quickly across the campus in the direction of the gym. I'm keeping pace at her side. "I don't give a shit about the moral point of view, Jade. I'm just worried that you're getting in over your head."

We've reached the gym. "I have to get changed, I'll meet you in the studio," I say. Getting in over my head? Going over her head, more likely. I change into lycra tights and bound up the stairs to the gym, bursting with energy.

When class begins, I perform each exercise full-out, beaming. The instructor, Jim, makes a joke of movement, saying, "You can do this if you want to," as he shimmies ridiculously to spice up an otherwise straightforward step. He takes time out at one point to say, "I see a lot of you here today looking around like this," and he sneers and rolls his eyes. "If you're new, it's going to take you awhile to learn the steps, so don't worry about it, this

isn't a competition." I tremble with joy: I'm his cohort, trying to loosen up the rest of the class. He highlights certain lines from the lyrics, and when he says, "It's in the air," he raises his eyebrows and looks at me.

"Do you want a ride home?" Yseult asks after class.

"No, I want to talk to Jim for a minute."

"See you later, then," she says. She looks back over her shoulder after she's taken a few steps towards the door. When she meets my eyes, she flutters her fingers in a wave.

"I really think you're on to something here, the way you make everything a joke," I shout at him after class. "I think a lot of people are inhibited about their bodies but you're in a position to get them past that. I liked how you said we weren't in competition. You move well--"

"Thank you!"

--and I move well, but it's not some big ego thing, I know the person standing beside me has the potential to move just as well as I do. I also like the lyrics of the songs that you choose, like 'We just want to be ourselves' because that's true, if we can just come out of ourselves, that's all we need."

Arms crossed, he nods his sweatbanded head thoughtfully. "Yes, I try to think about the lyrics. Thanks for your input."

His appreciation staunches the flow of my words. I depart with a sense of mission accomplished (for the

moment)--then I recall having heard that the best way to manipulate people is to tell them what they're already doing, not what they should do. As I wander out of the gym my confidence leaves me. It's 5 o'clock on a Saturday but I stumble to the English department anyway, looking for Cam. For Him. His door is locked. He has tacked up the poem "We Real Cool" by Gwendolyn Brooks. I read it and nearly weep, thinking about the black gangs Prince sings about, "high on crack, and toting a machine gun." In the foyer I lie down on a rusty-brown vinyl bench, murmuring, "Please come, I need to talk to you," over and over. Finally, I get up and scrawl, "SAY NO TO DRUGS" across the poem on Cam's bulletin board, and change the last line from "We/Die soon" to "We DON'T HAVE TO/Die soon," adding CRACK-DEATH underneath.

My family eats dinner with the blinds up while a couple strolls on the vacant lot next door. They stand on the corner of it and stare in at us. The woman's dark eyes glow with a warm, perhaps adulatory, look. "Stump's people! They've come to get me!" I run into my room--she's still watching me--I yank down my blind. Where have I seen those eyes before? "Come join our group," she's saying. I say, "NO! No! I can't have a nervous breakdown, I can't lose this, this is too good to lose."

I convene my family in the living room, blinds drawn. The stones in the walls piggy-back each other to the

rafters. The fireplace at my back, I face the stereo, half-certain it's bugged. My mother and younger sister take seats on the tan leather sofa; my father makes himself comfortable in his dark brown armchair, arms and ankles crossed, slippered feet resting on a stool. He's wearing ancient blue rugby pants; his cotton shirt, white with narrow red and blue stripes, is short-sleeved so I can see the black and grey hairs on his arms and the ribbed steel of his watchband. The fingers of his left hand press into his right bicep deliberately, like fingers holding down keys on a trumpet. His right wrist crooks into his left armpit like the neck of a sleeping duck. He closes his eyes and works his throat to make his habitual gulping sound, like the rapid croaking of a frog. I stand in front of him on the cold tile floor.

"I've heard from reliable sources that Roland Stump deals coke, and maybe even crack, at the same time as he runs a Christian group for young people, trying to suck up their positive, collective force for his own evil ends. It's all revealed on his sign: Ravens Nest. You see, this phrase can be interpreted as "the nest belonging to the raven," or "ravens nest," as an action. Understand?"

"Yes, that's pretty straightforward."

"In the English language, the possessive impulse is counterbalanced by collective action. The threat of monopoly ownership is thus held in check. Roland Stump

knows this. You see, there's no apostrophe on his sign. You see--"

"Quit saying 'you see,' it's bugging me!" my sister exclaims.

"I think you should go to your room, Sequoia." My father's voice booms out of the armchair.

"No, I wanted to talk to the whole family!"

"No, she's tired, she doesn't want to listen to this. Go to your room, Sequoia."

My sister creeps out of the room without protest and latches the door behind her. My father settles back into his chair, wriggling the pretzel of his arms against his chest.

"Roland Stump wants to control people. If he can't do it through his scam religion, he'll do it through drugs. The only people who are exempt from his control are the people who can understand the way he's exploiting language.

"Nietzsche had a great creative intelligence, but Hitler appropriated Nietzsche's philosophy, twisted it, and made it evil. I have a mind like Nietzsche and Roland Stump has a mind like Hitler. Roland Stump knows about me. We have to move out of this house."

Terror grips me, then spreads to my mother. Her face pales and her mouth falls open as she blinks nervously, flicking her head rapidly back and forth between my father and me, as if there's some secret she's not privy to. A

rumble erupts from my father as he clears his throat.

"Jade, you're scaring your mother. I think you need to get to some rest."

"You're right. I'm going too fast for you. But sometimes I need to talk about it."

I retire to my room to write in my Notebook:

The Scandinavian countries are wealthy and regeneration will have to come from wealth--West Egg, not West End (Gatsby): share the wealth. The Scandinavian languages contain the symbol "ø" which is Lacan's symbol for woman: not zero, but a not-zero.

Nott:

naught	knot
cipher	nexus
blank	binding
space	cords
void	web
abyss	net-work
chasm	ties
empty set	fabric
absence	relation
nothing	something

(K)not. Zero is only ever an arbitrary designation: (w)hole. Eco's twentieth century God "can be drawn only through negative theology...he is named at most as vortex, abyss, desert, solitude, silence, absence."

CHRIST and ANTI-CHRIST is the ultimate in oppressive binary oppositions. I am neither one thing nor another. No one is either one thing or another. WE DONT NEED BINARY OPPOSITIONS TO THINK!

The night draws on. We've been taught that life is painful and must be so and that we need to escape from our consciousness for eight hours every night with the lights

off--but when are crimes perpetrated? We need to stay awake, and keep an eye on each other.

My father, still dressed, pries open my door hesitantly but without knocking. He clutches the handle, looking from my desk to the floor and back again. "Shouldn't you be getting to bed?" His eyebrows slope towards each other, deepening the wrinkles across his forehead.

"No, I want to write."

"But you need to get some sleep."

"Didn't you just say a few days ago, nobody ever died from lack of sleep?" He can't deny that he did; we laughed at the dinner table about people who go into Emergency at 3 a.m. for sleeping pills.

"Hey!" He lets go of the door knob and approaches my desk to pick up the miniature vodka bottle at my elbow.

"Did you drink this whole thing?"

The wooden legs of my desk chair scrape loudly against the tile floor as I pull back from him. "Dad, the bottle only holds about a shot and a half. I needed it to relax."

"What else did you have?"

"Nothing. You're right to be distrustful, drugs are bad, but in a few days I won't need it any more. I just need to keep writing."

He tsks. For a few seconds he hovers in front of me, motionless. Mouth open, he exhales a puff of breath, stale like the air from inside a bicycle pump. I jerk my chair

even further back, hitting the bookshelf behind me. My bare arms bristle with goosebumps. He bends to realign my wastebasket with the edge of my desk, then straightens up and shuffles towards the door. In the middle of the room he turns to face me again. "What are you writing, anyway? More about Nietzsche? Are you studying him at university?"

"Not exactly, but we did read one of his essays in literary theory. That's what I'm working on--theory."

My father folds his arms, the empty bottle in one fist. His right knee jiggles as if to a jazz beat only he can hear. "Why don't you at least lie down and see if you can fall asleep? It's late."

"Okay, I'll try." He doesn't move. "I promise!" He shuffles out of my room. He starts to shut the door but halts when it's the width of his face from the jamb. In this way, he frames his final stare. After he leaves, bottles clink and thud in the kitchen as they're lifted out of the cupboard and then replaced, one by one.

I turn off my overhead light and move to the bed, switching on my bedside lamp. I prop my pillow under my stomach and continue to write. Every so often I collapse over my Notebook for fifteen minute catnaps with the light on.

The next day my mother says, "Jade, you're scaring me. You can't tell people things. They don't want to listen to you. You can't change the world."

"Who told you that?"

"Don't keep firing questions at me."

"I do have something unique to say. I can teach, not by telling people things they don't know, but by helping them to uncover things they know instinctively. Instincts are in the body; the body knows."

"That's obvious, Jade, you're not saying anything new!" Her eyes spill over with strain and denial.

"What are you scared of?"

"You've turned into this gaunt, hollow-eyed creature! I don't recognize you! I just want you to be the old Jade."

"Well, I can't go back."

Back, back, the muscles of my neck and upper back ache with tension. I ask my sister for a massage. She snaps, "No, I'm studying." Her bony elbows rest on the kitchen counter and, propping her pinched, sallow face between her fists, she bends close to the textbook in front of her. I plead with her, but she still refuses. "Why do you have to be so selfish, Sequoia? Why don't you come out of yourself?"

"Why are you always trying to tell me what to do?"

"You're right, I'm sorry, you'll come out of yourself when you're ready." I massage my own knots. I pour myself a glass of wine, then another.

"Hey! What are you doing? How much of that are you having?" My dad starts up from the couch in the TV room

where he's watching the winter Olympics.

"I need to relax."

"That's not going to help you!"

"You don't know how sore my back is, Dad."

"What did you do to it?" He scowls. "It's that aerobics you go to. You know there are physiotherapists now that specialize entirely in aerobics-related injuries?"

"I won't have any more." When I leave the kitchen I hear my mother's strained whine counterpointed by my father's bass interjections. Their voices chase each other in a fugue, a theme and variations with always another reprise. The composition gradually crescendoes until it culminates in a heavy chord. Accord. The word "doctor."

Sunday evening, Feb.28

In my feminist theory class, a woman said she distrusted words like "manuscript" and "manual," their gender bias. But manus is a feminine noun and means "hand." And a hand contains many fingers; it is not phallogentric.
"It's out of hand"--wild, uncontrollable.

I want to take my feminist theory class on a walking tour of the campus. Poke holes in the patriarchy. We don't have to be afraid of the phallus or its symbolic representations. Like the Clearihue clock tower: phallic symbol that undermines its own authority. The time is always wrong!

There's a man in the class named Arnaud. Arno, like the Father's No(m), denies faith, spontaneity. The teleological demon deadens his black eyes. He's a nihilist.

But the abyss is the female space, the location of jouissance/God/the unconscious I dance my freedom

It's Monday, Leap Day, and Latin is my only class. I wanted to point out to the class that you can see the Olympic Mountains from the window of the Classics Department Library: Olympus, home of the Greek deities. The symbol for the Olympic Games: five intersecting circles. Olympus is a place we can inhabit by joining hands. HEAVEN IS A PLACE ON EARTH!

I decide, however, that I need to spend the day with my mother, to reassure her. We walk along the damp sand at the beach, lowtide. The grey sky mirrors the sea and hints at rain. She pressures me into saying that I will see a doctor for her sake. When we mount the beach stairs at the end of our walk, an unfamiliar but nondescript beige car is driving up the hill out of our cul-de-sac. I know it contains spies who have "checked out" the house in our absence, so I wave.

"Did you know them?"

"No, I didn't have to."

We drive down to my father's drug store. Black sedans slip with impeccable timing on to the road as we pass, follow us for a few blocks, and turn off again. When intermittent rain begins, I say, "Put your windshield wipers on!" The wipers of the car in front of us are signalling, and I want to signal back.

At the drug store, I join my father in the dispensary. He's wearing a white smock over a white turtleneck. "I just

need to get a hold of myself," I tell him. A hold on the helium balloon, my head, that threatens to float up to the ceiling. "Let me count some pills."

My dad sets up a tray for me and I begin to push the pink tablets over the edge two by two, but I bubble over with giggles and sway on my feet. Even my father chuckles a little. "Jade, you need to lie down."

I'm not tired, but I want to oblige. I stretch out in the staff-room on the faded, chocolate-brown couch, a sagging, prickly cast-off from our family room. It reminds me of when I was a little girl eating Cheezies and watching Sesame Street. After a few minutes I say, "Can I get up now? Let's go for a walk."

My mother and I stroll around the Inner Harbour. I'm wearing my purple coat, so I am not even disguised. It's brave of me. Spies from all over the world have congregated here to witness this event. We pass a craft store called "Out of Hand," whose logo depicts a full moon escaping from between a pair of hands. "See, Mom? It's out of your hands."

We wait at an intersection. The pedestrian sign says "DON'T WALK," but no cars are coming. "We don't have to wait for it," I cry, and sprint across. When I reach the curb, I turn and urge my mother on.

"Now we're on Store Street--but we don't have to buy anything!"

We enter a mall and sit down on a bench to rest. "The Danish Boutique" sign reminds me of a girl of Danish descent I knew at junior high. I tell my mother that the girl, Shelley, had a reputation for being a slut, whereas I say no. Her face tightens with alarm. "That's good, I'm glad you say no," she says vehemently.

"Once Shelley and I were at a party and we both liked the same guy, but he stuck with me, despite her reputation. Maybe from that experience Shelley has learned to let her inner beauty shine through instead of relying so much on her outer 'shell.' She was pretty, with blond hair and blue eyes, but any so-called 'slut' is really abusing her body to win approval from men. She's really complicit in her own oppression."

An employee standing in the entrance of a camera store across from us says to a co-worker, "This is good, you should listen to this." He rests his hands in the pockets of his black trousers and smiles at me from under his moustache.

My mother frowns. "Jade, that man's looking at us!" She indicates the man who's standing among a sea of cameras, all aimed at us.

"Let's move on, then." I don't believe, anyhow, in spending too much time in one spot. But as we leave the mall, the same man, dashing out on an errand, beats us to the door and holds it open for us. "That's a beautiful

coat, and you look good in it," he says, his eyes frank with approval. I nod and say, "Thank you." My mother snorts.

On the drive back home I say, "See? All these cars are driving around with their lights on these days. The Spirit is in the machine. We can use the machine if we want to, but we don't have to. But we don't have to be afraid of it." And thus we don't have to be afraid of The Button because what they don't want you to find out is that The Button is the Cosmic Clitoris and if we all Fell at once, we can all Come at once--redemption, the Multiple Coming. God said after the Great Flood that he would never kill his creatures again. Nuclear annihilation is not going to happen. Peace is unfolding even as we speak.

dad comes home from work early he has his courses to attend jade were going to the doctor do you want to shut me up dad no i dont want to shut you up lets go to the university then (latin: universi=all together) you have your course in the history of jazz and after that your continuing education seminar in contemporary pharmacy dad you dont like drugs

dad what will they do to me if you take me to the doctor theyll shut me up dad didnt you just say you didnt want to shut me up you cant argue with me dad i dont want you to argue with me

(grab the door) you cant own me dad (yells) jade
(im out the door) JADE! [you can name me but that doesnt
hurt me i already know my own name] im not by dad i dont
want to buy dad i dont say bye dad i run out of the house
in my socks, carrying shoes stained with blister blood i
throw them on to the junk pile in my neighbour's yard peel
off my socks and toss them after i dont need shoes & will
resist capitalism be the barefoot queen

its my Coat of One Colour which is important regal
purple Christ's passion suffering and sexual pleasure i
need to be inviolate Joseph's brothers persecuted him for
the Coat of Many Colours the mark of distinction chosen
one of his father

I run up to the University clutching my coat comforted
by cars with their lights on: a Sunday School table says
patches of light around the world are slowly pooling and one
day soon everyone will glow. I can run on the pavement but
the earth is much more comfortable. We could eliminate
roads at the same time as shoes. I splash ankle-deep in the
puddles.

Entering the grounds of the University, I meet Arnaud,
who says, "How you doin', Jade? You've got your shoes off."
"I know." "What are you doing?" "Walking around. Want to
come?"

"Where to?" Fixated on an end. "I'll buy you a beer,"
he says.

"I only drink water now," I say. You can't buy me. I make for the square pillar, a Native Indian sculpture, that stands just outside the library, planning to dance around it until other people come and join me. Then we can dance around it holding hands. A pillar is a shape that naturally arises from the earth, and shouldn't frighten us. Like the Uplands gates. They're posts with circular lights on top, they're upside down exclamation marks that shout with joy over the space between them--for there is no gate, anyone can enter and enjoy the green beauty.

"If you keep going around in circles you'll go crazy," says a voice in my head, so I walk across the damp grass to the other piece of Native art on campus, the totem poles close to the Music Building. At the top of one, a bird grows out of the wood, beak open, neck arched back. I encircle the poles, then start back for the clock tower. Dusk is gathering and I can just make out the hands of the clock: ten minutes to two. With a grin, I include it in my loop. Since alcohol is a mind-deadening drug, I studiously avoid the SUB and its bar. The bookstore, a capitalist institution, must also be excluded. The library looks impregnable--trying to store up the world's knowledge instead of distributing it--so I leave it alone, too. I do, however, embrace in my curve the Clearihue building where the languages are taught.

Then I realize that it's not up to me to create a ring:

the University is already built around the Ring Road, the city planners have already said it. Rings have frightening power when they keep people out, but the Ring Road is not hermetic: it's intersected at many points by other streets. And at the centre, the University. All together.

I no longer walk, I gravitate. From its displaced position on the edge of the Ring, the Centre draws me in.

Lacan says that everyone must line up in front of one bathroom door or the other; no human being can become a subject outside the division into two sexes. But a third door exists between the two in the University Centre: the door to the janitor's supply room. It stands open, light streaming out, while the custodian, arms folded, guards the room from his chair across the hall (Latin: *custos* guard). Keys dangle from the ring on his belt. I approach him. "This is going to sound crazy, but I've been walking around outside with my shoes off, and there're no paper towels in the women's washroom to dry my feet with." He starts forward and fetches me some paper towels without a word. Now the next step becomes clear: having given the password, enter! I open one of the series of heavy wooden doors on the other side of the foyer and step into the auditorium.

Tinkling music, all bells and harp, floats across the dark theatre from the small circle of musicians on the stage. Sliding into a seat on the aisle, I crane my neck--a solitary black-haired man with silver glasses hunches in the

seat behind me. "Is this a rehearsal?" I whisper. "No, it's my piece," he says. "But they all wrote a piece of it, right?" He looks puzzled and says, "No, it's my piece." "Then what's the difference?" I ask. "What do you mean?" "Between playing and writing?" He cocks an eyebrow, eyes dancing, puts his finger to his lips and says "Shh." Ah! He's just posing as devil's advocate. The conductor starts forward with a jerk. At this signal, I rise, speed through the theatre and walk up on to the stage. I pick up a cellist's music and she says, "Hey, that's my music!" "But you can play without it--play! Look at that, it says 'Fandance.' That's only one arbitrary signifier away from Candance--we can all dance, and anyone who says can't is full of cant! We can't keep this in, the bird has flown!" The conductor comes over with his magic wand and puts his hand on my shoulder. "I think it has too, but we're not ready for you yet. Would you please go with this man." I am being taken into the bosom of the community, I am the one in the Purple Coat, the one they've been waiting for. A heavy-set trumpeter (giver of the Judgement Day clarion call, dies irae) ushers me off to the wings. We step backstage into the twisting, well-ordered corridors of the university's heart. Warm-Up Room "This is where we should go because I'm cold. But wait: if you go alone into a room with a man he can rape you--can we leave the door open? I'm scared of the closed door." My escort props the door open.

Outside the window, cars are circling the Ring, their lights radiating into the mist; all the spies from downtown have come over to my side, their spirits are shining through. I take my coat off and lay it across the piano bench. A gentle glow suffuses the room--I recline on the floor and let it envelop me. My escort sits down on the window sill. Slowly, I yield to the pulsions traversing me. My legs slightly spread, my arms above my head, my hips thrusting as I talk, I am being cleansed of my shame, purified from the inside. The Light rolls over me, ripples through me. "I'm afraid of the gun." The bullet will come after they've coaxed my jouissance out of me: this is the female power they can't afford to have publicized.

"What gun?"

"The gun in your pocket."

"What, this?" he says in surprise, and pulls out his sheet music so I can see the dancing black notes.

"I see, that's a fluid river to delight me, not a bullet to kill me. I should let the work flow over me, no appropriation by text or reader." My spirit has expanded to fill my skin; I inhabit my body thoroughly, comfortably. I stand up and do a walkover to show how flexible my identity is. My shirt slips down to half-expose my breasts. Arched in a bridge I say, "See, I can come up either way." I right myself. "I can come up like this." I bend backwards again, this time kicking my legs over my head in a back-walkover,

"Or like this." I lie down on my back again and raise my legs perpendicularly, ankles together. "My sister used to have feet like moccasins during the summer. She could stand on a big rock and jump down on to the little ones and it wouldn't hurt her." Then I see it: "That's the point, isn't it, just to be one of the little rocks." My escort approaches and kneads my bare feet gently. "My feet aren't very hard yet," I apologize. His touch lingers, approaches the sexual, then withdraws.

It's time to go to the bathroom again. He takes me to another set of three doors. "I know I could go in the middle, but I'm not ready to pee on the floor yet." To my relief, he agrees, "No, that would be bad."

The conductor and the musicians have disappeared from the concert hall and my escort sets about clearing off the stage. I crouch on the stairs at the back. "Are you Gabriel?" I ask.

"My name is Terry," he says, stacking chairs.

"Are you sure you're not Gabriel? You know, the guardian angel from the Bible? Are you married to Gabrielle?"

"Is she in the Bible too?"

"Do you know her?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I haven't met her yet."

Will I have to sleep with Terry, then? He sits down on a step below me and I study his pug nose and lumpy face. I crumple inside, I'm too little, I don't want to. The trunk of my body hollows out. Tears spring to my eyes.

A jury of angels hovers in the seats of the auditorium. They send a golden cloud pressing into me--it engulfs me, smothers me. I grip my head and choke for air. "I don't want to sleep with Una either!" I scream. Blue-eyed blond Una, almost a mirror-image. It would close the gap...I want to cherish the difference. Autonomy. Separateness. The pulsing yellow pressure on my temples lets up. Relief pours over me like clear water: no one is going to make me have sex.

Terry has finished tidying the stage and says he has to teach a trumpet lesson. I am reluctant to let him go, but he insists. The angels disperse as Terry turns off the lights, and we leave the dark theatre. Outside, the night is thick, but the campus is peopled with lampposts whispering rumours into the dark. Terry and I walk together until we reach another building. I say, "I guess I'll go in here." "Are you sure you'll be all right?" he asks, and, summoning strength, I say "Yes." The door yields with a friendly click when I tug.

I hear Cam around the corner. "I'll just come in here with you for a second," he is saying to his escort. I lay down on a bench in the hallway, shut my eyes, and talk to

the immortals telepathically. "You mean you have a partner, but you only get together with that partner sometimes? And when you do, you don't have to have sex, but only sometimes? Just spending time with your partner is a refreshing rest?" Several small, floating faces nod enthusiastically. I'm giggling to myself when an immortal approaches down the hallway. Her bobbed hair bounces around her shoulders and she hugs an armload of books to her chest. "Excuse me, but are you all right?" she says in a voice full of mock concern.

"If someone's laughing by themselves, there's supposed to be something wrong with them!" I exclaim.

Her face blurs with nodding. "Everyone knows it's more fun to share the joke."

Share the joke! My summons has come.

Consummation

I burst out of the building and beeline for Clearihue through the low fog that veils the campus. I climb the corner staircase with its glass-panelled landings, to the third floor, and turn the corner. A woman professor steps out of her office, blue eyes glowing and a soft, knowing smile ready on her lips. I march straight down the hall and into Cam's office where I leap into his lap, my legs straddling him, beaming into his face. His freckles stand out, marks of Pan, animal skin-spots, natural and good, like bare feet.

"Do you want to go for a walk?" he says.

"We could stay here."

"Not with my colleague Dana Edsell around."

I slump with fatigue. I thought it was my turn for the refreshing partner-rest the immortals spoke of, but if he still thinks we've got something to hide from Dana Edsell, then he needs to achieve further revelations. "OK," I sigh, "we'll go for a walk."

In the hallway, he notices my bare feet padding along the linoleum. "Where are your shoes?" "I know where they are." As we proceed into the Centre, he eyes me suspiciously. "You're looking very--" but he can't find the word. "Let's find your shoes, Jade." I approach the empty newspaper box and look in: "Are they in the Martlet box?"

Nope! They're not in there!" why do you want to clip my wings?

We climb the steps to the mezzanine floor of the Centre. "Do you want to consummate our love or just drink consommé? And how do you spell it?" the "u" can be stabbed or raped; the "o" is protected

"What are you on anyways?" he asks, resting on a cushion and leaning his back against the wall as I straddle his lap again.

"I'm on you! I'm on water! Do you want to see where I got it? Are you thirsty?"

"Not for water," he says glibly.

I back away in terror. "You want to drink my water?" "To consume me? consummate me comes the voice. consume ate me "I thought my work was done." But I take a breath, struggling to overcome my fear. "Let me show you where I get my water."

"I've already seen it," he says, but he follows me down to the foyer. A Russian spy in a trenchcoat and bowler hat stands holding a briefcase and looking out the window, trying to appear inconspicuous. I know everything I say is being taped and understood. "Deja? Ou deva? Et pourquoi? Por que?" I try my best to speak a mumbo-jumbo of languages, to recreate Babel. The Russian spy stifles a smile. Meanwhile Cam says, "One hundred and forty-seven. That's an existentialist principle. Any question can be

answered with a number."

I drink from the fountain. He's beginning to catch on. "You don't know the answer to every question."

"I know you'll be going to the bathroom in an hour," he replies. "Well, I'm going back to Clearihue," Cam says after awhile. I grin with relief, reading this as, "Clear: I/you." He has recognized his place at my side in the revolution which is unfolding tonight. He escapes in the nick of time.

In come the Boys in Blue, first security guards, then police officers. The interrogation begins. I freely dispense name, student number, and address, adding, "Yeah, you should check it out." My head half-cocked, I nod slowly and let a sly smile spread across my face, picturing the collage of relics I have left strewn on the kitchen counter: Contemporary American Poetry open to Allen Ginsberg's "Moloch"; my opal ring; a sheet of paper listing the etymologies of my family's names....

"Would you like me to dance?" I ask, drag-stepping, arms in a broad "V." "I can do jazz, ballet, or tap." I dance among the coffee tables and ashtrays. "You can learn anything you want," I tell the security guard. "You can become anything you want."

"So life is a dream, is that what you're telling me?"

"Yes!"

"Do you want me to call your parents?" He wishes to

include them in the excitement.

"Yes, I want them to come!" I exclaim. Grey-haired and bespectacled, he scurries off as fast as his short stout body will carry him to spread the good news.

"Sit down, Jade," a sprightly, bearded police officer says. His partner ogles me out of the corners of misogynist eyes. I say, "Would you like me to sit down?" you can't order me around because I want to oblige you

"Yes."

"Okay," I say, and plop myself down. He asks me what courses I'm taking and writes them down, or pretends to. I give him the name, number, and even the section number. I spell everything clearly, slowly, relishing the precision of detail. I say, "Would you like to know the etymology of my surname? It means cops branch in Danish." His eyes sparkle because he knows I know his game, knows I'm a "cop" too, and he responds to my mandate: "cops branch." "What was that again, Spanish for--" and he glances at me playfully, pencil poised above the notebook. "Danish for cops branch," I repeat.

"Jade, your parents are here," the security guard comes puffing to announce.

"It's okay, Jade, go with your parents," the officer says.

"No, I want them to stay."

"Go with your parents," he insists.

I give in, concluding that they must need me, and that now the police force will carry on my work. Mom's face jars me with its familiarity. Her off-white jacket stands out like a blotch of cream. Dad, a dark pillar in his long raincoat, melts into the walls of the institution. I crawl into the brown plush of the Chrysler and shut the door.

at home Mom puts a plate of spaghetti in front of me I stare at the foreign matter from faraway pick at it then beat a retreat to my room thinking to outfox them I lock my door (this door which locks from the inside) & fly out through my bedroom window (this window without bars) they're on to me "I don't want to chase you Jade" "I don't want you to chase me dad" it's out of hand out of their hands diverse fingers are dispersing it but I pick up my shoes fighting entropy keeping warm

since I have already spread the news I wander for awhile with less urgency then decide that the time has come to enter that Citadel of Sin the SUB immediately the cops surround me again I can't trust all of them not all pigs can be changed not all by me the leering mustachioed woman-hater is here but his sprightly partner is gone oh no! I drink some more water "Can I talk to you in private?" the cop says to me

the closed door terrifies me I will be raped & shot my instinct says to keep people around me I enter a room where a group of students are sitting around a table the

SUB Upper Lounge "Is it anything you can't say in front of my friends?" suddenly he's speechless back out in the foyer I shout "You want to FUCK me don't you?" & he smirks how could any woman touch that bastard

Bravely I descend the stairs into the bar--Felicita's, place of happiness & good fortune according to the Latinate root--but I am on trial for my sexuality. I am fighting through the dance in a sexual battle. They send the pig down. He takes a ringside seat, leaning on the bar, speaking into his walkie-talkie. Marilyn Monroe's essence begins to seep into me & I start to understand her torturous experience the sex idol that all the men wanted forced to flaunt her body in front of them for I jazz dance by myself convention forbids females to dance alone they might be practising pagan rites the cop continues to smirk waiting for me to strip like the dancers he watches in other bars he doesn't understand the joy of movement can't separate physicality from his misogynist notion of sexuality he probably even thinks I want him

I screw up my courage and approach the cop. "I'd like to buy this man a glass of water," I tell the bartender. He pours one out. "How much?" I ask. "Aren't you going to let me pay for it?" CAN'T YOU SEE? I think YOU CAN'T BUY WATER I AM (composed of at least 90%) WATER ERGO YOU CAN'T CONSUME ME. The cop doesn't get it. He's been brought up in a society where sex is for sale. He's beginning to

understand, however, that I don't want him with his damned extraneous phallus hanging from his belt. "I don't want to close any doors with you, sir." His sneer promises retribution. Beer bottles and cigarette butts overflow the tables; the laughter of the crowd swells to a derisive roar. I dart back upstairs.

More cops. My parents returned. "Jade, your parents want you to go home with them."

"Again? I've already gone home!" It's my passing presence which is important, I think. The Midas touch. But no. They want to take me into a room. "No! You'll close the door!" and I know what will happen I'll be raped and shot out of disappointment because when somebody sleeps with a goddess he has to be disappointed that's why they killed Marilyn Deceptive Vessel promised perfect piece of cunt

A new cop wants to take me into a room this time. I remember the taboo which will save me: the incest taboo, displaced a little, but surely no one would have sex with me in front of my parents. I enter the room with the familiar security guard, my parents, and the new cop--a thirtyish man with sandy brown hair and the obligatory handlebar mustache. A blond girl wearing scholar's glasses and carrying books against her chest bursts in: "Yes? What's going on? This is my office." She doesn't even look at me, the cause of all the commotion. "There are too many people in here,"

says the cop. My dad picks up his cue. "I'm the father here," he says, putting his hand on the girl's shoulder--as if he were her father! I protest his leaving, fearing I will be shut up in a room with the Boys in Blue after all. "Your mom is here, is that all right?" the cop says, and I turn around--there she is in her cream-coloured coat, with that echoing face. "Okay," I say. He instructs me to sit down while he stands in front of me with crossed arms.

"What's on your hip?" I ask in terror.

"Pants," he says.

"What else?"

"A belt."

"What else?"

"A holster."

"But what's inside the holster? A gun!"

"I don't have the authority to use it."

"You have a gun for shooting people. Who's in charge here?"

"I am."

"Didn't you just say you didn't have the authority?"

His face softens, he almost smiles.

"Phone Dr. Nott," I say to the security guard sitting behind the desk. "He understands me."

"Is he a professor at the university?"

"Yes, yes, he has his Ph.D."

The guard leafs through the phone book, then dials. I

stand up. "Cam Nott I need you now, I'm dead serious!" I shout. I need to show that I have a partner, then maybe I won't be raped & shot. The time has come for Cam & me to come together, the meeting of our bodies will signal the start of the new sexual revolution--but without his help, I'll be killed. "I'm dead serious, Cam!"

I take my chair. "What is this place called?" I ask the cop.

"The SUB," he says.

"How do you spell that?"

"S-U-B."

"What do you get if you invert those letters?"

"B-U-S. Bus."

"Is there is busstop around here?" I ask.

"Yes, there's one just over there," he says.

"But where is it? It's right on top of the SUB, isn't it? Invert SUB and you get bus. Now, do you know what 'bus' is short for?"

"No, I'm just a dumb cop," he says, shifty-eyed.

"I'll tell you. It's short for omnibus. Do you know what omnibus means in Latin?"

"No."

"It's the dative plural meaning 'for all.' The bus is for all, the SUB is for all."

His eyes veritably twinkle. "You'd make a great defense lawyer."

I sigh. "Now can I rest?"

"No, Jade," he says, assuming his business face again, "you're a danger to yourself. You were crossing the street in front of cars--"

"But what happened before I crossed?" He shakes his head as if to say, "No more fun and games." "The cars stopped! I waited for them to stop!"

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but we can't apprehend her unless she's being a danger to herself or others."

I have won! We have won! Cam & I. He is to meet me just outside the SUB. Set free, I stroll outside to wait, longing to be alone with Cam, but my guardians follow me. I say, "Come on, I'll introduce you to Cam Nott." As I cross the Ring Road with my parents on my tail, I see Cam holding hands with a woman and walking across the campus, then the couple disintegrates before my eyes. Pairends.

We march down the cement path beside Clearihue. I look up and see a light in one of the third floor offices--Cam's light. We climb the stairs and I prance down to Cam's door. I knock, but there is no answer. I press myself into the door and start kissing it. Cam's lips press through the door, the heavy cold surface begins to yield and I can feel his erection against my pelvis; I bang my hips into the door playfully, then rub against him. His flesh becomes warmer and warmer, the door between us, thinner and thinner. "Don't you see, we can cleanse the doors of perception like

Blake said, it's our duty." I jiggle the clitoral door knob. "I already showed you where your clit was, remember? But I didn't name it. It's okay, we can do it in front of my parents." theres nothing more natural we can defeat the Oedipal obsession He presses harder in response but still says nothing--they've got him gagged & bound, they're in there saying, "Show us. Prove it." The Devil asks Christ why he doesn't jump off a cliff if he truly has faith in God. I falter. I have known the faith-driven strain of Cam's passion against the door, and have given myself in return. I turn my head--my parents have their backs to me and are walking away down the hall. Halleluia! "That's it! There's no need for incest because Gerald & Geraldine are one! Gerald and Geraldine are one!" I yell, stepping back from the door, flinging my arms ceiling-ward. "I can give you a blow-job, Dad! I can suck you off--but I don't want to! I don't want to!" Free of Freud, I run up to my father and fall to my knees in front of him. I bob my head and a phallus enters me. My head is being penetrated by a penis made of compressed, golden air like a halo. I am giving head to my Father. The human one starts to hit me hard on the head, "Wap, wap, wap" from side to side. "Yes, you can hit me Dad, I don't care!" because my synapses won't register pain pain becomes ecstatic abasement in the service of the Lord

next I am running through the breezeway of the Centre

flying down the stairs and leaping on to an upside down exclamation mark squealing with joy: "We don't have to be afraid of the phallic signifiers!" My Beloved & I work our magic, his lips press into mine I close my eyes, hugging him, legs wrapped around him, waiting for our force to pull him through, for him to emerge from inside the pillar fevered, naked, I pant and groan and writhe and strain towards my incorporeal lover and "Jade," I hear. I reluctantly open my eyes clothes materialize around my limbs. I am prostrate on the sidewalk beside the lamppost My Beloved has slipped away again his spirit gleams whitely in the point of the exclamation mark

"Can you hear me, Jade? You have to come with me. Do you understand what I'm saying to you?" This is the friendly cop in whom I have awakened the divine, and beyond him, a woman waits--his partner. But behind their car is another police car. What he is saying, as he speaks slowly, weighting his words with emphasis, is, there's no way out, come with me because I am here to help you fulfill your mission in bridging the gap. Come with me because the car behind me is filled with ordinary cops--we are decoys, and immortals take care of their own.

I rise and get into the back seat of the car with the lady cop. "I feel like I'm in God's arms," I say, relaxing into the seat, finally allowed to rest for awhile.

We arrive at the Emergency Ward of the hospital. I

don't get dragged in kicking & screaming; I walk in between the policepeople. "I think I have to go to the bathroom." They lead me to a small, tiled room and start to close the door. "No! Don't close the door!" I cry. "Come in here with me!" The woman decoy in her steel-toed boots giggles and says, "I don't want to watch you go to the bathroom." I am not afraid of her because I believe she won't rape me. "No, I need you to keep an eye on me!" I plead fervently. "I need you to hold the door." Her brown eyes soften when she smiles; I know the immortals will take care of me.

I kneel in front of the toilet. Now I think I need to throw up. "I need you to hold my hair back like my mom does!" I vomit into the bowl and suddenly there is a nurse at my side, "What did you eat tonight, Jade?" "Spaghetti-- with a little bit of hot sauce," I say, and somebody giggles, the elfish voices giggle. My face is roughly licked by a warm facecloth. I am led out again, this has only been a warm-up, a not-so-dry run. "I don't want to go back in the car!" The male cop says, "Is it okay if you go with her?" I recognize my female friend and say, "Can we leave the door open?" He says yes, and as I get into the car on one side, the door on the other side is open, all four doors are open at once, like wings. Then they are closed: I've been tricked, where are they taking me? I don't want to go home, the drama/trauma isn't over yet. "I think I've cottoned on to something, and I don't want to

keep it all to myself!" I cry, tossing my head from side to side against the seat. "I think I've caught-onned on to something," I repeat. Because salvation is coming through deconstruction. If you want to reform institutions, you have to start from the inside.

im stretched out on my back again eyes closed i thinknow my arms are being held out (like in those cults where they make people perform sex) but this is on American/national tv (it had to end up there) there are a circle of people around me with cameras and flashcubes and movie lights (i am not afraid of the Light) i can hear them marvelling at this event i know Mick Jagger and David Bowie and the Reagans are watching i am ripe for my lover and he is kneeling naked and hard on the floor right in front of me and we are straining towards each other with a pure gold longing but we dont do it we wont do it even though it s obvious how much we want it my breath storms my pelvis thrusts my back arches im tantalized by ethereal foreplay brought within seconcs of orgasm my lover poised inches away but we wont do it for fame or profit every time im about to come the messages change i say "i think i have to throw up" or "i think i have to pee" and everybody laughs they must be hearing "i think i have to come" because that would be funny to American national tv this is when marilyn is really inside me i know i appear as the naked marilyn

trying to show there are some things that cant be bought i
keep being swept to the verge of orgasm but my body declines
it until finally they pack up their cameras and leave i
can hear their shoes clicking down the hall as their voices
die away done with the public sphere the joke becomes
serious and the drama personal and holy im in the bathroom
on the floor "Now you kneel in front of her" they say to a
man in black pants and im lying in the same position as
before still looking like marilyn (goddess incarnate) my
platinum blond hair gleaming waves pound through me with
the force of the surf Diana chaste goddess of the moon and
my water-filled body using me to breach the gap between
Venus & herself the virgin/whore opposition is being
deconstructed in my body i am being cleansed from the
inside with holy waves "O O O" my voice keens my hips are
pumping the golden phallus plunges through rectum vagina
bladder stomach scouring me inside out showing me i have
nothing to fear from this temple i inhabit familiar muscle
contractions are triggered my guts heave i spew and retch
leaking warm fluid as i vomit and urinate at once
exquisite post-orgasmic relief for a few seconds then the
pulsating strokes start again orgasm really does become
vomiting pleasure becomes pain theres a crucial
distinction but it s circular and the shortest verse in
the Bible is "Jesus wept" time is relative pain shrinks
but oh multiple orgasm is SO tiring the waves start

crashing on me again i can hear the immortals giggling when my eyes are closed but they are still cradling me they revere the goddess in me when i open my eyes i see heads "It's OK, Jade" they say "can i stop now?" i beg "Just one more, Jade," a voice says sweetly it s up to me to survive this crucifixion theyre nailing my flesh against the wall my powder blue eyes are wide with the anguish of coming/ dying and meanwhile Cam is still poised above me afraid to thrust inside me waiting to be convinced that it s all right for them to say "It's OK, Cam" i see his flattered bafflement "She can't want me" hes saying "I'm not worthy, I don't want to contaminate a goddess" he cant believe hes allowed to fuck Marilyn just a poster on the wall but the hospital staff/votaries are now urging him to do it and im pleading with my body--this isnt just lust boy it s the redemption of humankind to fuck only for the perfect unity of reasons physical intellectual emotional but above all social & spiritual satisfaction and good "Do this for the good of society, you two, here in the privacy of your own room--we know you can't be bought, what the two of you are bringing to the world between you can't be bought"

ive already slept with Jesus when I was 14 in my dream i was a whore in a special brothel set up for Jesus and his disciples for their sexual satisfaction on the road and Jesus picked me and we went into a closet much like this tiny bathroom and he knelt in front of me in his robe i

dont remember penetration but he definitely deflowered me
but the spiritual phallus is not enough because Cam is
still behind the screen of his own unknowing until finally
we do cleanse the doors of perception/break on through to
the other side Cam bursts into corpo-reality and Jesus is
embodied in him because he's always already inside of all
of us this time the penetration is real love can be
startling breath-stealing almost brutally passionate slam-
bam but true unbounded free revel of flesh juicy squelch
scratch of pubic hair but sacred holy & whole i jerk
forward eyes & mouth pop open and i gasp with the pleasure
of shock a new sensation like a jump into icy emerald-green
river-water you are where your dreams take you ive been
to heaven & back finally fulfilled the prophecy we did it
for Jesus/for the good of society the Marriage of the Lamb

The Eric Martin

Clothes seized pink pills tainted juice white crackling
brain itch wormlike writhing head-banging broken tooth death
smell black cave locked room floor-peeing forced bath gloved
hands stabbing fingers--"I only want to clean your lady
parts" nurse's fat face marbled with broken blood vessels,
my vagina starved with hot pulses of hurt. Voltage surge
lunging veins dagger at my back running twirling searching
stripping isolation cell water rising drowning screaming
window wet. Purple halo nose to doorjamb golden shaft
tumble to infinity. Haldol, Hall Door: let me out.

Oily-haired men gluey pancakes sausages filled with white
grubs. Grinding keys slamming doors scaly lips bursting
bladder abdomen spangled with purple half-moons. Urine
samples soapy tea floor wax strangers' farts syrupy speech
sealed windows dry air soiled pajamas. Waxy-skinned
catatonics drug dealer masquerading as patient young nurse's
warning not to squeal. I squeal.

Jade: "We need to talk about incest."

Father: Hands folded over belly, eyebrows steeply inclined
to red forehead birthmark, crosses leg, jiggles left heel
uncontrollably. Stares at wall, checks watch. "Visiting
hours are over."

Jade: "I was raped."

Doctor: Springs to feet, scribbles note. "You're psychotic. I'm putting you back on Haldol."

"No, it'll make me stoned!" Pursed lips closed throat
pinned arms circle of people tight grips bare bum sharp
prick drug rape.

san(e)itized polarized normalized the severed head can spin
its web bear the sufferer far away while the bod(il)y
remains submissive prostrate still dark raincoat of night

Flurry bustle body hoisted corpse-like wheeled through doors
dumped on mattress thumbs pry open eyelids narrow-beamed
flashlight scans pupils. Panicked hands tumble me, scared
they've shut me up for good. Iphigenia, sacrificed on the
altar of Science.

Brain fog clears as I squat on the toilet and notice the
squishing of my thighs against the cool plastic seat, the
sloping line of my toes against cream and beige floor tiles.
My thighs. My toes.

Three weeks pass. At last I'm allowed to wear my own
clothes. My Levi's have shrunk two sizes in the hospital
laundry, but my sleek leather jacket is unchanged, and I'm

comforted by its violet softness around my body.

On the first day of spring, the psychiatrist calls a meeting. I'm pinioned between my parents on a black couch; Dr. Burns faces us in a chair. "So how is she? I don't know her, is she back to normal?"

My parents don't respond, so I make my own defence. "I feel fine, I can't wait to get back to school and dance class. I got carried away, but I'm still really excited about my studies. A lot of what I was saying, even though I went overboard with it, is legitimate--for instance, I was interested in the root meanings of names--that's all linguistics, it's a recognized academic field, you can take courses in it. I hope I don't have to miss any more classes. Do I start with day passes and progress from there?"

"We can do anything we want. We've had students living here and going out for their classes every day. Or we can just discharge you altogether."

"I'd love it if I could go home with my parents now."

"That's a bit premature--I don't know what your plans are for the rest of the day--" he glances at my parents, who shrug. "But why don't you come and pick her up around six tonight? Check in with the hospital once over the weekend. I'm going away on holiday next week, so I'll give you your prescriptions now. Don't worry," he adds, glancing up at my parents, "she can see my replacement, Dr. Simons, while I'm away."

He prescribes Haldol in tapering doses--and says if I'm having trouble with side effects, I can go off it altogether April fourth. He says I must take lithium for at least six months.

Prescription in hand, the psychiatrist leans towards my father, who extends his arm: a white sleeve meets a dark one over my body.

Discharged

Home is a white villa with a red Spanish-tiled roof on a cliff overlooking the sea. I hunker on the brick path while many metres below, the surf ebbs and rolls in white streaks, tide out, sand flat. The ocean breeze kisses my eyelids. I gulp lungfuls of salt air. The fruit trees on Sinclair hill offer armfuls of pink and white blooms when I walk up to the university.

Cam's eyes flash when I enter the room. "Is there anyone who hasn't cleared their essay topic with me?" Several students raise their hands, but it's me he targets as he urges, "Come and see me."

Two days later I'm on my way to Latin when I meet him outside Clearihue, heading home. "Nice weather, if you're a duck," he says, one hand in the pocket of his beige Goretex, the other clutching the handle of his leather satchel. "So how are you doing, anyways?"

"Every day gets a little bit better." His eyes drop to my chest, alerting me that my nipples are erect beneath my pink jumpsuit. "I got too high, and the institution doesn't let you get too high."

He murmurs something about grades, and I don't know whether he understands me or not. The light is already waning in the washed-out, tear-streaked afternoon.

A few days later I'm idly scanning bulletins in the English Department Office, waiting to speak to the Honours secretary. Cam passes on his way to the photocopier. "Hello, Jade." His emphasis is an accusation--I still haven't been to see him. I write him a note: "When are we going to 'work something out?'" , echoing his own words from before the hospital. I slip it into his mailbox on my way out of the building. The next day in class, Cam digresses to emphasize a certain canto in Don Juan: "I hate inconstancy," he reads with conviction. I bend my head over my desk as he paraphrases the story of the married man perplexed by his attraction to a pretty girl he has met at a party. When I raise my head, smiling at something he's said, his eyes are on me, storm grey.

April 4th: I stop Haldol but the side effects don't disappear--my bargaining tool. I phone Dr. Simons and play up my symptoms as I enumerate them: drooling, slurred speech at times, dry skin, agitation, and worst of all, excessive hand tremors. "I've got an exam next week and my hand shakes so badly I can't write. I consider this an emergency."

"Those are all signs of too high a lithium level," he agrees. "Given the circumstances, perhaps you don't need to be on it."

Home free.

April 12th: I'm reading over my Honours thesis in the lobby of the English Department, waiting to be called for my oral defence. My peripheral vision tells me that the person approaching on my left has short fat legs and can only walk with an effort. She disappears behind the bulletin board, my eyes jump hastily over the pages, and "So this is like the expectant father in the waiting room, is it?" I turn my head to see hawk-nosed Cam. I flash him a bright mask of a smile and say, "I didn't get a chance to read it over last night so it's not fresh in my mind." He takes in what I say, blinks and turns away without returning my smile and not even able to speak in complete sentences today he says, "Well, that's...."

"Unlucky," I say. "It's unlucky."

His calm sad aura today.

Whose legs were those? Cam's but I saw the short fat legs of JP, the nurse who "I only want to clean your lady parts" finger-raped me. Cam said, "Tell me what you like" and before I could answer plunged his finger into me and slid it back and forth in a velvety motion and I said "Mmm...."

Burning in my clitoris. I drive down the feelings. Cauterize them. "I've got to get back to this," I snap.

April 23th: I have postponed my appointment with Dr. Burns as long as possible. Flanked by my parents, I report

that I've been off everything for nearly four weeks with no problems. He asks about my final grades and I say, "Three A+'s and two A's." He rounds his eyes, impressed. "So what's your professional opinion?" I ask lightly.

"That you're going to get into trouble again." His words slam into me. "There's an eighty-twenty chance of a relapse."

I leap to my feet, and he jumps nervously after me, his arms spread. But I only hold my head, look out the window, and say, "Jesus."

"Jade," Dad spits out my name to scold me for swearing, so I add, "Please help me now." Tears pour down my face; I yank some Kleenex out of a box on the ebony coffee table. Dr. Burns writes out a prescription and hands it to me.

"I would advise you to follow this."

"I'm glad I'm not you."

"You should know that your name is on file with the police, so that they have automatic authority to pick you up. I would advise you to fill that prescription."

"Thank you. And I'm glad I'm not you." I wipe my eyes and my nose and slide into my seat again. "Before I leave," I say, choking back my tears, "there's a few things I'd like to clear up. Remember that bump I got on my head, and my broken tooth? You told my parents I only fell. You lied. You lied by omission. I had seizures! Why did you lie?"

He smirks, says, "Well, yes, you did have petit mal seizures, but how can you remember that? If you were really having seizures, it should be a total blank for you."

A total blank: mental health. When my sister asked if I would be okay, Burns said, "Don't worry, she won't remember a thing!" But experience isn't just erased. It lingers until sense can be made of it.

"Any other questions?"

"What about the night they overdosed me on tranquilizers, found me in a death-sprawl on the floor beside my bed, barked at me to get up, had to rush me on a stretcher to an observation room in PIC, stare into my eyes with a pinprick flashlight? All because I wanted to sit up for a while and write, like you told me I could."

"I don't have your file memorized; I have a lot of patients. I can't possibly remember what happened to you every night."

File's sitting right in front of him, but he doesn't want to be shown up by my vindictive memory again. "You said I could write by my bedside light as long as I wasn't disturbing the other patients." He widens jelly eyes flat with lack of insight and shakes his head.

Once home from the psychiatrist's office I change and head for the car. When Mom asks me where I'm going I say I have to go think. "Are you going to take your medication?"

"I'm going to go think."

I drive to the Shelbourne Street liquor store, buy a cheap 750 ml bottle of white wine, find a private hollow in the yellow grass at Mt. Tolmie and drink half of it. I have dressed in my tight Levi's and a peach tank top, cropped to expose my midriff, armholes cut daringly wide. I've lined my eyes in sapphire blue. It's approaching one o'clock as I arrive at Cam's office, breathless after the run from the parking lot. I sink into the armchair and breathe deeply.

"What did you do, run up?"

I absorb the fact of his presence. "You're here," I say. "I knew if you were here I'd be all right." Then my face contracts and sobs start. Cam jumps to close the door.

"What's wrong, Jade?"

"I saw my psychiatrist today, and he wants me to go back on my medication, and I don't want to. I don't want to," I say, drawing out the repetition into a staccato of sobs.

"Why does he think that?"

"Because I was crying."

"Crying is normal, my daughter cried this morning."

"Can we go? Outside?"

Cam swivels his chair, turning his profile to me and his gaze towards the clock on his filing cabinet. "I'm late--I've got to go play tennis. People are counting on me."

"Yeah, that's not the point, to hurt other people." I

had muddily imagined that consummation now would save me, that it was called for in this crisis.

I leave the office. The short conversation has given me no relief. I want to say: I'll make you think twice before getting implicated in the precious lifeblood of someone else. I want to throw a brick through your bedroom window. I want to rip up your lawn with the wheels of my car and smash into your flashy convertible. I want to phone your wife and embroider a true story into the pit of her stomach. I hate you for using me to find out that you really do love her. I hate you for wanting to have an affair and then changing your mind. I hate you for turning me on and not following through. I hate you for rejecting me to fulfill your own ends, for ignoring my need. I hate you for accepting my confidences without confiding in me yourself. I hate you for not being my lover. I hate you because I loved you and you didn't feel the same. I hate you because you're in my blood and I can't get rid of you without spilling it.

I hate you because you denigrate and downplay my experience. I hate you because you're in my way. I hate you because you're there.

I hate you because I can't have you and I hate myself for feeling that way. Why do I want what you can't/refuse to give?

How would your daughter feel about this? How would I feel if I found out my father had an affair when I was six? The rusty white and red swingset in the backyard of my childhood home. I'd play on it while he gardened. I'd shimmy up the pole while he weeded. I was addicted to the sunburst between my legs, the hot rush, I preferred to do it when no one was around but if he wasn't too close I'd do it. How did I know how? It was my secret.

How would your wife feel about this, how much does she know? My dun-haired, aged-faced rival, yes I saw you together. She's too old for you, not what I pictured at all. How would she like it if she knew you were a cunt-tease to undergraduates? Beautiful, slim blondes that will stay perpetually young while every September, she grows another year older. How would she like to know she formed with you the base of an isosceles triangle, while a bright eyed mistress hovered above, the satellite point, drawing you away? She maybe won this time but she won't win forever.

I want to say all this but I think it instead. At home, I scream into my pillow, smudge the flowered case with mascara tears. I'm curled stiffly on my left side, facing the door, unable to move. When I sleep, I dream of murder-suicide: expunging the three points with gunshot.

April 29: When I wake up my mother hounds me about taking my pills and my yells bounce off the white walls. I run out and want to hop in the car, but it's not mine and I know she'd jump at the chance to send in the cops again. So I grab my bike and pour my rage and fear into the pedals until my calves burn. I arrive at Cattle Point and crouch behind broom bushes, scared that one of the cars passing by will be an ambulance, or cops.... I listen to the smashing of the surf on the rocks. The beating of the wind draws out my sobs. My family! They betrayed me, they turned me in to be drugged and raped. JP! Cam! My parents! All against me! I've got no one--no one. Wind whips the bay into choppy silver peaks. Seagulls glide and screech.

Hot tears trickle from my eyes to be blasted icy against my cheeks. The cold sea beckons to me, urges me in. I could lose myself, lose this pain-filled body, merge with the waves. There's no other way out. My mother awaits my return in the white kitchen by the red phone.

I stand up, plant my feet firmly on the stones. Clench my fists. Below me the ocean rages, roils. I call on that power, ask it to lend itself to me. It surges up through the rocks, up through my legs. It fills the trunk of my body. I breathe deeply. I blow some of my hurt into the gale and it swirls away. I keep breathing til the wind circulates through my blood. The tension in my neck and shoulders eases

off and I feel a little lighter. There is one thing I can do.

Filling in the Blanks

Write, write because my life depends on it. I begin with the parking lot outside Merlin's one Friday night and clatter away at the typewriter behind the shut door of my room every day for a month. "I can't believe you have so much to say," my mother comments. I need to name what happened in every detail, not repress it--not this time.

During the weeks that I'm writing, I avoid passing Raven's Nest when I go for a walk or a bikeride. In my bravado, I could curse at the intercom, but now I'm as intimidated as I always have been by the forbidding facade, by the gates that open and close on a mysterious schedule. One particularly bright afternoon I take the chance and walk in the direction of the mansion. Just as I'm approaching the gates, Stump trudges out wearing worn jeans and a sweatshirt. He tosses a comment over his shoulder to a young man working in the garden. The gardener grimaces as Stump swings around to face me. Slope-shouldered, with hands stuffed into his front pockets, he scuffs his feet as he walks, travelling low to the ground. I raise my head and look him coldly in the eye.

As he meets my gaze with kaleidoscopic blue irises, his eyebrows draw together in a slight frown. He might be reading the hatred on my face, or he could be simply squinting against the sun. He shows no signs of recognition

before he looks away. As we pass each other I notice that he's hardly any taller than me.

I breathe deeply, my heart pounding fast, and relax my hands, which have clenched into fists. I walk on, rolling my shoulders back from their usual caved-in position.

My text spills to over a hundred pages, then the flow of words dries up. I'm mired in a swamp of resistance. My parents are pressuring me to get a summer job. "So much writing isn't healthy, isn't that what happened before?" I'm forced to strand my narrator in Psychiatric Intensive Care. But even if I can't write full scenes, I jot down notes so that I'll have an outline for future use.

I apply at a popular tearoom where the all-female staff wear frilly, wraparound aprons in the style of Victorian maids--mostly for the benefit of American tourists, although the restaurant has a strong clientele of British expatriates. Hired as a busgirl, I'm taken for seventeen or eighteen by the rest of the staff, and I enjoy being incognito.

Busgirls are almost invisible anyway, clearing the tables like good fairies and turning them out for the next influx of customers, rarely having to speak to anyone. Nurses from the Eric Martin come in for lunch and don't notice me, even when I stare. Starting my shift one afternoon I find Cam, his wife Tina and a Century 21 representative spreading out their documents on one of the

large dining tables. They consume one pot of Earl Grey tea and ask for a refill of hot water. Business complete, Tina vaults the stairs. Blushing faintly, hiding his hands in his pockets, Cam grins at me self-consciously before following his wife. I hitch up my clearing tray like a shield and make a face at him. When I reach his table, I'm glad I did--they didn't leave a tip.

When I leave home for graduate school in September, I take my manuscript with me. Through all the moves of the next three years I never forget about it. At last, with a summer free, I return to it and finish a draft. A writing friend and I trade manuscripts for mutual feedback. Deanna, my friend, is a counsellor as well as a writer. After commenting on some technical points, she says, "Your narrator behaves seductively. Girls only learn to be seductive when they're abused. She seems to be acting out."

I grip the edge of the narrow Ikea bed I'm sitting on in my rented garret. Suddenly it's obvious. "I was sexually abused by my father," I say numbly.

"That's certainly what the writing suggests."

I continue to stare at the floor.

Deanna says, "You've survived. You've got incredible courage and strength."

I don't feel strong. I feel shattered, dizzy, groundless. The order and security of my daily life is

rooted in my upbringing: stable, ordinary--privileged. If the foundation is rotten, my life will collapse. I can't stand to consider it. I sleep fitfully, Deanna in a cot beside my bed. In the morning, wide open funnels in my head suck up the sounds of Deanna's breathing, of a fly buzzing behind my curtains. They still strain for...for what? The dragging heels of my father's slippers. My chest has already tightened to fight down nausea.

When I was going to highschool, he used to shuffle into the kitchen exactly five minutes after me. I'd be bending over to get the box of Pep from the cupboard when his feet would leave the olive green carpet and strike the mottled linoleum. The soles then made a sticky sound, like sweaty skin pulling off vinyl. "Mornin'," he would grunt. I could smell his oily hair--the infrequency of my father's baths was an item of household shame, and he washed his hair even less often. In tight-jawed silence I would make us each a cup of instant coffee. "Thank-you dear," he would say when I set it in front of him, slopping coffee into the saucer. We would rustle newspaper pages, he with the front page, me with the "Living" section, and clink spoons against our bowls. I never said a word except, when the sound of his sucking air over the mashed wheat puffs on his tongue became unbearable, "Must you chew with your mouth open?"

Later I would yell up the staircase, "Come on, Dad, I'm going to be late! We have to leave now!" We drove to my

school in silence. Even though my own head buzzed with the schoolday ahead, I couldn't help noticing the depth of my father's distraction. I would try to imagine his thoughts-- order forms, phone calls from creditors, irascible customers, staff complaints? The store manager used to joke that my dad spent most of his time at work staring out the office window. That's funny, I said, because at home he spends all his time staring at the TV.

"How are you doing?" Deanna mumbles in a voice heavy with sleep, squinting up at me.

"Terrible. I feel like I've just released the floodgates of memory and I'm being whirled away."

Deanna takes hold of my hand. "You're right here. Just breathe."

I develop a chronic side ache that settles in like the smell of the sea every morning when I wake up. Finally I decide to visit a chiropractor.

"You have a lower lumbar sacroiliac fixation," he announces after he's examined me and taken X-rays. "I'm just going to stretch out your back before making some adjustments." I have to lie on the table on my stomach. I'm feeling exposed in skimpy underwear and a flimsy gown that doesn't close at the back--I didn't know I'd have to take off my clothes. Even my bra, for the X-rays. A heavy fog of sadness fills me. Desolation out of nowhere. My

face smushed against the headrest. The chiropractor stretches the spasmed area of my lower back, pushing down the elastic waist of my underpants an inch or two. Air bubbles are rising up from the bottom of a pool, they're going to hit the surface and burst--no! Stop!

Flashes, snapshots one: pink warm small bum two: fingers spreading wet goop in my crack three: weight denting mattress--a sea anemone squeezes shut. I gasp for air, shaken, shuddering to be in this deserted night office with this white-coated man. But I lay still and submit as he manipulates my body, using his weight and the strength of his hands to make harsh snapping movements with my spine and neck. Finally he's done. I can get dressed and go home to look up the word--

sacroiliac: sacrum + iliac

sacred + flanks, groin

sacred + jade

I am back in my childhood bedroom. The door opens and a large purple shape with a squarish head and sloping shoulders is silhouetted against the yellow glow of the hall light. I turn towards the wall and pull the covers tighter around me. The slippered heels of the shape drag on the floor as it approaches. It sits on the edge of my bed--the springs bounce and my whole body shifts. It rolls me on to my stomach, pinning my arms underneath my body. It leans.

its dark weight over me. Its hand slides under my blanket. It pulls up my nightgown and places its fingers in the crack of my bottom.

The form begins to gather an identity. My mind fights up from the wells of sleep to avoid discovering its name. When I finally break the surface, I am lying half on my side, half on my stomach, furiously scratching my anus. I blink and breathe and shake my head and turn on the light to dispel the shadows.

Hall Door. The door to my bedroom becomes the Hall Door when I'm inside wanting out. I lie on my stomach, head turned toward the crack of light. When the monster comes to crush my legs I escape on this shaft. I can never quite reach the Hall Light, a golden chandelier where Tinkerbell lives behind smoked glass. But though the monster says "Sh," I know if only I could get enough air in my lungs, I could scream loud enough to wake Tinkerbell and she would come running down the hall in her nightgown to save me.

I hold two hands out to my sister: in my palms is a cube wrapped in green plaintain leaves. She takes it from me and unwraps it to reveal a black onion. She raises it to her mouth but I stop her. "You've got to carry it until you're ready to peel it." Her arms sag with the weight and grow skeletal. Purple-red bags appear under her eyes; she

stares at me balefully. I open my raincoat to reveal a belly-sized black onion.

At fifteen I got drunk and crawled into bed with Ben, the twenty-four-year-old brother of my best friend Yseult. When he unbuttoned my shirt and took off my pants, the endings of my nerves retracted an inch or two. His hands touched numb skin, touched the soft nipples of breasts that were not large but rounded just the same. He placed his hand between thighs that should have been skinnier, smaller--I resolved to diet. He wanted to give me an orgasm. I squirmed and squealed, "No!"

When he taught me to smoke pot I had a memory re-run: riding in the back seat of the car as my mother drives into the garage. My father stands in the driveway holding a broom. He gives my mother a silly grin and flaps his hand. My face in the back window is neglected. A solid line connects them; I am an extraneous third point.

When I wept, Ben hushed me, not wanting to get caught before he had a chance to urge me. Later I floated to a corner of the ceiling and watched his bare flanks moving on top of me. When I returned to my body, I thought we'd had sex, but I didn't know for sure.

A hard thing is scraping, chafing, carving itself across my back. "No!" I scream, running away from the red

sticky. I'm in a cafeteria; a tray caddy blocks my way and the thing catches up. The rubbing resounds deep as the bone as a little girl's voice says, "He held my shoulders a lot and first he went outside, then he went inside." I wake up holding my side. The ache is gone, the muscle relaxed.

pushed down mouth wide open for the dentist throat jammed jerking shaking shaking milkshake making eyes closed lids red can't breathe scratchy hair choking drowning going to die this time yucky taste down my throat washed away with red Koolaid my favorite

When I was little, I had sore throats all the time. Then when I was six they said I was going to the hospital to have my tonsils out so I wouldn't have sore throats any more. First I lay on my stomach in a gown that didn't close properly. The bed had wheels. Curtains were pulled shut around it and people dressed up like mint candies surrounded me. My bare bum stuck out in the air. The man with the kerchief on his head said something and the women laughed and then they pricked me in the bum. My bum started to feel wobbly. "I have to go to the bathroom," I pleaded, as they wheeled me into the operating room. "No, you don't," the man said, "it's just the needle that makes you feel that way."

In a long narrow room amongst many other lying-down

people I watched a clock like the one in the gym at school. The red second hand dragged itself around the center point.

I woke up with an awfully sore throat. I wasn't allowed to talk. I learned my lesson.

I sleep on my side, back to the door. Talons dig into my shoulder blades, jolt me awake. I'm paralyzed, can't turn my head to see who's behind me. Gradually my muscles relax. I want to go to the washroom but the light switch is at the far end of the hall. I roll onto my back and stare at the ceiling, panicky, scared of the dark and who might be in it. Waiting for morning.

My sister says the navy blue trenchcoat man is developing cataracts. see no evil As they creep over his corneas, he shatters milk bottles trying to replace them in the fridge, misses the counter with plates. He denies there is a problem and refuses an operation. His hunched trudge degenerates to an invalid's shuffle. His vision has failed.

I slam my ticking clock in a drawer. I unplug the phone. I bite the insides of my cheeks. I can't bear the thought of grocery shopping though I'm out of food. I want to stay beneath my quilt hugging my teddy-bear and reading children's books forever.

My body held the memories in for so many years, tensing

more and more til I was crustacean, trapped by my frame. Now my body releases her secrets piece by piece. Grubby hands grope my breasts, my genitals, my buttocks-- their imprints are never going to leave my flesh. I'll never be free. Could hang myself from the overhead light with a stocking, but I'm stuck to the mattress. Clothes litter the floor where I've stepped out of them, dirty dishes are stacked beside the door, papers smother my desk. Grey light casts a pall on the clutter. I produced this mess and it reflects me.

I clutch my vulva, trying to protect it from the hands. It doesn't work--the handprints are inside the skin-- I can't bear it. I grab a pencil and scribble on the nearest paper. My fist moves in tight circles, gouging a black knot into the sheet. The harder I press, the more pain gushes from my clitoris to the pencil tip. The paper rips and I chuck the pencil to the floor. I want to cut myself. I turn my wrists to study the thin greenish-blue and purple veins. The insides of my wrists look so tender, so baby's skin soft, that I let go of my fury. I rock back and forth, hugging my teddy-bear. The light wanes.

My father is chasing me around the house with his shirt off. Everywhere I go, he turns up. I keep running until finally he corners me. I turn and face him. "Get away from me! You RAPED me!"

He says, "You came to me, you had bare shoulders, what did you expect?"

"That doesn't make it okay."

I shake out of sleep in shock: I expected denial, not justification.

I roll onto my side and face my room. The stacked plates and cast-off clothes infuriate me. I pull on some jeans, collect the dishes and head for the kitchen, busting through the tunnels I've made. I refuse to cage myself any longer.

My forehead has broken out in clusters of pimples, one swipe across each temple like the marks of a vise. They don't clear up, so I visit a dermatologist. When he prescribes antibiotics, I almost back out, but I can't bear the acne. I fill the prescription at London Drugs. It's the first time my father hasn't supplied my medication, and I'm shocked at the expense. I start to feel upset as I hand over the money, precious now that I am supporting myself. In the parking lot, I twist open the vial and am confronted with large pink pills the colour of lithium capsules. As I pedal away on my bike, tears spill down behind my sunglasses. My weeping gains momentum. Into the traffic noise, I yell, "You didn't have the right to do that, you bastard! I'm not going to take the fucking drugs!" I'm bewildered by my own screams. Eventually I collapse in sobs

on a boulevard.

It's more than "drug rape" in the hospital. Drugs-- rape: my pharmacist-father gave me drugs when he abused me.

A group of women sit in a circle in a dimly lit office at the YWCA. Stuffed animals are jumbled in a pile in the middle of the room, and each of us is holding one--a teddy bear, a doll, a unicorn. We pass a conch shell and whoever holds it shares her story while the rest of us listen. Women piece together what happened to them as girls and identify the havoc incest has caused in their adult lives. If a woman cries while she's talking, someone passes her the Kleenex. Everything said is received in accepting silence.

At the end of the meeting we hold hands and say a prayer, and afterwards some of us hug. We don't have to go through it alone again.

After a long and discouraging search, I find a good therapist. She tells me I have the right to my own body. That the abuse doesn't make up the whole of who I am. That I should take care of myself, not just because nobody else will, but because I have the right to have pleasure, the right to linger in a warm bath, the right to eat a well-balanced meal. When I'm scared, I need to move through it, not let it paralyze me. I can even transform my nightmares.

In time, when I dream of encountering my father as I climb a staircase in his house, I scream out loud. My voice forms a protective shield around me. The wall of sound butts at my father, who can't move from his place on the stairs. I am safe.

I have cut off all contact with my father and most with my mother. When the tide of my dreams starts to turn and my father appears less threatening, I begin to wonder if it is time for a reconciliation. A birthday parcel arrives from my mother--my father has included a brief note in which he attempts to breach a year's silence with comments on the Constitutional crisis. The inside of my chest is wrenched with sadness and longing.

I dream that I'm home for a cousin's wedding and my father stands in the front hall offering me his hand to shake. I stare at his white, uncalloused skin, the creases of his finger joints, the black hairs on the back of his hand and their prominent follicles. I cannot bring myself to shake his hand. I still don't know all it has done to me!

Two nights later I dream that I'm walking along a sidewalk, well ahead of my parents, but within earshot. They're baiting me by discussing their plans to shame my sister publicly. Enraged, I turn around and yell, "Just broadcast it then!" I run at my father and punch him in the face. When his knees buckle, I kick him in the head. Then

he's twisting me from behind, I've shrunk, I'm five, or maybe eight. He's digging his fingers in between my ribs--I wake up. My ribs and back ache until, with a tingling sensation, the pain dissolves.

The next day at therapy, I decide for the first time to re-enter the dream through hypnosis and find out what I woke up to avoid. Why was he torturing my back? I lean back in an armchair while Lise dims the lights and places a candle on a table in front of me. I relax and watch the flame. Lise holds my hand and counts, telling me to sink deeper into my body. We begin on the sidewalk with the light, and soon iron claws are digging brutally into my ribs. I moan in pain and Lise rubs my back. "What's happening?" "He's twisting me, he's turning me over." I resist and resist and finally Lise says, "Is he going now?"

"Yes! Yes, I can see him silhouetted against the hall light as he's leaving...." But I'm lying on my back now in the visualization; I skipped something.

"There's more!" Lise exclaims. "What's happening? Is he penetrating you? In your bum?"

I shake my head, unable to speak--I make a couple of clucking sounds. I point to my mouth. Finally I yell, "In my mouth!" Opening my eyes, I roar, "BLAAAAH!" I sit up. Lise tries to hug me and says, "You're so good, Jade, you're good, you were very good. You really fought him. You kept fighting with your legs, that's how I knew it wasn't over."

"I need something to drink!" The unmistakable taste of semen coats the back of my throat, getting stronger by the second. "Please get me some juice!"

Lise hurries out of the room and returns with a carton of grapefruit juice and two plastic drinking glasses. "To Jade!" she says, raising her glass in a toast. I feebly clink my cup against hers and swallow the tart juice, washing away the taste memory with relief. I curl up on the couch in fetal position, holding a pillow against my stomach. "How could anyone do such a thing to a child?" I ask in vain.

There will never be any "reconciliation."

To release anger, I use aerobics. At one point in the class that I attend regularly, we run on the spot very fast, hardly lifting our feet from the ground, many of us yelling. I often picture my abuser's head beneath my feet and stamp it to a pulp as I bellow from my gut. I leave the gym purged.

I continue to store tension in my back, though the more aware of the sources I become, the less pain I have. I visit a massage therapist whose gentle presence comforts me. When her hands touch certain places on my back, I feel permitted at last to experience abandonment and loneliness. My body relaxes its brittle facade, and at times I sob. To receive nurturing after so long is bittersweet.

A quiet, wide-eyed little girl still lurks inside me. She's waited all this time for me to listen and believe. Her intuitions are good. She knows when she's cold or tired or hungry or scared. I'm starting to meet her needs. Now she can dance, draw, sing; read, brood, dream; run, yell, cartwheel, cry and laugh. Grow whole.