

A Quest for Fulfillment: Lucy Pilgrim's Map

Marianne Choquet



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A QUEST FOR FULFILLMENT: LUCY PILGRIM'S MAP

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0. Introduction

0.1 Methodology and Structure

This composite thesis is the fruit of a marriage between the creative, imaginative, and critical aspects of writing. The overall aim of its elaboration has been the creation and critical examination of an autonomous interdependent female subject in literature. As it is a unique thesis at the University of Barcelona, and because one of its directors is Southern Cross University professor Baden Offord, the structure follows the regulations established at that institution: three-quarters of the thesis is to be a creative work, and one-quarter is to be a critical exegesis.¹

The creative section of this thesis is the novel *Lucy, Go See*, a bildungsroman based on a quest. The critical exegesis, *A Quest to Self-Construct: Lucy Pilgrim's Map*, is an analysis of how the novel *Lucy, Go See* fits within the quest and bildungsroman genres. The aim of this exploration is to offer a creative, narrative, and critical inquiry into the value of eros, voice, and wound as instruments and articulations of agency constituted through visions of subjectivity. Both texts illuminate the strength and value of the vulnerable subject.

The research was undertaken in several fields: English and French literature (specifically in the genres of quests and bildungsromans), as well as in gender studies, feminist studies, cultural studies and creative writing. In regard to the creative text, I researched a wide variety of literature, from the early quests and bildungsromans through the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Apuleius' *Psyche and Cupid*, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Charlotte Brontë's

¹ Dr. Baden Offord is a Professor of Cultural Studies and Human Rights at Southern Cross University and Visiting Professor at the University of Barcelona. See also "PhDs in Creative Writing" at the University of Adelaide: <http://www.hss.adelaide.edu.au/creativewriting/program/PhD/>

Jane Eyre, Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, and Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* are only some of the quoted examples. I also studied non-fiction works by critical and creative writers on the craft of writing such as Annie Dillard's *The Writing Life*, Charles Baxter's *Burning Down the House*, George Plimpton's *Women Writers at Work*, and Eudora Welty's *One Writer's Beginnings*, among many others. In the interest of researching the presence and legitimacy of creating writing in the university, I spent one month as a Visiting Scholar at the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, where I conducted and gathered a significant portion of my research. I found D. G. Myers work (1996) on the history of creative writing to be the most extensive and foundational. Franco Moretti (1988) and Jerome Buckley's work (1974) on the history of the bildungsroman greatly informed the exegesis, as did the gender and postcolonial and feminist studies of Gayatri Spivak, Carolyn Heilbrun, Susan Fraiman and Stella Bolaki, among others. The theorists who have most enriched the section on eros are Jacques Lacan, Angela Carter and Anne Carson. The section on wounds, vulnerability and recognition is based on the work of Hélène Cixous and Judith Butler. Carol Gilligan's research on voice, patriarchy, and tragedies and Tillie Olsen's thesis on the territory of silence informed the section on voice. Bell Hooks' work on love and sexual agency enriched sections on eros and wound. Many of the theoretical works I consulted had an impact on my writing of the exegesis; I have referenced these works in a special section of the bibliography (Section 4.2).

As a point of departure, eros, and most specifically the experience of jouissance, impelled the writing of *Lucy, Go See*. Using the desire to tell a tale, it urged the creation of a novel. A quest for knowledge of eros drove the creation of the critical exegesis. Writing the exegesis revealed that the novel was more about a wound than about jouissance. Consequently, jouissance led to the recognition of the wound via voice. Throughout the writing of this thesis, the elaboration and methodology of these creative and critical texts

consistently inspired and informed each other. Drafts of the novel were followed by drafts of the exegesis, which informed revisions of the novel which informed revisions of the exegesis. The creative and critical works questioned and answered each other this way. Together, they speak for the value of incorporating creativity into the critical field.

From the first creative writing was an institutional arrangement for treating literature as if it were a continuous experience and not a mere corpus of knowledge [...] as if it were a living thing—as if people intended to write more of it—as an inheritance of texts and a flexible set of methods and standards for generating new texts. (Myers 1996:4)

Before introducing the novel and exegesis separately and more specifically, I will first briefly elaborate on the place of creative writing in the academy.

0.2 Creative writing in the academy

The first university course in any kind of creative writing, called “Verse Making”, was offered at Harvard University and the University of Iowa at the end of the 19th century. The study and development of creative writing courses were based on a constructionist belief that creative writing necessitated the knowledge of how literary texts are made, how they work. The constructivist approach to the discipline considered the study of literature in its broadest sense, and the ideal end of it to be the making of literature.

Creative writing officially entered the academy as a degree-conferring program in the United States at the University of Iowa in 1922. Women were the first students to obtain their Master of Arts degrees for compositions in music, plays, and poetry. The first doctorate was also obtained by a woman poet at the University of Iowa in 1931. Of special interest to this thesis, the appearance of these programs presented women with a broader opening to

what was then called “literature-in-the-making”. With the introduction of creative writing to literary education and the process of democratization of higher education in the early 20th century, women began to study, teach, and write literature in universities.

It was a craft that could be taught, but it was not merely a craft. It was also a means of self-definition, a way to snatch critical standards away from the old men of literary culture and education and—whether the writer agreed with the new humanists, the new critics, or the new literary women—to replace them with new, more appropriate standards. (Myers 1996:145)

The aim of education, in 1931, at the Iowa School of Letters was the development of the whole literary mind. The founder of the program, Norman Foerster, believed the development of a wide array of skills were necessary to a thorough training in the study of the literature. His vision was of an English department that consisted of practitioners of all the various literary disciplines—philologists, literary historians, critics, and writers. He explained that there were other means than research in language or literary history for understanding literature, and insisted upon the creation and criticism of it as essential for all PhD candidates, though they could choose to specialize in one of the four: language, literary history, literary criticism, or imaginative writing (Wilbers 1980:44).

Foerster was inspired by the Renaissance humanists Petrarch, Poliziano, and Erasmus. To define the new scholar he envisioned, he used the term the historian Jacob Burckhardt used to describe them in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1878): they were “poet-scholars”, who were not only concerned with close scholarship but were also concerned with the creation of poetry. Even the editors and scholiasts attached to the Museum of ancient Alexandria—men like Callimachus and Rhianus”, Foerster observed,

“presented much of their learning in the form of ‘creative writing’” (Myers 1996: 133).

Foerster’s program was a sequence of courses in noncontemporary texts and authors, criticism, literary history, and the history and structure of the English language. “Creative writers would do scholarship; scholars would creatively write”, he insisted, and it would be “1) a graduate program, 2) for Master of Art’s candidates the ‘heart’ of the program would be a seminar, and 3) The PhD option would culminate in a dissertation that was a ‘piece of imaginative writing’ (or what has since become known as a creative thesis)” (Wilbers 1980:137). He had earlier explained:

the dissertation is everywhere viewed as a piece of research in language or literary history, these two fields being conceived as a means of understanding literature. The School of Letters, however, believes that there are two other means of understanding literature: by creating it and criticizing it. All candidates for the PhD will be expected to form some acquaintance with all four of these means. They may specialize in any one, language, literary history, literary criticism, or imaginative writing. (Wilbers 1980:44)

Paul Engle took over the program after Foerster’s departure and in the following twenty-four years as director turned it into the world-renowned Iowa Writers’ Workshop. He reflected on the importance of Foerster’s contribution in his introduction to *Midland, An Anthology of Poetry and Prose* (1961): “It took imagination, some years ago, for an educational institution to put its trust in the imaginative arts. [...] Universities are not famous for taking chances, but the University of Iowa took one.” Other university creative writing programs began taking root throughout the United States in the 1940s. The next four were founded by University of Iowa graduates at Johns Hopkins (1946), Stanford (1947), University of Denver (1947) and Cornell (1948), and for the next two decades those five performed the bulk of the work in the United States.

The first graduate degree-conferring program in Canada was founded at The University of British Columbia in Vancouver in 1965. Malcolm Bradbury, along with Angus Wilson established Creative Writing as an academic discipline at the University of East Anglia at Norwich, England, in the early 1970s. The first PhD in Creative and Critical Writing was awarded to a woman at the University of East Anglia in 1990. Universities in Australia began offering this discipline in the 1990s and PhD programs are now common in Australian universities. To date, there are creative writing programs offering PhDs in the United States, Canada, England, and Australia. The University of Leipzig, Germany, was the first on the European continent to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing, and is currently developing a Master of Arts program. The University of Krakow in Poland offers a Master of Arts, and the University at Bern, Switzerland, offers both a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts.

0.3 Introduction to the novel

Lucy, Go See narrates several years in the life of Lucy Pilgrim, a young girl from a rural environment who wants to go, see, and know the world. After her grandfather, Ernst, wounds her, Lucy sets off on an exploration of sex and desire. Despite resistance from her mother, Viola, she uses fashion modeling as a way to travel the world. She marries to feel more like her family, and then quickly divorces to feel more like herself. The novel's plot lines trace Lucy's development, and her relationships with Ernst Pilgrim, the grandfather who loves and wounds her, with Viola and Tom Pilgrim, the parents who both bind and free her, and with Julien, the Frenchman she meets in Japan who triggers a sexual awakening which transforms her life. Lucy's quest leads away from and back to home, and eventually to recognition of the wound, which has both

protected and blinded her. In the end, her mother's voice and her grandfather's vulnerability free her to see, and to go once more.

0.4 Introduction to the exegesis

A Quest to Self-Construct: Lucy Pilgrim's Map is concerned with self-construction as opposed to self-destruction in response to a wound, and is based on the notion that to map one's life is to claim personal territory. After examining the history and nature of quests and bildungsromans (Section 2.1), and situating the novel *Lucy, Go See* within these genres (Section 2.2), the exegesis traces eros, voice and wound through the vulnerable territory of humanity and explores how colonization has affected personal relationships. Sections 2.3 and 2.4 trace eros, voice and wound as supportive elements of self-construction. The arousal of eros is considered as an ally rather than a threat, voice is understood as the verbal claiming of one's own territory, and wounds are considered fertile territory for revelation and transformation.

1. *Lucy, Go See* - A novel

IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO FIND A WAY OF LIFE YOU LOVE,
YOU HAVE TO FIND THE COURAGE TO *LIVE* IT.

- Owen Meany (Irving 1989:445)

Prologue

These are the things she knew. Joy was a house to be lived in with laughter as its guardian. Sorrow and anger visited but Lucy would not let them stay. It was a mobile home, her house of joy. Its walls were her skin. She knew she was different, that she was born with desires no one around her seemed to have, and because she was just one sapling in a massive forest of relatives, rooted and thriving where they were, it seemed the problem surely lay with her—and she became nervous as what she knew did not fit with what she saw—was she in the wrong place? She knew, too, that nature knew the way to be—she knew the solace of trees, the openness of pastures and meadows—the enthusiasm of brooks, rivers, and streams—the beauty of growth in all stages—the triumph of flowering, the following decay. The warmth of the sun, the strength of the wind, the cleansing rain, the pristine nature of snow, the color of fall. She saw there was pain and she saw love eased it. She knew she was pretty and she knew she was smart and she saw that most everyone wanted her to think she was not that pretty or that smart. She wanted to prove to the world and herself that all she knew was true. She wanted them to apologize for not having recognized all that was in her. She wanted to go and see what lay beyond the rolling green hills of the Upper Mississippi Valley and she wished she could take all those she loved with her, which she did, for she was made of them—Lucy wanted to sculpt her life—in much the same way she shaped the earth after rain as a girl. For her life was to be play and her work to be play—earnest, serious play. If there was a god he was a benevolent one, she knew that, too, and the only thing she saw right in the church was the singing. She saw death left behind the shell of a body, that mobile home discarded, it was obvious the spirit fled it, though she didn't know where it went, yet, she could feel her pioneering ancestors both around and inside of her. She listened more to the voice inside than the multitude hawking their wares out.

She knew, too, that what most people called love was not, and that love was not easy. And she knew that desire was something altogether different too. She had a feeling that sex was much more important than anyone seemed to realize, much more sacred than anyone would like to believe and even more powerful than anyone had already imagined. She sensed it was at the base of creation, not to be messed with, without messing up the whole system. And she knew when her grandfather kneaded her breast as he hugged her that something in the system was obviously very messed up.

I.
The Manner of Her Setting Out

The first inkling of a way out came via envelope, handed off by a departing spectator after the Twins/Astros game in St. Paul. A breeze cut through the heat in the shaded seats of the stands. It smelled like spilled pop and cool cement. Lucy's two brothers and dad were in the dugout visiting her uncle and meeting the players. Her two sisters were back in Iowa. Viola Pilgrim looked over her daughter's shoulder. "What's that?" Lucy showed her mother the Miss Teen-Age America application she had just unfolded. Viola wrinkled up her nose, then darted her eyes around. "Who gave you that?"

Lucy lifted her chin toward a man exiting the stadium. "Him."

Viola glanced, already shaking her head in rapid disapproval. "Throw it away. That's all you need is to be getting yourself mixed up with characters like that."

Lucy was already engrossed in the fine print. The guy had looked as normal as any other to her. She thought her mother was a suspicious woman who would do what she could to keep her captive, like a sort of Cinderella in a tower, only letting her out for chores or family activities. She was surprised, and not, that someone considered her Miss Something or Other material. She believed she was good-looking but as scarcely anyone else mentioned it—"You clean up real nice, Lulu" was the biggest compliment doled out, and that by her dad—she had begun to doubt. Now here was proof of some kind of attractiveness,

though she was unable to compete for the prize, which was just as well. There would be no way anyone would get Lucy in sequins twirling batons.

Her brothers Blaze and Eze bounded up the stairs carrying freshly autographed baseballs like prized gems, their father close behind. Lucy raised her eyes, and then slid the application toward Tom Pilgrim's firm, round stomach. "Look."

He glanced at the title. "You're not a teenager yet, are you, babe?"

"I will be in November. Anyway, it's only for Minnesota residents."

He waved it away and looked out over the empty ball diamond. "Then just forget about it. There's no sense in thinking about what you can't have or can't do." Lucy watched his eyes for any arrow of sadness, she always wondered if he regretted giving up on professional baseball to raise a family, and if it was painful for him to now watch his younger brother on the field. Yet, all she ever saw was joy and pride where his brother was concerned, and right then, a longing for the field and the play. She admired his acceptance, his choice was unfathomable to her yet she knew she would not be without it. She folded and rolled the application, and then slid it into the front pocket of her jean shorts like a bullet, thinking, I'm a Ms. anyway.

As she lay in the back of the station wagon watching the sky on the ride home, she wondered if what had inspired that man to consider her a contestant could be her ticket out of the cornfields. Could the way she looked, alone, be enough to take her the places she wanted to go?

For the time being in Iowa, her life was junior high in the city, and home in the country. Lucy kept to herself, mostly, in both places. She loved her afternoons wandering in the woods with the squirrels, sitting by the streams molding the

silt, and laying flat out on the hills watching birds, butterflies, and clouds. Evenings she walked across the yard to her grandparents' house to help Grandma Pilgrim bathe and prepare for bed. As Lucy emptied then cleaned the bedpan, her grandmother watched from the tub, "Honey, you should work in a nursing home."

Lucy shook her head as she flushed the toilet. "I do this for you, Grandma." This was the woman who had taught Lucy to read when she was four, who stuffed butterscotch drops and dollar bills in her hand when she brought her the paper, who told her the family history, whose eyes glistened when Lucy offered bouquets of hand-picked violets. Lucy enjoyed the nightly ritual of carrying her a small plate of crackers, a pitcher of iced water, and painkillers for her arthritis. After she swallowed them, Marie Pilgrim rocked back and forth on her bed while Lucy caressed her back. "I'm going to see the world, Grandma, that is what I am going to do."

Marie smiled. "I'd just like to go somewhere. Ask your mother if she goes into town, if I can go along, even if it's just to sit in the car."

"Grandma, did you ever want to see the world?"

Grandma Pilgrim sighed as if to say if you only knew how much. "Honey, I could get on a bus and ride, and ride, and never come back." Lucy wondered what kept her there. She imagined it was family.

"She looks so pretty, so at peace, she looks so good, Ernst," some offered with condolences at Grandma Pilgrim's wake. Lucy, now fourteen, watched her grandfather stare at his wife's lifeless head on that ivory silk pillow, how he looked like a horse struggling with a bit and how he winced, and she wanted to

scream. “What the hell is the matter with you people? Pretty? Good? She’s dead.”

She felt comforted when her mother stood behind her while she was kneeling in front of her grandmother’s body, trying to figure out if her lips were glued shut. Viola put her hand on Lucy’s shoulder. “Touch her, if you want.” Lucy was shocked by the cold hardness of the body but didn’t flinch. The touch only confirmed for her that her grandmother wasn’t in there. She stood up and wandered through the funeral parlor, a Victorian mansion formerly owned by one of the city’s pioneer industrialists. Back out in a den off the viewing room, where the closest family members gathered, she poked her head in. “Isn’t it funny that they lay dead bodies out in what was once someone’s living room?” Nobody laughed. Lucy sighed and wondered why.

Graveside, it became clear to Lucy that her grandfather was in trouble. She had never seen emotion in him and he was overcome. She watched Ernst palm one corner of the casket and not let go, and then was both horrified and awestruck by her father’s ability to lift his own father’s hand so his mother’s body could be lowered into the ground. She gazed at her grandfather’s face, bathed in tears, casing his movements as he climbed into the grave and walked around every corner of it, checking that the casket was sealed and secured as if he were tucking his wife into bed. Lucy was so nailed by his grief she could not move. She stood with the taste of salt in her mouth, perspiring, staring at her scarred, trembling knees, and then smiled a smidge noticing the reflection of the tall cedars and blue sky in the silver buckles on her shoes. She liked to think her grandma made her look.

Out of a sense of duty and a need to fill the hole left by Marie’s passing, Lucy slipped in one night like a cat, and sat on the floor in front of her grandfather’s recliner as he watched the news. If he was downstairs, she alit on a stool in his

workshop. Watching the way he could make any broken thing work—simply by taking it apart, studying it, and putting it back together—made her believe she could, too. When he was working in the garden or pasture, Lucy sat on her grandmother’s bed and touched the pillow, or fingered the cut glass doorknob where her cane still hung, opened her closet and smelled her clothes.

Even though she went to Methodist Sunday service with Ernst and to the Congregationalists with her mom’s mom, Grandma Bighart, in town on Saturday nights, her parents still insisted she attend the Catholic mass. “I don’t think God really cares which church I go to,” she protested, “or even if I go for that matter. All I do is sit there and think about everything else.”

Her father lifted his hands. “Then it’s good for that.” Lucy saw his point but she would have preferred an empty church in which to be alone with her supposed maker, rather than one crowded with hypocrites.

As she grew, her grandfather began to pass his large hand along her thigh and then slap it. “You’ve got legs just like your grandmother’s. You’re built just like her.” This petrified the girl but she told herself that it was harmless, even though it didn’t feel that way. She felt a certain quivering around her leg, like a thick plasma spreading and fixing itself into a transparent coating. Not wanting to believe what she felt, she blinked it into impossibility, shook it off, willed numbness onto it, which of course didn’t work. She began to sit or stand a little farther away when talking to him but always gave him a hug good night. He needed a hug good night was the way she saw it. One evening, when she opened her arms and wrapped them around him, he slipped his hand between their bodies and kneaded her breast. He had strong hands the size of dinner plates. It hurt her. She had no idea what to do but she knew what he was doing was wrong.

She teetered back and he let go, her breast felt like it was being released from a sort of branding wrench. With her glistening eyes down, she decided to pretend it hadn't happened, at least for the time being, until she figured out what to do, and she walked to the door as normally as she always did, and then walked home stunned, even more numb, her heart both breaking and aching. He wanted to touch a breast, she guessed, and there had been hers in front of him. That, at least, seemed to be the best-case scenario, and the only thing to do, it seemed, was dust it off and find a way to carry on. The thought of telling her parents, because if she told anyone it would be them, only brought images of pain. She couldn't even imagine being able to speak the words rising in her: Grandpa squeezed my breast really hard and acted like it was normal and didn't even say he was sorry. That, she knew, would officially ruin her idyllic image of their relationship.

She loved her grandfather the way she loved her whole family, like a task. She knew love was not a feeling, it was work. It was what one did, how one lived, and it was easier with some people than others. Being close to her grandfather also made her feel special in a world where she often felt overlooked. She wanted one of those tender relationships—between strong, wise, caring grandfather and curious, smart, brave granddaughter—that she had read about and seen in movies. In her determination to make one, Lucy kept showing up for the job, and darting, dashing, or ducking when need be. When she did hug him, she covered her breasts with one arm, and wrapped the other around him. She hoped he would get the hint. Mostly he did. Yet, a certain sickness lingered inside of her whenever she thought about what she was hiding in order to be close to him. That felt wrong, too, and made her feel dirty somehow, but the fact that she successfully shielded herself made her feel less guilty.

At fifteen, and five-feet nine-inches tall, she was six inches taller than her petite and curvy mother but still four inches shy of her broad father and grandfather. With money she made babysitting, she subscribed to the fashion magazines she'd seen at the beauty parlor. When they didn't arrive in the mailbox, she found them hidden in the hall closet. She stormed up to her mother waving them in the air. "Why are you hiding these?"

Viola turned from the African violet she was watering in the kitchen windowsill. "That's a waste of money on useless crap. How many times do I already have to tell you to get your nose out of some book and do something?"

Lucy, who knew something meant either setting the table for seven, peeling and chopping vegetables, vacuuming, dusting, scrubbing, cleaning toilets, washing mirrors, shining silver, or ironing, went livid. "I'll mow the lawn, I'll shovel snow, I'll walk the garbage across the road, let them come inside and do what I do." She was talking about her brothers, of course, but she may as well have been talking to the apple trees in the backyard for all the response she received. She let the screen door slam behind her as she walked out on her mother.

Leafing through the magazines down in the pasture, Lucy saw modeling as a fabulous ticket out. What enticed her was how happy, independent, and cosmopolitan the young women looked, that and the fast piles of cash she had heard they made, of course. She, too, wanted to stand in the middle of busy sidewalks in Tokyo, take Japanese baths, walk with elephants in Kenya, all while wearing fabulous clothes and getting paid for it. She looked up at the house, seething at her mother, marched back up the hill and then slipped inside, upstairs to the kids' bathroom. She stood in front of the mirror comparing the models' faces and bodies with hers and saw no reason why she could not be among them. She thought of the Miss application she still kept in

her drawer. Her older sister Ruby looked in. “Don’t you have anything better to do than stand around staring at yourself in the mirror?”

Lucy raised a shoulder. “Not at this moment, no.”

When Lucy saw a feature of Candice, a tall and very pretty girl from New York who had just transferred to her high school, in the fashion section of the local paper, she waited until Candice was alone in front of her locker, and then handed her the paper. “How did you do that?”

“I’m taking modeling classes and the woman who teaches arranged the job.”

Lucy looked her up in the phone book as soon as she got home that afternoon. Viola was on her way out the door to the grocery store and was surprised by Lucy’s offer to go along to help. Afterwards, as they were leaving the parking lot, Lucy pointed to a building nearby. “Would you stop there for a minute? I’d like to get some information about a school.”

“What kind of school?”

Lucy braced herself. “It’s about self-improvement and beauty. And they give modeling classes.”

Her mother glared. “Would you just forget about all that phony bullshit?”

“Mom, please, I just want to talk with them. By myself. It’ll only take a minute.”

Viola parked. “I’m not waiting here forever.” Lucy sprung out of the car.

The front walls and door of the agency were glass. A well-dressed woman talking on the phone behind a desk motioned for Lucy to come in. As Lucy waited, the door swung open again and the most un-Iowan woman she had ever seen, with cropped red hair and flawless skin, sashayed in with a briefcase, knocking her knuckles on one of her breasts. “These things are hilarious,” she looked at Lucy, who was already wondering where she could get a set. “I’m breastfeeding. They’re breast cups.” She circled Lucy then, smiling and nodding, “You must be here for the modeling course.” Lucy didn’t know how much either woman knew about fashion and modeling but she did know they were more sophisticated than she was, as she stood there looking down at her jeans, button-down shirt, yellow rain slicker and plastic boots. She glanced at the clock, and then waved the price lists and information brochure as she dashed toward the door. “I really have to go. My mom is waiting.”

The woman’s eyes widened. “She didn’t come with you?”

Viola wasn’t there. Lucy didn’t care. She was glad to have gotten where she wanted to go and she knew her mother would turn up eventually. As she contemplated calling her father just to stir things up, Viola charged in, slashing through the puddles. She slammed on the brakes and stared straight ahead. Lucy slunk into the car, shut the door, and heard for the umpteenth time, “Don’t you think I have anything better to do than chauffeur you around?”

“Why don’t you let me drive by myself then?” Lucy knew her mom wouldn’t answer that. She watched the headlights of the approaching cars blur and refract through the rain sliding down the windshield and waited until they were on the road to say more. “I would like to take this modeling course.”

A moment’s silence as if she was considering it, then Lucy watched the veto happen in her mother’s brain. “I don’t know why you need to go to school for

such a thing. With all the brains you're supposed to have, why don't you use them?"

Supposed? Lucy thought as Viola proclaimed, "I'm not paying for it."

Lucy shrugged. "I will."

Her first job was a television commercial for a trucking company. In jeans, cowboy boots, and hat, she climbed into a semi cab, tossed off a few lines, and then pulled the horn with a big smile. Her father shouted "It's Lulu!" every time it came on, her mother shook her head rapidly as if it were all headed in the wrong direction fast, and the rest of the family paid no attention. Lucy happily took the check to the bank. Then the local newspaper booked her for a fashion shoot on the Delta Queen, a furrier paid her to stand in a fur coat next to a limousine, furniture companies paid her to stand next to couches. It was so easy, and fun, and gloriously paid compared to her new part-time job at the department store. But she had to agree with her mother, not much of her brain was involved. At that point, she didn't care. She enjoyed walking the runway for mall fashion shows, and smiling down at all those who had not voted for her for class president, not invited her to their parties or cliques.

On Mondays, she often heard girls talking near their lockers about their weekend sexual experiences in words that disgusted her, telling and asking each other if they had "been porked. Although Lucy had little interest in pig sex, she was curious as to what all the whispers and giggling were covering. Not just at school but everywhere. Sex seemed so delinquent and important at the same time. Her mother had told her it was for babies alone but all the hullabaloo and desperation surrounding it told Lucy there was more than

propagation involved. She decided to approach it as an equation, and set about deducing its unknown values.

She looked around and chose the handsomest young man, an athlete a couple of years older than her, and set her sights on him. She waited until it seemed like he loved her, and as, for her, love was a task she could perform with whomever she chose, she found it fitting enough that he was clean, pleasant, and fun. Sex, she found, or penetration, more precisely, was rather boring and painful at first. “That’s it?” did not seem the right thing to say up there in her room with her boyfriend while her parents were away.

She did not wonder if her lack of pleasure in the act had anything to do with the rather heartless algebraic approach. Lucy had organized love and sex like divisions of labor, even though she imagined they’d fit best in the same department. Hence, she did her best to apply love to sex through romantic gestures she learned on television, in movies, and novels, not yet knowing that eros came to town all on its own. Could her grandfather’s abuse have had something to do with her separation of love and sex? She was unaware. Whenever she thought of it, she would find herself humming, “one of these things is not like the other, one of these things just doesn’t belong.”

For her sex became research on the pleasure of touch. The rest of her time she was caught up in making something of herself and her life, and she felt it was good to have a fun jock of a boyfriend while doing so. Until she found out her bed was not the only one he shared. The months of lies no teeny aside, it was also a combination of hygienic and practical issues that killed it for her, there was even chemistry involved: Lucy knew two essences required a closed vessel to do their best work. After that disappointment, she slipped another coat of armor over the first.

Deeper pleasures rippled in her groin when she was in nature, or in *her* nature: feeling good in her skin, happy and working on something exciting, sculpting or drawing, or even reading: A party scene in a novel in which a woman, dressed in a tuxedo, was flirting with the woman next to her turned Lucy on so much she read it again and again. As did another scene in another novel where a married mother blisses out during a secret summer affair with a young man at her cottage. The daring play across borders and limits thrilled her. Yet it scared Lucy to realize she was attracted to women, society certainly made it uneasy to explore that, she thought. When her modeling teacher joked, “God, imagine how exhausting it is to be bisexual, everybody turns you on,” Lucy sighed and wondered what kind of exhausting life awaited her because it seemed to her that it was life itself that turned her on.

This arousal seemed too volatile and unheard of to be trusted. And why did people have to label their sexuality, Lucy wondered, why couldn't they just live it? She deferred the rushes and vibrations mounting in her because she had never heard of sex talked about in the way it seemed to be coming alive in her, and she wondered if there was something wrong with her. She found she was attracted to authorities, teachers, managers, professors, people she wanted to be, who had qualities she wanted to develop in herself. Some let her close to them, privately, and at the risk of arrest. One recent divorcee twenty-five years her senior initiated her to the arts of non-reproductive lovemaking. He cared for her, too, it must be said, but he had to drop her. One might say Lucy slanted all of her experiments toward proving her hypothesis that men would only hurt her. She simply followed her feeling. Males could be her friends, she noticed, until sex was involved. It seemed she would have to choose between love and sex, and she felt safer not loving. In the span of a couple of years, Lucy concluded that her desire was more powerful than its consummation and the best she could do was carry a good shield.

What she couldn't understand, though, was why more boys her own age did not ask her out. Her brother, Blaze, suggested a possible reason: "If you didn't talk, they would." This only puzzled her more.

The summer after she graduated from high school she begged her mother to let her visit Candice, who was modeling in Chicago. Her mother shouted, "You're only seventeen years old. Do you have any idea what can happen to you in a city that size?" When Lucy said, "I'm your daughter, what could possibly happen that I can't handle?", Viola let her go. After looking through a pile of Candice's portfolio pictures, Lucy was wistful, wondering again if modeling could give her the worldly life she was dreaming about. It seemed like such a risk. She also thought about the acceptance letter she had received from the University of Iowa. She still wanted to travel but she also wanted a college education. She could feel Candice's eyes on her profile as she heard her kind voice, "You could make a good living doing this, you know?"

Lucy turned. "You really think so?"

"Yeah, you just need pictures and an agent. You have a great nose."

"Hmm, a nose model?" They both laughed. "But I want to go to college, and tuition to any university in Chicago is out of the question."

That August she packed up her things. Her mother and grandmother were waiting on lawn chairs in the sun as she loaded the trunk. Lucy dangled the keys. "I'll drive."

Viola stood. "I am driving my daughter to college."

“You can just drop me at the dorms.”

Viola, who didn't believe that a college education was as important as her husband did, flipped. “Did you ever think that it might mean something to your mother and grandmother to take you out to lunch and spend a little time with you when we take you off to college for the first time?”

Grandma Bighart, who, like Grandma Pilgrim, had never had a driver's license, raised her index finger in the air. “I only finished the eighth grade, honey. My mother made me quit school to stay home and help her. The proudest days of my life were when I saw my daughter graduate from high school, and when I saw her driving a car. Now, look at you.”

Lucy lifted her arms in truce, hung her head in mock shame, and then glanced at Viola, who days before had called her her problem child. “I thought you'd be happy to get rid of me.”

“You really get some damn dumb ideas in your head.”

During lunch, while her mother was in the ladies' room, Lucy asked what she had been wondering throughout the ride: “When did you leave home, Grandma. How long did you have to take care of everyone?”

Willa Bighart sipped her iced tea, set it back on the table, “I was twenty. I'd been taking care of my brothers and sisters since I was thirteen. We lived out in the boonies. I know it's not kind to bad-talk the dead, but my mother was not a kind woman. One day your grandpa was coming to pick me up, and I was wearing what we called knickers then, short pants just below the knees, which were the fashion. My mother told me I wasn't going anywhere in those.

Your grandpa drove up in his jalopy and I got in and rode into town with him.
Never looked back, never went back.”

Lucy raised her glass. “Cheers to you, Grandma.”

That fall, just to see, Lucy sent pictures of herself to the top modeling agencies in New York City. One week later a booker from Vanity Fair called and asked her to come to meet the owner. It was the first time she had ever flown, and Lucy loved being in the clouds. She stared out the window most of the way, in the cab to the city, too, following the line of skyscrapers back up to where she had just come from. The driver pulled to the curb in front of the Blackstone Hotel, a narrow fifteen-story brick building on 58th Street. The stout balding concierge smiled from his wood-framed window, lifted the key off the wall and nodded toward the elevator. Lucy felt like she was being given a pass to adulthood, which also made her feel like an impostor, as if someone might stop her anywhere along the way and ask her who the hell she thought she was and where the hell she thought she was going.

The suite was empty and dark. The carpet, bedspreads, curtains, walls, and towels were all teal, making for a theatrical blue room quality. Lucy opened the curtains and looked down to the street. Two blocks to the west were the Plaza Hotel and Central Park. She turned on the radio to a man's voice giving a Manhattan traffic report. As she changed clothes, she felt as if she were stepping through space into a different dimension that had always been there, yet not, as if she were in a sort of real dream world.

The phone rang and it was her mother checking in to make sure she'd arrived. "So what kind of cathouse do they have you in out there?"

"What do you mean, cathouse?" Lucy had no idea what she was talking about.

“Never mind.”

Vanity Fair was on the 25th floor of a reflecting skyscraper on 57th Street. As Lucy waited for the elevator, a woman she recognized from a television commercial walked in and stood next to her: she looked like a modern street-wise Snow White in jeans, a white t-shirt, and leather jacket. In the elevator mirrors, Lucy saw a chic New Yorker next to a provincial Midwesterner. When they reached the agency’s floor, she hung back, let the already-working girl walk through the glass doors ahead of her.

A trim pointy-breasted woman with red curly hair piled on top of her head sat erectly at the reception desk wearing a headset. A hallway departed from either side of her. Her voice was soft and rich with a lilting Swedish accent as she announced on the sound system “Serena, Lucy Pilgrim is here to see you,” then pushed the microphone away from her mouth and nodded toward the black leather couch with a smile. “Please, have a seat.”

The walls were lined with magazine covers featuring Vanity Fair models and Lucy’s favorite, Julie Nancy, was on many. She probably sat right here, too, Lucy told herself, as two tall men in silk suits strutted down the hallway towards her, ending a meeting, planning another. Lucy recognized Bill Zabub from pictures; a tall, portly man with dark hair parted on the side and falling over half his forehead, he had an aquiline nose, olive skin, a fine set of lips, and a little dimple in his chin. As he and his colleague stood in front of Lucy talking in deep smoky voices, wearing what smelled like matching musky perfume, Bill reached into his pocket, pulled out a pink lacy bra and panties, then dangled them in the air. “Now where did these come from?”

An elf-like woman with black curly hair, brown doe eyes, and red painted lips skittered down the other hallway, wearing high heels, a white lace body suit, and a black miniskirt. When she held out her tiny white hand and introduced herself, Lucy recognized Serena's voice. Serena looked Lucy up and down, then scratched her head in a way that made Lucy worry she didn't look the way they thought she would. Serena paused her gum chewing. "Follow me."

They turned to the left at the end of the corridor and entered a large open office space with a round table in the middle. Serena alighted onto her chair and spun a circle of files in the center of the table as if she were playing roulette. She came to Lucy's name, extracted what she had on her: the photos, the letter, a record of their phone conversations. "I need your birth date, telephone, and social security number," she penciled them in as Lucy recited them. "Now we just need to weigh and measure you."

Lucy began to calculate how many pounds her clothes alone added up to: wool pants, thick cotton long-sleeve shirt, wool sweater, corduroy jacket, suede boots. She stood on the scale against the wall inhaling Serena's powdery perfume as she watched her gold-laden fingers fidget with the balance. One hundred and forty-seven pounds. Having read that models weighed no more than one hundred twenty-five, Lucy thought her trip was already wasted.

The height was easy, painless. Five-foot ten. Then Serena unfurled a yellow tape measure. As she wrapped it around Lucy's bust, waist, then hips, Lucy withstood the temptation to blurt, "but my clothes are heavy and thick, and isn't that a little loose, here let me pull it a tad tighter." She had not yet learned that every model's card lied about her measurements.

37-26-38, Serena wrote carefully in big loopy numbers. Lucy thought about the so-called perfect measurements for a woman's body, 36-24-36, and

considered the trip wasted even further. Serena swiveled around in her chair, and dropped her teeny feet to the floor. “This is Apollyona.”

The gaunt woman around thirty who had been quiet at the desk in the corner moved one side of her long, straight, black hair behind her ear, motioned to the chair across from her. “Come and sit here in front of me.”

Apollyona sized Lucy up and down as she walked toward her, and then crossed her arms on the desk in front of her as Lucy sat. “I am the head of the New Faces division. In this department, we introduce you to photographers and help you put together a book of pictures to show to clients. Then we send you on “go-sees”, to go and see prospective clients. We also dispatch you on castings to meet clients who already have a specific job in mind. But before we talk anymore, I want you to meet the agency’s owner, Bill Zabub. He is the one who liked your pictures and is interested in you.”

Lucy thought that an interesting way for Apollyona to pass along the information that she was not as interested in her, and she was happy to see that she was a couple of inches taller than her as she stood. Apollyona was thin and flat chested, also wearing jeans, a white t-shirt, and black leather ankle boots. It seemed to be the New York fashion uniform. As Lucy followed her through the adjacent department, she paused to look at the piles of well-known models’ composites stacked on the shelves against the wall and enjoyed imagining her own among them. When she looked up, she saw Apollyona across the hallway, talking in front of what she assumed was Bill’s desk. Lucy glanced a glimmer of vulnerability in her there, embers of a kindness that seemed nearly burnt-out. Apollyona turned, and as quickly as she motioned Lucy into Bill’s office, the glimmer was gone.

Bill was on the telephone speaking French, running his hand through his hair. He nodded toward two brown leather armchairs. As Lucy sat, she saw the

photos she had sent from Iowa lined up in front of him, on top of his long maple desk. His double-breasted suit was open, along with a few buttons of his shirt. After he hung up the phone, he stretched his arms like a bird in mating season, and then dropped his elbows at the edges of Lucy's pictures. He joined his hands, rested his chin on top of them, and then gazed into her eyes. "Why do you want to be a model?"

"It looks like an interesting way to travel and make money."

He smiled. "I can give you a tour of the world." Lucy wondered if he thought that might put her bra or panties in his pocket. "I have agencies everywhere. And you have everything you need to become a star. All you need to do is lose a little weight."

Becoming a star seemed the least interesting prospect to Lucy as she scanned the Manhattan skyline through the wall of windows behind Bill. Instead, she imagined herself in European capitals, being photographed in studios there and being paid a lot for it, then sipping coffee and wine at outdoor cafés with foreign friends, walking the boulevards, crossing bridges, and strolling the narrow streets with wind blowing through her hair and a wistful smile on her face, of course. "How much?"

Bill reclined. "Do you know who Julie Nancy is?" Lucy nodded. "You remind me of her. When I met her she was waiting tables. I told her that if she lost twenty pounds I would get her a five-page spread in *Vogue*. She did it in three weeks. Lose twenty pounds and you will be perfect. Don't do any other exercises but running every day until you lose the weight. Eat only salads – that is what she did. She set aside her pre-law studies and you can see the successful career she has made for herself."

Lucy wanted it all: studies, modeling, and traveling. She thought she could make enough money to pay for it. “I would like to at least finish this semester of college.”

Bill leaned forward. “Drop the weight and come in January then. Nineteen is already getting old for this business. I like to get girls around sixteen, before they have a mind of their own and I can’t do anything with them.”

At that moment, Lucy considered it a rather unwise career move to ask Bill if he’d always been an asshole or exactly what had triggered the development of this attitude. Instead, she loaded her eyes with the information that her mind was indeed hers as they shook on the deal. Then she walked out of the building under a cloudless sky and headed for the park.

The Brandenburg Concertos and the smell of roasting chestnuts floated in the air as she strolled. She stopped and bought the tape from the vendor then walked farther north. In a clearing, she saw a man standing alone in the field she was approaching with the waist of his pants around his knees. He was pumping his arm and hand. She thought no, but it was yes, confirmed as she picked up her pace to pass quickly by. He bellowed, drawing out each vowel as long as each breath would allow, “Suuuuuuck myyyyyy diiiiick, suuuuuck myyyyyy diiiiick!”

Did life really all boil down to that for men? Lucy wondered, but couldn’t believe it and didn’t want to when she tried. Some men, maybe, she thought. Maybe even most, if she ventured. Some women, too, for all she knew. “They only want one thing and don’t give it to them. Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?” She’d heard that back in Iowa and thought moo? Me? Do I moo? I think not. Am I for sale? I think not. But suppose it for a split second; what milk? Ah, so that was the magnet in her breast and others’ hands. Sometimes it frightened her to think it might be true, that the world might be

structured as such that a woman had to use sex to get power. But, did men really only want *one* thing? How incredibly boring, how impossible for Lucy to imagine. How awful for them to get old, she thought, and then the *them* bothered her, too, she hated the way that people threw that four-letter word around to sum up half the population. She knew some men who were different, at least it seemed so. There must be more. She was different than most females she knew.

Her back now to the desperation that hung in the air like a swarming cloud of flies, Lucy scurried toward the crowds. As she calmed down, she looked into the faces of the people who passed, wondering about their dreams, wanting to tell them how far she'd come toward hers. She sat by the pond and watched kids remotely controlling miniature sail boats, some raced each other. Mothers and nannies pushed prams through the fallen golden and red leaves. In the afternoon, she walked downtown, imagining a life of her own in the city. She bought a fedora in a boutique in Soho, dined alone in Greenwich Village. It could be lonely, she thought, but also so exciting.

Three weeks later, Apollyona called. "It is important that we have some pictures when you arrive in January. Could you come to New York during your Thanksgiving break for some photo sessions? We will forward the cost of the photos and hotel expenses and deduct it when you work." Not knowing how to say "No, I am still too fat," Lucy ate as little and ran as much as she could, without fainting, for the next ten days. She forged her father's signature to receive a short-term loan for the ticket, told her parents that she was using savings.

The city was dark, gray and cold this time. The morning she arrived, Apollyona sent her to a former slaughterhouse on 20th Street. The stairwell was rough cement, the elevator was wide enough to fit at least five cows in. She knocked on a steel door, and a short, long-haired man with a scarred face opened it. "I am Hyde." He led her into the musty loft where there were two other models, a make-up artist, and hair stylist along with a couple of technical assistants. They were all sitting and eating at a long table under opaque windows. The makeshift table was filled with thick deli sandwiches, soft drinks, and water. Bright lights and a backdrop were set up on the other side of the loft. Off to the left was a wall-sized mirror with five stools in front of it, and a row of exposed light bulbs above it. Another sectioned-off area of the loft contained open boxes of clothes. Lucy declined the offer of a sandwich, and sat under the window, with a glass of water and a magazine, while everyone else ate, then was directed to the hair and make-up area with the two other girls. They were thinner than her and she wondered how they could eat the hero sandwiches they had and look like that. They didn't talk to each other, or to Lucy, and she didn't speak to them.

After the make-up artist finished working on her, Lucy was startled by her reflection. The rose blush on her cheeks looked like war paint, and it appeared she had a new mouth: lines drawn above and below her lips were filled in with pink lipstick. Lucy scrunched them up and around. The pale make-up artist patted her on the back. "You're ready for the hair chair."

The smell of hair spray and cigarette smoke made Lucy dizzy. She half-smiled into the mirror at the reflection of the skinny, dark-haired man in a tight black t-shirt and jeans standing behind her who placed his hands on her shoulders. "And what shall we do with you?"

"Your call?" He pulled her hair tight behind her head, then let it fall, sprayed it with water, blew it dry perfectly straight, added gel to immobilize it, then

curled it up at the ends. Thinking they must all know better than a girl from Iowa about what looks good in New York City, Lucy remained silent.

The other two girls rummaged through the boxes of clothes, making their selections. Lucy had no idea what to wear, what to do. She wondered if it was okay to say so as she stared at the collection of leotards, shirts, tights, and belts. Then she heard the shutter clicking. She walked toward the set to watch one model, then the other, posing, laughing, smiling. It seemed so easy. Hyde said, "Now jump," and the blonde model ran, and then jumped through the air across the set. Hyde turned to Lucy. "Help yourself to some clothes."

She pointed to her head. "I really don't know what to wear with this."

He scuffed over to the box in his new white sneakers, reached in, tossed her purple tights, a purple bodysuit, and a thick black belt. "Try this with your boots."

Lucy thought she looked like a cross between a Concord grape and Robin Hood. Her thighs trembled as she approached the set. "Run, then look at me as you leap across the set." Lucy gathered her courage, ran, and leapt. At least twenty times. When she heard, "We've got it," she thought, *we do?*

Then he tossed her turquoise tights, a turquoise body suit. "Put these on and go to the hair chair." Lucy closed her eyes as the chain smoker sectioned off half of her hair, then added more gel to stiffen it so it stuck straight out on one side. He gathered the other half into a tight bun at her nape. Now she thought she looked like a blue cockatoo. On the set, Hyde peered around the camera. "Just stand there and look at me." Lucy did. "Now move."

"Where?"

“Just move. I will shoot when it looks good.” Lucy lifted an arm. Moved a leg. Crossed them. Stood profile. Flinched with every click of the shutter. Hyde waved her off. “Okay, back to the chairs.”

Her nerves were soothed when her hair was let down and combed through. Hyde passed behind the chair, rested his hand on her shoulder. “The close-up is next. Accentuate her eyes,” then he looked in the mirror at Lucy, “You know you really have amazingly beautiful eyes.” His sincerity jarred her as another glob of gel hit her head.

Once again her hair was slicked and twisted into a ponytail, twirled around and stuck with pins. She slipped on the lilac polo and pink sweatshirt he’d given her and then sat Indian-style on the set. When he zoomed in on her face, she relaxed and peered into the lens knowing he appreciated her eyes. Those would be the only salvageable shots. Walking out of the studio that chilly evening, the smell of corner fires and exhaust mingling in the air, Lucy asked herself how long she could survive weeks of days like that. The only part she had liked was peering into the lens as if into a rabbit’s hole.

The next morning a pretty, female photographer in jeans and turtleneck opened the door upon which she knocked. Dove’s studio was clean and organized, a bright loft on the fourth floor, clear windows looking out onto the Hudson River, wood floors with a lemony scent reflecting the morning sun. She appeared so happy and comfortable with herself. Lucy thought she might prefer her job.

Dove joined Lucy on the couch, edged closer, glanced into Lucy’s eyes, and then scrutinized the features of her face. “We are going to shoot beauty this morning.” She smelled like orange blossoms. Lucy wondered what she would do if Dove kissed her. She thought it would be difficult to say no. “Focusing

on face, hair, and skin.” Dove caressed Lucy’s cheek. “You have lovely skin.” She pulled back to survey Lucy from more of a distance. “How long is your hair?”

Lucy undid the ponytail and let it fall. Dove ran her fingers through it. “To feel the texture.” The door buzzed. Two women, one tall and one short, each with pixie haircuts, both wearing black, and carrying metal cases, walked in. After introductions they directed Lucy to a small paneled room off to the side, instructed her to sit on the red vinyl barbershop chair, whereupon she was swiveled as they considered angles and discussed plans. Dove stepped back. “Curl her hair, do some soft natural makeup, pinks, to start,” then left to set up the camera, backdrop, and lights.

The tall woman was the hair stylist. She plugged the electric curlers in, brushed Lucy’s hair, and then sprayed it. Lucy watched as she rolled the first few sections then sprayed each roller full of hair. After that, she closed her eyes until the woman patted her on the shoulder. “Time for make-up.”

The make-up artist returned with a cup of coffee, lifted Lucy’s chin with her fingers to get a closer look at her face. Then she set down her cup, swiveled Lucy to face the mirror, wrapped a fluffy white towel that smelled like pine around Lucy’s neck, patted her shoulders. “Let’s begin.” Lucy closed her eyes as the woman applied a rosemary moisturizer into her face and neck in delicate spiral movements, and then repeated the process with foundation. A light powdering was followed by swift brush kisses of rose blush along her cheekbones. The petite woman touched Lucy’s temples whenever she wanted her to open her eyes. As she worked, she prompted. “Open. Close. Look up. Look down.” Lucy slipped into a quasi-hypnotic state, time-traveling through memory and imagination.

This time when she looked in the mirror she liked what she saw. Her features were enhanced, not altered. The hairstylist removed the curlers, brushed and styled the hair with her fingers. Dove peeked in, “Ready?” then held a blouse the color of morning glories toward Lucy. “Put this on, then come to me.”

Lucy moved across the room as if on a red carpet, then perched herself on the tall wooden stool in front of the camera. Dove carried a fan over to the edge of the backdrop, aimed it at her, and then turned it on. A light wind blew steadily through her hair. “What do you want me to do?”

“Just relax and be yourself. Smile, but not every time. Play with the camera, and leave the rest to me.” Lucy gazed into the camera lens and thought of it as an intimate friend. Dove shot a couple of Polaroids to test the light. She shook them as she waited for them to expose, looking at Lucy’s face as if perceiving something uncommon she’d missed before. She ripped off the coating then moved closer so that Lucy could also see the Polaroids. The images looked like magazine covers. Dove loaded the film and shot one roll of thirty-six takes. And then another. The first smile was easier for Lucy than the fiftieth.

That afternoon, in another studio, in another loft in the village, the photographer, a tall man in his thirties with a beard and nimble hands, placed tiny model cars all over the set around Lucy. “Play with them. Look surprised about how small they are.” Lucy stood over the cars in a short skirt, polka-dot body suit, and high heels, with one hand on her cheek, and her mouth in a big O, attempting variations on that for three rolls of film.

She ended the day with a sense of longing. Despite the morning’s sensual pleasure, it was all too passive, and out of her control. There was a vague uneasiness coupled with the pleasure of being pampered. She could only see the irrelevancy of what she had been doing. Yet, the possibility of

cosmopolitan adventure within it still glimmered like a lodestar. She wanted to learn to make the most of her raw beauty and she thought modeling could teach her that as well as take her places. She lifted the collar of her jacket around her neck as she walked. The trees, where she spotted them, were bare, and the sky felt like a vacant, gray stare. Pollution coagulated in the cold air. Men in fingerless gloves warmed their hands above fires on the corner of Broadway and 20th. People passed, Lucy looked for faces but all heads were down, protecting themselves from the wind, perhaps the world.

The Monday after Thanksgiving Lucy was dressing a mannequin in the clothing boutique where she worked when an associate called her to the phone. It was Apollyona. “After looking at the slides it seems that you still haven’t lost enough weight and we no longer feel prepared to represent you.”

Lucy took a few steps back into the small office, slid the door shut. “I am sure I can lose the weight by January as was originally planned.”

“In our experience the girls who really want it lose the weight right away. If it is difficult for you, that is not a good sign.”

“I went slowly because I thought I had more time, I didn’t say no to you but I should have. Just give me until January as originally planned.”

There was a pause. “Okay, but I am not promising you anything.”

“I am not asking for promises.” After she hung up, she called back, and asked for Serena. “Could you send me those slides that Apollyona just called me about?”

“First thing tomorrow.”

Lucy slid open the door, then smiled at the nosy associate lingering nearby. She went back to the display window and slipped the red wool skirt slung over her arm onto the mannequin. She never told anyone about that phone call.

The slides arrived within a week. Lucy waited until she was home alone during Christmas break to look at them closely. Up in her warm paneled room, she turned the key in the ceramic lantern on her desk, and then held each slide above it to look at them again through a loupe. The first ones she saw were of her in the leotards. They were so awkward and awful she wondered if Hyde had intended sabotage. The others stunned Lucy by their beauty, even if that one with the little cars was silly.

One by one she cracked the ones she didn't like in half then threw them away. She carried the worst into the bathroom and put a match to them above the toilet basin, watching the awful images of her curl, melt, and fall into the water. Then she scooped them out, wrapped them in paper towel, and went downstairs. It was near midnight, a full moon was glistening on rolling blankets of snow outside the picture window as she walked through the den. Her mother was in bed watching television, the smell of pork chops and apple sauce lingered. The house was quiet save the sound of her father shaking peanuts over a bowl of vanilla ice cream and chocolate syrup. When Lucy passed through the kitchen, he glanced at the concoction in her hand. "What the hell is that?"

"Just some slides from the shoot in New York that I don't need." She opened the door and carried them to the wastebasket in the garage, lifted the lid and pushed them to the bottom of the bag. When she came back inside, she sat down at the table.

Her father examined her face. “I don’t understand why you want to pursue such a career. I have to say I envision much more for you.”

“I want to see the world, Dad. I see modeling as a means, not an end. Why not try if I have the chance?”

Her father raised and opened his hands to hold the possible emptiness of the decision. “Why not wait and go in the summer? That way if you don’t like it, you won’t have lost any school.”

The next morning, Lucy called Apollyona. “I’ve been thinking it would be smarter for me to finish the school year. Will you still be willing to see me in May?”

“I told you I won’t make any promises, Lucy, but you can stay in the model’s apartment when you come and I will see you.”

Tom was reading the paper when she came downstairs. Viola was griddling pancakes. “I called New York this morning.” Lucy stood behind her father, massaging his broad, tight shoulders as she looked out over the snow-covered valley, “I told them I will come in May.”

He cocked his head. “Now that makes a hell of a lot more sense.”

Lucy patted his shoulders. “Dollars, Dad, think dollars.”

She lost the weight gradually, and sent weekly postcards to Apollyona to report her progress. By May she weighed 130 pounds. A friend didn’t

recognize her when he saw her walking down the street on a windy day. “You are going to blow away if you get any thinner.”

She played “New York, New York” repeatedly at her good-bye party, singing along. She was sure this was the beginning of her exciting life.

Apollyona looked up from her desk when Lucy walked in, then picked up and waved her most recent postcard in the air. “You are a persistent girl. Let me take a look at you.” She smiled while circling and scanning Lucy from head to toe. “You have definitely lost weight. Let’s put you on the scale.” Lucy stepped up. “136, hmm,” then turned to Serena, “measure her.” Serena unfurled the tape.

“It’s a definite improvement.” Apollyona looked over the numbers. “But you still need to lose another six or seven pounds. We will arrange a weekly weigh-in to monitor your progress but we can start some photo sessions now. Just keep exercising and watch what you eat.” *That won’t take long*, Lucy thought as Apollyona nodded toward Serena. “Make a hair appointment for her. Ask for Carlos. He’ll know what to do with her.” She looked at Lucy. “Hair cuts for Vanity Fair models are free. Tip the woman who washes your hair five dollars and Carlos, fifteen.”

Lucy left with an address and a three-o’clock appointment, wondering what she was going to do until then, now that lunch was out of the question. She walked back to the Blackstone. One of the finest looking young men she had ever seen was running his hand through his long blonde hair and laughing with the concierge. Lucy thought he looked like a European orchestra conductor. As she admired him, another handsome male stepped out of the elevator and said hello. He was Italian-American, muscular, tall, and dark, and wearing a white tank top and little blue nylon shorts. Lucy didn’t know which way to turn. She decided on the cozy coffee shop off the lobby, poked some coins in the

newspaper vending machine, and then ordered black coffee, no sugar, no cream. She sat at a little table in front of the square-paned window that looked out on 58th Street.

“Are you in staying in the models’ suite?” The man she had admired smiled warmly, extended his hand to clasp hers. “I’m Ransom. That was my roommate who just left. We’re also in a model suite, at the other end of the hall. When did you arrive?”

“Yesterday I just met with the agency this morning.”

“Did they treat you well?”

“They want me to have my hair cut this afternoon. And they are going to set me up for a weekly weigh-in. Do they do that to everyone?”

Ransom waved a hand in the air. “They say that to all the girls all the time just to keep them on their toes. I have to run now. Stop by and see me sometime.”

The hair salon was on 52nd Street, a long narrow modern space on the second floor with a wall of windows to the street. Carlos, a Mexican in his thirties, Lucy thought, stared at her as if she were a blank canvas, and then waved his fine-toothed comb in the air as if he knew exactly what to do, then used it as a flag for her to follow him. After a warm relaxing wash, condition and head massage by a young Mexican woman, she was served a bottle of water from Finland on a silver platter. She thought of grass clippers as she watched Carlos’ with his crafty scissors, and she quietly bemoaned the loss of her long hair, now falling in sheaths to the floor below. She sat staring at her new pert bob in the mirror, Carlos proud behind her, and thought it was more appropriate for someone she didn’t want to be: someone cute. Lucy wanted to

be gorgeous. She sighed, she'd try it their way first. What did she know about what worked or didn't in the New York modeling world?

When she arrived to the agency, Apollyona and Serena looked up and stared at her for a while. Then Apollyona moved around her again, as if studying a statue, and Lucy stopped herself from cracking up at the absurdity of her position. "I'm going to set up some tests for you on Thursday. But you have to get some different clothes. Even just jeans and a T-shirt, that's what most of the girls wear. Or leggings and brightly colored tees. You can find them cheap at Alexander's." Wonderful, Lucy thought, cheap clothes to look like all the other girls. She liked her khaki pants and pink-striped Dior top. She moved toward the windows. The street below looked like a board game with moving characters. She watched a tiny man in a navy suit buying a miniature hot dog from a jelly-bean-shaped vendor on the corner. Then she heard Apollyona. "I feel a lot better about her now."

Lucy turned. Serena's eyes warned, "don't pay any attention to her."

Apollyona stretched out her arm to give Lucy the address. "Keep working on your diet."

Lucy found Alexander's on the corner of Third Avenue and 57th Street and thought it an architecturally uninteresting, overwhelming nightmare of a place, a monument to inconsequential choice, with racks and racks of clothing and accessories. She took three steps inside, one look, and walked out. She felt like they were trying to turn her into a clone. It started to drizzle. She opened her umbrella and walked on wondering how long she should just do it their way, how much that would cost, how would she stand out dressed like everyone else with a cute haircut? Pausing at Park Avenue and 58th Street, she stared

south at the gilded Grand Central station; it represented everything she was dreaming about, this golden white hub that connected to so many others. She imagined all the trains coming and going, she saw all the ground that was covered in between, the smooth tracks, the bends in them, the travelers' goodbyes and hellos. She loved the way it was both home and destination, arrival and departure.

When she arrived at the suite, there was a large tired woman and a young voluptuous girl on the couch. The woman's strong southern accent rolled across her tongue with her hello. The girl was playing with a box of *Anaïs Anaïs* perfume. "Some man gave me this on the plane from Milan, Mama, wasn't that nice of him?" As she stretched out lengthwise and opened a pint of ice cream, the curls of her long, black hair nestled into her impressive bosom. Her eyes were big and brown and her lips were plump. A stack of European magazines were piled on the carpet next to her.

Her mother saw Lucy glance at the covers. "Those are for her brothers. She likes to show them the work she has done." Lucy felt a pang, wondering if her own brothers would even look at hers.

The girl smiled. "I'm only 15. That is why my mama goes with me everywhere."

Lucy wondered if the mother—a good sixty pounds overweight, with greasy short dark hair that was gray an inch from the roots, large dark circles under her eyes, wearing stretch polyester and a smock top—had once looked like her buxom fashionable daughter.

"I'm Dolores. How is work going for you, honey?"

Dolores seemed sincere so Lucy was honest. “I just arrived. Today the agency told me they want me to lose more weight before they send me to meet clients.”

Dolores shook her head. “Those damn girls are crazy. They said the same thing to the girl who is on the cover of *Seventeen* this month. Well she marched right out of there and went over to American and has been working well ever since.” Lucy sighed. Dolores picked up her white vinyl purse, pulled a yellow piece of legal pad paper folded in quarters out of it, opened and glanced over it. “This here’s a diet that is guaranteed to help you lose seven pounds in one week. You have to follow it to a T though, honey.”

As Lucy stood up from the couch to reach for it, Dolores looked her body over, and then looked at her daughter. “I really don’t see where this girl needs to lose more weight.”

The girl had ice cream in her mouth. She pondered Lucy’s body, slid the spoon from her tongue “she’s just a bit wide around the hips,” and then burrowed into the container for another scoop. Lucy read the diet. One plain yoghurt and one cup of black coffee in the morning, a can of stewed tomatoes for lunch, another for dinner. For seven days.

Those first days Lucy walked and slept as much as she could not to think about how she was starving herself. She was often dizzy, and getting a kind of hollow, hungry look about the eyes. She and Ransom ran five miles a night in the park. Evenings, bored with the girls in her suite, she walked down the hall to the male models’ suite and hung out with Ransom and his roommates. She liked to watch the newest lodger, a college boy from Duke with a long shock of tawny hair across his forehead, a golden tan, and green eyes. Listening to him and Ransom complain about regularly posing eight hours a day in a

variety of groom's gear for bridal magazines provided Lucy with much-needed laughter.

"Beauty shots," Apollyona announced on Wednesday. Lucy wrote down the address. It was Hyde's.

He didn't recognize her and she didn't remind him. As she showed him the clothes she had brought along, it dawned on him. "Hey. Wow. You look great, you lost a lot of weight." Lucy wondered why people couldn't just say you look great and leave it at that. The hairdresser styled her new bob all curly and wild. She slipped on her turquoise top, and Hyde wrapped a white fish net around her neck, "for effect." He and Apollyona liked the shots made that day. They thought she looked sexy and sophisticated. Lucy thought she looked mean and overdone.

The day after the last day of her stewed tomato diet, Ransom invited her to a little pasta kitchen on Broom Street. Lucy treated herself to a plate of *tagliatelle al vongole* and a couple of glasses of white wine. After talking about his work in Paris, Milan, and Munich, Ransom lifted his glass. "You have to see Europe, Lu. We'll travel together." Lucy clinked her glass with his, searching his eyes for some clue as to why he had never touched her in more than a friendly way. They'd be running, laughing, watching movies, and talking daily. Sometimes she wondered if only gay men were refined, and she suspected Ransom was, yet she wasn't sure and didn't ask as days ago, when she'd pointed to the little photo of a woman he had stuck to his bedroom mirror in the suite, a vague expression came over his face and he uttered, "that was my girlfriend."

On weigh-in day, Apollyona shuffled the weights and Lucy watched them balance out at 131. Apollyona looked at the clipboard in her hand and Lucy's chart. "You have lost six pounds. But you have to go further. In the meantime, we will keep shooting and I have some go-sees for you." While Apollyona wrote the addresses on a square white notepad, Lucy wondered if she could face another can of stewed tomatoes. "This is a good photographer up on 83rd Street. Go and see him this afternoon." Apollyona handed Lucy the address without looking up from her desk.

This photographer's studio was a third-floor walk-up. Lucy stepped back when Chris opened the door. He looked like a gentle giant as he ducked to fit into the frame. His bright smile, handsome Seminole features, and ease put Lucy at hers. He looked carefully at the few pictures she had. "Could I make some Polaroids of you?" She nodded. He aimed the lens at her. "Just look off into the sky in thought."

"That's my specialty." Lucy did, he shot, and that was it. It amazed her how quickly these things could go. The phone was ringing when she arrived at the suit, it was Serena calling to say Chris wanted to shoot with her the next morning.

He was making coffee when she arrived, then offered her a cup as her hair was being styled. When she stood in front of him in a white linen dress, on white paper, in front of a low speed fan he cut it. "Just wait a minute." He dashed out the door and returned with a large bouquet of daisies which he held out to her. Lucy loved it. They shot several rolls as she held them behind her back like a waiting surprise, tilting and reclining her head, closing her eyes, smiling into the air. She imagined herself in the midst of country breezes in a field of wildflowers, and then she began to woo the camera. It was so much easier with

a photographer she liked. The fan cut, brought her back to the studio. “Lie down now and look at me, please.”

Lucy rested her belly on the floor, her chin on her crossed arms. Chris lay down on his belly, too, and shot close-ups of her face, front on. Lucy pretended the lens were the eyes of a lover, and invited, questioned, confirmed, cajoled, teased, and played coy with her face alone. Chris clicked until he couldn’t anymore, and then looked at the picture count on the camera. He sighed. “No more film.” Lucy didn’t move; she looked at him. He shook his head as if he could not believe something. “How old are you?”

“Nineteen.”

“Really watch it in this business.” It sounded as if he’d seen ruin. “I think you are going to be very big.” Lucy walked out of studio on air, with the wonderful feeling that she had been seen.

When she weighed-in the next week, she had lost another five pounds. 126. Apollyona quickly took the phone and made an appointment for her to test with a famous French photographer. She surprised Lucy by lifting her own black bodysuit out of her satchel and handing it to her. “Wear this.”

The studio—a huge, open loft with windows all along the walls—was on lower Fifth Avenue. Lucy’s hair was pulled back and clipped up, her eyes strongly lined. Barely clothed, she stayed back when introduced to the photographer. It was too weird to her that he was fully covered and she was in a bodysuit. He was full of energy, positive, and flirty, jumping around wearing a headset while giving her directions via microphone from behind the camera. Lucy tried to imagine what it was like to make a living as he did, and

wondered how it would be if he were in a bodysuit, too, which made her smile as she took her place in front of the pink backdrop. He looked closer at her face and ordered heavier make up. The make up artist rushed in to fulfill his wishes, adding more powder, lipstick, and lining Lucy's eyes more thickly, then scurried away until the photographer nodded his approval. "Just stand profile, lift your arms straight into the air, and then look at me." Lucy stretched like a cat and looked across the room into the lens with curiosity in one eye and warning in the other.

As soon as they finished, she rushed off, in the same make-up and hair, but in her own little black summer dress, one she had been pleased to find at Alexander's the day before, a boat neck with a big circle cut out of the back, exposing the area between her wings.

The Water Club was an old steamer converted into a restaurant on the East River. Lucy walked through the plush lobby and up the iron stairs to the offices. The owner of the restaurant, a proud man with short, gray hair and a finely cut beard of the same color, came to a sharp halt when he saw her. Lucy liked this attention but it also made her nervous because she thought it was more about the way she looked than who she was. "Do you work here?"

"Apollyona from Vanity Fair sent me, she told me you are looking for hostesses."

"A hostess is a boring job. Would you like to work as a cocktail waitress on the Upper Deck? You can make more money. See Carol, the manager."

"Thank you." Lucy scurried down the stairs as gracefully as she could, all the time aware that his eyes were on her tail feathers. Other restaurant workers

below stopped what they were doing to watch her descent. She wanted to throw up her arms and declare, “I didn’t do it.”

On Monday she picked up the slides from the daisy shoot. They looked more like paintings than photographs, filled with mood and artistry, and she and Chris loved them. She called and accepted the cocktail waitress job. The next morning Apollyona sent her to a casting for Clairol. Lucy felt like she was on her way. Waiting in the reception area on the 17th floor of a building overlooking Manhattan, leafing through *Esquire* magazine, she stopped at an advertisement for a man’s cologne. *Life’s an Adventure, Live It*, the caption under the image read. Now that was her language. She stared at the photo of a dark-haired man with penetrating blue eyes, a French engineer, the small print said, and “I want to meet that man” tumbled out of her mouth. The young woman sitting next to her looked as surprised to be spoken to as Lucy was to have spoken. Her name was called. She closed the magazine.

Just as Lucy thought everything was going in the right direction, Apollyona called to say she would like her to come in for a weigh-in and a talk. Lucy didn’t like the sound of it. When she arrived, she noticed the slide projector on Apollyona’s desk, the way Apollyona dodged in and out of the office, how Bill peeked in and told Apollyona that he heard she was looking for him. There was something disturbing in the way Apollyona was slinking out and back in, until finally, she illumed the machine, and projected the slides of Lucy’s test with the French photographer onto the wall. Lucy’s eyes widened as the beautiful larger-than-life images of her appeared. Apollyona plucked a wooden pointer from behind her desk, then pointed and rested the tip of it over the image of Lucy’s belly. She sounded like an economic advisor talking about excess spending as she reported, “This is still too much. I am afraid we are going to have to let you go.”

Lucy peered. She could make out a slight bump there, perhaps a millimeter. She turned and looked into Apollyona's gray eyes, noticing for the first time how many red lines were on her corneas. "I have talked with Bill and we both agree. He was really positive about you in the beginning, but it looks like you are just not the type. You are a very nice girl. I have even received phone calls about how pleasurable it is to work with you. I just don't think you have the body to be a model." She replaced the stick in the corner, and then crossed her arms in front of her.

Lucy glared at her, thinking how she had been sitting here for almost an hour waiting for this painful nonsense. Apollyona could read her face. "Lucy, when I was your age, I wanted to be a model more than anything else in the world. But finally I had to accept the fact that I wasn't built like a model and get on with my life." Apollyona wasn't pretty enough to be a model, either. Lucy noticed she didn't mention that. "You are a bright, charming, pretty girl – you have your whole life ahead of you, it is just silly to waste your time this way."

Lucy knew there was obviously something more going on than a millimeter swell on her belly she could barely see. What she could clearly see was that Apollyona was projecting herself onto that wall. She knew she was right about her brightness, charm and prettiness but whether modeling was a waste of her time yet, she would decide. It seemed fruitless to attempt to persuade Apollyona anymore, the best thing to do was quickly accept this sad end to things at *Vanity Fair*. Life ahead of her or not, one thing she knew was she did not want to turn around and head back to Iowa. She stared out the window, wondering if the cocktail job would cover her expenses. "I'd really like to stay in New York, at least for the rest of the summer. Could I work here in the agency as a booker or something?"

Apollyona shook her head. “It’s not my policy to hire models just after they have stopped modeling. I think it is better if you go and work at another job for a while and then decide if you want to stay in this business but on the other side. For now, you can stay in the model’s suite through the weekend.”

Apollyona gave Lucy all of the slides from her shoots, which Lucy added to those from Chris that she had been excited to show her, but had never found the opportunity. It was a dreary walk down the hall, past the Swedish receptionist and the framed cover girls. Back on the street on a sunny afternoon in early June, she walked toward the Blackstone, and then not wanting to face anyone, she detoured toward the park. She sat on a bench in front of The Plaza, watching people milling and rushing about in expensive cars and clothes, and wondered if a luxury jet-set life was as easily attainable and comfortable as it looked. Luxury alone wasn’t enough for sure, but she still wanted to go places in style. Perhaps that was silly, she thought, but she refused to turn back now. She was not out any money, and she had piles of new slides to use for her book. It wasn’t the end.

That night as they ran through the park, Ransom proposed a solution. “Why don’t you move in with us? We could share my room. You would have your own bed. Depending on whether there are three or four of us, rent would only be four – or three – hundred a month.”

Lucy moved in the next morning, then dressed and made the rounds to all the top agencies. “One said to come back when I have more pictures, another said “Go to Europe”, two others said I am not exotic enough, another said I am “too commercial”, whatever that means,” she tossed those words in the air that afternoon Central Park.

Ransom looked at her. “It means you can make money is what it means. Most of the so-called editorial models, the ones in the fashion pages, but not in the advertisements, are making about a hundred dollars a day. They want the kind of money you can make in commercials and ads.”

Lucy liked the sound of it, and still believed she could do it, but she had her fill of rejection, diets, and looks. She asked for more hours at The Water Club, and began working five nights a week, spending the rest of her time hanging out in New York City. She never told her parents the agency let her go, she did tell them she had a different room number, and that she wasn’t usually there, so not to bother calling.

One evening, a woman who looked like her first modeling agent in Iowa sat at one of her tables. As Lucy served her a margarita, the woman touched her arm and looked at her in earnest. “I think you should come to Giorgio’s model farm in South Carolina.”

Lucy imagined a yard full of pecking models being crated up. “Farm?”

“It’s a beautiful farm. Girls come and stay, get in perfect shape, learn the ropes of the business. You leave with a great look and a book full of pictures, ready for any agency in Europe. It’s only eight hundred dollars.”

“No thanks.”

The woman sighed. “Here’s my card, think about it, you certainly have what it takes.”

Lucy liked hearing that, even though she still did not want to more. She didn’t think of it as giving up, but as putting aside her dream of seeing the world, maybe she would find another way. In any case, she was more inclined to

believe her dad when he reminded her over the phone, “Getting your degree might not make a big difference to you now, but it will twenty years down the road.”

“Luce, I want to make love to you,” Ransom said the night before she left. They were paused on the gangway of The Water Club, after her going-away party.

Lucy rested her head against his shoulder and let him put his arms around her. “It’s because you are high.”

Ransom lifted her chin with his forefinger and kissed her softly on the lips. “Listen, if I am going to make love with a woman, it has to be you.” In the taxi, he kissed her neck, and then his tongue was in her ear, and then he was fiddling with the buttons down the front of her black cigarette pants. He undid them one by one then slid his hand beneath her silk underwear. All of this felt good, strange, and sweet to Lucy. “Now what do I do?”

Lucy lifted her chin toward the driver. “Why don’t you ask him?”

“Luce, please.”

She whispered. He fumbled. The taxi pulled over to the curb at Park and 58th. Lucy was staring at Grand Central Station in the rearview mirror. Ransom’s head was resting against her chest and she was playing with his hair. “We’re here.”

They stood, hand in hand, looking up and down Park Avenue. The avenue, sidewalks, and facades were slick and quiet after a light rain shower. Ransom pointed to the Waldorf-Astoria. “Some day we will live there in a wonderful

suite.” Lucy rolled her eyes, she knew they wouldn’t but it was pretty, kind of, she smiled, to think so. They walked toward Madison and The Blackstone and then began kissing in the elevator.

They were now living alone in the suite. In the bedroom, Lucy started searching through her drawers. “What are you looking for?”

She looked at Ransom in the mirror above the dresser. “Some protection.”

“C’mon Lucy, I want to feel you. You are not going to make me wear a condom on my first experience with a woman are you?”

“It is not a condom I am looking for. If you must know, it’s a diaphragm.”

“Yes, I must know. I want to know everything. What is a diaphragm? Show it to me, will you? Show me how it works.” Lucy figured she could either offer herself up as an experimental guinea pig, or forget it. It fit well into her sexual research approach, and she was honored that her friend wanted it to be her. He watched her squeeze the gel around the edges of the diaphragm. “God, straight sex is messier than gay sex.”

“That’s hard to believe.” Lucy looked at him. His long back was propped up against pillows, he tossed off the sheet and Lucy stared at his body. Wide shoulders, tapered torso, long lean legs. An inviting penis, curled in its nest. Smooth, lightly tanned skin. When she sat down on the bed, he pulled her toward him. They kissed and caressed each other lovingly, tenderly, playfully. Lucy felt love, and experimentation, but not passion in it. There was the pleasure of two different skins getting to know each other. Ransom pulled away, stared at the ceiling, dropped his forearm across his forehead. “It’s no use.”

Lucy smoothed his hair. “I imagine even a straight man would have difficulty after that many martinis.”

As if struck by a brilliant idea Ransom sat up. “I know. Let’s go upstairs and get Randy. That way he can get me excited, and then I can make love to you.”

That hurt Lucy even if she could understand it. It was one too many ingredients for her experiment. Randy was a handsome Scottish model Lucy barely knew and she had no interest in his being a jump-start for lovemaking to her. “You go upstairs if you like, Ransom, but I am not interested in making love to you through a stranger.”

Ransom slipped into the bathroom for a long time. When he returned and sat next to her, he whispered, “Luce, are you still awake?” She pretended not to hear him, listened as he gently closed the bedroom door behind him, and turned on the television. When she woke the next morning, and he was not there, she felt abandoned, somewhat, but imagined he was doing whatever it was he had to do. Her diary was lying open on the dresser. Ransom had pasted a small photo of himself in the upper right hand corner of a fresh manila page, and written *As you venture back to Iowa, Do Not get detoured by complacency.*

She was surprised how moved she was to see her parents when she stepped off the plane, how good, yet sad, it felt to be home. The next day she was sitting with her grandfather in his back yard, eating salted slices of his homegrown tomatoes at the picnic table under the maple tree. It smelled like curling leaves. The red wing black birds were calling to each other, the horses grazed in the sloped pasture beyond the barbed wire fence. New York City disappeared.

Love came and went as Lucy finished her degree, a highly marketable B.F.A. in sculpture. She went through an anti-beauty phase where she refused to do anything extra to make herself attractive but she soon tired of that. Her hankering for travel and excitement remained intact, well fed by Ransom's letters and postcards from European capitals. Proving Apollyona wrong popped into her mind now and then, as well. But what marked her most, during those next two years, was the sight of her mother's knees buckling, and her heels spiking into the wet ground as she strove for balance on the gray, sad October day Grandma Bighart was buried.

Unable to let go, Lucy put her modeling shoes back on at 23. In Chicago. Her agent, Angelina, picked up a loupe and scrutinized the new photos. Without looking up, she blurted, “You need to get to Europe. Now.” Lucy braced herself on the desk, there it was, and once again, she was ready to go, but she was also hesitant. Angelina looked at her hands. “That’s a beautiful ring.”

Lucy saw Vic, the man she had decided it logical to marry, placing the little black box on their dining room table three nights before. “I just got engaged.”

Angelina shrugged. “It’s up to you. I can introduce you to agencies when they visit.”

Lucy walked along Michigan Avenue, thinking how ironic it was that the stability she had found with Vic, which she felt had made her able to face the modeling world again, might now separate them. They were from similar backgrounds, had similar interests, wanted similar lives; he was a dancer from the Michigan countryside who also wanted a freelance big-city sort of life. It was the first time Lucy was in a serious relationship with someone her own age. And the first time she enjoyed a man both in bed and out, and that alone seemed a recipe for success. There was a certain common sensical factor about their relationship that bothered her however, and she often pondered whether it was Vic that she wanted to be with, or if he simply fit the role of partner she had in mind. Her father’s words, “Are you sure, honey? You’re young. There’s no need to rush,” repeated in her mind as the cold wind off the lake stung her

cheeks. In some ways, she was getting married to feel more like her family and she knew that.

Once home, as Vic chopped garlic and she stirred oregano into the tomato sauce, and they looked like the happy young couple she imagined them to be, she slowly reeled out the news. “I always wanted to go to travel on my own. I can’t explain why, but I feel like I can’t get married until I have done that.”

Steam rose to Vic’s face as he strained the water off the spaghetti. “I don’t understand why you can’t be married and travel alone. I don’t mind,” he glanced her way, “as long as you come back.”

How could Lucy admit that she wanted to be engaged more than she wanted to be married? That she was happy just being a fiancée because it made her feel normal after years of feeling wild and alien? She shooed away his fears and felt her own lingering behind. “Of course I’ll come back.”

“However, in the meantime, dearie, if you want to work here in Chicago, you are going to have to start wearing makeup and dressing like a model,” Angelina warned the next time Lucy stopped in. “You have to get flashier. Clients have no imagination. You have to show them exactly what they are looking for. Dress and look the part.”

Lucy looked into the mirror and did not recognize herself. She walked into the bedroom and sat down on the edge of the bed watching the morning sun, softened through the steamed windows, patching rectangles of light on the cream walls. Vic opened his eyes, blinked a few times. “What’s wrong, baby?”

“I look at myself in the mirror, after I don’t know how much time of putting all this crap on my face and what I see is not who I am.”

He lifted himself to rest on his elbows and look at her. “You know that I think you are most beautiful au naturel. If you want to work as a model, maybe you have to get used to it. Anyway, what you are wearing outside doesn’t change who you are inside.”

Lucy flopped backwards across the bottom of the mattress. Why could she not just shelve this career, she wondered for the umpteenth time, and could not answer with anything other than that urge to go and see. “I am giving this until the end of the year. If nothing interesting happens by then, forget it.”

“You need some lingerie pictures in your book so you can do catalog work,” Angelina said as she sent her to a shoot.

Lucy flinched as the graying photographer scooped his hand inside the cup of the bra and lifted her breast to fit it more perfectly. “Don’t worry,” he smiled, “it is only for the pictures.” Lucy asked herself if it would be unprofessional to tell him to stop. She’d never done lingerie pictures before. Maybe this was the way it worked. She even went so far as to think she could pretend she was not a human being with feelings, to think she could detach herself from her body and watch this stranger moving her breast around like furniture, as if it were a breast on a body she happened to be inside of but not connected to. What a contortion. Somewhat like those one-armed hugs she’d come up with for her grandfather. But Lucy wasn’t putting those things together yet perhaps because she had been too young when they started to think there was any other way to be.

When the photographer approached her again, she lifted a hand, “I can arrange them. You just tell me what you want.” The rest of the shoot was awkward, cold, quick. She never told Vic. Instead she walked over to her friend, Faith’s, penthouse apartment on Ohio Street and while looking at Chicago glittering in the night, told her. She sighed, trying to figure out why it was so difficult sometimes for her to figure out what was right and wrong in a man’s behaviour. “Am I an idiot?”

“No, no,” Faith handed her a glass of wine. “That would be him.”

On a rainy Saturday afternoon not long after, another photographer wanted to put her in lingerie. This was a free test; he had asked her to come, offering shots for her book in exchange. She did have to do her own make-up and hair, and bring her own clothes. About the lingerie, she said, “I don’t feel comfortable that way.”

“What are you wearing under your jeans?”

“Underwear.”

“Will you let me shoot you in a T-shirt and those?”

“I guess.”

“Bring your jean jacket, too, and your jeans. No shirt under the jacket.” He offered her a cup of tea before he went back to finish preparing the set, then pointed out the makeup room on his way. “Put more black around your eyes.”

Lucy sipped her tea in the makeup room and darkened her eyeliner, added more mascara. She liked the way she looked like a raccoon. He peeped in and

then pointed, “Curl your hair more, there is a curling iron.” When her hair and eyes met with a nod of approval he directed her to the set, which was the entire back half of the first floor, overlooking an alley. He was standing just inside the door of the deep, white room, and motioned for her to stand in front of the opposite wall, between the two shaded windows. He pointed to the little microphone below his chin. “To communicate with you better.”

Lucy listened to the rhythm of the rain as his amplified voice echoed in the room. “Hold your tummy in, and just look at me. Now play with your T-shirt, lift it a bit.” Lucy curled it in her hands. “Now take it off.”

“No.”

He looked out from behind the camera, “You can still cover your breasts with it, but show your shoulders. And keep looking at me that way.”

Lucy wondered what way that was she turned her back, took off her shirt, held it in front of her, and then turned around. Every man who saw them loved those shots. Whenever Lucy looked at them she tried to figure out why. What she saw was vulnerability and fear, yet there was also a willingness to remain open and receptive in her eyes, that was the part she liked. What was it about this combination of fragility and strength men found attractive? Or did they even see that? What did they see? How could she know? When she asked, they usually shrugged.

The morning of the wedding she sat on the golden spread of her bed, rubbing her forehead with both hands and rocking back and forth as her Grandma Pilgrim used to. “I can’t do this. I cannot get up in front of all these people and do this.” Though her body was begging her not to, she married him. She felt like wild filly and master, breaking herself in. The ceremony and reception

took place in the ballroom of a riverboat on the Mississippi in the full color of autumn. They each wrote their own vow, and each kept it a secret to surprise the other. Lucy looked at her tall and handsome groom. "I will love you and believe in you." She left out fidelity because she was unsure she could live up to it. It baffled her, later, that she had not been more alarmed by this.

When Vic proclaimed, "I promise to challenge you," Lucy, with one hundred and fifty sets of eyes on her, wanted to bolt.

"I have a two-month ten thousand dollar contract for you to go to Japan on my desk," was the first message on the machine the day she and Vic returned from their honeymoon. Vic looked up from the wedding gift he was opening. She stared back at him, her ivory satin dress hanging over her arm, her eyes saying I have to go. He pecked her on the lips and left the room.

Lucy stared out at the last leaves on the catalpa, trying to understand why this was all happening now, when she'd all but given up on it. She called Angelina. "Are you sure?"

"Well, I think I know how to read, and I think you are Lucy Pilgrim. It's for March."

"Wow. I'll stop by tomorrow and sign." She hung up the phone and leaned back in the swivel chair. It was late afternoon, quiet. The dappled light was playing shadows on the wall. Lucy, who had felt in a cage since the wedding, which was unexpected, hoped it was just her imagination and wondered if marriage was, perhaps, an acquired taste. When she talked about her unhappiness to Vic, his reply "you'll get used to it" frightened her more. She told herself if it was a cage, she'd made the bars with her own thoughts and deeds. Then she wondered if the problem was society's rules about marriage,

because the mere notion of being a traditional wife freaked her out so much she considered even making a meal subservient. The fact that she didn't want to take on her husband's name disturbed her as well, but that, at least, was the modern thing to do. It may have had more to do with Vic's family name, Dim. Lucy Dim? No way. Her father mentioned that maintaining her Pilgrim name was ridiculous. "Why did you get married if you don't want to change your name?" Lucy could think of many valid reasons that didn't include that one, and after all, all family names came from men, it was her father's name or her husband's name, not hers. She knew it was impractical, but she wished she could just be Lucy and leave it at that.

II.
Her Dangerous Journey

When Lucy walked into Osaka International Airport, and saw a Japanese man in a navy blue suit holding a sign with only *LUCY* written on it, she was delighted. He bowed as she approached, which she also loved, and then escorted her to a waiting van. He opened what seemed like the wrong door, and then drove on what seemed like the wrong side of the road. That, too, made Lucy happy. She was ready for everything to be different. The last light was fading from the sky and she rolled down her window. It was misty, cool, and smelled like seaweed. Billboards, looped highways, and scattered high-rises emerged from the flat, open land. Lucy looked at the blue directional signs written in Japanese and English hanging from steel poles and it struck her that she was lucky to understand one of those languages. How would a non-Japanese, non-English speaker get around in this country?

The newness of the architecture as they entered the city surprised her, as did the apartment complex the driver stopped in front of: it looked like a two-story American motel, with its interior courtyard, and exterior entrances. She wanted to live in a temple or a bamboo cabin. She followed the silent man upstairs to one of the doors. After he opened it and set her suitcase inside, he handed her an envelope and keys, "Everything you need." If only it were as easy as that, Lucy thought, smiling to herself as he bowed, which she did, too, and again and again, until she realized he wanted to have the last bow, and then he disappeared into the night.

She walked through the narrow apartment with that anxious feeling that usually accompanied her on first nights in a new space, past a windowless

bedroom across from a bathroom, to a bedroom at the back, in which she saw clothes strewn about. With a pang for home, she lifted the receiver off the pink rotary-dial telephone the size of a peanut machine sitting on a small table in the kitchen. She dialed but could not understand the Japanese recording.

After setting herself up in the empty bedroom, she showered, lit a candle, lay back on her single bed and listened to music, reminding herself that this feeling would pass. She shuffled through the papers in the envelope—there was a map to the agency, the time she was expected in the morning, and several copies of a composite they had printed. She looked at the different pictures and remembered each shoot. As she inhaled the vanilla scent of the candle, and then watched the flame, she thought about how frightened she had been to leave Vic, how it had felt like it might be forever and this confused her. She brushed it off as her tendency to dramatize, yet the upset stuck in her gut, not her mind, as if some sort of reckoning were due and she was going to have to come clean.

The next morning, Lucy was once again led off to be weighed and measured. Akiko, the female booker, looked more like a lab scientist with her bob haircut, long white jacket, and horn-rimmed glasses, clipboard and pencil in hand. As Lucy followed her, they passed a man sitting on a folding chair, and he turned toward them as one does sometimes when there is movement nearby, looked away as quickly, then back again as if he had seen someone he recognized. Lucy smiled and lifted her hand in salute. Her body revved, her mind warned her to stay back. Akiko watched. “That’s Julien. He is from Paris.” Lucy thought he was handsome in a real way, different than other male models she had known who looked like human replicas of mannequins. He also seemed older than them, and her. He looked like a cowboy, a movie star, a professor, an artist. She admired his heart-shaped face and his aquamarine eyes. She recognized a similar appetite in them.

She crossed the room, stepped on a platform surrounded by a canvas curtain, and while Akiko measured her behind it, Lucy, head and neck above it, observed Julien as he smoked and watched “The Terminator” on the television in the corner. She noticed his fine wrists and lovely fingers. His jeans, boots, and expensive white shirt. She wondered what it would be like to travel with him, reminded herself she had a husband, then braced herself to hear Akiko say something about the difference between her real measurements and the ones she had read on her composite the night before. Akiko said nothing.

“Why are my measurements smaller on the composite?”

“In Japan, women are smaller, so we have to make it different on your card so clients don’t think you are too big.” Lucy laughed at this logic, and though relieved not to be told to lose inches or weight, she once again felt over-sized. She was head and shoulders above Akiko. Above all of the people she’d passed on the way to the agency that morning. Akiko gestured for her to follow again, then walked her to the accounting office, where a kind smiling woman at a desk handed Lucy what she was told would be her weekly allowance of ten-thousand yen.

Julien was gone when she returned. Five beautiful young American, Australian, and Northern European women were waiting on the two black leather couches in front of the desk that separated the reception area from the bookers’ tables. All were scheduled to be driven to a casting together. Lucy sat down to wait. Two more women arrived. Caprice’s smiling mischievous mouth with its pulpous lips and her wide brown eyes were the first attributes Lucy noticed. She had perfect pale skin and long ringlets of auburn curls fell over her shoulders. Joy was next to her, a petite Australian with translucent

skin and twinkling blue eyes, wearing fire-engine-red lipstick, the blond of her short bangs barely visible under the hood of her black cape.

Akiko raised her clipboard in the air. "Time to go!" Lucy quickly discovered she was indeed the tallest of the group, by at least three inches. She stayed to the rear as they followed Akiko out the glass door, down the escalator, and through the commercial complex to the van waiting outside. Lucy sat in the back. Looking out the window as they were driven through Osaka, she reminded herself that this is what she was there for: to see Japan. Except a line of budding cherry trees, all she saw was one tall building after another in a grid-patterned city.

They filed into the lobby of one of those high-rises, then an elevator, then a reception area on the 23rd floor, then entered a board room where ten Japanese men, in what appeared to be the same navy blue suit, were seated at a long, narrow glass table, waiting. It reminded Lucy of the panels of Miss America judges she had seen on television. She didn't think she would be able to do this in front of a table of American men. She liked the exotic touch of being in Japan and being exotic to them, it made her feel exotic, as she never had. The fact that she was physically bigger than any of them added to her comfort in this situation. They each had a clipboard, a glass of water, and a pen in front of them. One at a time, Akiko presented each model's book of pictures and spoke emphatically in Japanese while nodding toward the model. The men nodded, too, accompanying each nod with a short guttural closed-mouth sound. They never lifted their pencils from the table. Enjoying the windy sound and upbeat cadence of the Japanese language, Lucy looked out the windows behind them, at other high-rises and gray sky, then at a tall, purple orchid in the corner of the room. Not understanding the language, and therefore how each model was being sold, put her further at ease. She considered the body language of each model next to Akiko, watched how their posture and poise did or did not change as they were talked about. When it was her turn, she looked each man

in the eyes, smiled, nodded, then didn't know what else to do as Akiko went about singing her praise and smiling at her, and them. She watched the men's faces for clues as they looked at her pictures, looked back up at her, their eyes following her height in astonishment. They nodded amongst themselves. She nodded back.

She stayed quiet in the van, staring out the window on the way back to the agency, observing the backs of the other women's heads, overhearing tidbits of those who missed their boyfriends, couldn't wait to get home, had worked so long the day before, were working tomorrow, were going out tonight, were wondering who else would. She felt too old to be there but was happy for the opportunity. She learned that no one could dial or receive overseas calls from their apartments, except with agency intervention, and therefore during agency hours, which cleared the confusion about that amazing pink phone. She had not met her roommate Patience, she was not expected back until that evening.

"Come with us to the clubs," Caprice said, as everyone was leaving the agency. Joy nodded in agreement. "Jubilation is where everybody eats. Then they usually move on to Bamboo for drinks and desserts." Lucy followed them, through the sleek and shiny underground metro system with escalators four hundred meters long, to Shinsaibashi, where she was relieved to walk up into the fresh air, even amidst the thick after-work crowd on the pedestrian street. They strolled past Pachinko parlors with their bright colors, flashing lights, and clinking sounds of metal balls and tokens dropping. There were exclusive gadget boutiques, and American fast-food franchises next to noodle stands and sushi bars. Lucy enjoyed the viewpoint of being heads above the crowd, noticing an occasional Western man also standing out. Caprice and Joy stopped in front of a red brick building and pointed to the neon signs jutting out from the windows above. *Jubilation* was written on one of them in green, the letters dancing among clef notes.

Upstairs, and inside, it was dark. A young Japanese man in a tuxedo welcomed them from behind a black lacquer reception desk, in front of burgundy velour walls. While Caprice signed her name on a clipboard, Joy looked at Lucy. “Give him one of your composites.” He filed it in a drawer with others, then handed each of the women a pile of lime green play money, Jubilation Dollars. Joy held them in the air. “These are for food and drink. We get twenty a night. Just because we’re beautiful.” This made Lucy feel guilty but she kept quiet, for now.

They rode the elevator upstairs then sat on a plush velvet banquette in the VIP room, at a table for four. The opposite wall was glass and looked to the dance floor and bar below. The ceiling was mirrored. It smelled like they had just waxed the wood floor. The music, pounding, reverberated the glass. Lucy held her hands over her ears. “People eat to this music?”

Caprice sighed. “Oh man, you sound like Julien. Wait, don’t sit down. Let’s move these two tables together because he said he and Felix were coming and I want him to sit next to me.”

“There he is,” Joy pointed with one of her delicate fingers. Caprice looked toward the elevator, then smiled wide. Lucy turned. Julien nodded and smiled at her. There was a younger and taller man behind him, with long, fine chestnut hair, a blue bandana around his neck, and a black leather bomber jacket. He sat next to Lucy. “I am Felix, from Paris.” He had a ferret-like, searching look in his kind hazel eyes, along with a set of lips that seemed perpetually posed for a kiss. The wattage of Julien’s smile, as he said hello to her, dazzled Lucy and she buried that as far out-of-sight as she could. His tie was loosened, his shirt open enough to see the arch of his clavicle. It reminded Lucy of her own. Now seated across from him, she trained her eyes away, looked at the menu. “So what is good?”

Julien looked at her. "I eat the Macedonian every day."

"The same thing every day?"

Felix nodded in agreement with Julien. "It's good, why not?"

"It's worth a try." Both Frenchmen looked at Lucy as if decoding what the word worth meant. The Macedonian consisted of spiced cubes of beef, fruit cocktail, and rice. It was good, and it was free, but such freeloading, approved as it was, would take some getting used to for Lucy. She was willing to try. She spoke what French she remembered from college, much to Caprice's dismay, and Felix and Julien's pleasure. Felix raised his eyebrows, "You are the first American I hear speak French. I no think they know."

As they ate, Joy told them that she had been a dancer in Perth. Caprice complained that she wanted to model in Europe but was too short. Felix wanted to make enough money to spend months in Thailand riding a motorcycle and getting stoned.

Lucy looked at Julien. "How did you get here?"

"Excuse me?"

"I don't mean by plane or train. I mean how is it that you are here in Japan as a model?"

He smiled. "It's a long story. A woman who I worked with left our office and then became a casting director. She called me one day to come for a casting. I won the job and that led to others. I received calls from New York and Germany to come and work and then Captain came to my agency in Paris.

This is my second time in Japan. I worked so much the first time I felt like I missed something. I wanted to come back so I sent a fax to ask, Captain said yes, come again, and here I am.”

Lucy thought his life sounded like the one she wanted. That must be the attraction, she told herself, remembering how she always fell for men she somehow wanted to be. Except for Vic, she thought, she had never wanted to be him, and this had made such good sense to her, this only wanting to be herself with a man, that she'd married him.

There seemed to be a certain escapism that bound them all together in spirit but was never mentioned by name. They all were obviously happy to be away from wherever they called home. It was strangest for Lucy to admit this, and she wouldn't, because she was married. She noticed out of the corners of her eyes that Caprice was ready to undress and arrange herself as dessert on the table for Julien if he so much as hinted he might like that. She also saw that he didn't brush her off, but didn't return much. Lucy suspected certain carelessness with women's hearts, and then wondered if she did with every man. She couldn't blame him for enjoying what was being laid on his lap: a gorgeous eighteen-year-old. By the time they finished their meal, she had decided he would be an amusing friend and was definitely a pleasant sight, but no more, no matter what her body wanted, and regardless of her inquiring gut. After the waiter cleared their plates, Felix reached into his pockets and spread a collection of lighters out on the table – one in the shape of a camera, another a hand, another a lipstick. “For you,” he gestured to the females at the table. Lucy chose the camera, Joy liked the hand, and Caprice grabbed the lipstick.

Bamboo was four doors away, and upstairs in another four-story building. They entered another dark reception area and signed in. This one required a Polaroid to be taken for the membership card. Lucy was given another ration

of play money; these bills were bigger and a creamy color. As she followed the others up the red carpet stairs to the VIP room, Lucy felt guilty again as she glanced below to the crowd not welcome there simply because they were not foreign models, or rich Japanese. That people would pay a lot of money to be in a room with foreign models seemed sad and ridiculous to her, but it was their life, their choice, she reminded herself as she entered the plush life. Ornate chandeliers hung from the ceiling, one end of the narrow passageway led to a square room with a bar and a buffet table filled with an assortment of sweet cakes and fresh fruit, next to a selection of board games on shelves. The other end of the passage led to the dance floor below, on a stage lit by strobes. The wallpaper was covered in green velvet bamboos and golden mosaics, Lucy ran her hand along it then slid into one of the leather booths big enough for six, each with a glass wall to watch the dancers. She fingered the base of the small red lamp in front of her, and saw there was a call button for the waiter as Felix sat next to her with a black lacquer box and chessboard in one hand, a turquoise cocktail in the other, delight in his eyes. “You like play?”

Lucy looked at his drink and then Julien’s. “What is that?”

“A Skydiver. Try it.”

And that is how Lucy’s life in Japan began: escorted to castings and work by day, and then indulged in free dinners, fancy drinks, and society games with handsome foreigners by night. The amazing thing was, she lost weight, it was as if something extra she’d been carrying slipped away. Or maybe it was just the protein, rice, and cocktail diet.

In between castings the next afternoon, the van stopped alongside an open shopping market area and Akiko turned to shout that they all had twenty minutes to do as they wished. From her back window, Lucy saw more

concrete and tall buildings, but this time something new, little market stalls lining the street, separated by curtains of green tarp. Some had flowers, some vegetables, some fish. Lucy sniffed the air as the others piled out. It was a gray day again and mist hung, curling her hair. Julien, who she had been sitting behind, was now standing outside the van. He wrinkled his nose. “Fish. It smells like fish.”

Lucy shook her head. “Seaweed.”

He shook his head. “Fish.” Lucy smiled as she shook her head again, then nodded when he asked if he could join her on this break.

As they passed different stalls, she pointed at what interested her. She noticed that a certain quiet came over her in his presence, a feeling of wanting to be very precise and sparing with words. She stopped in front of what looked like a miniature race track filled with water, and watched the tiny plates of different pieces of sushi floating around an oval bar. “Do you think we just pick up what we want and—”. She turned to look at Julien.

He wrinkled his nose again and slid a French cigarette from its fancy pack, then a silver lighter from his pocket. She noticed his manicured fingernails, the agility of his hand. His black leather belt was closed with a silver oval buckle, the black cowboy boots were polished and shined. He was wearing a tailor-cut blue shirt with black pin stripes under an open, fitted jacket. Lucy wanted to reach up and muss his hair. She was both attracted and repelled by his cool attitude. He looked at her suede jodhpurs. “Do you ride?” As he lifted his cigarette to his lips, she noticed the time on the black face of his thin gold watch. “We have to go. Now.”

Akiko was standing halfway out of the front passenger door, shaking her finger. Everyone else, five other models and the driver, were waiting inside the

van. Lucy quickly climbed into the back. “It was my fault, I couldn’t decide what I wanted to eat, and lost track of time. I’m sorry.”

Akiko shook her head, stern-faced. “He always late.” Lucy turned to Julien to apologize. He gently dismissed her concern with a wave of a hand. When the hand grazed her thigh, she thought it might start smoking, was relieved to see it didn’t even tremble. She inched toward the window, away from him.

“You working tomorrow, Lucy.” Akiko saw the surprised look on Lucy’s face through the rearview mirror. It was only the second day. Lucy couldn’t believe it was happening so fast. “They choose you from composite. For magazine. You will go to Tottori. You must be very early at station. I will give you map and directions after casting today. You must not be late. Client will meet you then drive you.”

Throughout most of the three-hour ride to Tottori, Lucy slept. When she woke, they were parked. It smelled like the sea, which was not far, but hidden by the fog. All that was visible were massive dunes of white sand. Like a puppy, Lucy followed the young woman who had met her at the station that morning. The rest of the crew emptied the van of equipment and the make-up and hair artists carried their supplies into a thatched cottage, where Lucy sat on a pillow in front of the fireplace and the make-up artist wrapped a towel around her neck then pleasantly surprised Lucy by first massaging her face. In between applications of creams and powders, Lucy opened her eyes and glimpsed the stylist unpacking, pressing, then hanging the clothes for the shoot. She hoped they would fit.

They didn’t. She had to crawl back inside of them to make it look like the sleeves were long enough. With the tight shorts hitting her above her thighs, the cotton cap sitting on top of her crown, she looked like she was wearing a

younger sister's clothes, and though she did her best to appear comfortable and happy, each time she saw the perplexed look on the stylist's face, she wished she could explain. She pushed a bicycle through the dunes smiling at the camera, then ran, twirling and flying a Hermès scarf through the air behind, and around her. As she thought about what she was doing, she began to wonder why they wanted an American model in their Japanese magazine anyway. Why were they using pictures of the descendants of the people that firebombed and destroyed their country only forty-four years before as examples of beauty and charm? Lucy tried to imagine what they looked like from above, there in the dunes: a female model, a photographer and his assistant, holding a reflector, a stylist darting in and out trying to make the clothes look like they fit, a make-up and hair artist dashing back and forth to powder her nose or touch a hair back into place, and the representative from the magazine, overseeing it all. The trail of their voices echoing through the quiet. "More genki! More genki!"

Lucy cupped her hands around her mouth and shouted. "What is genki?"

"Big, big smile, happy smile! More genki!" The stylist opened her arms as wide as Lucy imagined they wanted her to smile. She tried, but it seemed so forced, so fake, as if her mouth wasn't big enough for it. They asked for bigger, when what they really meant was *real* and bigger, she supposed. She was happy to finish, a morning's worth was enough for them. During lunch they all sat on cushions in front of the fireplace, steaming bowls of miso soup in their hand. Lucy loved that. She felt like a privileged visitor from another planet as she listened to the language, exchanged smiles, and nods. She wished they would photograph her doing that instead.

Upon her return to Osaka, the metro stopped at Umeda, where the agency was located, and when the doors slid open, Julien and Caprice walked in. “Lucy!” Caprice drawled in her Texan accent. “I wondered where you were today!”

“In some amazing sand dunes.”

“We were just on our way to watch some movies we rented.”

Julien looked like a squirrel at work on a new nut as he eyed Lucy. “Would you like to join us?”

Caprice lived in the apartment above her. Why not, Lucy thought, and went. As they settled in to watch the film, Julien sat down in the middle of the three-seat couch, opened and stretched both arms along the back of it and looked at the young women as if suggesting a harmless cuddle. Lucy, who had never experienced a harmless cuddle with any man except her father, nor wanted part of any threesome, looked at Julien to convey that he was dreaming. Caprice plopped next to him and nuzzled her forehead into his shoulder. Julien shrugged a *what would you do* at Lucy. She shook her head, and then sat on the floor, and leaned her back against the couch. At the part in the movie when the female protagonist, played by Meryl Streep, rushes out of her house to begin an affair she’s been fantasizing about, Lucy shook her head. “Just watch, her mother will die while she is in bed with her lover.”

Julien slid his toes under Lucy’s thigh as if in a gesture of compassion. Lucy wrapped her palm around his heel, caressed the arch of his foot, then wondered what the hell she was doing and stopped. The film was ending, and sure enough, the woman’s mother died while she was in illicit ecstasy. Lucy stood up and said good night. Caprice’s mouth was hanging open. “How did you know that was going to happen? You must have seen this movie.”

“Nope. Never saw it. Just an educated guess. Women usually are skewered for affairs. Men usually are forgiven.”

The next morning Julien came knocking. Lucy opened the door in wet hair and a white terry robe. “Do you have any eggs?” She waved him in, then held out a carton of six. After he insisted he only wanted two, she put the carton back in the mini-fridge. When she turned, he was looking at her lingerie, hanging above the sink.

“Aren’t these the strangest things?” She meant the chandelier-shaped pink-and-white plastic contraption with clothespins dangling from it. He pursed his lips, and then smiled as she blushed. Simply standing there with morning in his hair and two brown eggs in the palm of his hand, he forged a creek in her heart.

Tomy, the men’s booker, who looked like a Japanese movie star, with his longish hair falling over his forehead and his dimples under sparkling brown eyes, escorted a group of models on their castings that day. While they waited on a long, cold platform for a train to an outlying location, the smell of exhaust in the air, he looked at Lucy like he knew a secret about her, then showed her the chart on his clipboard. “You have a trip next week. You will go to Okinawa for Panasonic. One hundred thousand yen per day. That’s because it is an internal video, not a commercial video, which pays more. Means they want to use it for the company only, not for advertising. You will go with Patience. Happy?” Lucy nodded. “You will like,” his dimples deepened with his smile. “It is tropical.”

Okinawa was warm and blooming. The smell of the sea lingered with honeysuckle. Lucy and Patience were escorted to their hotel along a strip of apartments, shops, and restaurants, at the edge of the island and Lucy was relieved to be given a key to her own room, as living with Patience was wearing on her. After the driver gave them instructions to meet in the lobby at six a.m., Lucy dropped her overnight bag on the double bed of her simple, clean, and comfortable room, then opened the window to low, green hills. Patience knocked at her door. She looked like a lost raccoon as she peered in. “Lucy, what are you going to do?”

“I’m going for a walk.”

“Aren’t you afraid?”

Lucy shook her head, then reluctantly offered, “Do you want to come?”

“Just let me get my purse.” Patience scurried.

They walked along a strip of stores, restaurants, and bars that looked like many other beach fronts in many other tourist towns. There was an off-season ghost town feel because many were closed, and the night coming on carried a chill. Lucy looked around. “I wonder where the military base is.”

“What military base?”

“The U.S. has a base here.”

A drunk couple swaggered out of a bar, toward Lucy and Patience. There were Caucasian and Oriental traits on the man’s scruffy face, and the bulge of blue t-shirt that contained his belly fell over his blue jeans. His girlfriend looked like him, with longer hair. He slung his arm around her shoulder as they

approached, then reached out, opened his palm and curled his fingers as if preparing to grasp. It appeared he was aiming for Lucy's breast, but she gave him the benefit of the doubt until he lurched forward and squeezed it like an air horn. Lucy grabbed his hairy wrist and threw his arm back at him. His girlfriend let out a peal of laughter. Patience, who had been looking the other way, turned at the sound. "What happened?"

"That guy just grabbed my breast."

Patience lifted her hands into shaking fists. "Let's go get him."

Lucy waved a hand. "I don't want him."

"Aren't you angry?"

"What good would it do? It's already done."

"Get revenge!"

"Living well is the best revenge." Lucy, who overcame abuse by ignoring it, thought nothing could avenge an abuser more than his or her abuse not being noticed. Anyway, she thought, he had no breast to squeeze in revenge. She was not at all interested in getting anywhere near his penis, unless it was perhaps to tear it off, though that would require touching it, to which she was definitely adverse, even if she could go so far as imagining it sticking out of his mouth, severed. She wondered if people would be surprised to know she had such ugly thoughts.

"I don't get it."

“Think about it, and you will.” Lucy pushed open the door of a convenience store, shaking her head, not interested in expending energy promoting endurance to Patience. If she didn’t already know the value of that she probably never would. “Here we are in the middle of the Pacific and there’s a 7-Eleven.” At the same time Lucy thought that sign of market globalization a pity, and would have preferred a Japanese family-run grocery, she browsed the aisles for some comfort food, then settled on a package of the kind of peanut butter cookies she had not eaten since she was a girl. She’d only have a few, she decided, thinking about fat, and how she used to think that more of that would stop men from touching her, but it hadn’t. Back in her room alone, she stretched out on the bed and held the cookies on her tongue until they melted, while watching Japanese television she didn’t understand.

Her breast felt sad. She cradled it in her hand, caressing it lovingly, soothing her nipple. The problem with ignoring what had been done to it was first in the pronoun, that she thought of it as an it, rather than as her, as what had been done to her, not just her breast. She forgot, for the most part, while her breast remembered, storing up all these assaults to be triggered by some unsuspecting, loving fingers in the future. It was as if her lovely curves were turning into armor instead of doors. Lucy didn’t fully enjoy other hands, loving as they may be, than her own on her breasts. It always put her a bit on edge. What was curious to her was how much it turned her on to have them suckled.

At dawn, the driver escorted them to the botanical gardens, where the crew was already setting up, unloading equipment out of the vans. During breaks from being filmed while biking through the gardens, Lucy lay on the grass and watched the Japanese women tending flowerbeds under their wide-brimmed straw hats. She leafed through the pocket Japanese language book she had brought along and wrote to friends and family. Patience plopped down next to

her and looked at the postcard she was writing. “How can you stand to be away from your husband so long? Aren’t you worried he’ll have an affair?”

Lucy thought it interesting that nobody ever seemed to wonder if she would. They always asked about her husband instead. “One, no, it’s not easy to be away for so long and two, he could have an affair even if I were there. Are you suggesting that I don’t do what I really want to do in case my husband might have an affair while I do?”

“Come on, you know what I mean. Men have needs.”

Lucy slid a few blades of grass through her fingers. “Don’t we all have needs?”

“I was always taught that men can’t control theirs.”

“Why do you think women are taught that? Who is really being controlled by whom there?”

Patience looked confused, then as quickly, disinterested, in that way that people do when they want to dismiss what they don’t understand as too complex, but are really more exhausted, frightened, or perhaps both, by the idea of having their beliefs—and therefore, ways of living and thinking—challenged. Attention at these points often shifts to basics. “I’m hungry. I wonder when we will break for lunch *and* what it will be. I can’t bear another bento box. How long do we have to stay out here and how many more takes? I hate not knowing. I hate not being able to ask and understand the answer. I hate waiting. I hate the way they keep nodding and smiling at us. This is so boring.”

Lucy stretched her arms to encompass the hills, the gardens, the South Pacific surrounding them. “Look where we are, biking through these gardens and getting paid a thousand dollars a day for it. All that smiling and nodding, by the way, is a respectful and wonderful change compared to what I am used to in this business.”

They ate a lunch of rice and fish in a small roadside cafeteria then drove to a wooded valley where the crew pitched a tent, set up lights, and built a fire. Patience and Lucy waited. Lucy walked in the woods, occasionally making pictures of the location through the trees. “Did you notice they are all wearing the same white fishing cap?” Twigs broke under her feet as she approached the van where Patience was pouting. “They have to wait for it to be dark to shoot this scene, so we can sit in front of the fire under a starry night.”

“And then what? A dinner of fish balls and rice, too? It’s freezing. This is awful and boring and stupid.”

When they returned to Osaka, Lucy asked Captain if she could move, “I’d really like to live alone.”

“There are no one-bedroom apartments available.”

“An apartment near mine is empty.” Lucy turned. She had not seen Julien come in. He was standing behind her.

“It’s farther away,” Captain said.

“It’s not that far. I’ll take her there. I have time.”

“That is a three-bedroom apartment,” Captain looked at Lucy, “you can only move into it if someone else moves in with you.” He raised an eyebrow at Julien, then took the keys from a drawer and handed them to Lucy. “You both need to be back here by three.”

As the doors to the subway car closed, Julien placed his hand on her thigh. Lucy could see that he kept talking, she watched his eyes, lips, face and free hand move, but she heard nothing. The walk down the hill from the station was hypnotic, as well, the warmth and color in their exchange contrasted with the gray and white cool mist around them. Lucy nodded when Julien pointed out the passage to his place: a metallic pedestrian overpass at the bottom of the slope. He then aimed his finger at a cluster of tall white high-rises in front of it, which contained the apartment they were to visit. Every car that passed on the shrub-lined gray street was white, the white interiors and vehicles in Japan struck her again and again.

There was a 7-Eleven at the bottom of the hill, this one with a basket of onigiri out front. Lucy liked these seaweed-wrapped triangles of rice with mayonnaise and crab in the center. She was going to buy the one in her hand until Julien wrinkled his nose at it and said he didn’t like the smell of them on the breath. She dropped it back on the pile, not wanting to risk the possibility that the whole time she was talking to him he might be recoiling from her breath. She brushed her fingers along the thick hedge as they turned off the street and followed a curved sidewalk, then looked up, counted twelve floors to the top. There were small balconies with plants, and many windows.

The elevator doors opened to a smoky, mirrored interior with a musty smell. Lucy slid her hands behind her bottom and pressed up against the wall a foot away from Julien, facing in the same direction. She focused on the red neon lights above the doors as each flashed until ten. The hallway was long, narrow, and empty, with doors on each side of it. Her hands faltered as she unlocked

the door, then stood in back to let him pass. She flipped the light switch. “They don’t work.”

“This was my room.” Julien pointed to the right as he passed it. Lucy liked knowing that, and she liked that he was pushing her to live where he had. He opened a fuse box on the kitchen wall, flipped a switch and the lights came on. She walked into the bathroom and flushed the toilet, then turned on the water. Satisfied with the pressure, she walked into the kitchen. Julien was checking the water and gas. The two other bedrooms were next to each other at the back, each with their own balcony. Tatamis. Double-sized futons on frames. She passed through each one, enjoying this feeling of shared domesticity, while wondering who she thought she was fooling pretending that this was just a routine apartment check. She liked, too, the charge of electricity between them in this closed space, the vitality in the air, yet she had left the doorway to the hall open for that very reason, so some of that, and she, could escape. Her next strategy would involve asking Caprice to remain an obstacle by offering her the other room. She looked at Julien in the kitchen, leaning up against the table watching her. She stood in the doorway. “I want this room.”

He jingled the keys in the air. “It’s yours. Now, come, I will show you my place. It is right across the street.”

“Can I have a rain check?”

“A what?”

Lucy smiled. “It’s an expression, it means I would like it but not right now, will the possibility still be available at another time in the future?”

“But what has that to do with rain?”

“We’ll see. Come on, we need to get back to the agency. We are professionals after all, aren’t we?”

“Oui, oui, oui, oui, oui.” He accepted her resistance as if he recognized it.

She shook her head. “It’s never a simple yes or no with you is it?”

He looked at her like he may have gotten her wrong and then followed her out the door saying, “Non, non, non, non, non.”

After that afternoon’s catalogue shoot, Lucy met Caprice on the Midosuji bridge. Gigantic neon signs loomed above them from every direction, advertising *Johnnie Walker*, *Coke*, and *Camel* cigarettes. Lucy leaned over the brink to watch their reflections off the river as Caprice pleaded with her to come to dinner. “If you’ll come, he’ll come. Please. He likes to talk to you.”

Lucy looked up. A distant plane passed through a slice of dusky blue sky between two silver high-rises. “It’s not always easy to watch you touching each other. It makes me miss Vic.”

“Ask Felix to come. He likes you.”

“That’s not the point, Caprice.”

The restaurant was on the fourth floor of a twenty-story building. Elevator doors opened to a large softly lit room overlooking the river. It smelled like curry. There were tables surrounded by banquettes. As they followed the maitre d’ through the center of the red-carpeted room, Julien paused in front of a large clay oven, and pointed. “That is where they make the bread.” Lucy

looked inside and her face flushed with the heat of the glowing hollow. They were seated in a banquette next to the window, Caprice next to, and Lucy opposite, Julien. As they looked at the menus Caprice suggested, “What if we order different things and share?”

Julien shook his head. “I will have my own plate. I don’t like to share.”

Lucy looked up. Perhaps it was a language short cut, she thought, instead of an overall statement about who he was. Yet, she, too, preferred to have what she liked rather than share what she didn’t. “I have never eaten Indian food before so I’ll try what you like.” After the waiter left with their orders, Caprice excused herself to use the restroom.

Julien leaned forward. “Lucy, what is that on your hand?”

Lucy looked at the circle of sunburn on the back of her hand. “It’s from the bicycle gloves I wore in Okinawa.” She lifted and turned it to face him. “Branded with the Japanese flag.”

As she smiled into his eyes, she didn’t at all expect to hear him say “I’d really like to kiss you sometime.”

Lucy’s head dropped like a shot bird’s and she stared at the rings on her finger. She couldn’t blame him for stating his desire, though she found his timing vicious. Even though she thought Caprice dimwitted, she felt compassion for her ignorance there in the bathroom as the man she was pursuing was now pursuing the woman she was using as bait. Had Lucy not wanted to kiss Julien, too—it was really their desire he had given voice to, after all—she would have rolled her eyes and changed the subject, or laughed it off. Alas, Lucy still thought she could find a way to maneuver through this attraction looking good, which was difficult to do while feeling guilty for wanting the

kiss, as well as for liking his boldness. It was so much easier to just be angry with him for putting her in this position.

Caprice returned like a pinball. “You were all talkin’ about me, I hope.”

Lucy sat up straight, collecting herself but not looking at Julien. “We were just getting to that. Caprice, would you like to be my roommate in Tennoji?”

“I’d love to. That is where the Penthouse is.”

Lucy looked confused. “Penthouse?”

“That is what they call the building the guys live in. Where Julien lives.”

While Caprice simpered at Julien, Lucy looked around the room. Julien reached for his cigarettes, and Caprice reached over the table, lifted his portfolio from the chair next to Lucy. She stood it on the table like an individual juke box at a diner table and then opened it and turned the pages. Each was a different image of Julien. He was dancing in a tuxedo, offering a woman a glass of cognac, smiling behind the wheel of a Ferrari, playing golf, sitting in the desert. There, Lucy’s eyes widened. She looked at him, then at the picture again, then at him again. It was the one she’d seen in New York years before.

She had already felt their meeting had some hocus-pocus involved. Lucy thought she might have to kiss him just to see if what she’d conjured up had any substance behind it. It was, after all, the kind of occurrence people scarcely believed when it happened in real life, let alone novels and films. In the small print at the bottom of the photograph, Lucy read, Julien, Engineer. The product was called L’Homme. She smiled to herself. She could feel Julien

staring at her. She liked that he was becoming impatient, liked the way he looked like he might say out with it already if he knew how.

Caprice stared at her, too. “What?”

“I saw that ad years ago, and said, I want to meet that man. Now I have.”

Julien raised a finger, “That is a very good sign.”

Caprice pointed to a different photo, one in which Julien looked so mean Lucy would have backed away from him. “I like this one.” Caprice looked at her to see what she thought, and Lucy shook her head. “Your husband is very handsome. I saw his picture in your apartment this morning. You must trust each other very much. I think a good relationship must be all about trust.”

Julien squared his shoulders, “It’s not about trust, it’s about feeling.”

Caprice appeared clueless. Lucy was finally hearing someone else say what she felt. It was as if he’d put one of his beautiful fingertips on why the word commitment bothered her so much. It smacked of something willed, rather than felt, more about promise than passion, more about deals being made than life and love being lived.

“So, what kind of engineer are you?”

“I work with electricity.”

“That sounds more interesting than modeling.”

“It is at a desk in Paris every day. Drawing. What I like about this business is the fantaisie,” he raised a hand as if doing a trick, “to receive a call one day to go to Japan, or the Algerian desert, or New York on a moment’s notice.”

Caprice shook her head and twirled a finger in the air. “But this is not reality.”

Lucy pinched her forearm, and then rapped the table with her knuckles to highlight the density of things. “Then what is it?”

Caprice shrugged. Julien was so dashing when he smiled. “That is a very good question.”

Lucy's reality in Japan started with early morning running, zooming up and down steel stairs, across bridges, past noodle stands and shops opening for the day, on people-less streets, in the gray cool pre-spring mist, listening to the Pretenders and Zucchero sing. Her jobs entailed flinching as young Japanese female stylists slipped shirts and jackets on her, pushed her hands away as she tried to button them, held skirts and pants in front of her, open at the waist, gesturing for her to step into them, and then zipped them for her. "Look, you can just hang the clothes right here," she'd point to the rolling clothes rack. "I'll put them on, I'll be careful, I promise." She did not know if they understood her or not when they shook their heads furiously no, while giggling at her as if she was silly to think they would let her dress herself. They slipped high heels on her feet then stood back to take a longer look. The sleeves were always too short, so yanking them to cover her wrists was also part of the routine. As soon as she moved on the set, the sleeves shot back up and stylists rushed at her to tug them down again. When she pulled at them herself to save time, they all raised their index fingers and shook them vigorously, shouting "no, no, no!" as they ran to do it. She felt like one of the mannequins in Henri Bendel that she used to stare at while sitting in front of The Plaza. Moving in front of the camera was not getting easier for her, but she was learning to relax into a pose, to be a sort of stand-there model. Her hairstyle and lipstick shade were changed along with each of the fifty some outfits. Inside those warehouse studios it was gray all day except for the bright colors of the elegant suits she was modeling, the pastel backdrops rolled down for each change, and the bright red space heaters near the make-up chairs.

At the same time Lucy's world was widening in Japan, it began narrowing into her obsession with wanting to touch Julien and wanting to be kind to Caprice. It was the night that Lucy and Caprice moved into their new apartment that Caprice unwittingly gave Lucy permission, of a sort, to be unkind to her as she sat on Lucy's bed lamenting, "I have never met a man like him. I'm trying everything to get this guy and he keeps saying 'I don't think I am for you, or you are for me,' what the hell is he talking about?"

"That is a question for him, not me."

"His answers don't make any sense to me. He talks about being real, being present, about deep communication. Who cares? I'll just go over there and sleep with Boris, who wants me, who's dying for me."

Lucy winced. Boris was a mammoth Australian that looked like he'd gulp a woman down and then belch. "Is that really the way you want to make love?"

Caprice humphed. "Julien wants me to do strange things."

Lucy burrowed her head into the pillow. "Are they things you think would hurt you?"

Caprice whispered. "He wants me to get on top."

Lucy lifted her head, then her fingers to her lips. As she caressed them, she speculated. Climb on up there and ride seemed too enthusiastic a response, all things considered. "That's not so strange. That can be quite enjoyable."

Caprice looked away, as if she didn't care, which troubled Lucy. "The other night I dreamed that Julien was telling me that he couldn't get what he needed from me but he could get it from you, if you weren't so faithful to your

husband.” Lucy rolled onto her back. She would agree with Caprice’s dream, if pressed, but she suspected Caprice had conjured this in order to say what she herself thought, or, perhaps it was simply to test Lucy. As Lucy watched Caprice stare out the window, she saw another concern flit across her kewpie face. “And sometimes I think about women,” shame filled Caprice’s eyes, “that’s strange, too, isn’t it?”

“No, Caprice, it’s not strange at all. It can be very lovely.”

Caprice turned to face Lucy. “You mean you have?”

As Lucy nodded, Caprice studied her as if she were some rare phenomenon. Lucy, feeling she might direct her next relentless experiment on her, stared back with a gentle “I have enough on my plate” and offered another possible reason for Julien’s reticence and one of her own questions. “Maybe he has a wife in Paris.”

“He has two daughters and lots of girlfriends in Paris. Maybe he just hasn’t found the right woman. Maybe it’s me.” Lucy didn’t have the heart to suggest it wasn’t and Caprice walked out of the room looking like a toddler with her blanket trailing behind her.

The next evening in Bamboo, when Lucy and Julien were alone, Julien reached inside his jacket and lifted his fountain pen and leather date book from his inner pocket, then tore out a blank page and drew a map. After marking his and her place with a star, he slid it across the table. “I don’t want to make any trouble for you, Lucy.” This made Lucy laugh. “I just want you to know my door is always open. My room is at the top of the stairs.”

Lucy studied the map. “Are you married?”

Julien shook his head. “Never. I don’t believe in marriage.”

“Do you live with a woman?”

“No.”

“Caprice told me you have children.”

A tender smile spread across Julien’s face and he reached inside of his jacket, then handed Lucy a picture. Lucy looked at the two blue-eyed girls, they looked around 6 and 8, and they both had their father’s dimples. She wondered how he could bear to be apart from them, it added to her suspicions about him. “They must miss you very much.”

Julien nodded. “I miss them, too. But I have to live my life.”

That she could understand. “Are they able to spend time with their grandparents while you are away?”

A pained look crossed Julien’s face. “My parents are not together and unfortunately, I do not have a very good relationship with them.”

For the first time Lucy sensed a reason for the walls of Julien’s cool façade, as well as the source of the pain they were protecting. “I didn’t mean to pry. I only asked because I spent a lot of time with my grandparents when I was little. It was important to me.”

Julien leaned back into the booth. “I lived with my grandparents.”

“Why?”

“My parents were students in Paris not long after the war, apartments were difficult to find. The woman who owned the apartment they lived in said they could only have one child in it. So my older sister stayed with them and they took me to live with my father’s parents in the mountains.”

Lucy thought it rude to ask why they hadn’t moved. “So you grew up in the mountains?”

“I spent my first five years in the Alps. Then my parents moved and I went back to live with them. Then my father disappeared.”

“Disappeared?” Lucy was as silently flabbergasted by all of this, especially as he seemed unaffected. She searched for signs of damage but only found that solid, handsome wall. “How old were you?”

“Eight or nine.” Lucy winced. He waved that off. “He came back sometimes but we never knew when, and when we asked why he left us he stayed away longer so we learned not to ask. Then he asked my mother for a divorce. I saw very early that my parents’ life was not mine.”

Lucy considered all that enough to put someone in a basket case instead of a jet-set life. “What do you mean by not yours?”

Julien remained in his relaxed position. “My grandparents lived just inside the village and one summer night when I was about 13, I was coming back from a walk in the mountains and I watched my father kiss another woman on the street outside the village wall, then pass through, walk into my grandparent’s house and kiss my mother. I understood, then, that his life was separate from mine.”

Lucy searched for something to say to ease the pain she imagined, but found no words. He waited. She sat up straight to give her stomach breathing room. “I feel so strange inside.”

Julien gave her a look of warning and snipped, “Don’t take what isn’t yours.” It was the strangest context Lucy had ever heard the phrase used in, and yet she understood it, because she had taken his story inside and it was making her sick. She had never thought of such a feeling as theft, however. It was odd to her, too, the way he seemed angry. Was he even selfish about his pain? Or had he mistaken her compassion as a pity he was too proud to bear? She was too afraid of him to ask. He looked like a tiger patrolling his cage, ready to gnash any hand that reached in.

A man who looked like the star quarterback of a fraternity walked up to the table and smiled the kind of smile that could sell anybody anything, at least once. Julien introduced him as his old roommate, Joe. Then Dani, an Israeli, with close-cropped, dark curly hair, and a tender smile sat down. Felix slid into the booth after that. A Scot that Lucy recognized from an international perfume ad joined them. They were a stunning distraction to Lucy, now in the corner, surrounded by handsome, virile men. Dani slipped a deck of cards from his pocket. “Does anybody want to play?” They all looked at her.

Lucy, still dazed by Julien’s story but happy to let it go, thought, why not. “Deal me in.”

The next morning, map in hand, Lucy realized she had been running by the penthouse every day. It was on the top floor of a narrow three-story clapboard town house wedged in between two high-rises. Her steps creaked on the wooden stair boards to the top. She wiped the sweat from her forehead, smoothed her hair, and then knocked. Julien opened it wearing a yellow towel

around his waist. Lucy's glance caught on his chest, and then darted to his face. The scent of coconut oil and smoke surrounded him. Light and air flowed through the open window above the neatly made double bed. Genesis' "I'm Counting Out Time" played from a cassette recorder. Lucy looked around the room, at the purple love seat on the far wall and the low wooden table in front of it. "This is a great little place you have."

"I am happy to see you in it." Julien walked toward the makeshift kitchen along the same wall as the door. Whatever had bothered him the night before was gone, it seemed. "I was just starting my breakfast, would you like to join me for some eggs?"

She shook her head. "I can't stay long. I have to work."

She peered over his shoulder as he approached egg frying: that, too, in a way she'd never seen before. He first poured a cup of whites into a pan of warm oil. When they bubbled but weren't fully cooked, he centered the yolks he'd kept aside in their shells on top of them, cooked them until they were securely in place, added a strong dose of salt and pepper, then slid them onto a plate. He held them in front of her. "Are you sure you would not like them? Or maybe some tea?" She shook her head again, and then sat next to him on the love seat, watching as he punctured the yolks, spread them evenly over the white, sliced through it precisely, then rolled each bite neatly around the tongs of the fork. He cut thick white toast into small pieces, and then stabbed them one by one onto the end of his fork to sweep up the yolk that remained. Lucy loved his manners. She'd never seen anything like them, either. The bread surprised her. "They have Texas toast in Japan?" Julien looked confused. She nodded toward it. "That is what we call that kind of bread in Iowa."

"You must tell me about your Iowa."

You would knock my Iowa out is what Lucy thought as she slid her hands under her thighs, then came to the point of her visit. “I think you might be able to help me with a problem. Would you meet me around 6 at the agency and then we can go for a drink?”

“Avec plaisir, Lucy.”

When they stepped outside the building in Umeda that evening, Lucy stood for a moment enjoying the cool raindrops on the hot skin of her face and chest. “Do you know somewhere near here where we will not see anyone we know?”

Julien nodded, touched her elbow and looked into her eyes, “Are you okay?”

“Mhmm.” She felt different, so she imagined she looked different. She couldn’t speak. She felt like she was shedding a skin, surfacing from under all that protection she’d built up.

They stopped in front of a circular high rise and Julien held the door open. She matched the pace of his boots as they walked down a long, dimly lit hallway. Julien flashed his membership card at the reception desk, and Lucy slipped a composite from her bag and then posed for a quick Polaroid. They passed in front of a bar covered in mosaic shards of mirror and sat in one of the many tall, curved booths set up in a labyrinth pattern. Lucy stared at the mirrored ball suspended above the dance floor. She liked how everywhere she turned something was reflecting something else. She could feel Julien’s eyes on her but could not meet them. She smiled at the waiter’s spiked hair. “Wodka on the wocks, please.” It didn’t feel kind to mimic their accent, but it was fun. Anyway, he nodded happily, in perfect agreement.

Julien nodded, too. “The same,” he looked at Lucy. “I will join you in your drinking.”

She drank the vodka like an intravenous feeding, playing with the silver cocktail napkin, wishing he was nervous as she was. When she was ready to speak, she dared a glance at Julien. He looked like a relaxed cheetah with a twitching tail, following her every movement with his eyes. Out with it yourself, she said to herself. “The problem is this: whenever I am near you all I want to do is touch you.”

He nodded. “I feel it.”

She closed her eyes in embarrassment, wondering what the hell he meant by that. The right side of her body prickled as he neared. When she opened her eyes, and he tenderly then deeply kissed her, she figured he enjoyed this problem of hers. Julien nipped the end of her nose with his, “I like your kiss.” She could only nod, then dive in again.

When temporarily satisfied, she sipped her drink. The way Julien looked at her made her think he was going to say something sweet. “You have to help me with Caprice.”

Lucy had forgotten all about Caprice. She raised her eyebrows in a combination of disbelief and bewilderment. Granted, she could consider this a proclamation of desire for further kissing, and therefore, a request for help with the next problem to be solved. “You got into that one all by yourself, man, you’re going to have to get yourself out the same way.”

Julien raised his hands in exasperation. “But you know her. She never stops, this girl. Pushing herself into taxis with me, following me.” Lucy stared, unflinching. Julien insisted. “You saw her.”

All Lucy saw was an opportunity to ask what she most wanted to know. “Why did you even get involved with her?”

“Lucy, I am a man. She is a beautiful young girl.”

The way he said it as if that made sense enough both enraged Lucy, and made her laugh in stutters as she turned it around and looked at it from different angles. Her grandfather, along with a various number of other men, flashed through her mind. Anyway it was only a kiss, she told herself, as the young man who had taken her Polaroid walked toward their table.

With both hands and a bow he presented her club membership on a small silver platter as if it were a key to the company safe. *MAHARAJA MARU BIRU, Members Card of Foreign Models, Dress Fashionable, come and experience it for yourself* was written across the bottom of the lavender card. Lucy laughed again as she read, until she saw the date and remembered it was Vic’s birthday.

The time difference, the expense, and the difficulty in calling from the apartment had made communication with Vic rare and difficult in Osaka. She could sense a fleck of revenge in this kissing on his birthday. Even more than that, she could feel a sort of general “go fuck yourself” against all men mounting, and it was one she’d savor by herself. She thought that showing a man how angry he made her gave him too much of a feeling of power over her. She stood. “Excuse me. I need to use the bathroom.”

Lucy slid as many yen coins as she had into the pay phone on the wall near the bathrooms. Her phone number seemed like somebody else’s as she dialed. She thought about what nerve she had to be doing this, then quickly reverted to justice thinking about Vic’s own questionable relationships with other women.

The answering machine picked up. It was his voice now, and it was the telephone number he spoke, not their names, which made Lucy wonder why he had changed it, and if he wanted people to think he was a man living alone. After the beep, she sang “Happy Birthday”, and then returned to the table.

Julien stood, and then held out a hand. “Come with me. I want to show you something.”

They walked back through the corridor and underground to the subway system. The walls were filled with aquariums. Their shoulders brushed together as they strolled. Lucy, relaxed somewhat by the anonymity, thought this was it, this is was as good as it could get with a man, a feeling of shared adventure. She hooked her arm in and out of Julien’s, using it to pull him closer to the colorful fish she noticed. The passage opened into the entrance of the subway. It looked as if they had been transported into a space station with its chrome ticket machines, turnstiles, and sparkling white tile and glass in every direction. Not a soul in sight. It seemed they could go anywhere from there, with a push of the right button.

They stepped onto the subway and their complicity dissipated as Lucy searched for familiar faces, especially at the Shinsaibashi station, but none appeared.

When Lucy arrived home, Caprice questioned where she had been and she lied. It frightened Lucy how easy that was. She lay in bed thinking about how she hated feeling obsessed, hated not knowing what to do, hated lying and feeling out of control. She thought she was in love with her husband, but if that were true, how could she feel like this? She hated, too, the way this love story already seemed to be taking over her life. Yet, she couldn’t get rid of the feeling that she had something important to learn through Julien more than

from him, as oddly transparent as that sounded and as utilitarian as that seemed. It was as if touching him was a land she had to travel through to find a treasure. She was sure she would come out on the other side. He was not the destination.

For the next week Lucy kept as much to herself as possible, working, running, and dodging Caprice and further development with Julien. She was relieved when he was booked away for a commercial shoot on the sea and Caprice for a catalogue shoot in the mountains.

“You better get on a plane and get home now,” Faith suggested when she called and Lucy told her what was going on. Lucy imagined her friend was feeling the same way in her young marriage and her own desires had only exaggerated it. Yet, all this made Lucy wonder even more if the kind of marriage she wanted – two people first taking care of themselves and then having fun with each other —was even possible, as well as about how many people were happily married and why.

She certainly didn't want to run away from Japan and what she'd set in motion with Julien. Did this mean, she mused, that this lure of shared adventure could be even stronger than that of stability? The way she felt stimulated in every way in his presence made her ask herself why couldn't she feel that arousal everywhere and made her remember that she had before, when she was younger, back when she was doing whatever she wanted, without fear of loss.

Julien was the first person she had met, other than her parents, who was as hard on her as she was. Vic, Faith, and others were always telling her she was too hard on herself. She understood this as weakness in them, as if they were telling her to be content as she was when she wanted to be more. She understood the comfort of the middle, of staying away from extremes, but she

also knew that meant never reaching the best. Anyway, it seemed to her that it would be better to choose the middle from experience rather than from fear.

What she liked in Julien's hardness was the sense that he, like her, wanted the best from her and he, like she, could see there was more. In this way, he called it out in her, or their relationship did, even if sometimes only in resistance, and even if that meant the worst could also be summoned.

This is the kind of thinking that accompanied her on her evening strolls along the river to the Osaka Castle. The grass was tender green and colorful lights were strung through the cherry trees lining the east bank. Boys rowed while family and friends picnicked. Assorted stands offered corn-on-the-cob, octopus balls, apples, candies, and goldfish. Palm readers waited at their tables. On the other bank was a Zen garden: pruned shrubs and trees amongst rocks, flowerbeds. Lucy liked to sit and watch, imagining her questions would be answered eventually and the anguish would subside.

Ten days later, a Friday, she stood above Akiko's desk, shaking her head in wonder. Both her and Julien's chart were blocked out for three days in Nagoya. Julien walked into the agency, tanned from the booking on the cruise ship, and dressed entirely in white. He raised his arms to welcome her, "Hey Lucy, would you like to go to a party at the White House with me tonight?" Captain approached from the opposite direction wearing a navy suit. He looked like some kind of game show host with two large white envelopes in his hand, smiling slyly behind his smoky aviator glasses. It was as if inviting them both to Japan was all part of some grand plan and this, the climax. "You two must leave for Nagoya Sunday morning for two day booking. Good money. Beautiful hotel. You will do the brochure. I have all the information and tickets for Nagoya here. And here are the directions to the party tonight."

Captain couldn't help but smile as Julien reached out to shake Lucy's hand in congratulations.

They stepped into a taxi, then sped along a two-lane street under aqua-colored steel tracks suspended in air, until the driver stopped at an intersection underneath a film poster with a larger-than-life image of a French actress in white bodice and flowing blue skirt, paused on a flowering hill. "You would love that story. I would like to show you that film." Lucy looked up, imagined a life in Paris, and then shook the notion out of her head. The White House was written in pink neon and flashed from the window on the second floor of a four-story white brick building. They climbed white cement stairs into a deep, white room filled with models, bookers, clients, accountants and other business associates of Captain. After one of the English models expressed her regret to Julien that Caprice was away in the mountains, and threw in a "doesn't she have the most beautiful eyes" with a glare at Lucy, Lucy touched Julien's arm, then walked to the bar to meet Joy.

As the party wore on, and Julien stayed near, Lucy let herself go. She leaned into him when she laughed, touched him whenever she passed, sang "Bridge Over Troubled Waters" in a karaoke duet with Akiko. Chatted with American and Australian models she normally wouldn't have given the time of day to, and cracked up listening to Joy lay out her plan for placing cherries in a certain Australian's bottom then again at the subsequent hide-and-seek scheme for her consumption of them. She sat on Julien's knee for a picture, one she would stare at back in Chicago thinking she hadn't looked more happily beautiful since she was a girl. She enraptured Captain's clients with her stories of the covered wagons built in her hometown along the Mississippi. And in the taxi, on the way home that night, Julien rested his head on the back of the seat, and then turned toward her. "Lucy, you can have any kind of relationship you want with me, even if you only want to sleep in my arms."

It was such a sweet invitation, and she really believed him, but she knew being in his arms would do little for her sleep. She went to his room with him anyway, and after hours of kissing, lay pressed against him, naked, as if imprinting his flesh on hers. Later, when he was almost asleep, she lay there smelling the fresh French deodorant he wore. She was amazed he hadn't pressured her, it was yet another first as no man had ever not, especially in that position. She was tired of wondering where exactly the line not to be crossed was. It felt like some weird kind of hopscotch, she could kiss, but not snuggle, snuggle but no intercourse, oral but not vaginal. Sheez. Lucy nudged him to his back, rolled on top of him and put him inside of her. "What are you doing?" Julien whispered.

"Breaking through. Please don't move." It seemed so ridiculous and virginal to her, but that was all she wanted just then. To cross the line so it was no longer about that. It was done. Onward.

Yet, as they walked hand in hand through Shinsaibashi the next night, and two midwestern women from the agency waved through the crowd, Lucy felt shame and pretended not to see them. Julien waved back, so she had to look, then, and smiled shyly. Julien leaned into her. "Are you embarrassed to be with me?"

"I'm embarrassed because of me."

"But nobody here even knows your husband."

They knew she was married, and Julien knew they knew, too, which made Lucy think his reasoning odd. What did it matter who Vic was to them? This was more about her own feeling of shame at being blatantly unfaithful, which she had not yet learned meant seemingly little to the French. She thought that Vic should be the first to know, as ridiculous as that also sounded because, in

fact, he'd be the third. Calling him up to clue him in sounded even more absurd. "I don't care if nobody here knows my husband. I still don't like it."

Julien pulled his head back in like a turtle. "You really think too much."

"I can't think less. I've tried. Maybe you should think a little more."

"You should just live and do what feels good."

Ah, Lucy thought, the *good* life. It was really attractive to her. But what had felt good had not always felt right as well as vice-versa. She knew that feeling right with herself usually lasted much longer than feeling good. The lack of concern about other's feelings in the do-what-feels-good recipe concerned her. "I do what feels right, it doesn't always feel good."

"Oui, oui, oui, oui."

"And this little piggy cried all the way home."

Lucy enjoyed the puzzlement in Julien's eyes, and then was saved from explaining her joke by pointing at Felix waving from the entrance of Jubilation. She loved watching them speak French, their pursing lips and fluent hands. They both turned toward her at the same time, as if looking for an accomplice. Julien touched her arm. "Would you like to go to the baths?" She smiled realizing her Japanese bath moment had come. Felix nodded yes to encourage her, but she needed no encouragement. Julien reached for her hand, as if, he, too, thought she might be hesitant. What was it with these French guys? Why did they think American women were so ignorant? "We'll have dinner after. Come, it's just down the street. The men are separated from the women, though," he lifted his arm around her, and she enjoyed that, it wasn't time to launch into another attack, "so unfortunately we can't be together."

They walked into a narrow brick building a few doors down from Jubilation. The baths were upstairs in a white-tiled space. Julien, Lucy, and Felix were offered thick, white towels that smelled like hot lemons at the white semi-circle reception desk. Opposite white hallways led to more white rooms. It felt like being in heaven, all that white everywhere. Lucy followed the female sign, hung her clothes in a white locker then entered another large open white-tiled space where ten naked Japanese women of varying age and size were washing themselves on wooden stools under a line of low nozzles that ran through the center of the room. They all turned, then looked up as she entered, smiled, then sat on a stool to rinse herself looking at the others for direction. The woman next to her held out a bar of soap, nodded. Lucy smiled, then scrubbed, watching the other women in large baths that lined the edges of the room. She tested each one before getting in, jerking her hand away from the ice-cold one. The electric one made her nervous with its zapping, erratic currents. She climbed in the hot bath, and sat between two older women with pink, steamy faces and short, wet, black hair. Lucy nodded as they did, as if they were all meeting on the street. Felix shouted, “Hey Lucy, do you like?” and Lucy glanced around. He was perched over the top of a partition above her. The women at the showers ran for cover screaming dam mai, dam mai. She never learned what it meant. She covered her smile with her hand as she watched both of her bath partners shoulders jiggle in silent laughter.

In the bullet train, speeding toward Nagoya at dawn, she sat near the window, sipping steaming green tea, watching cities and towns flash by in seconds, smearing white, gray, steel, and streaks of neon across the otherwise sparse, open landscape. She turned to Julien, “Do you believe in destiny?”

“Yours or mine?”

She lifted her chin toward the man across from them, his head back and mouth open in sleep. “His.”

“Destiny is not fatality. There are many crossroads. We decide which ones to take.”

In the taxi, on the way to the castle, he rested his hand on her thigh. “Put on lipstick.”

Lucy glared and then rummaged through her satchel looking for the tube. She was still unable to believe she knew more about this business than someone else did. “I usually show up for shoots with a clean face.”

Julien nodded toward her portfolio. “And get your card out to present to the client when we meet. It’s always better, more professional.” Lucy shifted her body away from him, wondering why he thought he knew more than she did about everything, and why he was always telling her what to do; she hadn’t yet learned that that, too, was as French as wine. Gray sky and the stone walls of the castle filled her window view. The taxi turned then slowed along a circular drive. The Nagoya Castle Hotel was written in gold on a panel of windows at the lobby entrance. It looked to Lucy like the lush life was about to begin. They were greeted by name, and then led inside to one of the restaurants and their plush job.

A group of eight seated at a round table looked around the dining room in anticipation, then smiled knowingly when they saw Lucy and Julien. A fiftyish-looking man with a belly, glasses, and a happy face stood, smiled, bowed. “I am Toshiro, the photographer.” He lifted their composites and held them in front of him like a matchmaker, glancing at them, then Lucy and Julien, then back at the images, until he nodded his approval. The other

members of the team left their seats and huddled around to look, first at the composites, then, as if they couldn't believe they were real, at Lucy and Julien. Toshiro gestured to a nearby table for two, "Dozo, breakfast?"

When Lucy finished her coffee, a thin man in a navy cotton fishing hat, carrying a silver tackle box, walked up to their table like a soldier reporting for duty. "I am Yohji, make-up artist, please come with me." His eyes followed Lucy's height, and she tried the shrinking thing again but it still didn't work. In the lobby, Yohji introduced them to the Japanese couple they would be working with. Miyoki had kind eyes, a porcelain face and was wearing bright red lipstick, her long thick hair clipped into a tail by a mother-of-pearl barrette. Naoko had a noble look about him, wavy, dark hair, parted on the side, an oval European face with Japanese bone structure, and broad, strong shoulders. He was a head taller than Lucy so she moved next to him. In the elevator Yohji pointed to Julien and Naoko. "You two share room." He nodded toward Miyoki then looked at Lucy. "She live in Nagoya. So you have own room."

Julien traced an imaginary line between Lucy and himself. "We are married."

Yohji shook his finger at Julien. "No." Julien nodded. Yohji turned toward Lucy, who was bracing herself with the wall behind her. They were all looking at her, waiting for her to speak. She hated this manipulative part of Julien, this often putting her in a difficult position, at the same time that she loved his audacity. As she thought *why not*, she once again felt sick with the lie, not toward them, but toward what was beginning to seem like her imaginary husband. She always imagined him watching these scenes even if she knew he wasn't. When she nodded with that rusty feel in her gut, Yohji turned back toward Julien, "Sorry I did not know." Julien looked like a pastor forgiving a sin. Yohji pivoted back, as if it had dawned on him that it had taken Lucy an inordinate time to answer that question and if he moved fast enough he might

catch a false look on her face. Lucy met his glance. He threw his hands in the air. “Guess nobody knows.” She had to laugh.

It was as if they stepped into make-believe land as they were photographed on a couple’s vacation occasionally shared with Naoko and Miyoki. In between takes of them stepping out of a taxi, registering alongside each other, enjoying cocktails in their suite, dining in the rooftop restaurant, the Chinese restaurant, the French restaurant, at the sushi bar, working out at the gym, relaxing by the pool, sipping aperitifs in the cocktail lounge, perusing porcelain and pearls in the gift shop, or lounging in the splendid lobby, Lucy darted glances at Miyoki doing her own make-up while Yohji was doing hers. Miyoki nodded slightly each time in some sort of deference Lucy could not understand. She didn’t speak English and Lucy didn’t speak Japanese well enough to have a conversation. Lucy noticed that Yohji often asked if she was okay, if there was anything he could get for her, yet he ignored Miyoki. When she was alone with him, Lucy looked at him, “Why does Miyoki do her own make-up?”

“She, local girl. You make much more money.”

Later, on the set, Lucy expressed her disapproval to Julien. “That’s not right.”

“It’s normal. We come from farther away.”

“It still doesn’t seem right.” Even if she could understand the economics of it, it irked her. Julien seemed more comfortable in that role which impressed her in the sense of him considering himself special, but it also confused and bothered her when that first evening, after everyone was looking for him to begin the shoot, he emerged from the sauna and steam rooms, walking toward the set in a bathrobe, holding a towel around his neck, and even though he saw

the entire team waiting for him he did not apologize or hurry. Yet, there was something about the way that he didn't feel subservient that she liked.

Eventually he strolled across the thick cream rug covering the gleaming oak wood floor. He was in a black evening suit as he took his place next to Lucy on the tawny velvet sofa. Toshiro cupped his hands around his mouth and shouted from behind the camera fixed on a tripod fifty feet away. "Talk and smile, please."

Lucy fake smiled at Julien. "Nice steam?"

He looked so suave and de-boner, Lucy heard her brother say it in Iowa in her mind as Julien stretched one of his arms behind her, loosened his shoulders and looked her in the eye. "I would really like to make your clitoris as big as a nut."

The shutter clicked on Lucy's frozen smile as Toshiro shouted, "Again!" Lucy cracked up and the shutter clicked away as Julien kept his cool composure, never taking his eyes off her. Lucy did her best to restrain her laughter, and, as she wondered how painful a swell that size might be, she could feel her excitement grow. She talked about collecting acorns in the pasture behind her house.

Yohji flitted across the set. "They would like to shoot some pictures of you having dinner, then will leave you to enjoy it."

The punning never stopped and it relaxed Lucy enough to enjoy the rest of the evening, especially dinner in the rooftop restaurant, and especially after the crew was gone and she and Julien were alone next to the window with the castle's pagodas filling the view. No cameras pointed at her, Lucy drank wine,

ate lobster, and slipped into the mood and place that would let her go even farther.

As far as straddling him, lifting her arms like wings, and riding while her body flamed.

Lucy was a visionary when making love. With her first lover she had often seen children running on a country path in spring. With Vic she'd been puzzled by a recurring image of being in a Victorian room, unable to see anyone above the waist, surrounded by burgundy velvet walls, black taffeta, velvet purple skirts, men's tuxedo pants, a sense of her being an unnoticed child at a sophisticated late nineteenth century cocktail party.

That night, in the darkness of the Nagoya hotel room, as Julien lifted his hips to reach more deeply into her, and Lucy arched backwards from her agitated perch and grasped his ankles, an image of camels moving across a golden desert at sunset filled her mind. She gasped at the beauty and vividness of it. Julien paused, "Am I hurting you?" Lucy curled forward, glided into his arms then nuzzled her head into his shoulder. She loved the feel of his heart beating under her cheek. "What was it?"

"I saw camels. And gold. Everything was gold."

There was a pause. "I want you to give me yourself totally," Julien whispered. She lifted her head, kissed him deeply, and then entered another dream world. Gigantic morning glories opened, one after another, as she moved on top of him, feeling herself slinking through the jungle like a leopardess. Tall grasses brushed across her face, and then she saw a clearing where they rolled on sun-drenched earth beside a glistening turquoise lake. The thought of entering Julien excited her. Voices crept into her mind: you are not an animal... you are

not a man... you are a woman, and this is not your husband. Her kiss and movements changed, she became tentative. Julien stopped kissing her, pulled back, rolled away, and stared at the ceiling. "I am feeling someone else's energy. Not just yours and mine."

"I understand. I feel it, too. I don't know what to do about it."

"You need to get clear." He rolled away, and dove into the other bed. Lucy's nerves scattered in every direction, searching for the lost contact. She felt abandoned but did not have that word for it. She stared at Julien's profile. His eyes were closed. She was afraid to ask him anything. She tried to sleep, but her body was electric, and the image of the journeying camels repeated in her mind. Julien's "I want you to give me yourself totally" began its haunt, yet his jumping away told her he only wanted part, her light, but not her dark.

The next morning, disconcerted that on top of dealing with Julien being miffed at her for not making love right, she also had to contend with Yohji pummeling her face and threshing her hair in some kind of twisted hatred for women, Lucy lifted his hand from her face then moved it more gently to instruct him. He carried on as if her head were stone. She excused herself and dashed for the bathroom where she turned on the water so he would not hear her, then hung her head directly over the toilet so the tears fell straight down and did not run the mascara he had just swathed on.

When she walked into the rooftop restaurant Julien was playing "Misty" on the piano. Apparently there was no end to what he was capable of. He had everything Lucy appreciated: good looks, music, intellect, daring, refinement, even handyman capabilities. If he could just drop the selfish, arrogant and manipulative parts, she thought, but then how many other qualities, like the daring she loved, would go with them? The arrogance bothered her the least.

What she liked about his was that it was upfront, he said things like he saw them. He was not one of the many people who walked around being arrogant while hiding behind a calculating false altruism, using what they considered others' misfortune as a building block for their own esteem. All Julien seemed to be hiding was pain and Lucy could relate to that.

She loved hearing him play, she knew how but didn't let on, and when he lifted his head and looked at her, she saw that the tiger-who-had-not-succeeded-in-dominating-the-tigress-of-his-choice look had gone from his eyes, which dissolved the tension enough to carry on and enjoy the rest of pretending and picture-taking that day. Yohji shouted from a table set for breakfast, "Foreign couple on this side, Japanese couple here." When Miyoki smiled at Lucy so freshly, Lucy thought to herself, there is who I was.

At the team dinner, she looked up now and then to watch Julien across the round table. He was drawing a map of Paris on a white paper napkin for Toshiro. He sketched the Seine, the Eiffel Tower, and then after marking his neighborhood with a star, with the butt of his pen he showed Toshiro his way home. Lucy imagined riding with him. But, this was her story, she kept reminding herself, not theirs. She was on her own adventure and he was disturbing, delightfully albeit, her itinerary. Whether it was possible to have adventure and a love story was yet to be seen. Perhaps there was more to trust and commitment than either of them thought.

"Hey Lucy," the female stylist smiled, "Is true that everybody in Chicago carry a gun?"

Lucy lifted her hands. "Not everyone!"

Cars whistled in the distance as Julien and Lucy slid into the back seat of another white taxi. The driver's white-gloved hand reached for the address of the agency apartment. They swished through the streets, passing The Hotel More, written in flashing green neon. Lucy glanced back and thought, that's it, that more is what everybody is looking for. Julien kissed her neck. The taxi slowed, yen was passed over the seat. Cool air floated in as the driver pushed the button and the door opened to the street. She loved the feel of Julien's palm in the small of her back as they entered a narrow dark stairway.

It was another modern studio apartment, with a bed in the far corner next to a window, the room dimly lit from a distant streetlight. Once again as Lucy reveled, a vision appeared in her mind. This time, she saw the entire congregation at her wedding, gifts in hand, looking at her as if they had been duped. She considered the timing inopportune.

“What am I going to tell—” her voice broke. She curled into herself and covered her head with her hands. She was afraid that Julien was going to ditch her again, at least there was only one bed in this room. Instead Julien whispered, “Don't.” He wrapped his arms around her and she nestled the crown of her head under his chin.

Back in Osaka, while Lucy was drinking a cup of green tea after a long day of catalogue shooting, Caprice walked in with her hands behind her back and then set a package of Lucy's favorite Japanese chocolates on the table in front of her. “Everybody thinks I should hate you, but I just can't.” Lucy sorted through the subtleties on Caprice's face. She figured those from the party must have talked, or it had been Boris, who had seen her leaving Julien's room. Caprice lifted her chin and looked across the table. Her face was strangely calm. “I saw it comin' from the first time y'all looked at each other. I feel sorry

for you. You have a lot to deal with ahead of you. Are you going to break up with your husband for Julien?”

Chocolates and pity and none-of-your-business questions, Lucy thought, as Caprice leaned back against the couch and looked at her with half-cast eyes, moving like a cat preparing to brush up against her body. Lucy opened the box of chocolates, carefully removed the gold foil from one, and then popped it into her mouth. She let it melt on her tongue until she could feel the contours of the whole almond at the center. Caprice watched as if waiting for something more. “Thank you for the chocolates. I’m relieved to hear you can’t hate me. Please don’t worry. I can take care of myself. And if I break up with my husband for anybody, it’s going to be for me.”

Caprice looked like an actress who had been given the wrong lead line in a play and didn’t know what to say or do next.

“Overseas call, Lucy!” Akiko shouted, then peeked around the column, held out the receiver, and offered her chair.

When Lucy heard Vic’s voice, she rolled as far under the desk as she could, “Hi, listen, this is not the best time. Can I call you back later?”

“You sound strange. What is going on?”

They had talked about these things before, she had told him how it scared her when she was attracted to other men, and his response had always been that it was normal. So she didn’t hesitate now, though she did look around to see that no one was listening. “I am finding myself attracted to someone and it disturbs me a bit.”

“Well, that happens, but I really think the problem is that we’re not together. I want you to come home.”

“I will come home before I go anywhere else.”

“Lucy? You haven’t have you?” Lucy opened her mouth but no words came out. A strange gurgling noise came over the wires. She started to say she was sorry but Vic stopped her. “I’m standing alone in our apartment surrounded by your stuff. It’s pouring down rain outside. You’ve just told me that you are fucking another man thousands of miles away. I’m in agony and you’re sorry?”

“I never vowed fidelity.” She was shocked at how quickly that came.

“I’m going to pack up all your shit and send it to your parents. I want an annulment.”

“Please leave my parents out of this.”

Vic hung up and Lucy sat with the dial tone in her ear, wondering what on earth to do next. Akiko walked by and dropped a box of tissues on the desk. Lucy wiped her hands, and face, then took a deep breath and threw her shoulders back and stood. Like a person walking away from an accident with a concussion, she moved toward the exit. Tomy was waiting with his hands in the pockets of his khaki pants, his black leather folder tucked under his arm. He looked at his watch. “The casting is not far, we can walk. Julien is coming, too. This afternoon it’s just the two of you.”

Lucy excused herself to go to the bathroom, shied away from her glance in the mirror as she splashed cold water on her face, and then had to look. It wasn’t as bad as she thought. She slapped herself lightly on both cheeks, added a few

strokes of mascara, and some lipstick from the new tube that had just arrived in the mail from her mother.

Julien searched her eyes like a detective who has seen something out of place. She was silent as they walked and as they waited in a posh reception area. Julien lifted the shoulder of her jacket, “Take this off before you go in there. Show them your shoulders and waist. And take your hair away from your face.” Too tired to argue with him, she thought, who knows, maybe he’s right? He most likely thought he was doing her a favor, and maybe he was. Lucy assumed most people who told people what to do thought they were doing them a favor. She saw all unsolicited advice as arrogant no matter the pile of good intentions behind it. The ego, as she saw it, always thought it knew best and couldn’t stand the idea that someone else might have a useful suggestion. Anyway, even she would have admitted she looked striking in her snug sleeveless top with her hair clipped back, if she had looked at herself. She was definitely more elegant like that, than with the jacket and frizzed hair.

Tomy smiled as soon as they left the building. “You have the job, Lucy! A big one for a poster. Two-hundred-fifty thousand yen for only half-day!” His words bounced off her.

Julien grabbed her arm. “Thank you, Tomy, is what she meant to say.”

She was grateful. As well as fed up with Julien’s Svengali attitude even if his suggestions were useful. Arguing with him seemed useless. She was exhausted, anyway, and still in shock that she had told her husband she was having an affair by default and long-distance telephone. She just wanted to get away. She thanked Tomy and rushed off, leaving them both standing there, confused.

Julien called that night when she didn't come to the clubs and invited her for a bicycle ride. She rode on the handlebars as he pedaled her through the small streets of Tennoji in the dark. She loved having the warm, wet breeze on her face, watching the spattering of warm lights in the low buildings, seeing Japan, dark and sleeping. Lucy pointed to the crescent moon rising, and then glanced at the bikes they passed, parked up against trees, or walls, unlocked. "Where did you get this bike?"

"I borrowed it. Now you tell me, what is happening with you?"

"I told my husband today."

Julien swerved. "And?"

"He wants an annulment."

"Let him have it."

Lucy didn't know what to say. It seemed to her that Julien was tossing her marriage around like paper. Yet Lucy wasn't thinking about her marriage as much as she was thinking about herself. Was that so wrong? She didn't think so. She wondered if Julien saw something that she didn't. She imagined going back to Chicago without exploring this feeling, and thought it would be awful to be married to someone and always thinking it might have been better with somebody else.

Julien felt her sigh and turned to look. Lucy whispered in his ear. "Please take me back to my place."

“I thought we would sleep together.”

Lucy was pleased that he did, but all she wanted was solitude. “Not tonight.” She could see he was mad by the way he backed away at first when she leaned forward to kiss him.

As she showered, she thought it was telling that Vic’s first response had been to let it all go, to say that their marriage had never happened, and that because she was loving someone else and acting on it. She knew that she wouldn’t respond like that. She’d be hurt, angry, and scared, but as she herself didn’t think she was throwing her marriage away by sleeping with Julien, she wouldn’t throw her marriage away in the reverse situation. She might, though, if it were for nothing. She never understood how meaningless sex was more forgivable to most people she knew than meaningful sex. She thought those folks had it all backwards.

Caprice slipped into her bed that night, and Lucy stirred. “Lucy, you were crying in your sleep.” Breezes floated through the open window. Lucy was not surprised by her tears, she rolled toward Caprice, spooned her from behind, and fell back asleep.

That weekend, at her sayonara party in Bamboo, Caprice threw her arms around Lucy, and kissed her on the lips, then murmured in her ear. “When I came into your bed the other night, I was really looking for something more.” Lucy thought of the hotel sign in Nagoya.

Felix waved from the corner of a booth, “Hey Lucy, are you coming to *my* Sayonara tomorrow night?” and she was happy to have a reason to detour her attention.

“You’re leaving us, too?”

Caprice left, Felix left, Joy was still there, though, and Lucy realized how easy it could be to lie about Julien again. “He’s gone, Vic. I’m here alone, okay? I’m going to stay longer to work,” Lucy was on the phone in a quiet corner in the agency. “I will come home at the end of the month.”

Vic’s voice was full of disdain. “What can I say? You’ve taken all the power. I’m going to do what I want now.”

“Why, weren’t you doing that all along? And, if it makes you feel better, send the stuff to my parents, move if you want.” This time she hung up, and then left to meet Julien at Maharaja.

He was sitting in the booth where they’d first kissed, with a hard look on his face. She’d stayed out of his bed, except once, since Nagoya. The once had been yet another failed attempt at letting go of her guilt, and of him backing away due to her lack of presence. She was learning that his way to express his anger was by lancing verbal and facial darts. She sat down across from him and relaxed into the booth, anyway. “Captain agreed to extend my visa.”

“How do you feel?”

“Free.”

“You are not free. Now you have two.”

“I told Vic I was staying here longer for myself, not for you.”

Julien flicked his ashes into the ashtray. “But you must admit to yourself, at least, that you are staying to be with me.” Lucy wanted to slap the arrogance she saw off his face. Julien shifted position. “You are only letting yourself receive the worst of everything instead of the best.” She stared a “worst this” at him. “You know, Lucy, making love is more than just a pleasure, it is about communicating at one of the deepest levels.”

Lucy smoothed her skirt, remembering. “I must admit it has always been more of an experiment in pleasure for me. But I do understand what you are saying, and I feel it.”

“Have you ever had an—?” He was having trouble saying it.

Lucy laughed realizing he thought she’d never come in her life. Julien’s chin shot into the air. “Of course I have. I love them. I miss them.”

“So you know how, but you don't want to give it to me?” Lucy shook her head in confusion. “You know how to let yourself go but you just do not want to let that happen with me?”

“I want to. But,” she paused again and looked away. This seemed absurd to her. She turned back and used her softest voice. “Why don’t you?”

Julien was alarmed, as if he couldn’t believe she had the nerve to even ask him such a question. “I am not going to unless you do, why would I? It would be a tremendous loss of energy. It has to be a total share. Why even get in bed with me if you cannot be there completely?”

Lucy’s stomach ached. Her head hurt. “I want to give you as much as I can.”

“What do you give?”

Lucy stared at him in disbelief, she considered herself a rather generous soul, and was amazed she had no ready answer. It wasn't her nature to consider herself a gift anyway. She was amazed he was even asking her this question. What was he even doing sitting there with her if he hadn't figured that out? She pointed at him, "So you want to keep the control, but you want me," she thumbed herself, "to lose it? Exactly what kind of share is that?"

Julien drilled his eyes into hers. "I control myself in order to fulfill your pleasure, our pleasure, and yours is a major part of mine. I know women who climax many times during lovemaking. That is the great advantage you have. Men have one big explosion, losing everything. A woman loses nothing."

Lucy had never seen or heard anything like this. These control issues, this notion of gender advantages or disadvantages while making love. What she could not believe was that a woman had nothing to lose in the exchange. She raised an eyebrow. "Interesting theory."

Julien glared. "It is not a theory. It has been practiced, experimented. I know it is true."

What was supposed to be a pleasure appeared complicated to Lucy and she was no longer sure she wanted a sexual relationship with this man. "By the way, Captain made an appointment and reservations for me to go to Hong Kong Friday. I'll have to leave the visa papers at the consulate that morning, then stay through the weekend and pick them up on Monday morning."

"We could go together."

"I want to go alone. I think it will be good for me."

It was Golden Week, the first one of May, the longest, and for many workers, the only Japanese vacation of the year. Lucy lifted a map from her bag and laid it on the table in front of them, pointed to Katsurahama Beach, which she had circled in red pen. “But first, I want to go there. It's called Shikoku. Would you like to come with me on the night boat?”

Julien slipped a cigarette from his pack, leaned back. “You just said were going to Hong Kong.”

“Not until Friday morning.”

“Take an overnight boat to stay one day and night on the island and then come on the overnight boat back?” Lucy nodded. She knew by the way he almost smiled that he would come.

The ship pulled into dock at dawn. The sun was hidden behind the clouds, and it looked like rain. Lucy and Julien sauntered down the gangway and toward the path that led up a hill. Under a small thatch-covered area with vending machines, Lucy slid coins into a slot below a picture of coffee beans dancing with a cow while a packet of sugar was poured over them. Two cans of sweet, hot coffee with milk plunked out. As they walked up the hill sipping them, she hooked her left index finger in Julien's belt loop, then stared at it as some sort of unconscious accomplishment in reaching out and holding on. Scanning the area, the island of Shikoku did not seem foreign to her. Their feet scrunched along the gravel path, she closed her eyes to listen. At the top, the vista opened and spread. The gray of the sky highlighted the green of the grass. Man-made structures were scarce and scattered. Chickens pecked in a nearby yard. Locals bicycled by on the road, carrying open umbrellas. It was spitting rain, a misty morning. Lucy pulled the map from her jacket pocket and measured with finger and thumb. "It doesn't look that far."

Julien blew smoke in the air then shook his head. "You must look at the scale to measure correctly." Before Lucy could suggest that Julien look at it himself, a passing car slowed, and then backed up. Two young Japanese men in jean jackets smiled from the window. Lucy showed them the map, then pointed to Katsurahama Beach. They pointed to the back seat of the car and opened the door. Cigarette smoke and loud music streamed out as Julien and Lucy ducked in. The driver pointed to the cassette player on Julien's lap then to his own ear. Lucy ejected the tape and handed it to his friend. The Beatles sang "All You Need Is Love" as they pulled out on the road.

The driver nodded to his friend then looked in the rearview mirror at Lucy and Julien. “Where from?”

“Chicago.”

“France.” Both friends smiled at each other as if they had just come across a rare alien species. Lucy looked out the window, thrilled to see the horizon and open land for the first time in six weeks. They drove on, listening to the Beatles, smiling at each other, traveling between water and low land into clearer weather.

Three hours later they arrived to a beach. A white pagoda trimmed in red sat on top of a shale cliff where cedar trees grew. Three boulders formed an ellipse from there into the sea, a bamboo bridge connecting them. The driver pulled to the edge of the parking lot, and his friend handed Lucy the cassette. She pointed to them, and then the beach. They nodded and walked with Lucy and Julien.

“Kirei,” Lucy practiced the Japanese word for beautiful. They nodded again, bowed, and then turned to go. “Dove?” The boys pointed to their watches, the car, the place on the map where the ship docked, then themselves. It seemed they’d driven Julien and Lucy there just to do it. They waved away Lucy and Julien’s shock. Lucy offered the cassette but they wouldn’t take it. She made the gesture of drinking, and eating, then pointed to them. “Coffee? Lunch?” They each refused with a shaking of the head.

“Amazing people,” Julien said after they had left. He and Lucy were sitting on the beach looking out over the water. Seagulls swooped and dove into the silver waves. It started to drizzle again. Lucy looked toward the cliff, and then

lifted her nose toward the stairs that climbed and crossed it. “Want to see what’s over there?”

Julien was leaning back on his elbows, squinting at the hazy sky. “C’est dommage que le soleil se cache.”

“I love it when you do that.”

“Do what?”

“Speak French to me without realizing it.”

“Maybe I am comfortable?”

Lucy winked. “That is a very good sign.”

They climbed the stairs, passed under a wooden threshold painted red, and then looked down to another beach and a small village. As they descended the hill and walked into town, they passed small one-story homes sparsely placed, furrows in the open ground where planting had begun. Gardeners worked, their wide-brimmed bamboo hats deflecting the rain. The drizzle turned to steady drops. Under a cliff on the beach, protected from the rain, they sat throwing stones at a can, listening to the ping when they hit, the roar of the wild waves and their sizzle as they broke the shore. As they watched lightning flash on the horizon, and the rain died down, Julien placed a hand on her thigh. “Let's walk.”

Inland among the cedars and pines, a man stood guard-like at the opening of a huge canvas tent. Cheers grew louder as Lucy and Julien approached. They looked at each other, shrugged why not, then bought a ticket from the man, and went in. In the center was a ring, and in the ring were two dogs in a face

off, growling at each other, each one had bit-up and dangling bloody ears. Drunk and drinking men were shouting bets with beer cans in their hands, cigarettes hanging from their mouths. It smelled like sweat and blood. "I can't take it," Lucy said in Julien's ear. "I'll meet you outside."

Once there Lucy breathed easily, and watched families playing on the beach in the rain, umbrellas in their hands. She thought about her own family and how they would disapprove of what she had been doing as she walked along the boardwalk and timber, letting the scents of pine, cedar and salt fill her head, watching raindrops disappear into the sand until the drops came more slowly and stopped.

"You didn't miss much." Lucy spun in the direction of Julien's voice.

He looked so warm and alive, like a long lost friend against the gray and green backdrop. She didn't tell him how happy she was to see him standing there or how familiar he looked to her for the first time. Maybe it was his casual clothes. She loved seeing him in high-tops, and she loved being in nature with him. Telling him that, however, felt to Lucy like walking into a doubly life-threatening trap because it was guarded by the most attractive and smoothest operator she'd ever wanted to be near. Lucy thought of the friend from college who had told her she was afraid of men. She still wondered about that and decided she both was and was not. By now, it was clear that men would hurt her eventually. It was just a question of how much. She hated to admit that she was afraid to totally be herself with a man, but she couldn't say it was only men that she felt that way with. It was that old fear that if she were herself people would go away. Yet, that not showing herself was also a preparation for saying, when they did go away, that it wasn't really her they were leaving. She didn't know why she felt that way.

She did know she preferred men her own height, as Julien was. Big men repulsed her. The mere idea she might be physically overpowered kept her back. What also kept her back from Julien, other than the fact she was married to someone else, was the knowledge that saying no to him was extremely difficult. She worried he could persuade her to do things she'd never do alone – this also attracted her. So she was hiding and waiting, wanting him to prove his love first, and then, well, then maybe she'd fess up to her own tender feelings for him. She still had a hard time imagining a sophisticated man like him loving her, mainly because she was not enough in love with herself.

Some part of her knew she'd settled for less than she wanted with Vic, and therefore had been using him, however gracefully, and that didn't make her think very highly of herself. She'd given up on her adventurous life by getting married and didn't find that such an attractive quality, either. So, there she was on a beach in Japan with a handsome and fabulously foreign man standing in front of her, smiling at her, one she'd been straddling in ecstasy weeks before, and she didn't even kiss him, because god forbid what if that made him think she loved him? Then god knows what he might do to her, right? Jeez. She pointed to the water. "The tide is coming in. I think we should check our bags."

They returned to the cliff just in time. Julien gestured to a spot farther inland with his chin. "I think that will be a good place to camp."

"I saw some tarp we could use for a tent near a construction site."

"Tarp?"

She recalled the same expression on his face that night when she'd said pry, she liked watching him try to figure it out without asking. "Come, I'll show

you.” They crossed the beach, then the two-lane blacktopped road to where Lucy proudly displayed her find. “We can use it and bring it back in the morning.”

As they removed and folded it, Julien scanned the area. “We need sticks and wood for the fire.” He pointed to a dozen bamboo branches leaning against the wall of a shack. “I can use some of those for the tent.”

Lucy crammed the tarp into her backpack. “I saw a little grocery store where we can get something to eat.”

A tiny woman with silver-streaked hair rushed out from behind the counter in the little market and wiped her smooth-looking hands on her apron. “Kombon wa,” Lucy said, and lines crinkled around the shopkeeper’s eyes as she smiled and peeled out in Japanese. Lucy raised a hand to halt her, to say I do not understand. “Wakarinei.” But the woman thought Lucy didn’t understand the idea, rather than the language, so kept going, her sharp eyes flashing.

Julien, an aisle away in the three-aisle market, held up a package of cocktail weenies. “What about these?”

“Great, get two. Have you seen any marshmallows?” There was confusion on his face again. The woman smiled at Lucy. Lucy looked at Julien. “You know, white, puffy, we used to put them on sticks when we were little kids and toast them over the bonfire.”

“Is it some kind of cheese?”

Lucy laughed. “Forget it. I’ll send you one someday. They’re light.” She bent over a display of sake cans piled in pyramid style on the floor, lifted one, then

looked closely at the metal tab with lightning symbols on it. She imagined, when pulled, this tab would start a heating process within the can. She carried four of them to the counter. “Warm sake and weenies by the fire!”

“Weenies?”

Lucy pointed at them. “These are weenies, cocktail weenies. It’s also slang, you know, argot, for the man’s zizi.”

Julien pulled his head back in horror. “What is?”

Lucy chuckled. “Hasn’t anyone ever told you to keep your weenie in your pants?”

Julien furrowed his brow, really trying to remember. “I don't think so.”

Lucy kissed his cheek. “Why am I not surprised?”

“How about some chips? Tomatoes? Cheese?” He lifted each suggestion in succession. The shopkeeper and Lucy watched as he placed each item on the counter. Lucy scrutinized the individually wrapped cheeses with the laughing cow on them. She squeezed it. “What is this?”

Julien raised a finger. “Cheese is very good for you, you know. The cow is a very generous animal.” The shopkeeper added everything with pencil and paper, showed the number, counted out the yen, and handed them their picnic dinner in a white plastic bag. It struck Lucy then, that they had seen only Japanese people all day, had not seen any other foreigners. She wondered if this woman had. It amazed her how at home she felt on this remote island.

It was black dark when they stepped outside. Warm lights from houses shone like odd squares from the hidden landscape. The wet road glistened. The rain had stopped but the sky was not clear. Julien lifted a broken wooden chair at the side of a garbage container, studied it. "I think it's too wet."

Lucy opened the steel lid of the bin, peered in. "Jackpot. There are two more in here, and newspapers."

Back at camp, Julien pulled a long white candle from his bag, jammed it between the rocks and lit it. Lucy set the cassette player nearby and the Beatles played while he broke the chairs over rocks. She balled up the newspaper, he positioned the pieces of broken chair in pyramid form, and then by the light of the fire, pounded four holes deep into the ground with a stick and large stone. Together they inserted the bamboo. Lucy filled sand and pebbles in around them. He handed her one end of the royal blue tarp, then they spread it over the tops of the poles, weighting each side down with more sand and rocks. The extra tarp hung over the front edge as a door flap, swinging open toward the large rock and fire.

As Lucy watched Julien spear the weenies on a stick and position them in the fire, she asked, "Were you a Boy Scout?" Julien nodded. She tried to imagine him in the blue outfit with a yellow scarf around his neck that her brothers had worn. She wasn't afraid of her brothers, she thought, though it occurred to her that sometimes she worried if she said what she really thought she might lose their love, too. She wondered if that was withholding, in fact, if not giving her real thoughts was a lack of generosity. Hoarding them, was she? *Nah*. Yet, wasn't it presumptuous to consider her thoughts a gift? Was she demeaning herself to think they were not? She liked to think she was judging where they might be useful, or at the least, recognized. Yet another part of her harbored the fear that if recognized she'd be in danger of being unlovable. Even at that moment, she sillily decided not to tell Julien that this was the first time she had

ever camped in case it reinforced her novice status in his mind, as well as give him yet another thing to think he could be teach her.

He stood, wiped his hands on his jeans, and then removed the weenies from the flames as she opened the sake cans. As they sat in front of the fire, quietly eating and sipping, the night sky unveiled. The batteries, dying in the cassette player distorted the music and the Beatles began to sound like strangled warblers. Lucy shut it off. When the seat of the second chair became a bright red ember, she stood. "I want a longer view of this."

They walked toward the water side-by-side. Their bare feet sank into the damp sand at the shoreline, as they turned back to look at their little blue pup tent between rock and fire.

They lay with their heads poking out of the tent, watching the sky until their eyes closed. Lucy removed her shirt at the first light, and then edged a little farther out to soak in the sun. Julien rose and milled around, Lucy could hear him but did not open her eyes until he chided. "Do you like to expose yourself?"

"And you think I'm the prude?"

"People are arriving." She shimmied back inside the tent. Then after she came out dressed, he took off his t-shirt and lay on the warm sand in exactly the same position he had suggested she should not. Lucy stood above him. She looked at her watch. "We need to go. If I miss the boat tonight I'll miss my plane tomorrow."

"You can go the day after."

Lucy smelled the fire in her hair as she bent over to gather the sake cans, glinting in the sun and sand. “I guess I could hitchhike by myself.”

Julien sat up. “It’s a pity we have to leave now, in the sun.”

The first person to stop and offer a ride, in English, was a well-dressed pretty Japanese woman wearing lots of gold and driving a sleek black sedan. She watched Julien through her rearview mirror as if he were a tasty food she craved. Lucy looked at her watch, then the speedometer, and then leaned toward Julien’s ear. “Do you think it would be rude if I asked her to speed?”

Julien backed away. “It would be very rude.”

Hot, Lucy leaned forward to slip her sweater off. Julien caught her arm before it accidentally smacked the woman in the back of the head. The woman looked back and forth at them through the rear-view mirror. “You know, there is a very important bridge being constructed on this island.” If it’s between us, Lucy thought, it better be a sturdy one, that’s a long stretch.

Standing on the highway under a scorching sun, Lucy kicked the gravel. “I think she was going farther but just didn’t want to take us.”

Julien flicked his finished cigarette into the ditch. “She probably didn’t want to take you any farther.”

Lucy looked at him hard. “It is three o’clock now. The boat leaves at six. Do you even care if I make it?”

He took another cigarette from his pack. “And if I get stressed and nervous like you, what will it change?”

They walked for an hour or more on the quiet highway, Lucy behind him, or at least a foot away when at his side. A car roared past their outstretched thumbs. Not long after an older couple in a white Nissan stopped. They nodded energetically, knowingly, when Lucy showed them the port on the map. Lucy lifted her finger to point at her watch. Julien grabbed her arm. “Just get in the car.”

She slid as far away from him as she could. She was starving, they hadn't eaten anything since they returned the tarp and went to the café that morning. She unbuckled her backpack and took out a bag of fruit bars. There was only one left. She offered it to the woman, then the man, both refused, then reluctantly to Julien, who shook his head then glared at the crumbs that dropped on the seat and floor as Lucy ate it. She picked them up and pushed them into her pants pocket, glaring back.

By five forty-five they still weren't there. The driver began to speed, giving Lucy reassuring glances from behind his gold-rimmed glasses through the rear-view mirror. From the top of the gravel road that led to the dock, they saw the gangway being pulled in. The man lay on his horn, stuck his head out the window, waved and shouted in Japanese. Gravel spit widely from his wheels as he drove down the hill. The plank reversed its motion, and was set back on the cement. Passengers watched and some cheered from the upper decks as Julien and Lucy ran on.

It had raised halfway back up by the time they arrived at the top. They turned to see if their saviors were still there, and the man and woman waved. Lucy blew kisses. As they sailed out of the bay between high slate cliffs, Julien

yanked her away from the rail by her belt loop, and then pulled her in the direction of the sunset.

The next night in Bamboo, he drew a map of Hong Kong and the New Territories, told her about a ferry to Lantau. In the morning, before she left, she suckled him in a way that she knew would be difficult for him to control, and it was. It was the first kiss she'd given him there, and a goodbye, a dare, a framed attack, a steal. He didn't stop her. Had he let her hijack his almost defenseless missile, if that's the way she wanted it, so she could feel the strange emptiness of such power play? But wasn't his desire to see and feel her coming the same thing? She wondered. In any case, what she carried away with her did not feel good and Lucy Pilgrim decided never to play that game again.

On the plane, Lucy looked into the clouds and thought her oddest fear was that of feeling the same comfort with Julien that she did with Vic. Why did it scare her to feel as comfortable with both men? Because she'd married Vic, in part, for that feeling, and now it appeared she could have married herself instead. Green, smooth mountains appeared in view. Pastel high-rises thrust from the ground, Lucy smiled thinking how they looked like the refrigerator-box houses she and her brothers and sisters had cut out and painted in the driveway. Modern highways split and curved into the ancient landscape. "Welcome to Hong Kong, it is eighty-eight degrees Fahrenheit," the pilot announced as the plane skimmed over the buildings of Central then North Point.

Lucy took a taxi to Central, left her passport and necessary papers at the Japanese Consulate, and then walked from their air-conditioned offices out into the wet heat. People moved rapidly around her like busy ants. Street workers crawled in and out of trenches in between sidewalks and bamboo scaffolding. Fruit vendors carried their wares in boxes strung around their necks. Red, blue, and green double and single deck trams clattered down the middle of the street, clanging. Bicycles darted in and out, their bells ringing. Lucy walked, amidst the sound of drills, hammers, and shouting voices, mesmerized by the otherworldliness. She passed wooden barrels filled with fruits and nuts, next to tan rotary telephones sitting on tables, with signs saying they were free for public use. She doubted she could sit down and call Iowa or Chicago or Osaka. She didn't want to anyway. She walked on. Live chickens hung upside down on strings. A man teased snakes, bit off their

heads, spat them into his hand, drained their mouths, and auctioned the liquid as an elixir. People dressed in designer clothes wearing gold sunglasses, gold watches, and gold chains, clipped past this spectacle without looking twice. There were greasy cafes next to two-story fancy restaurants. Markets with rows of tables piled with fabrics of every color and texture imaginable.

Come early evening, Lucy stretched her legs on a wooden bench at the back of the Star Ferry, and rode across the harbor from Hong Kong Island to Kowloon, the Mainland. The sea breeze dried the perspiration covering her body. Junks, with their high sterns and four-cornered sails, floated by. Passenger ferries, tankers, small sailboats, immense yachts, cargo ships, and tiny fishing boats steered by a single man sailed about the harbor. Victoria Peak loomed above the congested high rises of the island as the sun dropped behind the haze. Lucy watched an old man, relaxing on his haunches at the back of a small wooden boat, anchored in the middle of the harbor, smoking a cigarette and looking out over the water in thought. She was struck by his flexibility and wondered what it took to maintain that, because she, too, wanted to be able to sit on her haunches at seventy years of age.

After the ferry docked, she walked into the nearest hotel. It was posh, and too expensive, but she liked the bar: cozy, woody, accented with hanging plants. Foreigners dominated the scene. Lucy watched, trying not to stare, as she leaned back in a leather armchair, sipping from a frosty glass of beer. Many different languages were being spoken, by faces and bodies in so many different colors, shapes, and sizes, yet the same feeling of unwinding permeated the room. Lucy wondered what she would do if she saw Vic, or Julien, walk in, and was relieved when it occurred to her that she preferred neither did. Content to be with herself, she wanted to continue walking and seeing. She considered not sleeping, but her feet were aching. Her thin-soled

sandals were melting, eaten up by the hot pavement. She was sweaty, dirty, tired.

Throughout the day, images of living alone, many relationships, and limitless options had collided with warm memories of the home and life she and Vic had made together. She wondered if she had screwed it all by telling him. What exactly was that it, however? She told herself that if he loved her, he would at least try to understand, yet, then that mind of hers asked the next logical question: how could she be doing this if she loved him? “Me first” is what came, I am doing this for me and it has nothing to do with him but he may benefit from it. It was an outrageous reach for her which felt both right and selfish.

She checked into The Empress, the closest hotel she considered affordable in Tsim Sha Tsui. “We will need your passport, please,” the young woman at the reception desk said after Lucy handed her the American Express card.

“It’s at the Japanese consulate.” Lucy showed the papers they had given her that afternoon.

Up in her room, after a long cool bath, Lucy sat on the bed, in front of the oblong ornate mirror, looking at herself as someone else she found interesting. She looked leaner, sharper and more mature. Here I am, on the other side of the world, alone, exploring, she mused. Maybe I really don’t need anyone, she thought. Then she called room service, and loved watching a young man in a tuxedo roll a silver tray into her room, bow, then lift a silver dome and serve her a cheeseburger and fries on china. After her meal, she called Vic again, and then hung up when she heard the answering machine. It was seven in the morning in Chicago. She wondered if he was sleeping elsewhere. She picked up the remote, pressed a button at random. A pretty Chinese woman in a red

suit gave the stock report in English, with a perfect English accent. Fascinated, Lucy changed channels to watch other Chinese male and female faces speaking English, with English accents. It jarred her, she wanted to tell them to stop. They looked like puppets on the wrong hands.

The receptionist called the next morning. “I am sorry but your American Express was not approved.”

“That’s very strange. I will be right down.” Lucy hadn’t used it since she left Chicago. Most of her money was at the agency in Osaka. She called Vic who was still not there. This time she left a message with this news. In the shower, she budgeted the nine thousand yen she was carrying: just enough to pay for the room. She had two nights and three days to go before she could pick up her visa and get her plane back to Osaka. As she imagined sneaking out, she thought, at least they didn’t have her passport, even if they did know where it was, and that she had told them she would go there to pick it up on Monday.

When the receptionist tried the card again, it beeped as unapproved again. Lucy fidgeted. “Is there an American Express office nearby?”

“Yes, there is, right over on Jordan Road. Here is the address.” Lucy walked out without paying, pretending she would come back, but knowing she wouldn’t, if she couldn’t get the office to approve the card. She had never done such a thing, but she didn’t know what else to do.

“This card has been cancelled by the primary holder.”

“My husband,” Lucy had trouble with the pronunciation of the word. The woman nodded. Lucy thought how ironic it was that telling him the truth had led him to distrust her. That also took care of the guilt she had been feeling, in one fell swoop. Tina Turner singing “What’s Love Got to Do With It?” came

to mind as she walked out onto the street. It was only ten and already hot. The strap of her backpack cut into her sunburned shoulder. Other than the yen, she was carrying a pen, a notebook, clean underwear, and a deck of cards. Her feet were pink, swollen, and bleeding in places. She saw a sign with an arrow pointing in the direction of the Kowloon-Canton Railway, and thought why not?

At Sha Tin, she stepped off the train and followed another sign, pointing toward Ten Thousand Buddhas. She climbed four hundred and sixty stone stairs barefoot, up the side of a mountain, then sat under an ancient eucalyptus tree at a rock table and chair, amongst singing birds and teeming insects, the faint traffic noise three hundred meters below. Sweat drenched her silk tank top. Her feet pulsed. She wondered where she would sleep. She told herself to just keep going, it would become clear. In an outhouse nearby she relieved herself in a hole in the ground, then cleaned herself with a leaf. As she passed under a stone archway, sheets and cotton shirts, a load of whites, hung from a string between trees on the other side, yet no one was in sight. Then she spotted the temple entrance, it was made of gray stone, framed in red, with gold Chinese characters etched upon it.

Lucy passed through it to an open courtyard, where the interior walls were painted cyan. A procession of Buddhas traversed the roof of a shrine at the far end. Underneath it, sitting inside a glass case, was the embalmed body, covered in gold leaf, of the monk who established the temple. Lucy walked around and saw that each of the ten thousand Buddhas on the grounds was unique. One looked like a woman and wore gold, she was carrying a wand, sitting atop a royal blue half-dragon half-dog. Lucy sat under her for the next three hours in that courtyard, her head and back pressed against the cool cement walls, leaves rustling in the eucalyptus tree above her, parakeets hopping from branch to branch. Her mind was empty, an open cage.

After she descended the mountain, she met an English couple waiting at a bus station in front of the railway station. “Will this one take me back to Tsim Sha Tsui?” The man nodded as the woman told her it would. They asked her where she was from. The woman smiled, “Are you studying here?”

“I have been working in Japan and came here to renew my visa and travel around for a few days.”

“Please tell me you are not staying in that awful place, that Chung King Mansions where my children have stayed for six dollars a night.”

“Where is that?”

“I believe it’s on Nathan Road, but I’ve heard simply terrible things about the place. Dark. Tiny. Shared showers and baths.”

“Have you stayed there?”

“Most definitely not, dear.” As the woman’s husband smiled, Lucy made a mental note of the address. A red double-decked bus appeared then stopped at their feet. “This one will take you back to Kowloon on the scenic route,” the man nodded, and Lucy climbed up the stairs, offered a handful of coins the driver chose from, and then sat near a window. After they skirted around Golden Hill Country Park, Lucy stepped off, to step on another to ride across Rambler Channel, just because she liked the name. She was the only one on the bus, sitting in the middle back seat, looking out the window. The bus driver watched her throughout the ride. She changed again at the Container Terminal, staring at the barges lined up, imagined their port destinations around the world, then rode along the coast of Kowloon, once again mesmerized by the

harbor, by the size of ships riding at anchor, docking, and unloading, the movement among them, the distance they had traveled. It was the Grand Central Station of the South China Sea, not as gilded, ordered and embedded in stone. She stared at the small villages crammed into the sides of mountains and wondered if she could live like that, if she would ever feel at home in anything but open spaces, which also made her wonder how far one can really travel from where one starts. She rode the Star Ferry to Central wishing she could ride all evening, until morning. It made her want to have Grandma Pilgrim at her side. After a tram ride to Victoria Peak, and a stroll along its pine-lined paths at sunset, she walked back down the hill into thicker and thicker civilization.

It seemed everywhere she looked she saw jewelry stores and wedding rings. She stopped in Harry's Bar and ordered a beer, then sat alone at a table for two. She wondered why she was so afraid of Julien, and feared that she would never be enough for him. She was not sufficiently in love with herself, perhaps, to understand how he could be. Enough wondering, she decided, and walked again until she found the Chung King Mansions and checked into a cell-like room.

There was a cot against the wall with a small mirror above it. One exposed light bulb, surrounded by cobwebs, hung from the middle of the cement ceiling. Lucy believed the spiders would stay in their web. She was only going to sleep there, anyway. A Filipino man was talking to his young son in the room next door. Luna, the Filipino woman who managed the guest house, told Lucy the father and son lived there, and were lucky to do so. Many others kept their belongings in locked cages, near the port, by day, and slept in the cages at night. Lucy wondered how they had imagined their freedom when leaving their country. Had they known what hardship lay ahead or had they been fooled? She didn't think it kind to ask. Nor did she ask Luna that night when

she went out with her, and sat with friends of hers drinking beer in an island pub, watching the crowd, and pretending not to understand the men that sat down next to her and offered her drinks, dinners, trips.

On Sunday, she woke early to ride a ferry to Lantau Island, and from its prow, watched the massive cluster of Hong Kong diminish and disappear. When they docked at Silver Mine Bay, she boarded a speedy and rickety bus, sat in the back seat dodging branches that caught in the open window, as they wound up and around the mountain to the place Luna told her she must visit. Six hundred meters above sea level, the bus slowed onto a gravel plateau and stopped in front of the gated entrance of the Po Lin Monastery.

Lucy followed small wooden signs marking a footpath, past stables where Chinese children were riding horses. The air was light there at the top of the world. Lucy imagined herself as a tiny figure on the globe as she arrived at the summit of the fuzzy mountains, and then rested in front of a small stone structure that looked like a shepherd's cove. Sheer clouds wafted in until the path she had trodden disappeared, totally enveloped in white. The clouds passed on, the shrubby knolls reappeared, and then the veil of white recovered the view of other mountains, sea, and small port villages. It went on like this for hours, Lucy watching. She felt as at peace as she had as a child in the woods, leaning against her favorite oak. Each time she attempted to rise, the ground held her tailbone like a magnet, so she let it. Warmth gathered and welled there. When the sun began to set, she walked back down the path, arriving in time to ride the last bus, to catch the last ferry, from Silver Mine Bay.

She eyed security guards at the airport, was relieved when she passed through customs without being asked to pay the hotel bill. The first thing she did back

in Osaka was take a long, lathery shower. Then she smoothed milk-and-honey lotion into her skin, dressed in her khaki adventure pants, and turtleneck black sweater. While lacing her boots, the image of Julien waiting for her in Bamboo moved her, and made her smile. Now that she felt desire rising again, she realized how her days in Hong Kong had emptied her of it. She felt new, and dashed out the door, braking herself to a lively gait instead of a sprint. Barely able to sit still through the five stops on the metro, she picked at the tiny balls of wool on her sweater. The only other passenger in the car, an older Japanese man in a business suit, snapped his fingers then pointed to her mess on the floor. Lucy gathered the lint and shoved it in her pocket.

In the velvet of Bamboo's reception area, she flashed her card, and picked up the pen to sign in. A few lines above her signature, Julien, 007. She took the stairs two at a time to the VIP lounge where she saw he was sitting alone. When he turned and saw her, the warm welcome and delight in his eyes told her more than he ever had. She dropped into the booth. He nuzzled his nose into her hair, and whispered "I am very appy to see you."

Hours later, after her stories were told, and they were back in his room, and as they kissed at the edge of his bed, fully clothed, Lucy eased him back onto it. As she lowered herself on top of him, her pounding sex felt like a smooth heavy stone dropping into water, echoing deeply, concentrically, filling her with reverberating waves of ecstatic warmth, spilling out into the world. One of her favorite ways to come, and so quickly. She rolled to the side, and then whispered, "That has never happened to me before. Like that, I mean. Still in my clothes. Just from my desire."

Julien lifted her face and looked into her eyes. "It is very important that you know it is not me that makes you feel like that. It is you. It is what you are giving me. It is yours." What was she giving him, she wondered, her desire for him, her love of him, her excitement. In any case, what amazed Lucy most

was the way Julien gave her pleasure back to her, telling her she was the source, not him. She had always felt like a victim of desire, as if it was something outside of her, more powerful than her, that came to rest on her and was out of her control. She had thought it was something the other had that she wanted, that it was more about the other, than her. She could take responsibility for her desire more clearly and joyfully with this understanding that it wasn't something that happened to her, but was something that came from her. She could use it constructively instead of always thinking of it as something she had to submit to, or conquer. It was becoming clearer and clearer that it was the way she loved, more than was loved, that turned her on.

A week later, while waiting for the train to go to work in Kobe, Lucy called her parents to wish them a happy wedding anniversary. Just by the way her father said, "How are you, honey?" she could tell that he sensed her predicament, and knew it was time to face the rest of her life. As she stood there at the payphone, watching three men slurping *udon* at a nearby noodle stand, Lucy wanted to tell her dad what was going on. "I'm hangin' in there," was all she could say. The next day she talked to Captain, made a reservation, left Vic a message telling him not to bother to come to the airport, she'd take a taxi home.

"So you've decided." Julien salted the Macedonian dish, then looked in her eyes and raised his brows for confirmation. She nodded. His movements slowed. "Well I hope you'll be a good girl for yourself."

Lucy cocked her head. "Please explain to me what a good girl is."

"Be strong. Go your own way. Drive your own life, do not let the energies and pressures of those around you steer you." Lucy listened, trying to picture her

life without him in it. Julien leaned back and looked at her from a different angle, as if he, too, were sizing up what would soon be gone. “I had a dream yesterday morning. I was driving my car in Paris and was very happy. I was with someone I stayed very well with, but she didn’t have a face in the dream. Her father’s presence was there, telling me to take care of his daughter, that she was really loving me.”

Lucy closed her eyes. “I can’t stay longer. I feel like I’m hanging in limbo.”

Julien nodded. She could see his Adam’s apple swell as he swallowed. After the waiter cleared the plates, he slipped his fountain pen out of the inside pocket of her jean jacket, which he was now wearing, then spread a white napkin on the table between them. He drew two stick figures then black arrows from one to the other. “You have this kind of relationship, one giving to the other and then the other giving back, that is, one always waiting to receive before giving to the other.” He drew another stick figure farther away from the two, then an arrow from one that traveled on to the third. “Then you have this type. One giving to the other, and the other giving to another.” Lifting his pen back to the two in the center, he drew arrows from each of them and joined their ends in the middle space above them. Drawing a spiral around that space he said, “This is the best, each giving one hundred percent and fireworks happening where it all meets.”

Lucy smiled. She loved the way they thought alike though it annoyed her that he seemed to think he was the one who had it all figured out about relationships, and she had yet to learn. She knew both of them had work to do, room to grow. She pointed to the drawing, “Much easier to draw than to put into practice.” Julien wrote *theoretical* in the top left-hand corner of the napkin then slid it her way. She folded it, slipped it in her pocket.

That night before sleep, she kissed him. “Why don’t you beg me to stay?”

He covered his forehead with a hand, looked at the ceiling. “I may as well pee in a violin.”

Lucy laughed as she traced his eyebrow. “Why a violin?”

“Exactly.”

He wrapped his body around hers and the way he held her so closely throughout the night, told Lucy that perhaps he even loved her more than either of them knew.

After one last job in Hiroshima, then amassing piles of yen into an envelope at the agency, after Moti, Bamboo, and all of the other good-byes had been said, Julien and Lucy and Joy sat in a private room of the elegant bar where Tomy had invited them, drinking whiskey on the rocks and listening to Tomy play the piano. Julien stretched his legs out on the booth then rested the back of his head on Lucy’s shoulder. She slipped her hand inside of his shirt. “Someday, someday,” she whispered, and then looked at him, both believing and not what she’d said. He didn’t seem to mind.

In the hours before she left, she slept astride him, enclosed in his arms. At dawn, perched above him, she caressed his body, traced the lines of his face. Any movement away from him wrenched her. Again, she was surprised. She didn’t think it would be this painful to leave him. She’d been telling herself he’d be a tender memory in her life and she’d go on. Now tears covered her face and body. He held her hips and softly spoke. “Go now, and don’t look back.” Lucy couldn’t bear leaving without looking into his eyes. She pried one open with her thumb and forefinger. The intensity of his regard shot her hand down, as if he was saying how dare you peek into my pain, yet, it was his pain

that told her their relationship was meaningful to him. She curled into him, and then slipped away from him. She dressed watching him. He never opened his eyes. After opening the door, she paused, raised her finger above her shoulder, and pointed in the direction she was headed. She didn't look back. He would write that it was sunny with a warm west wind the day he woke up and she was gone.

Lake Michigan was a vast shimmering aquamarine as the plane lowered in the sky. Vic held himself stiff in his new clothes when Lucy hugged him, then looked at her finger, and on it, the engagement and wedding rings he had given her. He laughed. It made her think that he had come to torture her, and she hated it that “How much money did you make?” was the first question he asked, on the way to the car.

“I have around seven hundred thousand yen in my pocket.” He lifted her suitcase into the trunk, then slammed it closed with a nod. As he jerked the stick shift, she rolled down the window and let spring in. Chicago had gone from gray and bare to lush and green while she was gone and she felt herself blossoming with it. She seemed as full of a sense of possibility, of a whole new life, as Vic seemed to be with rage. His anger was understandable to her, but not his behavior, she kept asking herself, “Why is he here? Why does he want me if thinks I am so awful?”

The first thing she noticed when she stepped inside their home was that their bedroom was gone. In its place was a new study. That is where Vic put her suitcase. She turned around to where the study used to be, and saw the new bedroom. The formerly cream walls were now painted drab steel, and were covered by ivory sponge marks that looked as if they had been slammed there in angst. The bed was hidden behind the door, shoved into a corner. Vic looked at her proudly. “What do you think?” Her face fell and nausea filled her stomach, she was heartsick to see how unattractive it was. She couldn’t stand

to be in it, she felt like she was being slammed by the sponge marks. He nodded toward their former bedroom. “I couldn’t sleep in there anymore.”

She nodded, too, and then slid around his body to get out. As they walked toward the living room, she reached to lift Lovey, who scrambled from her and scampered down the hallway with her sister, jumping on and off the walls. “The cats are running away from me.”

“Can you blame them?” Vic said over his shoulder. Lucy sat on the couch and leaned back, closing her eyes, telling herself to stay calm. When she opened them, Vic was standing in front of her with a tray, placing a bottle of chilled champagne, two flutes, and a small platter of Lucy’s favorite curried grape salad in front of her. She went wide-eyed, trying to sort it all out, as he sat down next to her, looked into her eyes, and lifted his glass for a toast. “Welcome home.” Lucy touched hers to his. Vic smiled. “He never left Japan did he?” With her mouth full, she shook her head. Vic bored his eyes into hers. “You slept with him last night, didn’t you?” Lucy closed her eyes, nodded. “And it was your friend’s boyfriend.” She opened her eyes. He was looking at her as if she had committed a heinous crime. “We have big problems here,” he concluded, leaping away from her.

Lucy set her glass on the coffee table. “I wondered what we were celebrating.”

Vic paced in front of the rocking chair. “I want you to stay, but you need to realize that you’ve made a mistake.”

“A mistake?” There was no way in hell Lucy would call it that.

He threw his arms to the air, walked into the other room, and picked up Lovey, then stroked her fur. He looked at the cat lovingly, then at Lucy nonchalantly. “I don’t know how else I can forgive you.”

Lucy looked around the room and thought it was understanding she wanted, not forgiveness. She was not about to let go of the ground she'd gained inside herself. She looked at the full catalpa trees, their leaves bouncing behind the screens of the open bay windows. She could smell the freshly cut grass. The day, and life in general looked so beautiful to her, too beautiful for this ugliness. She looked back at Vic, who was looking at her as if she were an ogre. "I'd like to see if we can build a new relationship from here."

"You have to admit you were weak."

Jesus, Lucy thought, what is this? She looked into his eyes. "It took a lot of strength for me to do what I did, and it was important." She loved hearing herself say these things, and was pleasantly surprised by her calmness while doing so.

Vic scoffed at her declaration. "I want you to stay, but no more traveling alone, *and* no more contact with him." He sat there in his grandfather's rocker, looking at her as if to say it was her turn, not to present her case, but to throw herself at his feet and beg for mercy. Lucy, silently flabbergasted, was trying to imagine never walking through an airport alone again, never talking or writing to Julien again. She couldn't believe Vic thought this attitude would inspire her to move closer to him. She'd never in a million years have thought that he would consider he owned her. Had she known then that he had told everyone they knew about what she had done, it would have been somewhat clearer to her why he felt the need to prove his domination. Love was unsure where to land in this territory. It hovered around him, trying to get in, but his pride kept pushing it out. Lucy sensed that this was all an act, so she put it aside. "Let's get outside, that will help. I'm going to take a quick shower, and then how about if we go down to that Mexican restaurant on Armitage for lunch?"

Vic looked like he could not care less, like he was doing her a huge favor to even be talking to her. “If you want.”

After a margarita, away from their home, as he sat across the table from her listening to her talk about Hong Kong, and she delicately sidestepped how he'd left her stranded there, he seemed more himself. He even smiled and let a compliment slip out. “You look great,” she could see a glimmer of understanding in his eyes, “whatever happened over there must have been good for you.”

She could not get in bed with him that night. She had not expected that. Each time she approached the bedroom, it was as if she walked into a countercurrent that whipped her about-face and marched her back to the living room. She made up an excuse of needing to drop something off at Faith's, but instead drove up and down Lake Shore Drive until dawn.

After the expected “where have you been?” and her honest answer, Lucy lay down next to her husband, but could not touch him. She could still smell and feel Julien on her skin despite the showers. If she closed her eyes she was in his bed in the penthouse. When she opened them, she heard Vic say “The ball's in your court. It's all up to you.” She thought, aren't there two of us here? but didn't say it. She didn't know what to say anymore and was confused about what ball, anyway, what game, and why it was all up to her.

Acid burned in her stomach when she thought about staying. It disappeared when she imagined going off on her own, then came back again with the images of divorce. When she thought of Julien, she ached, too. Yet she knew, deeply, it wasn't about leaving one man for the other. Instead, they both felt

like obstacles to her self-reliance. She knew she had to go further on her own way in the world first, that it was still too early to enter into full partnership, and she was as scared as she was desiring of that. She lay there, stiff, on her back, wanting to move away from Vic, but not wanting to hurt him more. She began to see how she had trapped herself with her longing for security, and now as it was crumbling she could see how false it was. As soon as the light came, she rose to make some coffee.

The phone rang around nine. She answered it in the study. It was her father. She imagined him at home, looking out over the valley. “Lucy, what’s going on over there?”

It always comforted her the way he seemed to sense when she was adrift, wherever they were. “Well, I’m trying to decide whether I want to stay married or not.”

“Already?” Lucy paced in silence, twirling the cord, seeing his point. “What is it? Drinking? Drugs? Gambling? Has he hit you?” She was surprised by his list of justifiable reasons.

“No, it’s me. I got involved with someone else while I was in Japan.”

There was a pause. “Why’d you tell him?”

It was as if the world she knew was taking off its topcoat. This, for example, was after all the man who had taught her to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. “Because if it were me, I would want to know.”

“Well, that stuff’s a whole different can of worms.” Lucy imagined cans of people intertwined with their lovers, which gave her a welcome smile. “I don’t

have any experience with that. All I can tell you is this, you made a commitment and you broke it. What you have to remember now is if you stay, you're making another one."

That piece of advice was the cleanest that had pierced Lucy's mind in months. That evening while she ran along the grassy hill and train tracks a few blocks west of their home, it dawned on her what she had really given herself with her honesty was a second chance. Would she marry Vic again became the pertinent question.

She came home, opened the futon and set up her bedroom in the office. She slid off her wedding ring, but left her engagement ring on, and over the next day's breakfast she told Vic, as sweetly and as softly as she could, "Let's think of this as a new engagement. Let's decide if we really want to marry each other again."

She watched the ripple of shock move through his body. "You've never made eggs like this before." His fork was poised above them, as if he wasn't sure he wanted to eat them.

"It's true. I haven't. Try them. You might like them."

He threw his fork on the plate. It rattled as he pushed it in her direction. "You think you are going to turn me into him, is that your plan?" Lucy stared at him. She foresaw a life of hiding in the pantry if she wanted to eat fried eggs like these. She wished they could read the *Tribune* and chat about current events, or just quietly move around in the same space, touching or kissing each other as they used to. Those days looked far away. Even though she was sitting nude at the breakfast table. "What kind of birth control did you use over there?"

"My own."

Vic's eyes went wild. "You used absolutely no protection with this guy?"

"I trusted myself."

"Trusted yourself, Jesus Christ."

"How dare people do that in this world," Lucy stood and walked out of the room. Vic was soon hot on her tail, breathing down her neck. "You could have gotten pregnant. Do you realize the risk you took?"

Lucy stopped, turned, ready for battle. How all these men thought she was so stupid was beyond her. She'd obviously been too quiet for too long, or talking to the wrong people. He stared at her as if he had never seen her, nor someone as outrageous as her, in his life. Then another thought crossed his mind, she could see it move across his eyes. "You talk about how you want to give me yourself as you are now," he'd spat out the pronoun. "But you have given me nothing in there." He pointed to the bedroom.

That did it. Lucy gritted her teeth and went straight up into his face. She focused on his eyes, and enunciated as clearly as possible. "Until I see something *out here*, you will not be seeing me in there."

A few days later, while leaning up against a willow tree by the lake in the afternoon sun, after having stood up for herself one more time in a battle with Vic, Lucy could feel, as she relaxed, a sort of gathering heat in her lower belly, and a strengthening pulse between her legs. It resonated upward and outward, and made her feel giddy, like a child who has just been told a delicious secret. It felt to her, at the beginning, as other excitement had, but yet it sprung from no apparent desire. If she desired anything strongly at that moment it was

simply to be, freely. And to be loved, or at least left alone. She felt a power surge within her. Maybe it was the approaching summer, she thought, with a smile. Or maybe it was because she had laid more claim to herself than ever before since returning from Japan, and her body was responding in celebration, saying yes, yes, yes, keep going, yes like that. She looked around, saw she was alone, lay back, closed her eyes and let go.

The passing cyclists, scampering squirrels, docked sailboats, everything around her took on a sort of oneiric glow after coming like that, and it was more difficult for her to discern where her skin ended and the earth, grass, water, sun and other people began. It was as if her walls were dissolving. She took this as a sign she was on the right path. It was interesting to her how the source felt female, how she had the impression it was a woman inside of her, and the pulsations were a breaking out, a rising through and out, and, finally, as if it were her, Lucy, coming out of and into herself at the same time. Whatever it was, she liked it. She thought everybody should feel it.

When she walked in the door, Vic handed her a letter from Julien as if it were more evidence for his prosecution, and then followed her into the study. She opened it in front of him to insist she had nothing to hide. He sat on the futon and she could feel his glare from the corner of her eye as he watched her face warm and soften—she couldn't help it—as she read. How sweet it felt to her to know that Julien missed her, loved her, wished her well. What an ache it caused in her to read the details of his life in Japan without her, how she was still there like a ghost beside him, how he was waiting for the phone to ring and for it to be her.

When she came to the end, and read *We both deserve the life we are working on, it is uneasy, tormented, but so exciting*, it occurred to Lucy that Julien might have known and understood her better than anyone ever had. *Keep*

going, I have my way to love you, just send me a sign, as you did when you left my room, last sad Wednesday... She wondered for a split second why she had left, but couldn't imagine herself still there. She turned to face Vic's hatred, and dropped the open letter on the desk. "You can read it if you want."

She watched the way his eyes widened and his mouth dropped open as he read. "I want to meet that man," he uttered as he set the letter back on the desk. In that moment, Lucy knew that he understood. In the next one, she saw the hardness return to his face as jealousy made him discard that knowledge for righteousness. He sneered. "Why does he say that his clothes now smell like you?"

"Because I left him the rest of my detergent." Lucy left the room. She didn't want Vic to see the tears in her eyes.

The month of June became filled with the matter of who was going to take the blame for the end. They stayed in their separate rooms, and lived their separate lives. Lucy started drawing again, something she hadn't done since she was married. She rode her bicycle for hours along the lakeshore, left news with the agency that she was available for more trips, saw Faith and other friends, though most were too nervous around her as their own marriages were faltering.

When Vic found her by her favorite tree at the lake, pretending it was a coincidence, she could not stand the fakeness of it. She was already gone, in a way, but was insisting on punishing him now, it seemed, as he was punishing her. She was bitter without realizing it. When he reached out and touched her cheek and said, "My daughters were supposed to look like you," all she could think about was how little love he had shown her. It seemed he was lamenting more the loss of what she could bring him, than her.

She whipped her head back from his hand. “So you married me to breed me?”

Vic looked at her in disgust, and then at her hand, which he grabbed, “I want that back. You are not the woman I asked to marry me,” he spat as he tore the engagement ring from it.

“You’re right. But you don’t have to tear it off.” Lucy slid it from her finger, placed it in his palm, bicycled home and started packing.

As she emptied drawers into suitcases, she came across a little velvet bag that she’d forgotten about. She loosened the drawstring, and a tiny gold dromedary charm her Grandma Pilgrim had given her years ago fell into her palm. She slipped it onto a chain and clasped it around her neck. That night, passing under elms on a bike ride along the lake, the steady beat of the pendant on her chest brought the memory of the dromedaries she’d seen while making love in Nagoya. She smiled, thinking about camels and gold, and what that might mean, then brushed the coincidence off as trite while marveling at it. So much hocus-pocus.

The day Vic’s brother helped him carry most everything out of their home, Angelina called. “Both Barcelona and Athens want you, take your pick.” Lucy chose Barcelona, as she watched Vic walk through the apartment pointing at things, saying “mine” until the place was empty save for their mattress, some linens, dishes, her clothes, a cassette recorder, and books. That afternoon, she rented a storage locker downtown, and in between filling it, met with a lawyer at his office in the Loop.

Raine, a friend of Angelina's, was a comforting type. "We can use the time you were in Japan as a separation. I will draw up the papers, then get a court date."

"How long could all that take?"

"A couple of weeks if there is no resistance."

Lucy knew her speed would also be conceived as brutal, but she saw no reason to prolong the agony.

On her way home, she saw a huge truck filled with catalpa trees pulling away from the apartment building. As she stared at the three raw stumps, the car behind Lucy honked, startling her out of her shocked state. Inside, she opened the mailbox, and there was a small cassette case, decorated with a map and Julien's handwriting. Upstairs, instead of spring green leaves the bay windows were now filled with the view of the red brick apartment building across the street. Lucy dragged the mattress and the cassette player from the bedroom into the living room then fell back on it, and listened to the tape.

There was a pause, the scratch of a microphone being moved, cars passing in the street outside the penthouse window, and Julien moving on his bed. "It's like I spend all my morning with you reading again your letters. And, I have a lot to say for sure. Let me put some music. Isn't it a good blues? I am quite nude. Totally. And I have a lot to do about your letters." The saxophone, piano, and bass played softly in the background. She loved having his voice with her, making love to her across the miles. When the tape ended, silence echoed in the large room, Lucy did not want to open her eyes. The faint laughter of children from a summer carnival at St. Gregory's, two blocks away, drifted across the silence.

She knew she had to get in touch with Vic, she did not know where he had gone, so she called his mother. “Just to give you an idea how hard Vic is trying to make things work, I think you might like to know that he is in Iowa right now having lunch with your father.” It infuriated Lucy that Vic and his mother thought talking to her father, instead of her, was impressive.

She thought it best to remain kind yet brief. “I’m sorry about all of this. I love you.”

“You don’t love anybody but yourself.”

Lucy hung up.

That night, she hopped up on one of the stools of a bar she and Vic liked on Halsted, and when her favorite bartender saw Vic come in, he winked at Lucy, then disappeared. Lucy turned on him like a big ready cat. “So, what did you have to say to my dad?” The thought of the two of them sitting across from each other, talking about her affair over lunch, made her clench her teeth.

Vic shrugged. “He had some questions. I answered them. Your family is not very happy with you. You should call them.”

Lucy smoothed some dollar bills, as flat as she would have liked to lay Vic, next to her half-empty glass, and then walked out.

If only her mother, instead of her father, had answered the phone when she called, things might have been different. But it was Tom who picked up the phone and it was to Tom she gave the news. “I didn’t tell you more about what was going on because I thought you would appreciate that I handled it on my

own. The divorce should be taken care of in the next week or so.” Her father remained silent. “I’ve been offered work in Barcelona, Spain, and I’m going to go. But first I’d like to come home for the Father’s Day picnic. I’d love to see everyone before I leave.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

Lucy swallowed hard, it was unfathomable to her that her father would not want to see her. She wondered what Vic had said, and then why he had believed him, and then wondered what one says after one is disowned, especially if one hopes it is only temporary, and especially if it is because one divorced someone who didn’t love them. “Are you embarrassed?”

“Yes, I am. And I don’t want to deal with all that right now.”

She had no idea what to say but she was as uninterested in seeing him now as he was in her. She had never felt like this before. “I’ll let you know when I leave for Europe, then-”

“You take care.” Lucy had often heard him say that to acquaintances, even to friendly strangers, but never before to her. She set the receiver into its cradle on the wall and watched the cord bungy around, then pushed open the screen door off the pantry, and walked out and sat on the fire escape. Looking up at the stars, the summer night fresh around her, she decided it was high time she learned to live without her daddy.

“Nobody understands me,” she told her mother by phone the next day.

“Would you please quit acting like you are on a soap opera?”

“I am going through a divorce. Forgive me if I have a mood or two.” Lucy hung up on her, too.

Lucy flinched as the uncontested papers were stamped and her marriage proclaimed dissolved. Dissolved, she thought that an odd choice of word, as she imagined their life together sliding into a puddle on the floor, soon to be swept away.

Viola called before Lucy left. “I didn’t want you leaving the country without a kiss and a hug from me.” And Lucy boarded the bus to live Grandma Pilgrim’s dream. When she arrived at Penn Station, she bought a plane ticket to Paris.

Walking up from the RER station and along Boulevard Montparnasse at nine in the morning, suitcase wheels rattling against the wide sidewalk, unfurled map in her free hand, sunlight splashing through the leaves of the plane trees, and the smell of baking croissants in the air, Lucy felt the weight of the past six weeks fall away under that foreign morning sky. She loved the stone buildings, shuttered windows and doors and she especially enjoyed the way the street signs looked like a mini stage, as if each street were an act about to open. Its title was its name, painted in white on enamel azure rectangles framed in green, and she saw how the French even detailed fine lines of black and white paint to create shadow effects, making the signs look three dimensional. There were marquees with the number of the arrondissement reigning above, as if the 6th, in this case, was the number of a perpetual movement in which everyone who passed through the neighborhood played a part.

The three-story hotel was marked by a painter's palette, jutting out above the lobby window, Hotel des Académies et des Arts. A bird-like woman in a tight chignon checked Lucy in and she followed her slim figure up a set of creaky wooden stairs, wondering if her bad mood was simply due to the fact that she'd tied her hair too close to her scalp. They entered a room with a double bed, a nightstand, a small chair under a wall telephone and a view of the slate roof. The woman opened what looked like a closet and pointed to the toilet in it. Behind another door she presented a shower and sink. She held the key in the air toward Lucy, and then left without a word.

Lucy splashed cold water on her face, imagined Julien waking to the message she'd left, and wondered if he would come, then went out for a walk in search of the Seine. After what seemed far too long on Boulevard Raspail, the colors of clothes, people, pâtisseries, boutiques, facades, and even sky, began to run together, and Paris became surreal in her vision. When she stepped into the street, and realized that the sounds of passing cars seemed farther away than they were, she turned back, thinking it wise to rest. In the window of a food shop, she pointed to a cheese sandwich with a 10F sign sticking out of it, then to a pretty blue bottle with an orange peel on it. Back at the hotel she ate, showered, and then fell asleep.

The knocking woke her, she covered herself with the sheet, and rose enough to crack open the door. When she saw his eyes, she fell back on the bed. His hair was long and he had grown a beard. Wearing black pirate pants and her jean jacket, and shaking his head in happy disbelief, he looked like Robinson Crusoe. "Lucy-chan, what are you doing here?" She rolled to her side, patted the empty space on the bed, and then curled her upper body into his lap. He glided his fingers through her hair, caressed her face and neck as she emitted pertinent details of the weeks since she'd seen him. Mostly she closed her eyes, enjoying his touch.

When Julien drew her on top of him, their kisses and caresses deepened and spread, and Lucy, with no need to hold back, no fear, no guilt, no worry, recognized that the dam to her full pleasure had disappeared. She was flowing free, river and source, amazed by how much she contained. When she felt empty, her body glided into rest, and peace in his arms. Until Julien spoke. "What are you going to do?"

The missing "we" pained her. She hoped Julien could not hear her heart skittering in fear of rejection. She'd survive that. She reminded herself she had

come to see him. She'd definitely seen him. Her lips moved against his chest. "I'm on my way to Barcelona. But maybe I'll see some agencies here before I go."

"Maybe it is better for you to go there." He was thinking about what was best for her, she told herself, even if it sounded like he was suggesting that she go. God, how could she love without becoming attached, especially as she felt the desire for it mounting, its stickiness looking for a place to hold on. She both knew and lamented knowing that he could not be part of this next step in her journey. Julien lowered his chin to look into her eyes. "Paris is a difficult market, you know."

"Mm-hmm."

"What is wrong?"

She was bothered, as well, that he had controlled his excitement and withheld his come throughout all of hers, but she didn't want to talk about that right then. Anyway, she imagined he would say he was doing it for her, but Lucy felt like there was more to it than that but was not in the mood for an argument about who was coming more and why. "I am frightened by the strength of my feeling for you."

"Lucy, noooo—"

"If you asked me to jump off the Eiffel Tower right now, I'd probably ask you what shoes you would like me to wear on the way down." She'd never admitted such a thing to any man. She wished she hadn't, but it seemed funny, and it was out, probably obvious anyway, she thought.

Julien laughed, then reached for a cigarette, kissing her on his way. He looked at his watch. "I must go. It is my niece's birthday. I am invited for a dinner."

Lucy wondered why he didn't want to introduce her to his family. "How are your daughters?"

"They already left on vacation with their mother. I talked to them this morning, all of us sad. But I will go to see them next week."

They dressed and walked downstairs and crossed the street together through slants of early evening sunlight. It was early July, the longest days of the year with light until ten. Julien stepped into a tobacco shop on Boulevard Montparnasse and, while they waited in line to buy his cigarettes, showed Lucy the different French coins and bills with images of a beautiful revolutionary woman walking, or charging with an army of men, with one breast exposed. *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*, Lucy read, thinking she might enjoy living in a country where they placed a courageous woman and those values on their money, though she wondered about the breast.

Julien kissed Lucy goodbye at the top of the stairs leading to the metro. She looked at the mint green wrought iron railings around its stairwell, and arching over it, with the name of the metro, Vavin, displayed at the summit. "This looks like an entrance to an amusement park ride or magic land."

"Definitely not," Julien said, and then pointed across the plaza, hesitating a moment as if it were rude to leave her alone there. "There is a bar called the Rosebud over there, you might like it. I will call you."

Lucy placed her finger on his lips. "Don't say it, just do it."

He kissed her once more and she watched him skip down the stairs, and then before disappearing underground, turn and wave. She looked around at Paris, and the Left Bank, which she had read was famous for its artist population, but she couldn't see what drew them as she'd imagined them in small plazas and cozy cafés. The boulevard was too wide to be quaint. In general, the city wasn't the storybook way she had imagined it, even though some details were. It was much more majestic, and there was a hint of something too perfect about it all.

Alone again after the intense intimacy of the afternoon, Lucy wandered, more floated, for how light and fluid she felt, toward Luxembourg Gardens where she sat for a long time by the pond, watching people stroll and linger, and children sailing small boats. She was pleasantly surprised to see that all Parisians were not chic. It made the monumental beauty of the city less intimidating. She definitely understood why they were arrogant; how could they go anywhere else and find it as impressive?

The feeling of freedom kept striking her, at first like the panic when one thinks they have lost something, but then is a relief when one checks and finds it is still there. She had nothing but an appointment in Barcelona on Monday to worry about. She found the Rosebud and ordered a martini while watching the reflection of the hanging lights off the bottles lined up behind the bar, and the few other customers through the long ornate mirror. It was too early for more of a crowd, she imagined, as she looked away from a pair of hungry male eyes.

She sipped her cocktail, feeling like the international adventurer she was, and enjoyed the jazzy music, the view to rue Delambre, and simply the fact that everywhere she looked she saw something new. She wished there were a way to live like that, seeing new things every day. Yet, it also flickered through her mind that she might look like a lost soul, drinking alone, and she was still

nagged by the image of following in her lover's footsteps while he was elsewhere, living his life. She'd left hers in tatters. It was time to give herself another good talking to: this is it, you're in Europe, really on your own this time, baby, and you're young, beautiful, free, and you're going to have fun, you are having fun.

That night, she decided Julien was right, that it probably was better for her to go to Barcelona. It was mainly because of the way it bothered her when he didn't call that night that made her want to split. Despite that, Lucy enjoyed the deepest sleep she'd known in months. The next morning, as she was preparing to leave, the phone rang. "Bonjour, Mademoiselle, are you ready to go to the agency today?"

"I think you are right and I should go straight to Barcelona."

"I will introduce you to my agency." All leaving involved was getting on a train to Spain, and it was Friday. Why not go and meet a Parisian agent, especially since Julien was offering, and see what happened? She told herself she could always leave the next day. "Meet me at Duroc, you can get there from the station I left yesterday." First, Lucy enjoyed a glass of fresh orange juice, café au lait, and a warm croissant at an outdoor café on Montparnasse.

Those metro entrances deceived her, it was a whole different story underground, gray, dark, dingy, damp, not quite a dungeon but more fit for rats and mushrooms than humans. Julien was sitting on a cement bench when Lucy stepped off the train, his brightness a stark contrast. He handed her a letter after he kissed her. "This is for you, I didn't get a chance to finish it."

The agency was on the fourth floor of a grandiose building on Boulevard Haussmann. Lucy was amazed by the size of the doors, which Julien explained

were originally for carriages to pass through. Upstairs and inside, a beautiful brown woman sat behind a semi-circle desk as if guarding the entrance. Julien spoke to her in French, and she picked up the phone. Lucy glanced around the room at the framed magazine covers of some of the most famous models in the world and didn't even notice that she was not nervous. A door at the far end of the long room opened and an elf-like man with curly brown hair bristled out dressed in a polo shirt, jeans, and loafers without socks. All Lucy found attractive about him, physically, were the tanned arches of his feet. He stretched his hand toward Julien and they exchanged conversation in French that Lucy only understood words of, like her name. He turned to her. "I am Léon. Welcome." Lucy nodded as she had in Japan, and had since, instead of offering her hand.

She was surprised and a bit annoyed when Julien followed her into in Léon's office as if he thought she needed a chaperone, but she thought telling him to wait outside would be rude as he had introduced her, after all, and perhaps he meant to be a translator, first and foremost. Léon looked like a rascal playing grown-up behind his desk, fidgeting around in his chair as he opened her book, darting glances back at her as he studied the photos, as if he'd missed something right away and was now getting it. "Very photogenic," he said to Julien, as if congratulating him, which wasn't lost on Lucy, but she was too interested in having a Parisian agent to contradict him. He snapped her book closed and looked at her. "It's good to work in Japan for the money, but the pictures are worth nothing here. People want to see work from European magazines—especially at your age. Go to Barcelona, work on your book, make some money, enjoy Spain—and come back to see me in September." He opened a drawer of his desk, and tossed a t-shirt with the agency's logo on it to her. "That's for you."

As they left, Julien shook his head in disgust. "Il est con."

“What is con?”

“An asshole.” Which it really isn’t. The Latins, even the English, use the word cunt in the way Americans use asshole which says a lot about all of them.

Lucy looked back over her shoulder and grinned, “You say that just because he didn’t give you a t-shirt,” then skipped down the stairs.

At street level she pressed and struggled with the lock on the smaller door inside what she called the big door. “La porte cochère, Lucy,” Julien corrected as he pressed a nipple-sized button on the wall and she stumbled onto the sidewalk, laughing.

After more lovemaking in her room, in which Julien still controlled himself, Lucy declared, “Je t’adore.” She felt so brave. She had never told anyone she adored them before.

He looked away. “Adore is too much of a feeling for me.”

She was stumped. She was giving him all of herself, as requested, and now it seemed it was too much for him. She wondered what he wanted, and if he even knew himself. Adore certainly wasn’t too much of a feeling for her. That night he had dinner plans again, and this time with the children of an ex, another birthday celebration. She reminded herself that he had just returned from four months away and she had shown up unexpected, thus she should not expect him to rearrange his life for her.

She toured Paris on foot, through the Tuileries Garden where she rose high above the city in a Ferris wheel. Circling, lifting, she came there in the air. She felt freer, each time, than she ever had, it seemed the excitement mounted at

moments when she realized her life really was totally her own to do as she wished.

When Julien called the next morning she was packing, because even though she wanted to have more fun with him, she did not like the feeling that she was biding her time, waiting for him. “I can’t just hang out in Paris and make love. I need more.”

“Just wait one more day. Another agent wants me to make a new picture for their head sheet and today is the last day, but if you meet me this afternoon we can walk together, and have dinner.” Lucy liked the urgency in his voice, and once again thought why not, there were worse places to bide one’s time, it is what she would be doing in Barcelona until Monday anyway.

On her way to meet him, she walked along the Seine, trying to picture a life for herself in Paris. It seemed fuzzy and difficult. She loved the bridges, but how much time and living could be spent staring at them, she smiled to herself, knowing very well that modeling would be a way, of course, but unsure if that would be enough. It scared her to be on Julien’s turf, too. She liked it better when they were both foreigners.

When she reached the Eiffel Tower, she stretched out on a bench and gazed at it, thinking how she preferred it lit. By day, it was too hard, too cold-looking, like the people she saw. She smiled as she wondered if they, too, were more attractive, lit up at night. Pigeons scratched in the gravel, it was cool enough to wear a sweater, the sky was gray, and it was July. The letter Julien had given her in the metro was in her hand, and started somewhere between Seoul and Anchorage. *Hi Lucy-chan, you are in trouble, I know it... Something is scaring me, you want, you need, too much to be understood. It means you are not strong enough—if you feel yourself surrounded by misunderstandings, just*

leave them “on place”, not to escape them, but because you still need comfort and security. She thought she had left them “on place” and it was true that she did not feel strong enough, still, especially with him, because she felt he could be added to the list of those who misunderstood her. Still, proud as she was, that “means you are not strong enough” got her gander up. First of all, because she thought she was just as strong, if not stronger, than him, and secondly, not caring whether anyone understood her did not sound like much fun.

She sat outside at the café he had told her to meet him and sipped mint soda while drawing a pot of nasturtiums on a napkin. She was startled, at first, when she felt a warm hand on her shoulder. Julien smiled at her suspicion, and she noticed his beard was gone. She reached up to touch his face. She loved the way each time she touched him now she no longer felt like she was breaking a rule, and that when they walked down the avenue hand-in-hand, she felt no need to look over her shoulder.

As they walked toward the Pont de Grenelle, Lucy was surprised to see a lady of liberty with her torch held high on the island below. She and Julien sat at her base, looking out over the river, away from Paris. Lucy turned to him, “So, what’s this tiny Statue of Liberty you have here?”

“A gift from your country.”

“Oops,” she covered her face as she leaned back against it.

“It was a Frenchman that designed the original, you know, which was our gift to you. This smaller one here, your gift to us, was erected later, facing the Atlantic, and her big sister.”

Lucy looked toward America, which felt light years away already. The now familiar excitement was gathering down low, and she closed her eyes. They

were so unpredictable to her, she loved them and wished she knew what created them. She smiled to herself imagining charting them, and then let go. When she opened her eyes, Julien looked at her with a wonder he attempted to disguise. “You don’t need me anymore.”

“It’s not about needing you. It’s about wanting you.” Lucy kissed him. But what did she know, really, about the difference between the two?

He glanced back at the river then, and appeared agitated. “Would you like to have dinner with me in Montmartre, Mademoiselle? Do you mind to have pizza in France? I was craving a Neapolitan pizza last night but they did not have it where I went.” He opened his mouth and bit the center of his tongue. “I can taste it.”

It thrilled Lucy to ride on the back of his Vespa. From her seat there on the hill above Paris, she could see the portrait artists that lined the Place du Tertre, who made her think that perhaps she could sketch for a living. Then she watched a couple argue outside the window the way she and Julien could have if she wanted to bring up the things that bothered her during her stay. Julien shrugged. “Everyone in Paris is in a bad mood, because of the weather.”

Lucy was registering, still, the fact that she was in Paris, and with Julien. Both the setting and the man were different. The Frenchman was more at home in France than Japan, of course. She glanced toward the pizza chef wiping sweat from his brow, then sliding pizzas into the open oven, then at the table of six that appeared to be a family, behind them talking and gesturing excitedly. She looked at Julien across from her. It all seemed real enough.

She thought about how she had to leave him again. It would be easier now, she felt, as the future seemed more open, more malleable. She had no idea what a Neapolitan pizza was but she ordered one to try something new, and

discovered a new taste to enjoy. Julien was shocked to learn that she didn't even know what an anchovy was. She smiled and shrugged. "There aren't any in the Mississippi." While she sipped the house wine, she watched Julien dissect a second plate-sized pizza, lifting perfect bite after bite. She was struck by how she felt part of a normal couple with him, yet still worlds apart. As he opened his French checkbook, after insisting on paying for their dinner, she tried to imagine herself with one. It looked as surreal to her as the play money in Japan.

Outside, they strolled for a while in the narrow, lovely streets, and then sat on the steep stairs in front of Sacré Coeur looking over Paris and listening to a group of Peruvian musicians. "Such happy people." Julien looked as if he weren't one. Lucy sensed a melancholy mourning in him that had nothing to do with her.

In the taxi, she was quiet, watching the rain hit the window shield and trickle droplets of the colors of the neon signs they were passing in Pigalle. She rolled down the window to get some air, and saw pale, hurried faces scurrying through the rainy night. As beautiful as Paris was, it seemed like a sad place, a place where nothing was the way people would like it to be. Perhaps it was the weather, she thought, but the citizens' dissatisfaction amidst such beauty and splendor puzzled her.

Her nipple was in the crux of Julien's second and third finger as they fell asleep like spoons. When she opened her eyes the next morning, the first thing she saw was his watch on her nightstand, and it struck her as odd the way it seemed its rightful place. He kissed her shoulder then her back, and she rolled to face him. They began to make love, "Just visiting" he said as he entered, and she looked into his eyes.

“Make yourself at home,” but in time, she was too bothered by his self-control to totally enjoy it. She could understand his withholding up to a point, but when total it seemed twisted. She deemed it just as twisted to demand that he come. Why did she care, she wondered, why was that important? She had no answer but it still bothered her, as it had in Japan, that Julien thought his energy, as he called it, was more limited and precious than hers. It seemed he didn’t trust her with it. It was difficult to call his retention selfish, as it also prolonged her pleasure, but it felt too much like a performance instead of a share. She was leaving anyway, they could always come back to that point later, she thought.

That afternoon Julien gave Lucy a whirlwind tour of Paris on his Vespa, cruising along the wide avenues and cobbled streets as if they were country back roads, whirling around Place de la Concorde, and the Eiffel Tower, Les Invalides, Pont de l’Alma, crossing her favorite bridge, Pont Henri IV, and racing along the banks of the Seine. It was like the movies but she didn’t feel like Audrey Hepburn. She knew they were not a couple nor very possibly never going to be a couple. She may see him in September, she may not. “Encore,” she whispered though, when he stopped in front of her hotel. They both knew she did and didn’t mean it. Julien carried her suitcase outside, and then hailed a taxi. And though Lucy knew well that being alone was much more enjoyable than being afraid of being lonely, had someone told her everything she would go through before she saw Julien again, she might never have moved from that spot.

Barcelona was Lucy's hot spot. Stepping out of Sants station into sauna-like heat at nine in the morning, she peered into a taxi and smiled. "Hotel Continental?" As the driver eagerly offered her the front seat next to him, she skimmed in, ignorant enough to entertain the idea that the front seat was perhaps where Spaniards sat in a taxi. Watching his basset hound eyes drool and his mouth twitch as he stared at her bare legs, Lucy found it pitiful and laughable, foolish and heartbreaking, really, what people went through over sex. Yet she enjoyed watching the man writhe, it made her feel potent. What she did not know was that the hotel she had chosen, for its central location and reasonable price, was also known as a brothel.

She had no knowledge of Spanish so could not speak to him, but did her best to decode it from the French she knew. Looking around, there appeared to be another language, or explanation, throwing her off, written above the Spanish wherever it was: on doors, especially. Obert. Abierto. Tancat. Cerrado. She smiled to herself as her mind played with the words: O, Bert, you are a Tan Cat. She had no idea what Catalonia, or Catalan for that matter, was, or that such a language even existed. She knew they spoke English at the agency, that would do to start. She'd figure everything else out from there. She had the money to decipher. She'd felt richer the moment she changed ten thousand yen for fifteen thousand pesetas.

In a lovely little room with a balcony overlooking palm trees and plaza, she stood staring across the wide avenue at the university. It looked like a sort of medieval fortress where, she mused, scholars may still be moving about in robes and hoods. She wondered what to do with the day.

The man at the receptionist desk suggested a beach to the south and which bus to take. Lucy sat near the window and rode out of the city, empty on an early Sunday morning. She stepped off along a dusty highway, at a place called Castelldefels and walked under the shade of parasol pine trees, looking up. In front of her, she saw a bungalow style restaurant at the edge of the beach where she sat and ate mussels, sipping Coca-Cola, looking at the sea, pondering which would be the best spot on the sand to rent a chair and umbrella for seven hundred pesetas. She could feel a faint nipping at her heels, back there somewhere, but in front of her everything shimmered with sun and heat. The cadence of the language was confusing. Sometimes she noticed open vowels at the end of words, with a lingering *s*, and other times all of the letters seemed cloistered, as if the speakers savored those words so much they held them in their mouths like tasty wine. Lucy was silent. She pointed to what she wanted, nodded to confirm.

She smiled that evening when she saw the white camel branded on her chest where the charm had lay that day in the sun. It looked like a scar just below the star of a freckle.

The next day the agency directed her to Hostal Campi on Carrer Canuda, which became home. It was sparse, clean, and inexpensive. About a dozen other foreign models rented rooms like hers and a constant flow of young travelers passed through the lobby's French doors that rang each time they did. It was on several floors of a building, steps from the bowered pedestrian walk called Las Ramblas, a ramble toward the sea, as Lucy thought of it, imagining the English word must come from Latin, but when she flipped through a dictionary in the back of a nearby bookstore, she saw that the origin was believed to be Middle Dutch. She shook her head in wonder as she read: "rammelen: to wander about in a state of sexual desire."

“Quién? Nombre? Ramblas?” Who? Name? Ramblas? were the words she used that amused the hostel’s friendly, frisky chef named Pépé.

“Lluvia,” he gestured with his fingers like rain falling, and then moved his hands like the banks of a flowing river, “Rio”, a river of rain to the sea. Lucy liked to imagine the rut transforming over time into the vibrant passage of pedestrians, artists, mimes, terraces for eating and drinking, flower stalls, birds, chickens, turtles, and other small furry creatures in cages it now was.

For three weeks, she marched around Barcelona in the heat, up and down and across town to five or more castings a day. She quickly discovered that modeling in Spain was not as regal or fun as it was in Japan. In the agency, she wrote down lists of other agencies around Europe, ready to visit and work in them. She’d prefer to do it with Julien, she thought, because she was realizing that was, in fact, a big part of what had made it fun.

For six days straight she worked for a German catalogue, in heat hovering around one hundred degrees. She did her best to appear as if she were enjoying a leisurely autumn stroll through the gardens in front of the palace while make-up artists rushed in and out to powder the streaming perspiration on her face, and workmen hid in bushes to watch her and the other models change in the back of the van. During the two-hour lunch breaks, she relaxed in one of the city’s shady plazas, eating a light lunch, sketching, watching people. She loved the way everyone seemed to take time to enjoy a meal and life in general. At dusk, which fell around ten, she ran under the Arc de Triomf, imagining herself as a hero, and then through the Ciutadella Park, past old ladies chatting on benches, old men playing cards and pétanque. She’d pause to catch cool sprays of water from the immense sculpted fountain, or to listen to laughter or the song of a flute, and then carry on past young adults

displaying their affection, and children romping. Those were the moments she missed being close to those she loved the most.

When arousal filled and rose in her, she giggled. “What kind of happy drugs are you on?” an English model sitting next to her clipped, as they waited for a casting in the reception area of a magazine.

“Pure joy,” Lucy grinned, and the woman rolled her eyes. Amazed, Lucy was, to see how disparaging people were of her joy. A few times she did talk about it, like once in a neighboring hostel room when four male models invited her in for a chat on her way back from the shower.

“When was the last time you had sex?” one asked, and they all looked at Lucy, who bizarrely enough didn’t consider walking out in response to this too-personal question because she was more and more convinced that it was time to start talking. She asked herself time and again why so much shame was connected to sex. It seemed women were even more ashamed to speak of it than men. Sometimes Lucy wondered if her brazenness was an over-compensation for all women who didn’t dare. She took a deep breath. “What do you mean by sex?”

They all looked confused. “What are you, some kind of innocent virgin?” asked Mr. When-Was-The-Last-Time.

Lucy looked straight at him. “Every time.” He laughed, and the others became quiet. Lucy looked at them. “The original sense of the word meant an unexploited, pure, wholesome person. Why should having sex change that?” They shook their heads, and one raised an eyebrow. “Anyway,” she was unconsciously running her hand along the curve of the bottle of body lotion she had carried from the shower. “I have had this amazing thing happen to me,

where I become aroused all by myself it seems. It is as if it, or I, am coming from the center of the earth or something.”

“Stop that.” The man sitting next to her grabbed the bottle out of her hands, and Lucy laughed as she realized what she had been doing.

Mr. When-Was-The-Last-Time stretched out on his bed at the far side of the room, and ogled her. “How big is your clit?”

“Jesus, man, lay off,” the kind man next to her stared across the room in disgust, then looked at Lucy as if he were really interested in what she had to say, but it seemed condescending, and therefore, fake respect, but was better than none at all.

“That isn’t important. And, excuse me, this obviously wasn’t the place to talk about this.” Lucy made way to exit through the door she had intentionally left open behind her.

The kind man stood and held it open anyway. “Thank you,” he looked over his shoulder, “And forget him, he’s an asshole.”

Lucy nodded and slinked out, trembling as she walked to her room. Whatever was driving her to be bold confused her deeply because it seemed she always wound up feeling at best partly ashamed of the bravado, at worst totally. She thought men would be relieved and women thrilled to know that they were the main source of their own excitement, that no tricks or manuals were needed, and that it was what *they did* that turned *them* on. If it could happen to her it must also be able to happen to others. The alternative, that she was the only one, seemed preposterous. Yet it seemed too easily considered some sort of freak show. The ogling guy even climbed to peer over the stall as Lucy showered the next day, as if there might be something visible about her inner

combustion. It was obvious why no one talked about it, she thought as she shook her head at him in disbelief, and he slid away.

The two women she dared to tell were models she was working with one day. The young Canadian woman looked on in a sort of mix of horror and fearful awe as Lucy trembled, her shorts in hand. A vulgar display, for sure, Lucy thought, again both ashamed and amazed. “I know this sounds totally weird, excuse me, but I just can’t stop coming. I feel like a river. I don’t know what is happening to me.”

The eighteen-year-old from Montreal’s big brown eyes filled with both kindness and fear. “Maybe you are having a nervous breakdown.”

Lucy glanced at the gorgeous blond patrician from Texas, a lesbian her own age, who was listening from the balcony of the hotel room where they were taking a break. When their eyes met, the Texan looked away. Lucy definitely felt on the edge. She didn’t know anything about it other than that it happened, and her favorite guess was that it was connected to guts, joy, and being loving, to finally doing what she wanted to do with her life. What else was there to say about the fact that sometimes she literally had to go back to the hostel, lie down and come until it was all out of her and she could carry on like a normal person?

The nerves, she imagined, had more to do with the rejection from her father, her attachment to Julien, and the disconcerting divorce. She liked to think that it was Julien thinking of her when she became aroused out-of-the-blue like that. The frequency and strength of it, however, compared to his silence, caused Lucy to deem that yet another long stretch between them.

An annoying model from America who looked more like a battery-operated corpse, a sort of Ken doll gone pale from it all, joined her table, uninvited, at dinner one evening then looked at her cockeyed when she disagreed with him as he blamed the agency for his lack of work and general unhappiness. “What if you consider approaching it a different way?”

He pointed his fork at her and gritted his teeth. “You don’t know what you are talking about.”

“Don’t ever tell me what I do, or do not know, again,” Lucy dumped the table full of food on him. Wendy, the Australian model, who looked like a sort of hippy Goldilocks, and lived in the room next to hers, followed her out of the dining room. Lucy’s heart pounded, her hands shook, that “go fuck yourself” for all men that she’d kept in check appeared to be on a wild gallop. “Everyone should know how that feels once, though, no matter how stupid it is.”

“Ah, Lucy, come on, it’s time to follow the crowd.”

“I hate following the crowd.”

“Just come with me to meet Cosmos.”

Lucy chuckled. She couldn’t help it. “How is it dating Cosmos? How can you say his name without cracking up every time?”

Wendy had a devilish look in her eye. “We don’t talk much. I don’t care what his name is. Come have some fun.”

Lucy didn’t regret it. There was a young man that looked part-rancher, part-dandy standing on the Ramblas, next to a BMW motorcycle. “I’m Beau.”

“You are.” Lucy shook his hand and introduced herself.

He lifted his shoulder toward Cosmos and Wendy who were kissing deeply.

“They’re too much. Would you like a ride?”

Lucy shrugged. “Why not?”

“A little more enthusiasm than that, please?”

“That would be fantastic.”

Lucy loved riding past Gaudí’s curvy colorful groovy buildings on Paseo de Gracia, they too were more magical lit at night, and she loved playing pool with Beau in a narrow, cozy bar he frequented in the neighborhood of Gracia. On that warm summer night, she felt happy to be alive sitting on a bench in a plaza, talking and listening to a new old friend. It seemed to her that the people she came the closest to had always been somehow nearby.

Days later, riding in the green mountains above Barcelona, Beau stopped in a village and they sat outside under a fig tree to eat paella while ridiculously arguing about whether life was easy and people made it more difficult, as Beau thought, or that life was difficult and people made it easier, as Lucy thought. He was from Rhode Island, which made him even more attractive to her. It was a mythical sort of place in her mind, the smallest state with the biggest ideas, with a capital called Providence. Lucy lifted her glass, “To your state, the first to declare independence.”

Beau looked at her differently then. “There are many firsts. It was one of the first to separate church from state, to pass laws prohibiting slavery, too, two hundred years before it was imposed on the south, and was the first union state

to send troops when Lincoln asked for help, it also, by the way,” he lifted his glass, “never ratified prohibition, and,” he smiled, “even built the first golf course in America.” He swigged the last bit of wine. “Now excuse me, I’ll be right back.”

Lucy smiled at the way he hitched up his jeans by the belt buckle every time he stood, looking her in the eyes wondering how much longer she could resist and why. She couldn’t believe her luck, really, to be in love with one handsome and interesting man and to have another right in front of her that looked very possibly worthy as well. Riding along the Mediterranean coast after lunch, her body pressed against Beau’s, she wondered how many men she could love.

She felt privileged as she admired his form from behind, following him along dusty train tracks to a remote beach he wanted to show her, and privileged again as they kissed in each other’s arms. It was amazing to feel like a mature and experienced virgin, it was really the best kind to be, and to finally realize that who and what she had to share was precious. Why hadn’t she felt that way from the start with men? Or when did it go away? She didn’t have an answer to that. But when Beau began to look at her in a greedy way, and was angry when she backed off, she sensed something was not right. “So it’s not me you want, it’s something I have.” He looked both confused and as if he had been found out.

Though Lucy thought all the chaos was making her stronger, she began to doubt it that weekend as she did not go farther than bathroom to bed, exhausted, sick, empty and sad.

Then she met Hope. In the air, on the plane to Dusseldorf. Her friendly coconut eyes were filled with love as she said hello. It was a comfort to Lucy

to meet eyes that seemed related to her own. She felt like they, too, had been friends before they met. They were two of at least ten models traveling from Spain to join fifty-some more to do a fashion show under a circus tent in Essen, Germany. Lucy watched the way Hope walked with a lilt, as if her life were a dance, and wondered where her lilt had gone, if she'd ever had one.

Back in Barcelona, she wanted to leave but didn't know where to go. What she had loved about Barcelona upon arrival was something of a prismatic quality in the air. It wasn't tangible, but she could feel it, and it colored everything, even the sea breezes. It smelled and tasted like openness. But now in August, it stunk. She wanted out, and was wondering where to go next.

She thought of her family. She'd sent letters and gifts, and the agency's number to call for emergency. She had written Julien, too, and was quite perplexed by the lack of news from him. Her biggest fear was that her real-detector was off.

"I met this man in Japan, and recently surprised him again in Paris before coming here, but I haven't heard anything from him in the last three weeks. Don't you think that's strange?" It was near midnight, Lucy and Wendy were sitting near the gondolas at the bottom of the Ramblas dangling their feet in the water.

Wendy leaned back on her elbows. "Just call 'im up."

Lucy thought about how easy that sounded and at the same time was struck by how afraid she was to do just that. It made her wonder what was wrong with this relationship, and, or, her, for god's sake that she was scared to call the guy on the telephone. Wendy looked at her as if she could read her thoughts. "Do it

for yourself. Who knows? A million things could have happened between now and then.”

Her hands shook as she slid coins into the green pay phone in the lobby. “I don’t know what to think not having any news from you. Would you please just give me a call to ease my crazy mind?” was the message she left along with the hostel’s telephone number.

Her heart pounded a few days later when she was called to the phone. It was Hope. “What will you do for August, Lucy? Why don’t you come to stay with me and my family in Bonica?” Lucy was thrilled to say yes.

She went to the agency and collected her money, then left Barcelona that evening, heading north by bus.

“This is for you.” Hope tilted her head toward the trays she was carrying over her shoulder, as they walked together to her car along a dimly lit village side street. At the dinner table of Hope’s home, Lucy could see the Mediterranean across the street, a pool of indigo surrounded by rugged cliffs. It was just before midnight, a platter of cured ham with freshly sliced melon, and another of salmon, were laid before her along with country-style toasted bread rubbed with garlic, olive oil, tomato, and sprinkled with salt. They drank cava, the local bubbling wine, to toast her arrival. Hope translated for her family to Lucy, and they laughed often. Lucy wondered if Hope’s parents knew everything about her, if they would still want her influencing their eighteen-year-old daughter. When she watched Hope argue excitedly with her father during meals, she missed her own, but never told Hope what had happened, nor about her divorce.

“Who is that?” Lucy pointed to a framed picture of Hope’s father shaking a man’s hand.

His eyes widened, his arms raised, outraged at what he considered obvious.
“Jordi Pujol! President de la Generalitat!”

“What is the generalitat?” Lucy asked Hope.

“It is the government of Catalunya.”

“It’s not Spanish?”

“We are not Spanish, we are Catalan!” Hope’s older brother exclaimed, raising his arms high into the air. Lucy didn’t know enough to have an opinion, but she did find any country that still had a king and queen ludicrous, so her tendency was already toward the Catalan side. It was Hope’s father’s birthday, and she gave him a card she had drawn for him, with the words *Cumpleaños Feliz, con mucho amor* written inside. After he opened it, he dropped it on the table as if it were infectious. “That’s Spanish.”

Lucy thought of Bert and the Tan Cat, and then looked at Hope. “How do I say I’m sorry in Catalan?”

Hope shook her head. “Forget it, it doesn’t matter. It was from your heart. That is what matters.”

“But it obviously does matter.” Lucy pleaded. Hope turned and spoke in Catalan to her father, who smiled at Lucy as if to say it was okay, but she could tell it was not, that there was a mountain of animosity under it all that had nothing to do with her.

It took Lucy ten days to get restless, and even more she felt she was imposing to stay so long with such wonderful hospitality. Her mind was wandering too much to what-ifs, what if her father never wanted to see her again, what if her real-detector really was off, and what if she didn't work enough, what if she ran out of money. Even though she knew she'd survive all that, it didn't sound like much fun. She wanted a change of environment, movement, money-making work, and cool air.

Another reason she had trouble sitting still was that her bottom was bright red from her daring venture into thong land. She had loved, though, being almost naked in the sun and sea, the way it made her feel like Eve in paradise. "I heard there is a good market in Zurich, and that their agencies are open in August."

Hope looked at her as if she were insane to want to work during vacation time. "Stay a while longer. You just arrived. Are you really just going to go there without knowing anyone?"

"Why not? I've always wanted to see Switzerland, and I can meet all the agencies in person. I just need to keep moving right now," Lucy explained at the train station and gave her a big hug.

"You are crazy and wild," Hope shook her head, smiling, "I love you."

On the train to Switzerland she read Sarte's *No Exit*. She'd bought it for the title. She was beginning to think that there really was no exit from her troubles, as she had hoped, and now she was feeling guilty about all the people she had supposedly hurt in the last months, especially Vic and her parents.

However, she did not know how to fix that. Where did people get the idea that a painless life was possible, anyway? She had hurt them by telling them the truth and then by doing what she wanted to do. Was there a way to live truthfully without hurting people? And, if not, was her life, then, to be an apology?

She did not even think about how worried her mother might be, because she knew she was okay, and as far as her father was concerned, well, he had told her to keep in touch so she did. She sent postcards and the occasional letter to them, and her grandfather, but could not bring herself to call. It had been seven weeks since she had really talked to anyone who really knew her, she thought, or had it been, perhaps, her whole life?

In Zurich, Lucy sat by the lake dangling her feet in the water near the cradling sailboats, timing how long to wait to arrive promptly for check-in at the convent on the hill. She knew choosing a convent hotel would ensure a beautiful place, they always were in the best spots. Maybe she could live as the sisters did, in that peace and order she craved, if it were not for the outfits, she thought, as she followed the nun down a long hallway, and the swish of her habit with her eyes. The room was spacious and welcoming, with purple velvet curtains falling over a wide window that overlooked the city. After showering, Lucy looked over the list of agencies she had carried from Barcelona, circled all five of them on the map, then walked the cobblestone streets of the center, delighted by the sharpness in the air, the cleanliness and quiet.

Each agency was in an attractive building with a perky well-dressed receptionist at its threshold, who looked surprised after Lucy introduced herself and her intention. “Do you have an appointment?”

“I prefer to introduce myself personally when I can. May I?”

“It’s not the usual way. You see, there are not many models who live in Zurich. It is a market more for those who have already established themselves in Paris or Milan; we book them directly from there. But wait a moment, I will ask if someone can see you.” A booker was willing to see her in each agency, to look at her pictures, and to suggest she go elsewhere and contact them again in the future from there. At the last agency on her list, the owner, a short, fit woman with strict bangs and a page-boy cut, flipped through her book, listened to her modeling history, then said the same thing as the others, adding “I think Paris is the best place for you.”

Lucy fidgeted, looked out the window. She could feel resistance in her bones. She did not want to go Paris until September when there would be work. What she was really resisting was finding out that she was dumped and duped. The agent stared at her, waiting. “But Lecon,” she heard her slip and smiled. The woman raised an eyebrow. “I mean Léon, at Soinin, told me to come in September. I was told that all the agencies in Paris are closed in August.”

The Swiss woman picked up her telephone, dialed, spoke French, and then as quickly hung up. “It’s slow, they say, but they are there. What are you waiting for?”

“Nothing, really, I guess. Thank you for your time.”

Lucy walked along the lake, back to her room, telling herself it was better to know than to wonder, even if she preferred to keep the possibility alive in her mind. Once back in the convent, she relaxed in the early evening sunshine streaming through the room. As she lay there on the bed, the sun warming her body, thinking about going to Paris, about how wonderful it was to even be

able to make decisions like that, the familiar arousal began. Lucy enjoyed it, wondering afterwards, and again, whether it might be life's way, her body's way, of bringing her relief when she needed it. That is how she had always thought about the times she had come in her sleep and dreams. She then wondered if the sisters, too, knew what she knew. They were hiding it well if they did, she thought. She remembered the story of Saint Teresa, and other religious women in ecstasy, but she had read it was their communication with God, their devotion to "Him," which was reportedly turning them on. Lucy could not deny there was an unseen force involved, but it did not feel like a man, or like devotion to anyone but herself.

In Paris, she checked into the Hôtel des Académies et des Arts again, and then went directly to Julien's apartment. Passing a flower stand as she walked, she stopped to buy a bouquet of miniature red roses. Though taught that was something men gave to women, she loved ignoring those kinds of rules especially because she thought everyone should feel the joy of receiving flowers. As she approached Julien's doorstep, a small mailbox overflowing with her letters, postcards, and packages answered some of her questions. She fingered through trying to figure out what day he had left. It seemed he must have received some, she thought, but she could no longer remember all of what she had sent or when. She stared at the tarnished doorknob, imagining his hand there, and then touched it. She shuffled her feet on the steps, imagining his feet there, then sat down on the stoop. She pulled all of the buds from their stems and wrapped them into that day's page from her agenda, stapled it with her nifty new pocket stapler, then crammed it in with the rest of his mail.

Standing at the public phone across the street from his home, she watched the breeze moving through the light curtains of the slightly open upstairs windows. The recording of his voice and the carousel music carved into her like a joy just out of reach. She imagined if he were sick or dead someone would have picked up his mail and, in the worst case, turned off the machine by now. "I'm back in Paris, the same hotel. Where are you?" She kicked the steel pole after she hung up.

Was it him she wanted, or was it confirmation of the reliability of her own instincts, some proof that she had not been wrong about his sincerity? Perhaps.

She did not know. She stood there on the corner of that small side street on the outskirts of Paris, not wanting to go or to stay, while questions bubbled inside of her. She asked herself if it was him she cared about in that moment, or her, and saw that it was her. She walked away questioning whether it might be the possibility that she could deeply love a man that she was most in love with.

No fountains, no statues, no beautiful bridges as she walked miles due east, just warehouses, grays, and charcoals. The air was warm and the streets near empty. Having measured the way back with her fingers, instead of the scale, it was much, much farther than she thought, which gave her plenty of time for more questions. She wondered what a life without desire might look like, and imagined death. She questioned how to live with it, to listen to it and honor it and not go nuts. She asked herself why she wanted to be with this man, wondering whether all those qualities she admired in him were in her, just waiting to be recognized.

Blisters formed on her feet as she walked along the river toward Montparnasse. When she finally reached the hotel, she decided she deserved a treat and walked across the boulevard to Le Dôme, where she sat in a fancy booth and ordered a seafood platter and a glass of white wine. She enjoyed watching the way people cast surprised and suspicious glances at her as she dined alone, with pleasure, eating slowly, lightly, what she liked. The waiter gave her his card at the end of the meal. As did a tall, handsome American doctor she met on the stairs of the hotel when she returned. She wondered if she had ever had more male attention in her life as in the last few months, or if it had been simply that she did not notice or allow it before. In any case, it seemed there was yet another man ready to offer her a motorcycle ride, or a drink, or a meal, around every corner. However, as much as she did not want to believe that, they all seemed to want something in return. She wanted to think that there were generous and genuinely interested people in the world, that it was a natural state.

When she walked into Léon's agency late Monday morning, he was on his way out. He looked at Lucy and then at his watch. "Would you like to have lunch with me?"

That was fast, Lucy thought, but why not? "Sure." They walked downstairs and a few doors away to an elegant restaurant. Another Frenchman who didn't speak English, his expensive shirt open to a barrel hairy chest and gold chains, joined them. As Lucy stared out the window at the noon light illuminating the shuttered French doors and balconies of the butter-colored facades across the street, the men's voices registered as if from faraway through a wind. *Men*, she was thinking, what kind of creatures are they, really? How much can I accept from them and retain my dignity? Between bites of grilled lamb, she mentioned she was looking for an apartment. Léon waved one hand in the air as if that gesture alone would make it appear. "I will find you an apartment. I was a real estate agent before the agency, but changed," he smiled, "from selling houses to selling women." He cracked up and Lucy shook her head. When he signed the bill, he looked at her. "Come back upstairs to my office." Again, she felt she had nothing to lose by following, yet it all seemed such an odd way of doing business.

Up there, he scribbled an address on a piece of paper. "I want you to see Christian, a young photographer, good. He lives in the Bastille."

"I thought it was empty since the storm."

"What storm?"

"You know, the storming of the Bastille?"

Léon gave Lucy a blank look as he picked up the phone and Lucy waved the joke off as unimportant. Léon hung up. “I’ll try again later, he is not there.”

“Where can I find out about an apartment?”

“I told you, I’ll do it. Soon, soon. Would you like to have dinner with me tonight?”

Though increasingly suspicious about this not talking much business with her, and then inviting her to restaurants, and then not saying much about work while there, Lucy figured “Why not?”

She met him for dinner at Bellini, a fine Italian restaurant not far from the agency. Léon was sitting at a long table next to a very attractive young man and five teen-aged girls who looked like the well-bred daughters of very rich people. As she watched him fidget and stutter as they ordered, and the waiter served their food, Lucy wondered if it was a language or a drug problem he had. He hardly touched the food on his plate. When, mid-meal, his friend leaned across the table to ask Lucy about herself, Léon slapped his arm and told him to stop, which to Lucy’s surprise, he did. Lucy looked at Léon. “Why did you do that?”

He lifted his chin toward the girls, “He has enough for himself,” then wiped his mouth with the white linen napkin, threw it on the table, motioned as if something outside was awaiting them. “Let’s go.”

Lucy was happy to go, even though she had not finished her meal. Trying to understand this man was requiring more effort than she wanted to exert. “I would like to go back to my hotel.”

He insisted on giving her a ride, so she let him. He pulled up in front of an iron-gated building. “This is not my hotel.”

“I know. It’s Regine’s. Come in, just for one drink.”

Once again, Lucy went to see what she could see. It was smoky with red booths, chairs, and floors, surrounded by mirrored walls and ceilings, and dotted with more men with lots of gold chains. Lucy kept her distance, looking up in the mirrors to watch Léon kiss a red-haired, curvy woman in a snug, sequined black dress, who he then directed toward Lucy. “This is Régine,” he announced proudly, as if Lucy were meeting a very important person. Lucy nodded, the woman smiled, and then signaled to a waiter across the room who glided through the crowd to offer Lucy and Léon a glass of champagne from his tray. Léon darted to a corner to speak to someone else, while Régine smiled at Lucy with a look in her eye as if she were surprised to see someone like her with him. As Lucy lifted the flute to her lips, Léon cupped her elbow. “Let’s go.” She shook her head in confusion, set the full glass on a small table near the door.

This time, instead of her hotel, he pulled up in front of a courtyard nearby and idled the motor, as Lucy wondered what kind of man drove an automatic Ferrari. “Please come to my apartment. I really don’t want to be alone right now. Please, just one drink.” Lucy’s mother would have been appalled to hear that part of the reason she went was that he was obviously lonely and the kind thing to do was to sit with him for a while.

The salon of his apartment looked like a ballroom, with high ceilings, ornate mirrors, and very modern furniture that he moved toward, touching piece by piece, announcing the tens of thousands of francs he had paid. Lucy nodded politely and then looked out the heavily draped windows wondering if Julien might be pulling up to his apartment at that moment, if he already had, and

what he would think about where she was now. The words screw what he thinks appeared in her mind. Léon left the room and she turned toward the fireplace mantle, looking for a picture of his wife, another midwestern girl she had seen on many magazine covers. There was no picture of her here, however, but Lucy imagined in vain that she would come home and join them for a drink.

Léon set a platter upon the glass table in front of the white leather couch, upon which were a bottle of chilled vodka on ice, a silver bowl with lemon quarters, two martini glasses, and a grapefruit-size mound of cocaine in a blue glass bowl with two little silver spoons sticking out of it. Hell, Lucy thought, that is the last thing I need. “Don’t you have any grass around here?”

He shook his head as he poured the thick icy vodka into their glasses. “Grass mellows me out too much.”

Lucy stared at the leg he did not stop shaking. “It looks like you could use some mellowing out.” He lifted a heaping spoon of cocaine toward her. Lucy shooed it away. “I am already nervous enough. Did you reach Christian or find out anything about an apartment this afternoon?” It was so strange, she thought, how she wondered if it were rude to ask this, but the more he did not talk about business, the more she believed it was never going to happen, and the more she wanted to make it happen. Perhaps she was taking the mature experienced virgin idea too far by giving him the benefit of the doubt. She wondered. But she had never had exactly this sort of experience.

Léon handed her a glass of vodka, “Do you know how many models have offered me blow jobs to get work?”

Lucy shook her head. “I always thought it was the other way around.”

“I even have mothers take off their shoes and play with my legs under the table as we discuss their daughter’s modeling future.”

“That’s sad.”

He poured more vodka in his glass then spooned more cocaine into his nose. “Would you like to watch a movie of some ugly dogs?” He lifted his chin toward an open door. “I can show you in there.” She raised both eyebrows. “It’s only to watch a movie.”

That is how he lured her to his room. On her way, she wondered how many steps away he thought she was from giving him a blow job. She sat on the floor with her back against the bottom of the bed, watching women wearing one-piece bathing suits and high heels, a combination Lucy had always thought ridiculous, parade across the screen. She looked over her shoulder and saw Léon, stretched out with six pillows behind his back, fidgeting his toes and feet. She said, “These are not dogs.”

Léon laughed. “They are ugly and fat.”

“These women may not be gorgeous, and are definitely too heavily made-up, and are curvy, but they certainly are not ugly, nor fat.”

“Are you comfortable on the hard floor?”

“Not really. Are you ever going to give me a ride home?”

“Why don’t you sleep here? You do not have to worry about me, I promise. I am sure my home is more comfortable than your hotel. Why don’t you go in my wife’s closet and choose a robe or some pajamas?”

Lucy looked at him. Something in his eyes, albeit tiny, seemed sincere to her. She liked that part. Something else looked sure that he would get what he wanted from her, and she even liked that part, but she was going to prove—yes, all that wanting to prove was getting the best of her—that no matter how close she came, he still would not. He smiled and pointed to the walk-in closet behind him. His wide, thick mattress looked comfortable to Lucy and her weary bones. If he tried anything, she told herself, she would go to the couch or leave. She could not believe she was doing what she was doing, as she walked into the closet and stood looking at his wife’s clothes. To make herself feel better, she imagined that his wife, if she were there, would have made the offer of a robe and bed herself, and she would not even have had to deal with him. She was even debating whether she might send her a letter and tell her what a scoundrel her husband was as she undressed in the bathroom and slipped on the long silk robe. She stood at the threshold of the closet looking at him, thinking Jesus, I am not getting out, am I? He moved to the far side of the bed and offered her a wide space. Her body was happy to lie down.

The phone rang. Lucy listened as Léon told his wife that he loved and missed her. It all seemed so surreal to Lucy, as if she both was a ghost of herself and watching a ghost of herself in a bed in Paris. Léon hung up and turned to face her. “That was my wife, Jean. Do you know her?” Lucy nodded. He looked alarmed.

Lucy shook her head. “Not personally. I have admired her work.”

Léon sighed. “She is in Miami working now. I hate it when she goes. I miss her.”

“So be true.” Now there’s just the thing to say to a man about his wife while you are lying in his bed next to him, Lucy thought to herself. My oh my. Léon raised his arm, then, to take her in. He appeared genuinely moved by her, and

the possibility of tenderness evoked by his gesture moved Lucy to let him hold her. Resting her cheek on his chest, keeping her lips far enough away to make a kiss impossible, she listened to his heart's rapid beating, as her own yowled for comfort. It took a matter of seconds for the realization that she was now in bed with Julien's agent because she wanted to be closer to Julien to form. God almighty, Lucy thought, what nonsense, and she jerked up and away from him. Her next thought was of her father, as she had felt some desire to be held by him in there, too, and it crushed her to see how pathetic she had become. Yet, how desperately she wanted some solace seemed totally valid and believable to her. She began to dress. "This was crazy. I really am going."

Léon panicked. "Please just wait for the light."

Lucy bit back the pain as her blisters burst and oozed when she pulled on the boots. "I'm sorry. I never should have come here."

"Please, don't go. I am so frightened when I'm this high and alone in the dark." Lucy shook her head. "Wait. I'll call you a taxi." He reached for the phone.

"I can't wait anymore." Lucy asked herself how much time she had already wasted in her life as Léon scurried after her, grasping her arm at the door, and then grabbing a pair of sunglasses off an entryway table with his other hand. He crammed them into hers. "Wear these when you leave the building." She shook her head in disbelief once more, wondering if he kept a stash of such shades for just such occasions, then walked out laughing to herself that he even thought she would wear sunglasses out of there, even at three in the morning.

The city was empty. Lucy set the sunglasses in a windowsill then limped until she leaned against a chic boutique, and eased off her boots. She walked

barefoot on the narrow sidewalks and the grassy areas along the Champs Élysées until Place de la Concorde, where she sat down to rest. Staring up at the obelisk she felt like a pawn on a huge chessboard and wished a big gentle hand would break through the pewter-blue sky and lift her to the next best position.

She could not imagine telling or not telling Julien about what had just happened. It was hard for her to imagine telling anyone such an embarrassing story, yet Lucy was beginning to feel the need to talk to someone she could trust, though she wasn't sure who that could be. Everybody seemed to have some agenda behind what they said to her, something they wanted her to do, or some way they wanted her to be, to make them feel better about their own lives.

It was half past five when she arrived at the hotel. When the Moroccan night watchman handed her the key with a smile, she wondered if she should distrust him, too. Who to trust, how to trust, when to trust? These questions appeared to be constant companions now. Jackhammers in the street woke her at eight. Pillows over her head did not drown them out. She decided to go and see if Léon's work offer was for real.

He was not there. She wondered if he was sleeping, as she walked out of Soinin around noon not wanting to see him anyway. When she opened the porte-cochère to the sidewalk, Felix pulled up in front of her on a Harley and Lucy felt like she was seeing the first robin of spring. He opened his arms and invited her to lunch.

“Julien is probably on vacation, you should just wait a few days more.” He swept his arm along the avenue. “Why do you want to leave Paris, the most beautiful city in the world?”

Lucy was reluctant to tell him what was going on and deflected his question. “Wouldn’t you like to go?”

He nodded, and then frowned. “My father wants me to start working at his bank.”

“Will you give me money if I come to your bank?”

“Bien sûr. Tout. Really, though, Lulu, where will you go?”

“I want to feel some familiar ground under my feet. I want to hear American English and speak it. I’m thinking about going to New York and seeing if I can work there.”

“I think Europe is a better place for you. You are not like the Americans. And, anyway, I am sure Julien will be sad to miss you.”

Lucy shrugged, wondering both about Julien’s feelings for her and what an American was. There were so many different kinds, after all, and she was most definitely one of them. For now, she was happy to see a familiar face, unexpectedly. It was another sign to her that life was on her side.

Back in her room, feet up and in the open air, she watched puffs of white clouds inch through the blue sky over the slate rooftops and thought how sad but true it was that she did not want to see Julien now. She felt too insecure to handle it well. Sure, she had money, she could stay in Paris, and see what

happened, see other agencies, even go back and see Léon again, but what if it meant dealing daily with him or characters like him? Going back to Barcelona for work was another alternative, she imagined, but modeling alone did not seem exciting enough. She could do more than that in America. A deep echo resonated when she thought about returning, about going to New York City, and Lucy decided once more that what excited her most was the next right thing to do.

After a nap, she went to the nearest travel agency and bought a one-way ticket. From a pay phone on the boulevard, she called Julien. “Well, I wanted to be all set up by the time you came back but it didn’t work out that way. I am leaving for New York tomorrow. I wish you would have called, or written, told me something.” Too weak to smash the receiver, she leaned back against the glass wall, and then stared out at the empty sidewalk as if waiting for the phone to ring. She even looked back as she walked away, in case a voice might come across the wires, telling her exactly where she had gone wrong.

III.

Safe Arrival at the Desired Country

Lucy had a wonderful time in New York without realizing it. She was still too obsessed about all that had happened and not, and all that still might or not, and what she could do about it. Her mind was covered in mud, rather than something sweet like chocolate, all the while she was living in a simple room in a boarding house near Gramercy Park, meeting friends and friends-of-friends for cocktails and dinners, walking through Central Park, drawing in cafés, visiting the Met or strolling through the library, scrutinizing the paintings on the ceilings and walls.

What she did realize was that she would have to start making money again. When she did gather her nerve to visit a few modeling agencies, they all suggested she go back to Europe, that she would work better there, that her look was more European. Me and my look, Lucy thought, walking down the avenue. Going back, just those words, tasted moldy and she quickly spit the idea out.

One evening in a restaurant in the East Village, as the handsome Swede across from her was attempting to engage her in a game of footsy, and the good-looking Canadian next to her began caressing her thigh, she decided enough was enough. She looked out the window. The telephone booth on the opposite corner caught her eye. She glanced at her dinner companions, "Excuse me." Her breath was shallow and fast as she crossed the street. Julien answered on the second ring. "Do I need to come back to Paris or what?"

"Where are you, Lucy?"

She looked up at the narrow green street signs. “The corner of Tenth and Broadway. Anyway, I thought what you felt for me was real.”

“Didn’t you receive my letter?”

“I received nothing.”

“Oh, I really wish you had. It explains everything.”

“Must be some letter.”

“Lucy, what is important is that we both live our present the best we can.”

“I know. But I miss you.”

“But you can't just keep jumping on airplanes, Lucy. Slow down, look around, it's fall. It's time to lose something.”

She looked up. Crinkled leaves dangled from the branches of the plane tree like deserted cocoons. Lucy closed her eyes on the rising tears. “What more do I have to l—?” Her voice broke.

“Oh Lucy, it's good to be empty. That is the way you will find your strength. And you are going to succeed. I am sure of that. And I miss you, too.”

“Will I ever see you again?”

“Eventually.”

Eventually? The promise in the word inspired her to ditch the smug certainty she'd also heard. Anyway, what could she say? He obviously was not ready to

be with her now. How could she be angry with him for not telling her to fly to Paris, or saying that he would come to New York? To see some movement toward her by him would have comforted her, she thought, but would it have moved her where she most needed to go? Or would she just be sucked into a trap of needing more signs all the time? She reminded herself that this life of hers was all about her making-more-of-herself-into-who-she-wanted-to-be, which was definitely not a clingy wanderer hoping for rescue. She mumbled “Sorry to have bothered you,” and then hung up.

It was cold and windy inside her after that. She felt she was a long, narrow hallway the world was blowing through. Reasons for her to stay on in New York became hard to come by. She saw so much condensed struggle to impress and oppress it depressed her. She thought she’d go to Chicago, an opener city, and get work and see if she could patch things up with her family. There was cleanliness and clarity left scoured in her emptiness, and she felt ready to face all those who had hurt her again.

Were they that important, these men that she met? She wondered. Lucy thought it better to think everyone was. She spent most of her last week in the city with Mick. He, at least, seemed not to want something in return for his attention. He was an Australian with keen blue eyes and a map collection, as well as a carefree, optimistic air and a strong, long-legged body. His spirit and companionship lifted her. Her last afternoon, when they sat drinking and laughing after dancing at a bar on Third Avenue, the current barged through and from her, and she told him about it as she came. She even took his hand and placed it on her warm, damp thigh, again, for proof. What was that about? It surprised her to see how barbarous this here-to-fore docile giant became, seething, “You bitch, you cunt, you tease. Why won’t you give it to me?” as they rode upstairs in the elevator of his apartment building. Lucy slapped him

hard to snap him out of it, and then stared at her stinging palm. It was the first time she had ever done that to a man. "I'm sorry, I'm an asshole," he blubbered.

Lucy wondered if she should be apologizing too, but kept doing it all the same. "It's partly my fault. I should never have told you what was happening."

She helped him inside where he passed out on the couch while Lucy smoothed his forehead, repeating a pattern she was not even aware of. She stood at the window then, looking thirty floors down at the colorful constellations of passing umbrellas, wondering what made her feel responsible for other people. She was embarrassed and ashamed yet again but still did not feel wrong. Had she been irreverent? She thought not, but perhaps she had been too playful. Yet that didn't seem right either. It seemed once again she was supposed to keep this to herself unless she was prepared to give it away for someone else's consumption. Anyway, she decided she would simply have to come to accept this as a secret well inside of her that did not matter to anyone else. Yet, how could it be "no big deal?" She wondered as she thought of how much people went through to get that feeling from another.

A change of environment did the trick, and the next day as the plane lowered in a perfect blue sky above a glistening Chicago on a warm October afternoon, Lucy felt anything was possible again. Within a week, she'd met and laughed with friends, moved into a residence on Dearborn Street, and accepted part-time work for a Japanese journalist in his office in the Wrigley Building. She called Angelina to say she was back in town, "I don't feel like modeling now. Please just call me when foreign scouts come to town." And then, finally, she called her mother to say she was coming home.

“But we’re not even going to be there.” Lucy winced at the pain in her mother’s voice but was grateful she would not yet have to face her dad.

“I’ll come again soon. I just need to get some stuff out of the attic,” Lucy lied. There was nothing there she really needed other than to walk around on the land, and to see her grandfather.

Ernst was waiting for her at the bus station like a stoic sentinel. Lucy hugged him, jumped in the car, and then rode next to him in silence as she often had. She was thrilled to see the river, the cornflower blue sky, and the waves of ocher, russet and moss in the valleys. She could already feel the roots gliding through her soles as she awaited walking on the land. When Ernst pulled into his driveway, Lucy reached for the door handle, and he gripped her arm. “Tell me about your life, honey. Did he hurt you?”

Lucy was touched that he did not blame her. She rubbed her bicep where he had squeezed it. “No, but you did.”

Ernst’s face wrinkled in pain, apparently unable to say he was sorry, though she could see he was feeling it. Lucy breathed deeply as she looked out over the pasture, and they walked to the picnic table under the maple. She watched her grandfather’s jaw stiffen as he stood there, and she knew it was because he was not sure what to say next to get her to talk. He, like she, hated asking questions. They both figured that people told you what they wanted you to know. He lifted the rake that was leaning against the tree. Lucy watched the narrow yellow leaves jump like fish as he went to work. “Who got the divorce?”

“I did.”

“Was there money involved?”

“Not much.” Lucy went to the garage for a bushel basket.

“What are you going to do now?” he asked when she came back out.

“Live. One day at a time.” She lifted the leaves.

When they were standing by the fire pit in the pasture, the leaves flaming and smoking, she confessed. “Grandpa, I was the bad one, in a way. I became involved with another man while I was in Japan. I told Vic about it. He said he wanted to stay married, but all he wanted to do was punish me. So I left.”

Ernst poked at the fire. “Why’d you tell him?”

Lucy shook her head. “What is it with you people? You’re the ones who taught me the Golden Rule.”

He responded with a tilt of the head, as if he were moving her words around in his brain trying to make sense of them. “We all make mistakes.”

“I don’t see what I did in Japan as a mistake.”

Ernst stabbed the pitchfork into the ground. “If that man really loved you he would have never put you in that position.”

Lucy knew that would come. Those words, not her own, had repeated in her own mind often. “I put myself in that position.” That last word made her ache and smile.

Ernst twisted his lower lip as if it were a key in a lock. “There was,” he grimaced, “intercourse,” he paused for a better word perhaps, “involved, wasn’t there?”

Lucy thought, there’s the technical line. “You might call it that.”

Ernst stoked the fire. She could tell by the expression in his eyes that he was still trying to figure something out. “Just tell me one more thing. Is this man a Japanese?”

Lucy shook her head. “He is French.”

He seemed to understand something then. “A traveler like you?”

Lucy had never heard Ernst say the word travel, nor had he ever called her anything other than her name or honey. A traveler, she thought, yes, and it made her happy to know her grandfather thought of her this way. She also liked thinking of her and Julien as two travelers, because for some odd reason, she never had. She looked out over the pasture. “Yep, a traveler like me.”

A strong wind blew the rest of the leaves off the apple trees the next morning, and Lucy stared at the bare branches through her parent’s kitchen window thinking of a line from a poem she loved, *this is the passing of all shining things*. It was lonely in the empty house, and it had been a long, still night, in which she lay awake listening to the ticking of the clock, thinking about her dad, and the letters from Vic she had seen. Seeing her engagement ring in a matchbox addressed to them, and realizing in detail what he had told them about the divorce, alongside his declarations of great love, made her both dizzy and furious. She went to church with Ernst, and then out for a pancake breakfast eaten in predominant silence, except when he asked her questions

about her family that she could not answer. “You sure don’t know a whole hell of a lot, do you?”

Lucy raised her hands as if caught in a hold-up and laughed, glancing across the room to the table where they all used to sit, and imagining her grandmother in her usual chair. “I know what I know.” She smiled. He raised an eyebrow. “Anyway, I haven’t seen any of them in nine months and you live right next door. So what’s up with your knowing?”

The first snow began to fall, melting wherever it hit the surface, as Lucy hooked her arm in his and they walked toward the bus. He pulled her closer. “I sure do worry about you, honey.”

Lucy wondered why he did not have more confidence in her, but did not connect his worry to what they never talked about. After she hugged him, she pressed her finger into his jacket. “Believe in me,” she looked into his eyes to make sure he was listening, “that will help a lot more.” He looked confused, as if that could in no way be enough.

It was November when Julien’s letter arrived, along with a royalty check from the agency in Barcelona. Money and love, Lucy smiled to herself as she stared at the French postmark, 8-8-88, and then slid it in, and out, of her pocket several times, marveling at her self-control to not rip it open immediately. She saved it for a favorite spot along the lake to read in the sun. *You put yourself too close to me, and it bothers you, as well as me... I would like you to get your distance away from me to grow up by yourself, with no help, and no private attach...*

Lucy gazed at the horizon, wondering how much farther away she and Julien could possibly get. She understood him. It was that closeness and attachment

that she had been struggling with all summer and still was, and maybe always would. She could also see how this distance was building her security in herself. As she watched sun rays sparkling on the lake, wondering whether he missed her, and if so, why he had not moved toward her, she reminded herself that he didn't even know where she was. She wished he would somehow find out, and turn up on her doorstep this time. Had she watched too many romantic American movies in her life and lost touch with reality? She smiled to herself as she asked and answered perhaps, perhaps.

The day before Thanksgiving, she sat in a rented car, staring at her parent's house. When she saw her father walk across the driveway toward her, she pretended to look for something in her bag. Tom Pilgrim bent down, looked in the window, and then tapped. As their eyes met a jolt of joy, relief, anger, and sadness tore through her and she could feel her composure crumbling, but was determined to stand tall. When she stepped out of the car, and he opened his arms warmly and said "How are you, babe?" that glimmer of the intimacy she thought was lost forever drew her, and like a pendulum she swung toward his chest. He held her there. Once more she was stunned by the amount of tears she contained.

When she walked in the house, light and cautious, like a bird toward the feeder when a predator is nearby, her mother climbed on a chair in order to be taller than her, and also enfolded her in her arms. All of her brothers and sisters, and their significant others, and kids and her grandfather gathered around the Thanksgiving table that afternoon. It was as if nothing had changed and she had not been gone for months. No one asked how she was, or where she had been, or what she had seen. This amazed her.

Her sister-in-law apologized for everyone while she and Lucy were alone doing the dishes, telling her that Vic had not only paid her father a visit, but

everyone in the family. “If you would have seen him, you would have understood why everyone was so upset with you.”

“What I understand is that wanting to be kind and charitable people, you all supported and believed a guy you knew for two years—instead of me, your own flesh and blood.”

“Everyone knew *you* would be okay.”

“How is it that everyone thinks I will always be okay but doesn’t trust me? It’s okay to hurt Lucy because Lucy can take it, is that it? Does anybody ever ask why Lucy can take it better than anybody else? Maybe she has more practice, could that be it? So let’s make her a master at it. Let’s just keep shitting on her because she can clean it off and not throw it back. Is that my reward for hard work, more shit?”

“Geez, Lucy, I said we were wrong, okay? Relax.”

Lucy could not relax. She saw that her family may never understand her and though she no longer needed them to, she still wanted it. She both resented and liked being made so differently than them. Hugging and carrying on like nothing had happened had comfort in it, but not enough for Lucy on the edge.

Christmas neared, Chicago hardened. Lucy, ready to go again, sat in Faith’s office looking out at the steely blue sky over the tormented lake watching Faith pace behind her desk. “What would you do if you were attracted to a man that was not your husband?”

“I think you know what I did.”

Faith stopped pacing and looked like she might cry. She flung a hand toward the window. "I don't want to just throw myself into the abyss."

Lucy shrugged. "It's where we all are anyway. Even if you think you're not there it doesn't change anything." Faith looked forlorn. "You have to do what feels right for you. That is it, that is all. That is only the way to really be true." Now Faith looked bewildered, as if doing what felt right for her was unbelievable as viable. This made Lucy sad and it also made her crave communion with a fellow daredevil. As she left the building, hungering for touch, she reminded herself it always came when it was right, and lifted her collar to walk north.

Angelina clapped and threw her arms in the air when Lucy walked into the Christmas party. "Tokyo called! They want you to come in January!"

A man across the room looked at Lucy with curious, witty eyes. Throughout the next couple of hours, he and Lucy glanced at and approached each other, then told stories and laughed so often others were drawn towards them to ask what was so amusing. When Lucy commented, "My, my aren't we cocky," and he responded, "We prefer to call it self-assured," she thought to be able to assure one's self was the key to life. When they left together, she accepted his invitation for tea at his home.

It was one of those serendipitous moments in life, Lucy thought as she moved around his cozy apartment. She could have done without the poster of Paris on the wall that reminded her of Julien, but she smiled when he turned on the cassette recorder and it played The Style Council's music that she had listened to all summer. She touched his sculptures and lingered over the sketches on torn-out notebook paper scattered around the room. It was like encountering

an unexpected oasis. He built a fire, and Lucy relaxed into a beanbag chair in front of it while he made tea. They talked about how they felt attentive when they drew, and strong when they sculpted, yet playful, too. She was moved by the depth of his eyes when he spoke of his dream of living in the mountains. She could see him chopping wood and a woman watching from the window. For now, she was happy to want to kiss someone she could.

And she was thrilled by his touch. Her body leaped toward his like a famished baby to the breast there in front of the fire. As his kisses lowered to her nipples and then her belly and then between her legs, she became nervous. She felt resistance in her body, that damn hey, this is not Julien, reply. She told herself it was important to let herself be loved by another, so she pushed past her body's hesitation, and in so doing farted in the dear man's face. She immediately covered her own, thinking Rule Number One? Don't Push It. "I'm so sorry, and so embarrassed."

He smiled and shook his head as if it were nothing, then held her. After cuddling, he covered her with a blanket and kissed her on the forehead. "I'm going to bed. You are welcome to join me if you like."

When Lucy woke in the dark, the fire smoldering, she tiptoed into his room and then slipped in beside him. He spooned her, and she fell into a deep sleep in which she dreamed that she was in the same place, rising and then walking into the bathroom. Still in the dream, she was sitting on the toilet when she looked between her legs and saw band-aids falling from her, floating like leaves on the water of the basin.

She opened her eyes, and then lay for a while, enjoying the smell of coffee brewing, staring at the ceiling, and then out the window at the bare trees, wondering what had been wounded there and what had healed. Tenderness is what she felt.

“Do you think you will ever get a real job and settle down in just one place? With one man?” her mother asked as they lay next to each other on her parent’s bed Christmas morning.

“There is one I could imagine doing that with, I think. But he is far away.”

“How far?”

“France.”

Viola dropped the back of her hand on her forehead. “You are going to live way over there?”

Lucy sighed, but this gave her new hope. If Viola thought it was possible, it must be.

Lucy looked at her father on Christmas afternoon hoping to convey that he seemed to not have noticed that he owed her an apology. “By the way, I’ve forgiven you.”

Tom slapped his palm on the kitchen table. “That’s one of those things you don’t have much choice about, Lulu.”

The lights on the tree blurred as she looked past him into the living room. The whole holiday was like that, the love still there, but blurry.

“Your whole problem is that you are too defensive.”

“That is because I feel like I have to protect the shit out of myself whenever I come to this place.”

“Well, then don’t come.”

“Fine then, I won’t.”

He raised his hands in resignation, feeling sorry for what he’d said. “What do you want us to do?”

Lucy glared. “Just forget it.”

A sleepless night, fever, and headache left her feeling delirious at dawn. She decided to leave. The snow crunched under her feet as she walked across the yard to say goodbye to her grandfather. Through the window, she could see him shuffling around in the kitchen in his robe. She tapped on the door. He looked at the clock on the wall, and then opened it. He could tell she had been crying. “What are you doing this early?”

“I’m going back to Chicago. Everyone is still asleep over home but I can’t take it anymore. I gotta go.”

He gestured her inside for coffee. When she sat in her grandmother’s chair, he looked at her the way he puzzled over tomato plants that were not growing correctly. “You’re just a loner in the world now. Just going out in the world totally alone.” Lucy nodded, self-satisfied, thinking it has always been that way, at least someone sees it now. “And this is no way to be. You will find out. You can’t get through this life all by yourself.”

“Oh yes, I can.” She sounded more like a child than she realized.

“You are totally independent—”

She interjected another fierce nod. “Thank you.”

“—and it can’t work. You need people.”

“What kind of people? That’s the question.”

Ernst straightened up. “You have no future.”

Lucy looked at the World Series ring on his finger. “Is that what you told your son when he wanted to play professional baseball?”

He nodded. “Luckily the grace of God was with him.”

“I thought it was supposed to be with us all.”

He didn’t know how to answer that, and it made him mad.

As Lucy scanned the awaiting crowd at Narita airport, all of the memories flooded back and beads of sweat and chills broke out over her body. Just as in Osaka, a man in a blue suit holding a sign with her name on it bowed. This time she was driven to Roppongi, the center of Tokyo, where the driver pulled up in front of a modern eight-story building between a 7-Eleven store and a flower shop, and walked her inside to the elevator and the fourth floor studio the agency had reserved for her. He handed her the keys and an envelope.

The agency was a fifteen-minute walk away on a four-lane street lined by young trees, in a simple office building. It was much smaller than the agency in Osaka and run by a cheerful and kind woman, Tami, who peeked around the philodendron on the counter as Lucy walked in and then introduced her to Oki, a tiny young woman with curious, friendly eyes. She was the first Japanese Lucy had seen with an afro and she smiled at how colorful she was wearing an electric blue t-shirt, rainbow-striped wool socks over black leggings, red Adidas volleyball shoes and a neon orange ski jacket. As they walked out the street and on their way to the first of many castings, Oki grinned sheepishly and pointed at her head. “I want to be a black person. That is why I did this to my hair.”

“Wow,” Lucy smiled. “But what will you do about your skin?”

Oki cracked up. “Can you tell me something? What does it mean to hang it up? My boyfriend, he is Australian, he told me that we should hang it up. Is it a good thing?”

“That depends on what you are hanging up. You know when you take off your coat and put it in the closet?” Oki nodded. “That’s hanging it up.” Oki looked worried. “As I said, it depends on what you are putting in the closet.” Oki smiled, nodded, working on it in her mind.

Lucy’s favorite jobs in Tokyo were as an “older woman” for elegant catalogues. She also did covers and fashion spreads for magazines, often as part of a couple as if on vacation in Chiba, skiing in Hokkaido, or playing a young mother in luxury homes in Tokyo suburbs. She was again treated like visiting royalty by the Japanese, and she loved those jobs where they played Kitaro’s music and gave her massages before make-up in order to “fully relax and increase her beauty.”

All the role-playing was getting to her, though, all that pretending, all that posing. Lucy began sticking out her tongue at the camera or crossing her eyes and screwing up her face for the Polaroid shots made to test the lighting. “Why you do that?” one photographer finally asked. Lucy shrugged. The man straightened his glasses on his nose, and then shook his head, confused.

“Diversion.”

“Diversion?”

Lucy shrugged again. She didn’t think she was being unprofessional. They were only Polaroids, after all. She played the right game with the real film. Wasn’t that enough? The breaking point was the day she was asked to do some aerobic dance moves while wearing a one-piece swimsuit in front of a table of fifteen Japanese men in business suits. The professional thing to do, it seemed,

was what she was asked. So she did. When they looked at the woman next to her and waited, and she refused, Lucy stood there ashamed.

“I’m not going to jump around for their perverse pleasure,” the model from Texas snapped as they walked out, and Lucy wondered what had become of her to think it was professional to do as she had done.

Yet she was happy to be in Japan again, seeing more and a different part of it, but Tokyo was more condensed and tense than Osaka, with even more neon and people. Lucy found the open spaces like the graveyards amidst high-rises, and the wild parks in the center. She loved to run to and around Akasaka Castle every morning, and to take long walks at night through Hiro-ho, the neighborhood adjacent to hers. The structures were lower there, and there was a park with an ancient eucalyptus tree, a stream, and across the street, a friendly, woody bathhouse where she often bathed with the neighborhood ladies. In the wee hours, when she couldn’t sleep, she went to the clay she’d bought, and sculpted miniature worlds of her own.

When she was in a social mood, she went to the clubs and listened to people’s stories. They were usually about chances missed, love, or what they thought was love, lost, abusive or neglectful intimates, strange jobs. Her favorite was listening to an American guy tell her what it was like to be in a male casting and watching him demonstrate how he prepared himself for bathing suit castings by doing push-ups and other pumping exercises. The night clubs had names like BingoBangoBongo, Bio, and Lucy’s favorite, Java Jive. It was set up to look like Jamaica, with palm trees and chaise lounges around the dance floor, wicker stools at the bamboo bar, and a live reggae band. Lucy loved the way the clubs were all on top of each other in a high-rise, how she could get into the elevator and ride to another one when she was bored. Models drank and ate free in Tokyo, too. Lucy wondered how long it would last as she watched the Australians and Americans, a group the youngest Australian girls

dubbed “The Wankers,” order the bartenders and waitresses around like indentured servants. She danced a lot in Tokyo, and by herself. It was then she felt freest. Sometimes she had the entire dance floor to herself, she closed her eyes and spun and flew, letting her body move as it liked to the songs she loved most: “I’ve been around the world and I can’t find my baby and Put a little love in your heart.” She often imagined Julien walking her way. Another Frenchman did instead.

She and Marcel met in a restaurant, both alone, eating separately, until he asked if he might join her. He had flashing eyes framed by thick, arched brows, full lips she imagined would be pleasant to touch and a long neck that she admired as he adjusted the bandana he wore around it. She noticed the way he checked himself in the mirror, too, before joining her, and this combination of vanity and insecurity endeared him to her. Every night they met for meals, as if not planning to, by showing up in the same Italian restaurant at the same time. At the clubs, they watched each other carefully, approaching and retreating. She liked the way he moved his fingers along her spine when they finally danced and she liked walking through the slick night streets with him, puddles of neon everywhere. Lucy was thrilled to share some spirit of adventure again. They spoke the same amount of each other’s language but were mostly silent partners, dancing, exchanging glances and soft laughter.

Eventually, he moved her enough to lie with him. Sharing was certainly the summit, the joy of happy skin with happy skin. She couldn’t believe she was making love again. When she straddled him and looked down into his eyes, and he looked surprised and said, “Are you going to rape me?” It seemed her desire scared him, and this scared her. She dropped to her side, curling into herself wondering how he could think she would want to do such a thing. It made her feel ashamed. She wondered if he had never seen a woman on top, but she imagined he had seen women in every position, and there they were,

two naked human beings with all of their thoughts and histories and questions, that close, and not talking. He held her, and that felt like enough though she barely slept in the next couple of hours before she had to report to work at six.

When Oki saw her that afternoon, her mouth dropped open and she looked at her as if she was noticing her for the very first time. “Wow, you are so beautiful.” Lucy smiled weakly, she knew it was from the love she was making through the night, from the giving and sharing. As much as her solo raptures satisfied her, they never compared to sharing them with another.

When Marcel saw her in Java Jive he leaned toward her ear, “What happened last night cannot happen again. I have a wife.”

“And who was it that stopped what was happening last night?” Marcel looked at her both confused and curious. She could see that something in her scared him and she thought it was her detachment from him. Yet, despite his words, he didn’t stop looking for what he said couldn’t happen to happen again.

Lucy was torn. He was the most fun she was having in Tokyo and she thought he was a way out into the world again, a chance for her to love again, but then again, not. The fact that he was married bothered her little. She knew that was more his problem, than hers. It was a present she was looking for not a future. What concerned her most was that he wanted to be close to her, but it seemed his only way not to feel guilty about it was if it didn’t mean much. She wanted it to mean a lot.

Of course it was then that a letter from Julien arrived, as if he knew he might soon be late. When she saw the envelope lying on the agency counter, she passed her fingers over the ink, imagining his hand writing her name. Once

outside the agency, she opened it and then walked down the busy street reading. *I have this feeling that I am not basically happy, actually...*

Lucy was happy to have him in her hands in Japan again and glad he had figured that much out. She wondered how much longer it would take until he realized, or at least mentioned, that his unhappiness might be connected to her absence. He asked her to present his composite, if she still had it, to her agency, to see if they might need him. But Lucy had stopped carrying Julien's composite, and she was still bent on him moving toward her all on his own, so she savored the letter, but kept on with her life in Tokyo.

Meandering through Ginza a gloomy afternoon at the beginning of February, she spied a familiar gait and turned to look more closely at a woman in a black fedora. It was the spring in her step and the way she held her head high and light. A fuchsia turtleneck flashed under her black wool cape as she turned to see if traffic was coming. Lucy stopped, waited, and saw Hope's face as she fully turned, and the tiny bells around the ankles of her boots jingled as she strode toward Lucy amidst the lights, shoppers, and skyscrapers. "You're here! I have been going crazy in Barcelona, everything delayed for three weeks because of visa papers. They brought me from the airport directly to castings!" She pointed to the booker waiting for her on the sidewalk. "Here is my address. Meet me there in two hours."

The apartment, which felt more like a space shuttle, was the one that Marcel had moved out of the day before. Hope and Lucy lay awake until three, telling stories and laughing. "You like the French guys," Hope teased.

Lucy rolled her eyes. "I don't know if it is because they are French." But she had to admit they had looks and movements that drew her. Those Gauls. Nine times out of ten the men that turned her head were speaking that language.

Tokyo became warm with Hope in it. She joined Lucy at the clubs and on weekend excursions and at the bathhouse in Hiro-ho. The day after she met Marcel, Hope leaned forward in the bubbling water of the Jacuzzi as if she were talking to a child. “He’s gorgeous, Lucy. You have to make love with this man.”

Lucy sighed into the rising steam and leaned back against the wooden frame. “I have started to, but I want it to mean something. I think he prefers it to be meaningless.”

“Mean what? Just take the pleasure. You deserve it.”

“Take it? I want it to be a celebration, a communion, an adventure in intimate ecstasy filled with both of us, all that’s in us. I think he wants it to be a stolen relief, a surrender to sex for sex’s sake so he can tell himself he was still true to his wife because his heart was not in it.”

“You think too much. Just enjoy it.” This, from a virgin, Lucy thought.

Yet, when she did take the risk to go farther, and let him inside of her, she felt first that glorious moment of being filled, a sensation she had not known for seven long months. She also felt a subtle change in Marcel, like a light going out somewhere in the house. His kisses and thrusts became impersonal, as if it no longer mattered who, or even what, was there with him. It was as if she disappeared as a human being under him and became a receptacle. She pressed his chest and whispered, “I do not feel you with me, please stop.” Then she watched his confusion turn to anger and insecurity as he moved from her bed to the bathroom and back again, walking through her apartment erect, as if

searching for a lost object while carrying it. She, too, was confused by the pleasure it brought her to watch him wander this way, part of it was in the beauty of his form, yet she also felt powerful for having stopped what felt wasteful, for having refused, for having said, “Not like that.” Yet, he stayed, slept, and they had breakfast together while he watched her like a rare never-encountered-before specimen, kissed her and left, “Ciao, Bella.”

Felix appeared that weekend, across the dance floor. He was so tanned he looked black. Lucy backed away from the scraped skin covering half of his face before kissing him. He frowned and pointed to his wound. “Motorcycle accident in Thailand.” Lucy palmed his back in sympathy. “I am sad to return to Paris. My father says I really must work with him now.” Lucy still couldn’t imagine Felix as a banker, but she liked to. Marcel was watching them from the other side of the room. Felix lowered his mouth to her ear. “I saw Julien in Paris last fall.” Lucy listened, remembering Julien as she watched Marcel moving. She thought, if nothing else, life was beautiful to have given her gorgeous Frenchmen to love. “He came to a party at my house.” Lucy, who still felt tossed aside by Julien, acted like any news about him didn’t really concern her. “Alone,” Felix added as if to emphasize some point. Now that caught her attention.

The next morning, when she woke with her nipple in the crux of her second and third finger, she slid open the window to feel the sun in her bed, and then wrote *Dear Julien (who by the way, still remains dearest and deepest in my heart)*. It amazed and pleased her when she realized it had taken her three weeks to respond.

At the beginning of March, with ten days left on her contract, she sat in her apartment adding up income and deducting expenses: two-hundred-thousand

yen, that was not enough money to go to Thailand as she had hoped, or to set herself up in Europe. She would have to return to Chicago. She thought of the sixty-year-old she had met at a dinner party with Hope, who, when she had told him of her plans, had exclaimed, “You women don’t need husbands.” How odd she had thought that idea was, that husbands were only for money, for tickets and expenses.

During one of her runs that week, she paused on one of the park’s bamboo bridges in the light rain, and was surrounded by every kind of green. She noticed the buds on the branches and inhaled deeply the smell of damp earth. This aroused her. As it engulfed her, she closed her eyes. Feeling other eyes on her, she opened her own. Marcel stuck his camera lens in her face with a sly slow smile, clicked the shutter, and walked away.

The day before she left, a gray and drizzly one, she walked to the phone booth near Roppongi Crossing, in front of the bright pink Almond Café, dialed Julien’s number and her heart both lifted and dropped at the sound of his voice. “Is it really you?”

“Are you calling me from Japan?”

“Yes, I can’t talk long. I’m leaving tomorrow. I wanted to go to Thailand, as I wrote you, but I’m going back to Chicago.”

“Problems?”

“I can deal—” she cut herself off as she wondered if she could. She thought about how she had left things with her parents, and the postcards she had written and received, how nothing had changed.

“You are an optimist.” He sounded like he had not heard one for a while. She was silent, happy just to hear him breathing, happy they were connected if only by wire and only for moments. “Lucy, are the cherry trees in bloom?” She closed her eyes, remembering, and nodded as if he could see her. “You know, I really miss this time.” Lucy was speechless with love in her ear, too far to touch, cars whizzing by as if it didn’t matter. “Give me a big kiss.”

Lucy smacked. “I’m running out of time.”

“Don’t leave me alone.”

Now you say it, Lucy thought as she shook all the questions she would no longer ask about when, where, why, and how they would see each other again out of her mind. “I won’t ask,” she said. The line went dead and she stood for a moment remembering all the phone booths around the world where she had stood, wondering the same damn thing.

“I wonder how long it will be before we are together again.” She warmed her cold and trembling hands on the cup of mint tea Hope poured for her.

Hope raised her brows. “If he is as stubborn as you are, it could be a very long time.”

As the thought, me, stubborn? crossed Lucy’s face, Hope nodded. They both had to laugh.

Flights to Paris or Bangkok were both boarding on each side of the flight to Chicago. Lucy sighed as she contemplated slipping onto either of them. She

knew she had to go back and face it all again, find her way, and figure out what to make of her life next. When she arrived in Chicago, she went straight to the agency. Angelina threw her arms open. “You look fantastic. I’ve never seen you in more perfect shape, Lucy.”

“I feel like shit. I need a place to live.”

Angelina picked up the phone and secured a good deal on a studio at The Elms, a small hotel half a block from the lake. “And by the way, your mother called here this morning, and says that you should call home collect.”

Knowing her father hated driving into downtown Chicago, Lucy was impressed when her mother said they were coming to see her.

Soon after he walked into her studio apartment, Lucy stabbed her father in the chest with her finger. “Can you imagine how much that hurt me when you told me not to come home last year?”

Viola sighed. “So that is what this has all been about.”

Tom squinted at Lucy, sizing her up. “You really take it right to the gut, don’t you?”

She pressed her finger deeper into his skin. “I give it straight from the gut, too.”

He lifted his hands to the air, then as quickly shook them out as if to wipe them of this trouble, as if it weren’t important, as if once again she was taking it all too hard. Viola looked her up and down. “Why don’t you buy yourself some new clothes? Do you go into the agency looking like that? Why don’t

you wear a skirt or dress and some heels instead of those flimsy pants and whatever kind of jacket that is?" She slapped Lucy's hand away from the cinnamon rolls she reached for on the kitchen counter. "And if this is what you want to do, you can't have those."

"I don't know how much longer I want to do this."

She looked at her dad. "You know you never once told me I was beautiful, not once in my whole life."

Tom held her stare. "You are beautiful," he said, like stating an obvious fact. Then he lifted his hands into the air. "And so what?"

Lucy laughed, a little, seeing his point. Then she turned to her mother. "So are you saying all of these feelings I had of being turned away by my family weren't true?"

Viola narrowed her eyes. "That is what you twist around in that brain of yours."

Lucy wanted to believe her.

Viola swept her arm around the circumference of Lucy's studio. "Why would you want to live in a little room like this when you have that nice big bedroom upstairs looking out on the countryside?"

"But what would I do there?"

"Get a real job?" Viola lifted a little silver suitcase jewelry box Lucy bought in Tokyo. "This is perfect for you." She set it back down, and then sighed wistfully. "You are rich."

Her admiration surprised Lucy. “Mom, I only have about a thousand dollars in the bank.”

Viola swatted the air. “I’m not talking about money, I’m talking about experience. Now what are you going to do?”

“I don’t know now. I wanted to see the world, to travel it alone, to prove that I could do it, and I did.”

Viola looked confused. “Prove it to who?”

“To me.” Viola still looked puzzled, but Lucy couldn’t tell if it was about the need of proof or a sentiment her mother simply didn’t share. “Anyway, right now I’ll just keep doing what I’m doing until I figure out what to do next.”

A letter from Julien arrived at the end of the month. *Do what you have to do, if you feel it, even if it hurts...* she read and thought he’s late again. She also wondered once more why he thought she needed this prompt.

That afternoon she went to the agency to meet a Parisian agent who looked like an ogre. He flipped through her book, “Would you like to have dinner with me tonight? We can talk about you coming to Paris.” Lucy thought they just as well could have talked about it right there, and though she was tired of this game, she accepted his invitation, mostly to observe his methods of entrapment but also because some part of her wanted very much for his proposal of work in Paris to be true. She would consider going to Paris again, if work were involved. When she knocked on the door of the agent’s room in the Palmer House Hotel, he offered her a drink, and then lifted a tiny white tablet between his fingers. “Would you like half an ecstasy?”

“How about if you give it to me and I take it with somebody else?”

He threw his fat head back, laughed and kept his pill for himself.

At the fancy French restaurant, she looked across the table at him. “Do you know Léon Soinin?”

“We have contests together to see who can get a girl’s pantyhose off fastest. So tell me, how many guys have you done? Have you tried Japanese? Chinese? French? German? A world-wide tasting?”

Lucy leaned back in the booth. “People aren’t little dolls to be taken off a shelf and tried.”

He shrugged. “Why don’t you come to Vancouver and San Francisco with me? I leave tomorrow.”

“Don’t think so.”

“I bet you are one of those women that won’t let anybody touch her then goes home and touches herself.”

“I don’t even have to touch myself.” She stood then, and left him sitting there, his mouth hanging open, looking like he’d missed something.

By now Lucy could hardly bear to stand in front of the camera anymore, she couldn’t explain it but she felt like eating the camera each time it was pointed at her, chewing it up and spitting it back at the photographer. Perhaps it was the photographers, it had been too long since one had looked through the lens

for her, instead of at her, it seemed. She worked for a couple of catalogues, then a whiskey advertisement with a slob, albeit famous, photographer who was angry with her for not cowering before him.

That evening she ran into Vic at a happy hour with a friend, and apologized to him for the pain she had caused and how mean she had been, and then after their conversation, she reached for her wallet to pay. It, and the six hundred dollars in it, was gone, probably slipped from her pocket in the crowded bar. She could hardly bear watching Vic pay, and refused his offer of cash as they said good night.

The next weekend, when she slept in her clothes at a Finnish businessman's apartment, after he begged her not to leave him alone, and woke to his hand on her ass, she called her mother. "Would it be okay for me to come home for a while? I'd like to take all of my stuff out of storage, sort through it, and then put it in the attic if you don't mind. Relax there for a while and figure out what to do next."

"When?"

"As soon as you want to come and get me."

"What about your work?"

"Call up my old babysitting contacts. I'd even cut grass for money at this point. I want to get away from this world."

That afternoon, she walked over to the agency to see Angelina. "I'll come back in to the city for important castings, if you call, or direct bookings."

Angelina rubbed her eyes. “Lucy? Look at you, you are in perfect shape, you are working well. What the hell are you going to do in Iowa?”

“Walk around barefoot in the grass.”

Angelina shook her head as she penciled the phone number at the top of her chart.

“Why don’t you try a weekend first?” Faith suggested as they ran along the lake. “And what about Julien, you said you wrote and invited him to share your studio here, for God’s sake, what if he comes?”

“Knowing Julien, it could be a while before I hear from him. And about home, I feel like I need to go there and settle something inside myself. I can’t explain it, only that it feels like the right next thing to do. I can always come back. It’s only four hours away. I have some money. More will come. It always does.”

Her parents drove into the city again, and to the storage place with her, where Lucy wheeled one of the large silver carriers into the elevator. Upstairs, and in the back of the aisle, she opened the wire cage that contained all of her belongings and began to remove all the boxes. Tom looked on in a combination of admiration and disbelief as he helped. “You put this all in here by yourself?”

Lucy remembered the sad June days the year before when she had hauled everything out of the apartment, Vic watching. She remembered driving all of her belongings to this place, load after load, stopping along the lake on the way back to regroup for a while before carrying on. She thought of how everyone in her family seemed to think it had been easy for her, and she was happy that at least her parents could see that there were definitely parts of it

that weren't. She nodded to her dad as she lifted the last box into the trunk. Tom handed her the keys to drive out of the city and she pulled up alongside a mailbox and dropped a postcard to Paris into it.

At first it was great for her. Lucy walked into the backyard and relaxed. Apple trees were full of white blossoms, the grass was so green it made her squint, the dandelions popping bright yellow everywhere were little bursts of joy inside of her, the heady smell of lilacs lulled her into a calm she hadn't known since childhood, and every oak unfurling its shiny new leaves looked like it was hoping she would choose to sit underneath it. Robins, cardinals, red-winged blackbirds, blue jays, and chickadees flitted and skeeted over the yard and goldfinches fed at the feeder outside the kitchen window. Horseback on Saturday, she galloped through the open, rolling fields in the sun. She donned skis on Sunday, and then skimmed over the Mississippi watching for the herons and turtles resting on driftwood along the shore.

She thought of this respite as a time for streamlining her ship. Monday morning she went to work whittling away at her piles of possessions, and each weekday afternoon after that she drove into town and dumped loads of clothes and household items into the St. Vincent de Paul container, thinking she was becoming cleaner, lighter, closer to the life she wanted. She lay in the sun on the roof, or in the backyard after that listening to music. In the evenings she ran up and down the hills along gravel roads, past silver silos gleaming in the warm and golden sun, and red wood barns that looked hot to the touch. Swallowtails fluttered in the tall grass near the fence line where Guernsey cows stopped chewing, looked up and walked toward her as she approached, their eyes and noses full of flies, tails swishing. She remembered how she once dreamed of getting away from all this, and it gave her satisfaction to think how she had done what she set out to do. She was surprised to notice that she liked the smell of manure in the air. She didn't remember liking that.

Once home, she stretched in the driveway and told her brother Eze the route she ran as he popped a bing cherry in his mouth. His spit the pit into his palm then pitched it into the pasture. “You’re nuts.” She thought that pretty well summed up what her family thought about her in general. When she walked in the den, her dad dropped the paper on the floor and leaned forward, “Scratch my back, Lulu.” She massaged his shoulders. “You know, you look and feel stronger and better than you ever have.” She did feel ready for anything.

When Angelina called, Lucy reluctantly drove the four hours to Chicago for a couple of castings. The closer she came to the city, the higher her stomach rose toward her throat, her hands quivered on the wheel. She wanted to turn around and escape into the woods, but she parked the car, combed her hair, touched up her makeup, walked into each of those studios on Huron Street, and smiled. On the way back, she sang loudly, with one hand guiding the wheel, wind whipping in the open window. The farther away from people, houses, and buildings she drove the freer she felt, yet she hoped at least one of the jobs would come through so she could add cash to her diminishing bank account.

She was happier back home, though each time she said that word, home, or even thought it, she now imagined other places in the world as well, and that also made her happy. Painting the porch swing while her parents planted impatiens, she thought about how much she loved this quiet and beautiful work in which she didn’t have to pretend to be anyone else. Or did she? She wondered, because though she felt safe in this home, on this land, there was so much of her she did not show here either, so many things she believed and ways she was that did not fit the rules or guilt of this world.

What they all shared was love, Lucy knew, or at least thought, and that was worth keeping quiet for. But why did she think she needed to keep quiet in order to be loved? Whenever she paused from her work and looked around,

she glanced at her grandmother's bedroom window. It was as if her ghost was a vigilant fugitive captive there.

Ernst was sitting on the lawn chair just outside his door, listening to a ball game on the radio. He and Lucy hadn't talked much since he'd told her she had no future, yet she still stopped over to sit or garden with him. When she told him that her parents were getting ready to go out for supper, he looked toward the house. "Are you going to be all alone over there?"

She looked down, at the long blades of grass she was smoothing between her toes. "I told you I like to be alone, Grandpa."

Ernst stood, leaned over the railing and took her face firmly in his hands. "You know what I'd like to do with you?" Lucy backed up and looked away. He twisted her face toward him. "I'd like to open up that head of yours and see what the hell is inside."

She imagined her head split open, and the people, places, moments, fears, dreams inside of her all blasting out like fireworks, slamming her grandfather against the limestone wall of his house. When she laughed, he let go. She looked at him, daring him. "What do you think you'd find?"

He shook his head in grumpy frustration. "That is the big question."

"I am as silent as you are. But there's stuff going on in there, you can count on that."

Ernst smirked, and turned to go inside, pretending her answer didn't matter.

It took a few weeks for all those values she could not measure up to to gain on her. Listening to her dad say “but she does have a college education” when she told people she was a model, seeing her younger sister’s lip curl after Lucy told her she also liked making love with women, hearing her older sister say “but guys don’t want a woman who has been around” when she talked about the lack of attractive men in town, and the way her brother and dad looked at her as if she were insane when she said, “You can love someone and still not be able to live with them,” made her wonder what she had in her that they didn’t, or vice versa. It also began a whisper in her mind that she was, perhaps, a weird superfluous slut.

Once again, Lucy felt torn by her love for them, and her desire to live otherwise and elsewhere. It occurred to her that perhaps the reason she liked being a foreigner was because she had always felt like one, starting right there in her own hometown, and at least being one in another country made sense. The reconciliation and comfort she had felt in her heart seemed like an illusion she had created, partly because she had wanted it so much, partially because she was immature enough to believe that relationships could arrive to a static state of equilibrium and remain there, and partially because it was clear that when she was herself, when she said what she thought and did what she wanted, she was not approved of here, or anywhere she remembered, it seemed. The most she was coming to hope for from anyone was a perplexed scratching of the head.

One afternoon while lying topless in the backyard, she was hit with a torrent of cold water. She opened her eyes and saw her father leaning out of the bathroom window above, bucket in hand. “Put some clothes on. We came out of the jungle a long time ago, you know. We’re civilized people around here.” Lucy looked out over the lush green valley and longed for the Mediterranean. There was a freshly opened letter from Hope lying on the grass next to her, and Lucy wondered how she could have shrugged that life off so easily, how

she could have been so impatient. I could still be there, right now, she thought to herself, if I hadn't been running around trying to settle everything with Julien and my family. How stupid the thought that she could get her whole life in order once and for all seemed to her now.

That weekend, lounging in the living room after the celebration of her parents' anniversary, Tom looked at Lucy that way he had before telling what he thought would be a funny joke. "You'll be in and out of this thing twenty times or more, by this time, at your rate."

Lucy shook her head to dislodge the stab. She still couldn't believe that people thought she tossed things like marriage around lightly just because she never talked about them. What the hell did they want her to say anyway? How many times did she need to say I'm sorry and to how many people? She stared at her dad. "Anyway, how can I promise one man that it will be him, and only him, that I will love all my life. How can I know such a thing?"

"I guess if you want to go hopping in bed with every guy you meet it must be difficult."

Lucy felt her cheeks stinging, yet she was ready to fight for the respectability of the right to make love with whomever she wanted, whenever. "Not every one, Dad," she flashed him a fake smile and then left the room.

The problem now was that she didn't know where to go. She still didn't want to go back to city life and modeling, but she was running out of money. She thought about going to graduate school, maybe she could teach art at a university, still have the time to sculpt and draw, and maybe even afford travel. She looked up a list of art galleries in town thinking she might work at one or all three of them, but whatever kind of interesting work she looked for turned

out to mean accepting a permanent sort of contract, accepting to live there: just the thought of that made her chest hurt. Waiting, watching, and believing that work or money would come, as she kept doing what felt like the right next thing to do, still seemed the best plan.

She read, she drew, she disappeared into the pasture with bottles of water and sat under the same oak trees she had as a girl, muddying the earth, and sculpting pruned bushes like she had seen in Paris in the Tuileries, as well as mini-models of the Arc de Triomf, Le Pont Alexandre III, even the Akasaka Castle. She was sure her life would only get better, that what she was doing there on her native land was getting to the bottom of things. Even if she couldn't see it, she could feel it.

One evening, as she walked along the river with her mother, Viola dropped questions between them like breadcrumbs. “What are your plans, Lucy? What kind of work do you want to do now?”

Lucy sighed. “I don't know. Something that involves traveling, living, and working in different countries. I love that and I miss that.”

Her mother snapped her now silver head in her direction as if seizing an opportunity to pounce. “But what do you have to show for it all?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean you have worked and made money, okay, but—” Viola's blue eyes screamed with the desire to know if she had taught her daughter anything at all. “Don't you want to own things? Don't you want to have a house? A car? A husband?”

“What I want most is an interesting life.” Lucy worried that it sounded like she was saying her mother’s life was not. “Interesting to me, anyway. What did you dream about when you were my age?”

“I dreamed about marrying your dad, having a house, a family.”

“So you made your dream come true. Mine’s different. Why shouldn’t I believe that it could happen?”

Her mother threw a hand in the air in frustration, “I don’t know, Luce, I don’t know,” then as quickly she pointed at the grassy knoll where the limestone nunnery sat. Lucy had stood there many times, looking out over the Mississippi and imagining riding it all the way to New Orleans. “We saw three of the most beautiful deer up there this spring early one morning.”

“Mom, do you, or did you, ever see things when you make love?”

“What kind of things?”

“I have seen different things with different people. Once I saw camels. Can you imagine? I just wondered if anything like that ever happened to you.”

Her mother shook her head, keeping her pace. “No. But maybe your dad sees things. You could ask him.”

Lucy couldn’t.

Gifts come in such awful packages sometimes that we do not realize that is what they are. The first Sunday of July, after church and a pancake breakfast, when Ernst pulled into the garage, and Lucy turned to give him a kiss on the

cheek, he lunged forward and forced an awful tasting kiss deep into her mouth as if he had forgotten who they were. In so doing, he shattered the weight of all of those values she was not living up to. She pushed him off of her, and then sat back horror-struck staring at the spade on the wall wondering what to do next. Spearing it into his head seemed rather rash. Ernst sputtered his excuse as he crumpled in shame. “I just need some love, honey.”

His desperation was real, and in it, Lucy sensed everyone’s. She herself had been feeling desperate for touch. But not that kind, at least not from him, she was shaking her head now. She, too, knew the relief that could feel like love in sex, and what a comfort that could be, for a while. But love is love and sex and is sex, and as involved as the two may be, Lucy knew they were not each other. Had his own common sense been stretched out of whack by the power of his unquenched desire coupled with his inability to live up to those values he was passing on? She wondered. Jesus Christ, save us all, is what she thought, and she stumbled out of the car and over the lawn mower, shoved open the side door to the bright sky of noon, tried to bolt across the lawn but felt like she was running against a strong wind in a haze.

She let the screen door slam behind her, and then fell across her bed upstairs. It surprised her how vividly the image of Marcel in Tokyo, trying to figure out how to love her, entered her mind and how at that moment, all she wanted was the chance to re-kiss him. Why him? She wondered. Probably because he had been the last one, she imagined, and hence the closest in memory. What she really wanted was to erase the one that had just been imprinted. She counted: six months without a kiss and now this. Yikes.

How terrifically sad it was that her and her grandfather’s desperations, their life forces, had collided in such a way. Yet how fortunate, even if unbeknownst to Lucy at that moment, because now she could set herself really free. She thought back to that first abuse, and all the work she had done to avoid more

while still loving him. She was a woman now, though, she could say something, couldn't she? Squeezes, kisses, naming these things made them seem minor until she considered their source and how they were wounds inflicted where love and trust should be. Lucy felt like she was thirteen again, nothing had changed, and all she wanted to do was run.

Instead she slept until the next afternoon. When she woke up she asked her father for a thousand dollars. He was standing in front of her in the kitchen, his back against the counter. She fidgeted, thinking how she had never wanted him to know what his father had done to spare him the pain or shame, yet it wasn't his fault. The escape artist in her cried out for help. She was blind to how she had carried, and was still carrying responsibility that was not hers, protecting the son from the father and the father from himself. These two men were supposed to be protecting her after all. It had been impossible for her to feel her own true weight, because she was carrying someone else's. "I'm running out of money. I see there is not much opportunity for me here. I thought I might get a modeling job out of Chicago."

Tom looked at her as if he had known all along that she wouldn't and was both amazed and relieved she was finally catching on. "You can't get a job there when you're here."

Lucy shifted her balance, held her trembling hands behind her back. "I just need money for one month and once I am there I can make a thousand dollars in a day."

Her father shook his head. "You can stay in my house and eat my food, but you will have to make your own money."

He had given her money to do things before, so she knew he felt like she needed some kind of lesson, and it was a nice house and good food, she

reminded herself, and a generous offer. She wondered if he knew what had happened if he would change his mind and help her go. She did not want to use that, though. Something in her told her she had to see this thing through another way. She could not believe she was back at the start and she could not yet see that it was never by herself that she had gotten, or would get, anywhere, anyway.

Days later, she was downstairs watching a thunderstorm roll in, wondering how long it had been since her grandfather had made love. Or had he ever really made love, perhaps he was just a brute who wham-bammed-thank-you-ma'amed. Regardless, she calculated it could have been twenty years, considering her grandmother's illness. She didn't think anyone should have to deny themselves that long, nor did she think that made it okay for him to try to steal it, especially from her. But she knew how second marriages were frowned upon by him and the rest of the community, as much as sex without marriage was, even female companionship for a widower. Viola walked down the stairs, and stood on the landing with a troubled look on her face. "I've been over at your grandfather's. He is crying in his chair, and wants to know why you don't come and see him anymore."

Lucy watched from the corner of her eye as Viola bustled to the washing machine, lifted the lid and began to empty a load of whites. Here goes, she thought as she walked toward her mom. "Do you really want to know?"

Viola kept to her task. "I do."

"Because the last time I did, he stuck his tongue in my mouth."

"I knew it was something like that." Her mother snapped the wrinkles out of a clean dishtowel. "Do you want me to go over there and talk to him?"

Lucy was left momentarily speechless by her mother's lack of surprise as well as her offer of support, and confused by the way she felt like she was three years old again. Her body seemed so small and tall at the same time as she wanted to wrap herself around her mother's legs. It was something she could not remember even having done as a child. "No, no, I'll handle it. I'm just not ready yet."

Lucy looked down at her tan thighs, how slim and strong they were. She wondered what it was for a starved man to see that in front of him daily at the same time that she asked herself why she should have to cover herself up because he couldn't control himself. Her mother looked at Lucy's breasts. "And from now on when you go over there, wear a bra."

Lucy laughed.

"I am not kidding."

Lucy took a deep breath and shook her head. There it was again, that question of how it was somehow her fault. She knew it didn't matter if she wore a bra or a long flowing skirt. "How about a suit of armor?"

"Not a bad idea," Viola said. Lucy lifted the basket of clothes, took them outside and hung them on the line. To have her grandparents right next door had been a joy and a comfort most of her life, but now standing there in the yard she felt watched, and the house loomed at her like an omen. She had to do something, she thought, but where to start. It seemed her whole life was in need of rebuilding. The previous moments with her mother flashed through her mind like flowers growing out of rubble.

For about an hour, she walked around the house in a daze, wondering what to do next and thinking maybe her mother was onto something with that car, husband and house idea. Especially the car, preferably fast, small and filled with gas. When Viola called out to her from the living room, Lucy looked in, and saw her mom sitting in the chair that had been her own mother's, snapping her fingernails, one under the other, as she did whenever she was nervous. Viola looked up at her daughter with a dab of fear in her eyes, something Lucy had never seen in them. "Did your father ever try anything like that with you?"

Lucy's eyes widened at the horror of the thought. "Mom. No. Never. I have never once felt anything wrong in the way dad touched me. Why do you ask me that?"

"Because mine did."

Lucy's mouth formed a howl but no sound came out. She swallowed. "What did you do?"

"I slapped him hard, across the face, and told him he had better never do that again."

Lucy stared at her mom in awe, wishing someone would please tell her why she had never thought of that.

Later that afternoon, while Lucy was sweeping rain puddles out of the hollows in the driveway, Viola walked back across the yard from Ernst's and stood under the maple tree next to her. She could not tell if she had said something to Ernst, but there was a certain triumphant glint in her eye, a look of a mother having done battle for her child. "Your grandpa wants to take us all out to eat at the Hideaway. It's chicken night. If you don't want to go, that's fine."

Lucy snorted, The Hideaway Chicken she thought, and then immediately felt mean, but decided to face him. The indigo secret she had carried for so long took on a less purple bruise-like hue now that she had an ally, now that she had told someone else at least part of the story.

They sat at a four top in the window overlooking the winding road and the bank of elms alongside it. Lucy shot glances filled with taunting childish ire at her grandfather throughout the meal, and was either silent, or blunt and sarcastic when she spoke to him across the table. Lena, the owner of the restaurant lumbered to the table with a belly full of baby, and started chatting with Viola. Viola looked around the supper club. “You need to get some more help here.”

“We’re looking for waitresses.”

Viola turned to Lucy, “Did you hear that?” and then back to Lena, “Lucy has experience and she’s looking for a job.”

Not that kind of job, Lucy thought as she smiled weakly, and yet, now she felt indebted to Viola. She was so happy to feel her support, but it seemed to already be slipping away and she was throwing her back to the lions. Yet, she still wanted to prove to her mother, more than she ever had, that she did not think of herself as “too good” for that kind of job, something her mother had often accused her of whenever she rejected something. She also agreed to the interview because she did need the money, it would be temporary, and there was no other way out now.

The next afternoon she drove away from that supper club with a horrid brown cotton dress with short white puffy sleeves and a front bib that tied around the waist into a large bow at the back slung over the passenger seat of the car.

Each day closer to the day she had to put it on, panic mounted in her body. Later she would wonder if it had all been about the dress. She slumped over when she saw herself in it, in the mirror. Her sister-in-law was nearby, telling her how great she looked and Lucy cried out like she'd been stabbed.

“I don't think you should do that, though, Lucy, if you don't want to.”

“What else am I going to do?”

“I don't know. But if you don't want to, don't. I don't think that's good for you.”

Seeing no other way out, Lucy did.

Her schedule changed to sleeping late, lying in bed dreading going to work that afternoon, being driven there by her father, who, as she begged him for a thousand dollars daily, patted her on the thigh, “You'll find your way. You'll make it through.” Once inside, she moved through the narrow passage between tables with steel trays the size of pigs, loaded with t-bone steaks, baked potatoes, and salads, all balanced on one hand, walking through swinging doors backwards praying no one would come around the corner and fly into her. “Is that Lucy Pilgrim?” she heard, and turned to see a high school volleyball rival. “I thought she was modeling in Europe.” She often hid in a little cove just outside the kitchen, washing gold plastic glasses, filling them with ice and water, lining them up on trays, all the while fighting off the thought of becoming the ancient waitress with a graying ponytail who lived upstairs. Reeking of fried chicken and steak at the end of the night, she peeled off the pantyhose and dress, and took long very hot showers. After six or seven hours of hard work, she had thirty-seven dollar bills, maybe. She calculated

the months it would take to gather the thousand she needed. Modeling quickly began to look like not such a bad way to make a living after all.

When her family came in, one of the older waitresses perked up and started straightening her hair, “That grandfather of yours is such a wonderful man,” and Lucy thought, now there’s someone he can kiss, and wanted to introduce them. Then, when she came to the table for their order, and her dad said, “Lulu, you are the prettiest waitress in the county,” she wanted to cry. But she did appreciate the twenty-dollar tip he left.

She knew he was trying. One afternoon before he drove her to work, he showed her an article in *National Geographic* about women who worked in National Parks. “There is something I think you would like doing and be good at, Lu.”

“I’d love to live in nature and sculpt and draw.”

“Then you need to marry a doctor,” Tom said as if this were a normal response.

Lucy stared. “You mean be a prostitute?”

She watched the difficulty in his eyes as he registered that, and saw he had never looked at it that way before. “You’re right, I guess that is what it would be, like that.” She also noticed the way he eyed the title of the novel she had in her hand, *The Magnificent Spinster*, a magnificent spinster slut, now there were a few words he had trouble sitting comfortably next to each other.

When the doorbell rang one afternoon, and Lucy said, “Maybe it’s Julien,” Emmy looked at her as if she was farther gone than she had thought.

“He doesn’t even know where this place is.”

Lucy took a bite out of one of the chocolate chip cookies Emmy had cooling on the counter. “There are maps.”

Not having the heart to burst her sister’s bubble Emmy could see she was living in one. “Ooo...kkkaaay,” she said and walked out of the room.

That night Lucy tore apart all of the photos she had of her and Julien together, and then ripped the sheets that had been a wedding present off the bed. She wanted to forget all the men she had ever known and start again, fresh. She began to read medical books hoping to find an explanation for the pleasant serendipity she had known, and why she still believed it could happen.

“Do you think it means I’m crazy that I tore apart all those pictures?” She asked Emmy the next morning.

Emmy shrugged. “Just sounds like a waste of money to me.”

She took on another waitress job in the afternoons on a yacht, for a luncheon cruise. That way she could ride up and down the river and make money, too. Every morning she deposited all of her cash in the bank doing her best not to think of the mere minutes it had taken her to make similar quantities posing as someone else, which she was doing now, too, in a way. She began to believe she was being punished, yet she could see she was the one punishing herself and couldn’t stop. The way she figured it she could just get it over with, and

since it had to be done, she'd rather be the one with the whip. Everyone close to her told her she was overreacting or simply shied away.

Faith had warned her about coming back here. Yet, when Lucy asked Eze if one of those shotguns on the wall downstairs could kill her if she shot herself in the head, and he looked at her as if he had no idea she was such an idiot and said "Quit talking so fucking stupid!", and when Gina, the wild bartender Lucy worked with on the luncheon cruise listened as she asked "If I jump in the river, will I drown?" then looked at her and said, "Can you swim?", Lucy knew she was surrounded by the right folks. Her older brother Blaze confirmed that hunch after she lamented that other people would find out about her predicament by looking at her, shrugging, and saying, "Just don't tell 'em." "Your whole trouble is that you've tasted the good life," was Gina's assessment of the situation. Lucy couldn't argue.

She sent what she considered a last letter to Julien, like a flare into the sky one night in mid-July. *I thought I was so smart, I thought I had it all figured out, but now I see I know nothing. I'm back at the beginning. I must have missed a step. I only want you to know that I am not who I have appeared to be. I wanted to be a "hero" but am facing the reality that I am not strong enough. At least now. I am truly frightened.*

After she hung up the phone, having apologized to Vic in a pathetic attempt at the forgiveness she could not yet give herself, her mother barreled into the room, and looked at Lucy as if she might bite her head off. "If I ever hear you talking like that again, I am coming in here and taking the phone out of her hands and hanging it up."

“You have to get a grip,” Ruby said over the phone from Iowa City. “I set up an appointment for you to see some people down here who I think could help you.”

“What did you tell them?”

“I told them, for one thing, that you were someone who didn’t even understand the meaning of the word compromise.”

“I know what it means. I just don’t like it.”

“Whatever. Just come and talk to them, please. Maybe they can help.”

So Lucy did. She sat across from a young male psychiatry intern in a white coat, who had that detached impartial expression that she hated, and, as she told her story from divorce onward, except for the part about Ernst, not a flinch, blink, or twitch crossed his face. “The fact that you weren’t spending all of your money staying in four star hotels, for example, while you were traveling in Europe, shows that you still maintained your reason.” Lucy waited for more. He scratched some words on his clipboard. “I’ll be right back.”

He then ushered her into a large clinical room and offered her a seat in front of four other doctors in white coats who all stared at her. One small woman, the only female other than her in the room, spoke. “We have talked this over and we think that you may have a slight manic-depressive condition. We’d like to put you on lithium to see if that helps.”

“I know I have my ups and downs, and I am working on that. But what I am most curious about,” Lucy opened her hands in front of her, “are these spontaneous orgasms. Where do they come from?”

The woman looked down, seemingly embarrassed to have no answer. “Well we think the lithium will stabilize that.” She leaned over the table, scribbled something on paper, tore the prescription off the pad, and handed it to Lucy. Lucy stared at her. “What do you mean stabilize?”

Now the woman looked ashamed. She couldn’t look Lucy in the eye. She looked out the window. “We don’t know. We think it will stop them. Try it and come back to see us in a month.”

Lucy shook her head, then left. She crumpled the prescription into a ball and tossed it in the tall aluminum wastebasket in the hallway. She did the same thing with the bill for their services when it arrived.

August rolled in, hot and white, and Lucy kept on with her routine. The days seemed to just hang on the calendar to her, she even wondered if the clock was going backward. Viola slid a letter from Julien across the table one morning. Lucy skimmed through three pages covered in his handwriting, thinking how strange it was that she could no longer imagine being with him, it was like searching for a hole that was no longer there. She glanced through the photocopies he’d also sent. Viola looked at them out of the corner of her eye. “Why is he sending you all those pictures?”

“He wants me to introduce him to my agency in Chicago. He would like to work in America.”

“When?”

“He says October.”

“I thought you were tired of modeling.”

“It beats waiting tables.”

Her mother glanced back at the pictures. “That one there, where he’s in the suit. Twenty years and twenty pounds ago I would have given you a run for your money.”

Lucy laughed but she was shifting her weight, shaking her leg, squinting as she tried to concentrate on what Julien was telling her. She couldn’t believe that he wanted to live with her now after she had told him how frightened and lost she was. Instead of telling her to find her own way, he was telling her to stop punishing herself, telling her that she had not missed any step but had stepped right on it. That she was a hero, that she was strong enough, that all she needed to do was keep on, and that wherever she was he would like to come and share her space, and *by fact, her spirit*.

Her breasts filled with tears. It seemed he loved even what she thought was the worst in her. She thought of all the ways she had let herself crumble, all the theatrics she had allowed herself. Had she let herself fall apart in front of her family for yet again more proof? She really needed to rethink this scientific approach to love. Now that she had found that all of the people she loved would even accept the pathetic and pitiful worst in her, would the need for proof stop? She thought of the Wisconsin professor who had listened to her Asian and European adventure story on the boat the night before. She could still see the riveted look in his eyes. Maybe her life had meant something, maybe it wasn’t all over.

She wrote more than eighteen pages in response to Julien, different letters that she never sent, in which she circled around what was really going on, asking

and answering herself until she got to the end of her line and realized she had formed a spiral. Rereading them on the swing in the wind, she saw what lay beneath it all was the open wound of her relationship with Ernst. She could feel him in the house at her back, moving around, not knowing what to do either, but she still didn't want to deal with it. She just wanted out.

Her dad dropped her off there, at the outpatient service of the local hospital. He hated doing that, he wouldn't even look at her when he did it because he hated that she was going to someone else for help with her problems. She tried to explain to the ex-nun psychoanalyst, whom she was paying three dollars an hour due to a sliding pay scale based on her waitress income, that getting out of town was the key to unlocking all her problems. As far as Lucy was concerned, she'd venture three bucks on talking to a supposed profession, someone other than her family who didn't know her family, as people who didn't were hard to come by in that town. It was the talking that seemed to help, even to this woman who was like a stone with blinking eyes. She insisted what Lucy needed to do was write a five-year plan for getting out, though, and was not amused when Lucy explained that she was more interested in the five-minute variety.

The fact that her father hardly spoke to her made Lucy angry even if she understood him partially. She knew that he knew what had happened with Ernst, because her mother had told her that she had told him. And though Lucy wished he would just say something, anything to show that he recognized it was difficult for her, she also knew that he stayed away because he could not stand to see the way she'd caved in. They both knew she could have avoided that, and perhaps he even sensed what she did, that she was enjoying the breakdown. It made sense to her when so little else did. He had already told her it was just a matter of "pulling herself up by her bootstraps," and she knew that he, too, was right, but she was more in the mood for wallowing and splashing around in it all until she got sick of it and tossed the boots.

She also knew that her mother, who prodded, yet comforted, was right. One morning Lucy came downstairs distraught after dreaming that all of her teeth had fallen out, and her mother reached over the table, pried her mouth open, looked in and around, dropped her hand and proclaimed, “They’re all there.”

As they were riding into town together, Lucy was thinking about Julien’s letter that she still hadn’t answered, and about the balance in her bank account rising. It occurred to her that her situation was improving, and then her next thought was of the only obstacle she currently saw ahead. She looked at her mom and blurted, “I feel like Dad is never going to respect me again.”

Viola snapped her head to face her, her mouth tightened and her eyes were fiery. “So what? Is he God of the universe?” And that’s how Lucy realized he wasn’t.

Faith called, and Lucy lay back on her bed, twirling her hair in her fingers as she listened. “The thing is, I would like Julien to just show up on his own without asking anything of me.”

“Why?”

“I guess because it would prove that he loved me.”

“What do you want—love or proof?”

There it was, out in the open, giving Lucy pause. “It seems I need both.”

And then, Sparky Marky, an old boyfriend from grade school, came back to town and took Lucy out for dinner and drinks. He had grown into a handsome and successful businessman, and Lucy wondered yet again, what attracted her to some and not to others, how magnetism worked. Nevertheless, she listened to the quiet inside. They had fun telling their stories, and on the way home, after he played the harmonica for her like he used to do, upon request, and then he handed Lucy his car phone. “Now would you please call this man in Paris and let him know what is going on?”

Lucy leaned back against the car seat and shook her head. “I don’t know what to say.”

“How about I miss you, I want you to come here?”

“I can’t say that.”

“Why not? It’s the truth.”

Lucy looked him in the eye. “Not exactly.”

“Call him,” he whispered.

“It’s too expensive.”

“What you are doing to yourself is too expensive. You’re like that frog they put in warm water and keep turning up the heat.”

“Frog?”

“If you put a frog in very hot water, it will jump right out, which you would have done had you jumped straight into this situation. But if you put a frog in

warm water, it gets comfortable, and then you can slowly turn up the heat and kill it before it realizes it is dying. That's like you, now, here. So call now. I'm not saying it's him or being with him that will save your life but maybe it will move you. I'll pay for it just so I don't have to see you like this anymore."

Julien was there. His voice sounded like background music to Lucy's thoughts. She thanked him for the letter, mumbled about having tried to answer, and still wanting to see him, but how it wasn't the right time. "I am going back to Chicago soon, but am not sure what I want to do." She couldn't hear half of what he said because his voice only made her ache. She set the phone on the dashboard and wanted to disappear. There was so much he did not know that she did not want to tell him that could explain so much.

Marky looked at her. "What did he say?"

"He said, 'Lucy, I think you should decide the moon is where you want to be and then you can spend your life saying, but I have to get to the moon.'"

"That's not very supportive."

"I told you it wasn't a good idea to call."

Sitting in her parents' driveway with the motor running, Marky looked at her, and she hoped he wasn't going to try to kiss her. "What would it take for me to convince you to leave?"

"I have nine hundred and thirty seven dollars, as soon as I have one thousand I'll go." She sounded like an idiot even to herself.

Marky leaned forward and slipped his wallet from his back pocket, then plucked three, crisp one-hundred-dollar bills from it. One by one he dropped them on Lucy's lap. "Get out of here, Lucy."

She looked at Ben Franklin's face times three and smiled. It was the first time she had ever had hundred-dollar bills, any bills, dropped on her lap. She liked it. "I can't take that."

"You will take that. That is my gift to you."

She stared, considered. "I will take it but I will pay you back."

"It's a gift, Lucy." He let out a sigh of relief as she lifted the bills one by one to her nose.

"I love the smell."

Lucy and her parents were at the Busy Bee diner in town eating hash browns and fried eggs when Lucy announced her decision to leave. Viola set her fork down. "I don't think you should go."

Lucy thought of all the trouble of the summer. "I don't think I should have come here."

Viola looked in her eyes. "I'm glad you did. Imagine if this had happened to you somewhere else."

Lucy wondered if it would have. Wasn't it because she was there that it had happened? She would never know.

As much as she wanted to leave, she was now afraid to go. There, in her childhood home, there was still some sense of security. Yet, she withdrew cash from the bank, called Angelina who set up an apartment, and she quit the luncheon cruise but couldn't bring herself to call and quite the Hideaway job. And then, she woke early the day she felt ready, dressed, and paced back and forth from bathroom to bedroom gathering courage.

Then she walked downstairs into her parents' room. Tom's eyes blinked open when Lucy touched his shoulder. "Will you please take me to the bus station?"

"When?"

"Right now." He was out of bed and dressed in the five minutes it took her to kiss her mother goodbye and put her bags in the car. They pulled out of the driveway with no time to spare. Lucy glanced at her grandfather's house, and felt cruel and right for not saying goodbye.

Three minutes before departure, Lucy lifted her luggage into the bus. Tom stood by the door, an expression she could not read on his face. Lucy hugged his limp body. It killed her to have lost the enthusiasm of her father. He could hardly look at her. "Thanks, Dad."

"You take care now," he said to the bus, "and call. Your mother will be worried about you."

From her back window seat, she watched him walk toward the car, turn, and stand there, the two of them watching each other until they were out of sight. He would wait years to tell her that helping her leave that morning was one of the hardest things he had ever done in his life. And her mom called the Hideaway, and told Lena that Lucy had had to go.

She almost turned back. Already there in the Greyhound Terminal in Chicago the strap of what she was carrying caught in the escalator, sending her legs into the air and people stepping over her, so flustering Lucy that she rode back down to buy a ticket for the next bus back to Iowa only to watch the man behind the window reply. “No more buses headed there today, Miss.”

So Lucy took a cab to the brick residence on Goethe Street where, when asked how long she would be staying, again hesitated, until a tall young woman with skin the color of chocolate oak walked into the lobby and surveyed Lucy with her cinnamon eyes while smoothing a palm over her cheek as if coming out of hiding. “Are you Lucy Pilgrim?” Lucy nodded. “I’m Claire, your roommate.”

The kindness in her presence spun Lucy back to the concierge, “At least one month.”

There in their studio apartment with twin beds, Lucy began to sort through what had happened to her out loud, in snippets, always asking Claire, “Does that make any sense to you?” And Claire studied her, thoughtfully, with some fear in her eyes, too, wondering out loud, too, if her decision to take a semester off school to model in the Midwest had been a good idea. “Go back to school, Claire.”

“My mom says there is a divine order to things, and we have to bear what comes to us as we go on our way, in order to find out what it is. Whenever I

have had a hard time, she tells me about when she was a girl in Alabama and how the white children threw rocks and spit at her when she stepped off the bus to come to their school.”

Lucy covered her face. “And here I am distraught over the flimsy fact that I can’t stop fretting about what people are thinking of me.”

Claire, sitting at the edge of her bed and dangling her feet as if on a riverbank, looked across the stream of carpet between them. “My dad would say that is very conceited of you to think that people are even paying that much attention to you.” Her words entered Lucy like slants of light through a deep, dark mine.

Within a week, Lucy modeled for a poster for running shoes and made more money in three hours than she had all summer. Regular work for *Land’s End* catalogue followed, as did bartending in a chic hotel in the Gold Coast at night. Lucy was thrilled to pile more cash in her drawer. After an English advertising executive watched her reading *Scientology* in between shaking cocktails, he nodded toward it when she poured him another martini, “Save yourself the time, and just do whatever it is you want to do.” Lucy knew he was right, but some small part of her was still hoping that there might be a clear-cut answer, outside of her, that would eliminate doubt, decision-making worry, and fear. It continued to amaze her how much guts it took to suit herself. The summer extravaganza of freaking out had left her rather gun-shy of her instincts and intuition again, as they had guided her into hell, and even if she could see the benefits of that trip, she wasn’t interested in going back.

Lucy began to run again, and to take long walks along the lake. She spent time with the French impressionists she loved at the Art Institute, sat near Columbus Fountain drawing and reading, and went to foreign films with Claire. She struck up chats with strangers, with the waiters, bartenders, and

customers around her at her favorite café on the corner, the Third Coast. It became a home away from home. She liked to have her meals there and hang out in the evening, sketching people. She even went out on dates.

Theo, who she'd known for years, and who had visited her in Iowa, bringing the *Chicago Tribune* along to encourage her return, invited her on bike rides through the fall leaves, and to his swank office parties, to the theater and dinner at interesting restaurants. He played the guitar and sang to her in his West Side loft overlooking the city. His gentleness and the way he did not coax her to come to his bed or bother her when she slept on his couch, comforted her. She wondered why she felt no desire to kiss such a fine man. It just wasn't in the chemistry, she supposed, as it continued to intrigue her why some men moved her more than others. She still wanted to believe that friendship between men and women, without sex and without threat, was valuable and possible.

"I feel like I lost my balls," she lamented one morning to Sheldon, the middle-aged Jewish journalist who often sat in the booth next to her. He peered over the top of half-glasses, "Darling, you never had them."

Lucy laughed. "Okay, guts, then, my guts."

He shook his head. "It's none of that. What you have been doing, I imagine, is watching yourself as a character, and enjoying the drama of it. Consider it your Holly Golightly phase, you'll get tired of it."

Lucy shook her head. "Me? Holly? I think not." But she knew he was right. She had been watching herself, and she was tired of it.

An Italian-Austrian young man sat down one evening and raved about the Giacometti exhibition he had seen at the Art Institute. When he took a breath and a swallow of his wine, he studied her like an unfinished sculpture. “Why is someone like you insecure? It doesn’t make sense.” He picked up the matchbox on the table, “Imagine you are this matchbox, and it is like you have a lot of dust on you, and all you have to do is wipe the dust off.” Lucy was amazed by her transparency. She began to wonder if people had seen through her all along, and if she, perhaps, was the only who had believed her charade of invincibility.

Over lunch with Yoichi, the Japanese journalist she had worked for, when asked how her summer had been, Lucy covered her face in shame, “I was so bad.”

He stroked his salt-and-peppered mustache in concern and looked at her with loving eyes. “You should not think of yourself as a bad person, Lucy. You are a lovely person, growing.”

All of these people moved her back into herself. Or more deeply into herself. Which was it? Had she ever left herself, after all? Did it matter? All these questions began to seem like a pile of crap to Lucy. What was clear to her was that people did help. Maybe she did need them, after all, she pondered, though the idea still made her squirm. She remembered crying out to Ruby that summer, “I’m just trying to figure out who I am,” and how Ruby had rolled her eyes. “You are who you are. Don’t sweat it. You just need to get out of that house.”

Perhaps it was that simple, Lucy mused, walking through Lincoln Park, winding south along the paths on her way home from the health club. She stopped to look up at the pure vivid intensity of the November blue sky, and the sight of a bare branch against it struck her. She followed its outline,

thinking of the generations of leaves within it, and how its resting fruitfulness appeared barren. Joy rose in her as she noticed the edges of things again, the clear line where branch was branch and sky, sky and spring a kept promise between them. She recognized herself in them, related and distinct. She felt alive again. Maybe it all did boil down to physical exercise, she mused, as she had stopped running when she went off the deep end, and now that she was working out again, the endorphins were back on the job, too.

The spontaneous combustions reappeared, as well, with Lucy's coming out from under the dust. They had gone quiet since that afternoon with her grandfather when she'd sunk into gloom. She celebrated their return by welcoming them gently, discreetly, offering them a comfortable place in her home. They would be confidantes only shared with other treasures. Sure, they did come from her, in some way, she knew that now, but in considering them more as a gift of the river of life moving through her, and her body as a knowing bed, inspired her to do their spring proud.

New opportunities presented themselves as the year ended: Angelina called to say an agency in Barcelona was interested in her return. Lucy called Hope. "Lucy! You have to come first to Bonica, and stay with me. We'll celebrate the New Year together!" Lucy looked at the stack of graduate school applications, want ads, and resume drafts on the kitchen table and couldn't decide if going back to Europe would make her happy or not. It seemed time to build something totally new in America. Yet she could feel the Mediterranean lifestyle lapping around her ankles and if modeling could buy her more time there, she'd do it.

And then, Leif walked in. He stood at the top of the red carpet stairs of the entrance of the Third Coast, looking like a young president. He moved a hand through his cinnabar hair as he cased the open velvet room for a place to sit.

His eyes stopped at Lucy, who had looked up when the door opened. “Do we maybe know each other? I really hope so,” he seemed to say. Lucy smiled at the sound of the troubadour horns she could already hear in the distance. She, too, recognized him. She felt the door in her heart that already had his name on it pop open.

“Will I interrupt your sketching?” he asked as he looked at the empty chair in front of her. She shook her head, and then, as he sat down, saw that his eyes were the same color as hers and a similar spirited innocence glinted from them. “I’ve just come from an interview. I’m only in town for a night and have never been to Chicago. I’d like to listen to some blues. Do you know a place?”

They sat next to each other watching Koko Taylor sing the blues in a smoky club uptown. Lucy’s body kindled at the feeling of his lips and the warmth of his breath near her ear as he proposed more time together, “I’d be up for breakfast.” They met at 9 at the Artists Café, and after a visit to the impressionists, he changed the time of his return flight to D.C. After lunch at the Billy Goat they spent hours on a walking tour of Chicago, paying attention, storytelling, asking, answering, their gestures and movements filled with mutual attraction. Lucy felt stoned with a fearless happiness she had never known with a man. When he surprised her with a deep goodbye kiss at her door, her entire body blushed.

And then his letters overcame her, giving her a vision of herself that she liked better than her own. It was a celebration of her like she had never known and it lifted her.

And then, as if Julien could feel it afar, he sent word. Viola called. “You have a letter here. Well, it’s a postcard. From France. What do you want me to do with it?”

Lucy never had answered his July letter, nor had she contacted him since that embarrassing call from Sparky Marky's car. "What does it say?"

"This post card is only a candy before I write you a real letter. I wish I make enough money to spend time in USA very soon and give you kisses you deserve. I'm boring, need to move. I'm missing fun, action, craziness.' What does he mean by craziness?"

"Fun, Mom, he just means fun. Is that all?"

"He says, 'I hope life is still a big adventure for you. I send you my best kisses, love and hugs. I'll write you very soon. With all my love, Julien.'" Lucy was silent. Viola waited. "What do you want me to do with it? What are you going to do?"

No one had ever talked to her about what she deserved but people were beginning to. She thought about Leif, who'd also written that she deserved so much. She was still thinking about his kiss, too, and was interested in more. It was easy to imagine happiness with him. She tasted Julien's kiss, then Leif's, like two ice cream flavors that were very difficult to choose between. Then remembered Viola was still waiting for an answer. "Just send it to me, please. And, for now, Mom, I'm just going to enjoy it."

"Whatever that means," Viola mumbled and then smooched kisses before hanging up. Rain pattered against the windows. Lucy cranked Chrissie Hynde singing "I'm Walking on Sunshine" and danced around the apartment. She decided to allow herself everything.

Lucy booked Leif a room at The Elms when he came back for a visit, and was elated to find herself having the most delicious time she had ever had there. She was elated to make love in love, elated to be elated.

Angelina pulled her aside at the Christmas party. “Lucy? Harvard Law? Marry that man.”

Lucy shook her head, rolled her eyes. Her body tingled. Angelina stared at her like she was insane. Lucy raised a shoulder. “I think I have to go to Barcelona first.”

“Oh, now I get it. You are one of those people who likes what is not good for you.”

Lucy crinkled up her face in confusion, thinking of all the good-for-her things she liked. She rolled her eyes when she guessed Angelina had translated Harvard Law into money into good husband. Yet, it was obvious that Lucy and Leif enjoyed each other very much. She turned to look for him, he was laughing with Claire on the other side of the room, and he looked at her, then, as if he'd felt her search. She had found communion. It was possible, which she had known deep down, but now here was proof when she was no longer looking for it. It felt like money in the bank of love to Lucy. She had no idea of the future but it looked wide open again, and more importantly, she was totally happy in the present.

She decided to go to Spain, if only for the winter. She knew that she had to see Julien again before she could build more of the life she was thinking about in America. She knew how rare what she felt with him was, how precious, not be squandered. She worried that she would always wonder what might have happened if she didn't find out what it would feel like to be in his presence

again. And she still had that odd feeling that, with him, she could live the life she meant for her, the open one she most wanted to live. This sensation confused her, but there it was.

She wouldn't go directly to him, though, "I'm not showing up on his doorstep again," as she put it to Faith, who had told her the year before "if I felt like you did, I'd have been back on the guy's doorstep with all my suitcases long ago," but then during the summer had suggested another sort of appearance there, "If you are going to kill yourself, go slit your wrists on his doorstep, please. I don't want to see it." That doorstep haunted Lucy's mind, as well as those upstairs curtains moving in the breeze, Julien behind them somewhere doing whatever it was he needed to do, she imagined. It was a lonely doorstep to Lucy, one that did not call her back. Anyway, it was him she wanted to see, she reminded herself, not the damn doorstep.

As she prepared to leave America, again, she wrote to her grandfather to settle the matter once and for all. She hoped communication with her father would improve with time and distance. She wished her mother would not see her decision to leave as a rejection, but instead would see her as a bird that loved resting in the nest as much as she loved to fly.

She called. "After Christmas, I'm going to stay with Claire and her family in Virginia and see a friend in Washington, D.C., and then go to Barcelona to work, to see how it goes, I don't know for how long."

Viola was quiet. "You see, you are working a lot and everything is going well and now you are leaving. What kind of sense does that make?"

Lucy kept her mission—to enjoy herself with Claire, and then Leif, and then to find out if what she felt for and from Julien was real, all while traveling—to

herself. “I’ll leave money in the bank, Mom, and I can always come back if it does not go well there. Spain must be nicer than Chicago in the winter. How’s that for sense?”

“That makes a bit more. Who is this friend in Washington?”

“A kind man I met.”

“Is he American?”

“Yes.”

“Good.”

Lucy laughed.

“I just hope what happened to you here this summer doesn’t happen to you over there.”

“I hope not, too, Mom.” Lucy smooched and hung up.

Faith scolded her at the Third Coast that evening. “It won’t, that is what you say to your mom, Lucy, you say it won’t.”

And Lucy realized Faith was right.

“Maybe you can help me with this,” she opened up at a Sunday breakfast with Theo. She wanted to ask a man about what had happened with her grandfather. “What really bothers me is that my dad never said anything to me about it.”

“Maybe your dad thought that you could handle it just fine on your own.”

Lucy liked that answer but her father’s lack of recognition of her pain still affected her own validation of it. She sipped her cappuccino and went on to her other recurring question. “What do you think about this idea that we all need people? I hate the idea of being dependent, yet I can see the way we help each other. It just drives me nuts these people who talk about it as if they are setting up some sort of needy network. When people tell me I am too independent, it sounds insane to me. What do you think about that?”

Theo finished chewing his bite of blueberry pancake, wiped his mouth. “I think in being independent, we are all interdependent.”

It was a Eureka moment for Lucy. “That’s exactly it. Why could I never say it like that?”

“You didn’t need to say it. You live it, Lucy.”

She kissed him on the cheek before getting out of his car. “When I come back, we have to go there again.”

He looked through her, his eyes smiling. “Do tell about this mythical return of yours, Lucy.” Lucy shook her head, amazed once more by how obvious she was.

It was a gray afternoon on Goethe Street and midnight in Paris as Lucy looked out the window and listened to Julien’s phone ring. “It’s for engineering, I’m working on a, I don’t know how you call it—”

Lucy pictured him on a stool, stenciling a plan. “Perspective? Well, listen, what’s yours on this? I’m flying to Spain on the twenty-ninth of December and was thinking of passing through Paris.”

“Why don’t you come another day?”

She couldn’t believe, all things considered, he was now going to get picky about the day. “Because I am coming on the twenty-ninth.”

“Of course. Right.” It was that vulnerable voice she had not heard since Tokyo. “It’s just that I won’t be there that day, but if you come in January—”

“I have a party to go to in Barcelona on New Year’s Eve.” There was no way Lucy was going to change her plans to fit his. His long silence softened her.

“Then, please call from Barcelona. It would be perfect if I come, no?”

“Incredible,” was all she could say.

Claire walked into the apartment and saw Lucy in front of the window, staring at the phone she’d just hung up. She shook her head, smiling. “I’m going to miss you and your nakedness, Lucy.”

Viola jerked her head in the direction of Ernst’s house and said, “He’s over there,” when Lucy asked how he was.

The house was dark as she walked across the frozen lawn and up the back stairs. The door was unlocked. “I’m in here.” His voice came from his bedroom. Lucy paused at his open door, the light from the moon shone

through the two corner windows. She saw movement under the covers. “Come in, honey, come in and sit down.”

She sat at the far edge of the bed. “Did you get my letter?”

She stiffened as he lifted his arm out from under the sheet. He laid it across his forehead. He looked so white in the moonlight. “I don’t know how a girl could think such terrible things about her grandfather.”

Lucy was astonished he was taking this tack. She had never once felt that he didn’t know what he was doing. “You know damn well how I could. Where is the letter?”

“I burned it like you told me to.”

“So you know.” How had it come to this, she wondered, why did this have to be? Why do I have to be here having this conversation? Why couldn’t he be like those grandfathers in movies and storybooks? Perhaps they were all lies. Anyway, sex was the answer. Sex. If it hadn’t been for that, she began to think, but knew, too, that if it hadn’t been for that none of us would be here. She wondered, too, why our source is so hidden from us as a sacred art of communication and so blatantly degraded in public.

Lucy looked at her grandfather, ashamed in his bed. If they didn’t love each other, they wouldn’t be there either. She wanted to ease his pain and make her point. “I don’t think you are a terrible man. You are a man, just a man. All I know is that I never want it to happen again. Just tell me you understand.” Ernst stared at the ceiling, rubbing his hand back and forth on his forehead, biting his pain. She thought about how he would soon be alone in his bed in the dark again. Either he couldn’t speak, or wouldn’t. In any case, Lucy was not going to make him. She stood, leaned forward and kissed his cheek.

When she reached the threshold of his bedroom door, Ernst gurgled, “I love you, honey, I really do,” and Lucy looked toward her grandmother’s room.

And there was Marie, rocking back and forth on the edge of her bed, looking worried. Lucy filled with joy and sadness. “I didn’t want you to know anything about all of that.”

Marie motioned for her to come, and then began to hum as she gathered Lucy into her arms, stroked her hair and caressed her cheek.

Lucy could feel her mother watching her as she opened a package wrapped in gold paper, which was filled with a mile of tissue paper. Lucy unraveled it until she reached an ivory porcelain camel, its saddle trimmed in gold. She looked at her mother. Viola, obviously proud of her find, winked and smiled as if it were all in a day’s work.

The doorbell rang, and Lucy saw her grandfather through the window, upright again, ready for anything. She stood back as she ushered him in. “Merry Christmas, Grandpa.”

He raised his chin, then, and looked down at her, “Well, can I kiss ya?”

Lucy pointed to her cheek as she turned it. “Right there.”

Red napkins flowered out of glasses over a green tablecloth on the dining room table, set in front of the picture window overlooking the snow-covered valley. They drank sweet wine, ate Viola’s special pheasant, wild rice, cranberries, green bean casserole and warm bread from the oven. There was ease and laughter around the table set for fifteen, nobody talked about the

summer, or her upcoming departure. Lucy was coming to accept that most of her family thought of her as living in the air somewhere, coming down from the sky from time to time for a visit.

Her send-off crew from the small regional airport, just over the hill from home, was Tom, Viola, Grace, Emmy, and the grandkids. Ernst said he needed a nap and stayed at home.

“Always be thinking,” Viola warned as goodbye.

Lucy hugged her. “I always am, Mom. It’s my blessing and my curse. I just wish I could get to the point where I don’t worry about anything anymore.”

Her father looked at her. “That’s when you’re dead.” And Lucy laughed as she hugged him.

After she climbed the ten stairs up into that tiny plane, she looked back once more, to see all their hopeful faces from the window. The plane taxied, then rose above the rolling hills, gleaming white.

2. *A Quest to Self-Construct: Lucy Pilgrim's Map - An exegesis*

2.1 Questing and Bildung in Literature

2.1.1 The genre of the quest

All narrative can be considered to contain an obvious or inferred quest plot, as all story is born of some desire, if only the writer's desire to tell a tale. Desire moves a character in search of what is desired, and through travails, until what is searched for is found, or the desire for it given up. Furthermore, every story, of the quest genre or not, contains a multitude of desires within it, micro-quests on every page. Yet, the search is never-ending because, as Lacan argues (1986:182), desire is never satisfied. Desire moves, desire is moving. The self forms according to desire. In this way, desire like maturity is a never-ending quest. Specifically, it is a desire to attain some sort of knowledge that is at the heart of the quest. The traditional quest plot in literature, however, is traced specifically to mythology, and has a fundamental three-part structure involving travel and containing a trope often referred to as separation-initiation-return. According to Joseph Campbell, in his critical analysis of quest literature, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, the quest pattern follows the subject along an adventurous road that moves the self toward learning and transformation. Campbell named this pattern "monomyth", a term he borrowed from and attributed to James Joyce in *Finnegan's Wake*.

The monomyth's three main acts are similar to the trope stated above: I. Separation, II. Initiation, and III Return. Each act contains defined scenes. The overall gist of Act I is that we are introduced to the common, everyday world of the hero, usually an adult, who is roused by a call to adventure—which could be anything from an inner desire to a call to arms. This then causes said hero to venture forth into a challenging and unfamiliar world. The stages of this first act, according to Campbell, begin with this call to adventure, followed by a refusal of that call, until some sort of supernatural aid appears which propels the hero to cross the first threshold and enter into

what Campbell calls “The Belly of the Whale.” This represents the final separation between the familiar and unfamiliar world and signifies the hero’s openness to change. In Act II, the hero faces obstacles and travails alone, or perhaps with supernatural assistance or that of a mentor. The journey becomes increasingly intense, to a point where the hero must survive the severest challenge of the quest. If successful in this second act, the hero may acquire a great gift, or what Campbell called, “The ”ultimate boon”.” This boon often results in the discovery of important self-knowledge that in turn benefits community. If the hero returns, the boon or gift may be used to improve his or her original and familiar world in Act III.

Who am I? Where did I come from? Where will I go when I die? What is good and what is evil? What must I do about it? What will tomorrow bring? Where did yesterday go? Is there anybody else out there? Campbell found that this universal quest was based on these eternal childlike questions related to ontology and epistemology as well as to ethics and metaphysics.

Though very few quests contain all of the stages mentioned above and in the detailed order. In summary, a quest plot is the tale of a hero’s separation, initiation, and ultimate return to community, bestowing knowledge and powers acquired on the journey. Sometimes the hero departs again, opting to live in the other now familiar world. Lucy Pilgrim, for example, prefers continued exploration, thus, choosing no longer to divide the world into “ordinary” and “challenging and unfamiliar.” One example of an alternative endings in classical quests are in Virgil’s *The Aeneid* (Aeneas, when, after trials and tribulations in his attempts to rescue his family and to find a new home among them, he finally prefers to settle in Italy rather than return to Troy), and in Sir Galahad's legendary quest for the Holy Grail, first written of in the late 12th century in *Perceval, le Conte du Graal* by Chrétien de Troyes (his quest was to find it, not return with it).

One of the earliest quests, found written in Akkadian on tablets, is the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, a story of a king's transformation through loving friendship. One of the earliest female questers in recorded literature is Psyche, on a quest for love in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, also known as *The Golden Ass*, written in the late 2nd century. Carol Gilligan reads it as an allegorical myth about love and the soul, an "encoded map of resistance" (2002:22) to patriarchy, a tale of cultural mixing (Latin and Greek, Mortal and God)—"Marking a path leading to freedom, it is a radical geography of love" (22).

On Lucy Pilgrim's journey there are no mythical dragons or wars to fight, no quest to ravage or conquer, no interest in domination. The reader instead participates in a journey to restore love, intimacy, and vulnerability to a valuable and respected place, after patriarchy has set it aside in favor of colonialism and imperialism. As Bell Hooks argued

wisdom is needed if we would restore love to its rightful place as a heroic journey, arduous, difficult [...] more vital to human survival and development on planet Earth than going off to slay mythical dragons, to ravage and conquer others with war or all other forms of violence that are like war. Wisdom is needed if we are to demand that our culture acknowledge the journey to love as a grand, magical, life-transforming, thrilling, risky adventure. (2002:21).

Lucy Pilgrim's quest is also one to define herself by herself, and to live the life she wants to live. Her determination to do this is an act of self-love. Thus it is a tale of self-construction, which establishes it in the bildungsroman genre, and is explored in the following section.

2.1.2 The genre of the bildungsroman

The evolution of the bildungsroman hero's story can be considered as literature's human story of civilization. Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) assessed the

genre as portraying a hero emerging along with the world. “He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from one to the other” and there he is “forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being” (23). In this way, the genre is a mirror of the subject’s place in the world and an exploration of possibilities of new ways of being human.

As the monomyth’s structure promotes the gift of the individual to society, the bildungsroman promotes the compromise of the individual with society. Although it shares the structure of a quest, it forms a genre of its own. “Bildung,” a German word that means both production and process, marks this genre most precisely as a quest to self-construct. It is literally considered to narrate the building and subsequent sacrifice of the ego from youth to maturity, responding to a yearning for an encounter with the unknown. The bildungsroman’s protagonist is an average middle-class child or adolescent, most often from a rural setting, from his ordinary world, who journeys to an urban setting, or the challenging and unfamiliar world. The general pattern is very much like that of the traditional mythic quest: separation from origins, initiation in the urban world, and the return to origins, in this case with an additional requisite of compromise with society.

Jerome H. Buckley (1974), focuses on the bildungsroman subject as exclusively male, and ranging examples from Dickens to Joyce, lists requirements that must be met in order to belong to the genre, starting with “a child of some [emotional/artistic] sensibility [who] grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination” (17). The child’s interest in reading is also noted, along with his family’s disinterest and lack of regard toward the literature the child prefers, including a lack of recognition of the child’s creative abilities and ambition. The subject is often an orphan, as well, or perhaps has been rejected by his father due to his unsupported ambitions. Sexual initiation also

has its part in the bildungsroman, so specifically that the protagonist must satisfy a requisite of two love affairs with opposing natures. These subsequently positive and negative affairs, one debases and the other exalts, promote a sort of moral and emotional re-evaluation in the protagonist. The protagonist's primary conflict, however, according to Buckley, is personal and lies within the protagonist himself, as he during this adolescent quest is working out an obligation he feels to both himself and others. Thus it is a more interior quest, in which the mythic figures to be slayed are generally internal and intimate in nature.

Franco Moretti (1988) argues that the classical hero was a mature adult and the bildungsroman marks a conceptional shift in the novel's history, from mature to youthful hero. Moretti notes Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1796) as the accepted prototype for the European bildungsroman genre, a genre now considered Eurocentric and patriarchal by feminist critics. He argues that the bildungsroman marks this shift to the youthful hero, wherein youth becomes a symbol of the new era, and reflects modernity's dynamism, instability, mobility, and inner restlessness. He ranged his genre study from 1898 to 1914, a time period in which he considered the question of how the individual could co-exist with society's normality basic to the modern bourgeois civilization. The bildungsroman, according to Moretti, succeeded in representing this fusion as it narrated the formation of an individual's social integration. The exposition of the tension between individual desire and the demands of socialization, while aiming toward "channeling individual energy into socially useful purposes" (Bolaki 2011:2), is the narrative material of this genre.

Moretti noted a shift from the classical, to what he calls the realistic bildungsroman with *Stendhal* at the end of the 18th century. His heroes betray traditional values in order to succeed but do not forget the traditional ideals, and instead, conceal them, making the core identity of the hero less visible than in the classical form of the genre. Their ideals are intact while hidden. In

other words, the hero of the classical bildungsroman does what he does because of who he is, accepting himself while seeking to find a place in society. The realistic hero acts opportunistically, however, with an intention toward what he would like to be, and he does this by concealing ideals and concealing who he is. Inherent to this intention is the desire to reconcile the real self to an ideal self, to integrate all parts rather than annihilating the more disturbing aspects. Moretti considered this key to the modern mentality. "The question is not how do we separate the angel from the demon, but rather how do they manage to live together?" (87) In other words, not how do we separate the light from the dark, but rather how do we accept both in ourselves and others? What sort of alchemy is necessary to integrate all that we are?

Moretti also sees a shift, nearing the beginning of the 20th century, from the work ethic of the bourgeois world toward the world of consumption and of capitalism. The hero begins to look at the world less in what he can do in it, or give to it, and more in what he can obtain and/or consume from it. Here, youth and money become life's greatest goods, and "the history of the bildungsroman bears witness to the subordination of being to having" (Steeves 1989:344). How rich one can become materially rather than spiritually, becomes the modern hero's concern.

Happiness and harmony are considered the logical destinations of the bildungsroman. Moretti found that happiness was considered as the highest value "but only to the detriment and eventual annulment of 'freedom'" (8), as if stating the impossibility of being simultaneously happy and free. Hence happiness, in Moretti's paradigm, became related to a sort of static position, an immobility, and "a repugnance to change" (8), a sort of fixed comfortable closure where everything is settled and there is no room for transcendence or transformation. Placing it within a French and English novelistic context, mobility and constant transformation are apparently more fascinating to the former than the latter, at least according to Moretti. He concluded that the

French endeavor unceasingly for freedom and individuality in order to escape this stagnant closure of happiness. In *Lucy, Go See*, Lucy Pilgrim, a young American woman, endeavors for this freedom and individuality *as* happiness, suggesting that perhaps it is closure that is stagnant, and that happiness is to be found in movement.

Moretti claimed Flaubert's Frédéric Moreau (1869)—who desires a protracted youth rather than maturity and is averse to concluding his apprenticeship—as the character who signals the beginning of the death of the bildungsroman. He describes this period as the late bildungsroman, a time when youth is no longer considered the training ground for maturity, and the trope of apprenticeship is no longer reflective of society. What once were considered opportunities for growth in the important plot points or “kernels” of the novel, are transformed into accidents that underline the futile effort to find meaning in an increasingly meaningless world (Moretti 233). Moretti claims “a phase of Western socialization had come to an end, a phase the European bildungsroman had both represented and contributed to” (244).

Perhaps the bildungsroman lives on, despite Moretti's claims of its death, because it is “a medium in order to articulate concerns about questions of subjectivity and identity” (75). As literature can reflect reality and thus serve a social function, there has been a resurgence of the genre in the 20th century in the interest of representing marginalized subjects such as those related, for example, to the women's and the civil rights movements, multiculturalism, decolonization and diasporic histories and experiences. The bildungsroman has not died, but changed, becoming more inclusive. Its character has altered its focus from the white male character of the 19th century to the white female, and male and female post-colonial subjects, of the 20th and 21st century. Its ending has also changed; it is not always happy nor always compromised, as reflected in Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), and Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* (1985).

McCullers' female protagonist is caught between a desire to belong as well as an urge to run away from her ordinary world, and longs "to be known for her true self and recognized" (74). Winterson's contribution to the genre, which she calls "an exploration of the power of love," follows a female protagonist in her ordinary world as she stands up for her sexual difference, her right to belong, and God's acceptance of her while facing an Evangelistic mother dead-set on raising her as a missionary and a congregation who attempts to convince her that she is evil because she is in love with a woman. McCuller's ends on a sad note, with the subject feeling she is in a jail with invisible walls, and though the future is open and uncertain, it looks dim. Winterson's tale concludes outside of the binary oppositions of happy and sad, or good and evil, and the ending is open, with the protagonist coming-to-voice, admitting her vulnerability while being strong.

In life, as in writing, there are limitations. In the following section, I will explore the limitations in these genres pertinent to the discussion of interdependence, open-ended maturity, and vulnerability associated with the novel *Lucy, Go See*.

2.1.3 Limitations of the genres

In contrast to real life, quests' stories and bildungsromans generally have attempted the solved predicament as ending, promoting either compromise or conquest as a finality, along with the illusion that closure is anything other than death. Critical postmodern views of the coherent and autonomous self, or the autonomy and sovereignty of the individual as represented in the traditional quest and bildungsroman, along with the compromising closure of the bildungsroman, and what Rita Felski called "a closure that avoids openness" (1986:137), are two of the most-repeated criticisms of the genre. Judith Butler's questions, "Have we ever yet known the human? And what

might it take to approach that knowing?" (2004:36), are the very questions explored by a quest and a bildungsroman. Her evident curiosity when asking "Should we be wary of knowing it too soon or of any final or definitive knowing?" (2004:36) points to the importance of open endings, of endings creating more space. As the search for knowledge admits a lack of knowledge, and desire, it also admits vulnerability by its openness. Hence, if vulnerability is inadmissible, what happens to openness and desire? Without desire, what happens?

The myth of Achilles' heel speaks of the fear of vulnerability. It also speaks of a warrior in a violent world, a world which considers vulnerability as weakness, a world which seeks to conquer rather than connect and to defend rather than respond. It is interesting to remember that the weak spot on his body is the place where his mother's hand covered his skin as she held him away from death, submerging the rest of him in the hope of rendering him invulnerable. It must be also remembered that she is a goddess and not a human, and that her wish for her son was one of an inhuman realm. Along these lines it is clear that to be human is to be vulnerable, to value vulnerability is to value humanity. One must be strong to be vulnerable.

The strength of a questing subject contains vulnerability, and bildung, as recent examples of the genre in Winterson's work demonstrate, can be a subversive act rather than a compromise. Cultivating maturity requires the acceptance of undeniable vulnerability, because it requires openness to life and the other. Individualism, rather than compromise/sacrifice of self, can be maintained within community. The individual and community can nourish and revitalize each other. One can be related yet separate, as Lucy Pilgrim learns, and, as in Winterson's novel, the subject learns this first and foremost for herself, rather than her community. Simultaneously this interdependent relationship opens the possibility that such an understanding could also be considered an "ultimate boon" for her community.

Both the quest and bildungsroman are different ways of considering the human being, the relationship between self and other, and the interdependence of humans. “The ‘I’ has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation—or set of relations—to a set of norms” (2005:8-9), Butler wrote. Hence, it follows that the “I” has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation or set of relations to whom he or she calls a singular or plural “you.” A character’s life is always created within the range of his or her relationships, his or her connections, or lack of them, with others.

Adriana Cavarero argues that as human beings we are necessarily “exposed” to one another in our vulnerability and singularity and that, in fact, our political situation consists in learning how to best handle—as well as to honor—this exposure which is both constant and necessary (Butler 2005:32). Butler suggests taking this “unbearability of exposure” (2005:100) as a sign or reminder of our common vulnerability. A bildungsroman can dramatize the value of that recognition of the interdependency of human beings, and the strength contained in the vulnerability we all share.

It is impossible to argue away this condition of primary vulnerability, of our impending death and our fragile life, this way that we come into the world unknowing and dependent and to a certain extent remain so until we leave. Therefore it is impossible to argue away the possibility of our interdependency, though the treatment of life as a predicament that can be solved once and for all without dying is cause for argument. Butler argues that “the attempt to foreclose that vulnerability, to banish it, to make ourselves secure at the expense of every other human consideration, is surely to eradicate one of the most important resources from which we must take our bearings and find our way” (2004:23). To recognize the strength in our vulnerability is a maturing in itself, a work-in-progress which questions the need to construct closures and compromises to keep the predicament of life at

bay.

Women, already in a vulnerable position in patriarchy, have occupied limited positions in these genres. In the following section, I will focus on the gender limitations of the quest and bildungsroman, and their relationship to the discussion, before finally, in the last section of this part, I situate the novel *Lucy, Go See* within these genres.

2.1.4 Gendering adventure

Before delving into prior literature about the quest and the bildungsroman regarding the question of gender, it is interesting to note how revealing of cultural limitations it is that a human quest, specifically a quest to self-construct, could be limited because of sex at all. Recognition of the gaping absence of the female protagonist in quest literature, and in the first bildungsromans, while considering arguments that these genres represent the subject's place in the world, is evidence to arouse suspicion that women were not considered as subjects on an adventurous quest for knowledge, nor a quest to self-construct.

Late in his life, Campbell was asked about the presence and absence of women heroes in quests, and he responded, "All of the great mythologies and much of the mythic story-telling of the world are from the male point of view [...] It was the men who got involved in spinning most of the great myths. The women were too busy; they had too damn much to do to sit around thinking about stories." (Campbell 2004:145, 159) Yet, he also said that women do not need to make the hero's journey because, in his words "the female character" (245) is the quest's destination. "All she has to do is realize that she is the place that people are trying to get to" (Murdock 1990:2). Campbell's reference to women as already evolved could be considered empowering,

except for the reference to women laboring while men did not. Moreover, referring to a woman as a place, a static location, affords the possibility of colonizing her.

Is the sacrifice of one's own desires that the quest teaches unnecessary to women because they have been taught these positions from birth? Is this humility, forced on women or any second-class subject by society, the very vulnerability that makes the quest to reveal it unnecessary? Or was the colonization of women what the male tale-spinners and heroes were after? And, thus, were women's attempts at power through the seduction of those males, also an attempt at colonization? Are human beings all descendants of colonization, all intent on colonizing the other, consciously or not? It is pertinent to remember that the root of these words *colony*, *culture*, and *cultivate* is the same: from the Latin past participle of *cultus*, *colere*, which means *to till*, *to toil over* which infers land and property, which infers that whatever it is we are cultivating, colonizing, or culturing, we are attempting to control. To colonize people is hence to subjugate, cultivate, and culture them, consciously or unconsciously, and therefore to deny—or at least to attempt to deny—self-cultivation, self-development, even self-colonization. In other words, to colonize another is to wound them. We are a wounded society with the most privileged in power, yet we are all somehow colonized by what/who controls us. To wound an other, and then to deny a public voice to articulate that wound, denies society as a whole the recognition of the wound and therefore the ability to care for it. As Gayatri Spivak asks, “Can the subaltern speak?”, recalling Foucault's and Deleuze's claim that the oppressed can speak and know their conditions if given the chance. She argues that, regardless of female participation in insurgency or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant, pointing out that as the colonized male subaltern lacks history and voice, the female subaltern is doubly affected and more deeply in shadow. (1988:24-28) The constant reminder that a woman or other colonized/marginal person is a

human being seems necessary.

Can there be a postcolonial world or a postpatriarchal world? It is impossible to remove the wounds of the past. The wounds remain. By considering them a part of the past, they go unrecognized, and all of their richness is lost or hidden with them. It is important to care for those wounds. One only has to look at who is in power to see evidence that the hierarchy established by sex is still intact, even if it is being slowly permeated by women in positions of more power. There are female characters questing and “bildung” in literature today, women are able to provide for themselves materially, though major discrepancies remain between men and women concerning equal opportunities or possibilities within society. Referring to Campbell, and to the stories written about women, a half-century ago Leslie Fiedler observed that “all of the idealizations of the female from the earliest days of courtly love have been in fact devices to deprive her of freedom and self-determination” [2003(1960): 68)]. Forty-two years later, at the turn of the 21st century, Bell Hooks, in her appeal for new stories for women reiterated, “Our founding narratives were not only handed to us by men but shaped to reinforce and sustain male domination” (2002:34). In her research on tragedies, Carol Gilligan (2002) noted that the tragic (heterosexual) love story was the story of patriarchy, that patriarchy itself was a tragedy, having established hierarchy at the heart of intimacy.

Terry Eagleton (1983) argues that in 18th-century England, writing that embodied the values and tastes of a particular social class qualified as literature, and as such was used as an instrument for their deeper entrenchment and wider dissemination. Whether literature reflected and still reflects reality, or whether literature imposes one view of aspirations for reality, our canon of literature is what has been published. How much can we know about what was being written and unpublished by women?

Carolyn Heilbrun argues (1988) that power consisted in what stories were being told, and that the patriarchal order, threatened by adventurous women, and in control of publishers, encouraged safety and closure as ideals of female destiny. She also observed how few writers, even female, permitted their female adventurers a quest plot. She lamented that literature did not write women's "fictions of desire" (45). She did note that Virginia Woolf, though she had called for a new plot for women, and knew that with money and a room of her own (these two positions meaning power), woman could give birth to a quest plot, yet Woolf never wrote one, nor did Heilbrun find that anyone else did. Heilbrun believed that some women have always looked for new stories about women, quest plots other than the traditional marriage or erotic plot. She searched for narratives in which being erotic and ambitious would not be set against each other for women. In her words, what was necessary was "an understanding of women whose lives include risk and the desire for individual achievement in the public world, as well as, or in place of, marital love" (50). She and others pointed out how women's stories always end with marriage, with wifedom and motherhood, and that if female characters do want to live a quest plot, as men's stories allow and encourage men to do, some event must happen that accidentally transforms their lives from conventional to eccentric.

Buckley never mentions female subjects in his study of the bildungsroman. Moretti, in his survey refers to Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë in passing and notes that anyone outside (those not white, not male, and not heterosexual, for example) of the "wide cultural formation, professional mobility, and full social freedom" (1988:ix) attributed to the Western European middle-class was ineligible to participate in this narrative of self-growth and development. Due to these societal restrictions, women could not occupy this definition of the genre until women could occupy such space in society, nor could men occupy a different role, for that matter. It is easy to conclude that at least the literature available did not provide women with images of female characters directing

their own growth, and creating their lives according to their desires, while at the same time providing the opposite for men. In this way, literature did not support a female quest for knowledge, or self-construction, nor did it support a male quest for intimate relationship, a quest more often relegated to female characters as will be developed in the following pages.

The 19th-century female bildungsroman has been described as “a domestic novel, rather than one of development and mobility, the female journey seeming predetermined with a fixed destination” (Bolaki 2011:5). *Jane Eyre* introduced the female “I,” the first direct female voice to English literature, albeit under a necessary male pseudonym. As a novel it is often considered ahead of its time because it portrays “the development of a thinking and passionate young woman who is both individualistic and desiring of a full and interesting life, while also highly moral.”¹ (ref) However, Jane’s quest is to become a subject, rather than being one when she sets off on a quest; it is a narrative of the determination to have a voice, to be heard. All the same, her quest for autonomy ends in marriage to a man of a social class higher than hers, yet to whom she may now feel equal because she has money of her own, albeit inherited. In that era it would have been impossible for a woman to earn a decent living in an established and dignified profession. Her story, then, can be considered one of becoming materially autonomous and interdependent, more than emotionally, as Lucy Pilgrim quests to become.

Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868), considered the first well-known American novel written specifically for and about adolescent girls, is seen as a synthesis of the usually male-dominated bildungsroman and domestic fiction, forming the female bildungsroman (Kornfeld and Jackson 1987:69). Jo March, the main character, states clearly to a male friend who would like to go on an adventure with her, “If I was a boy, we’d run away together, and have a capital

¹ Charlotte Bronte: *Jane Eyre*. Eds. Claudia Toutain-Dorbec and Jennie Sherwin. CFS Publishing, n.d. Web. 10 April 2012. <http://www.csfpublishing.com/literature-novel/charlotte-bronte/>

time, but as I'm a miserable girl, I must be proper and stop at home" (191). In this novel, originally written with an open ending, two of the four sisters pursue artistic careers, making it a sort of double *kunstlerroman*, a genre which deals with the coming-of-age of an artist. The novel was refused by the publisher until Alcott accepted to rewrite the ending as marriage for each artistic sister, thus a narrative intended as a visionary effort became another advertisement for marriage. Heilbrun comments, "Was marriage always in such danger of becoming unappealing to women that the whole society had to contrive to keep the fiction of its desirability alive and intact?" (1988:88).

Interestingly, and related to the differences in French and Anglo-Saxon literature mentioned earlier, there are also examples of 20th-century French literature written by women with female protagonists that do not end in marriage. In George Sand's novels the independent and artistic heroines often prefer not to marry, and in Colette's *La Vagabonde*, the heroine, a music-hall artist, refuses a marriage offer from her younger, handsome, and rich admirer. This is interesting to consider while reading Lucy Pilgrim's attraction to the French. As well, the genre-related differences between the French and Anglo-American countries are remarkable when considering that equal rights for women were granted two decades later in France than in the Anglo-American cultures, yet the women in these novels, at least, appear to be freer.

As cultural and social structures developed to support women's struggle for autonomy, the heroine in fiction began to reflect these changes, moving toward narratives of a young woman's ability to construct an identity prior to knowledge of who her husband would be, or what home she would have. Esther Kleinbord Labovitz (1986) notes "this new genre [the female *bildungsroman*] was made possible only when *bildung* became a reality for women, in general, and for the fictional heroine, in particular" (6-7). Whether women wrote their way in, or society finally allowed their writing in, is another question. Less than fifty years ago, most significantly in the 1970s,

along with the feminist movement, and with the establishment of female publishers such as Virago in London and The Feminist Press in New York. Before remarking on those changes, it is important to look more closely at what preceded them.

In Joseph Boone's wide-ranging survey of American and English novels (1998), he remarked that falling in love was only one part of a many-sided process on the way to learning and self-development in the male bildungsroman, and concluded that until very recently, courtship was the only action of a female bildungsroman. Joanna Russ (1972) noted before him that fictional plots in general were essentially rather than contingently male, and that the most common plot available to women was the love story: the female plot was either about how the female subject got married, or didn't, or how she fell in love and committed adultery. Less common were writers like Doris Lessing, who, though her focus was elsewhere than did women's lives, gender, and power in *Martha Quest* (1952), she downplayed gender differences by writing a character who chooses the same developmental path as the male hero.

Feminist criticism of the genre frequently focuses on the difficulties of achieving maturation and inner development while constrained by the limitations inherent in being female in a patriarchal society. Marriage also marked a sort of death of the female quest as the female bildungsroman does not encourage autonomy, but rather dependency, and the closure of marriage or death. The hero who wins a vital wife wins a soon-to-be dead wife, that is, if she wants to stay alive questing for more. Stella Bolaki (2011), repeating that the traditional female bildungsroman represses bildung or quest, points out how death is the closure, or the price paid, when the female heroine subverts the acceptable social scripts, as in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, all examples of unhappily married women who commit or attempt suicide. If not

a physical death, when a female chooses autonomy, she chooses solitude as in Cather's *O Pioneers!*, or a societal death, meaning an exclusion, as in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

Marriage was not considered a dilemma, or a hindrance to self-development for the male, but obviously was for his female partner. Susan Fraiman (1993) highlighted the differing positions of marriage in the female and male bildungsroman. The hero typically married when he was a mature young man who had decided on his career and found his place in society, with marriage representing a reward. For the typical female, marriage was the goal and a reward in and of itself for following patriarchal rules, and happening before she had yet found her identity.

The sexual experience, as well, was a dilemma for the female subject. While male mobility and sexual experimentation is taken-for-granted in this genre, mobility is impeded for the female character, due to social restrictions on income possibilities, as well as the social mores against women traveling alone. Sexual experience is impeded, due to female social norms that ostracize any sexual activity outside of marriage, as well as concerns of unwanted pregnancy if she were daring enough to subvert them. The plot element of two love affairs required for development, could not be an option for the female during the same era because female sexuality becomes associated with promiscuity. Homosexual men were also bound to repression and punishment if they divulged their sexual orientation, as in the case of Oscar Wilde. Thus, only heterosexual affairs, were permitted for men and women, and for the ladies, only one. The development of the heroine's sexual agency was either considered unimportant to her overall development, or not to be narrated, nor voiced. It was to be developed with one man, being her husband, who could in this way be considered her colonizer, her possessor. It is as if she were considered land he owned, this property to be cultivated, toiled, tilled, and fertilized.

Fraiman notes that mentors were more abundant in male bildungsromans, and female protagonists generally found few. Often their mentor became their husband, leaving the heroine in the position of “perennial novice” (1993:6). As inferior as this position may seem, it is interesting to note that this it is a fruitful and vulnerable one, replete with possibilities for transformation.

Heilbrun pointed out how occasionally women have put God or Christ in man’s place as primary position. In any case, the results remained the same: women regarded their desires and quests as secondary. She noted that the pain of women who put themselves at the center of their lives was a lonely pain, because they had no stories, no examples, to encourage them to be an “ambiguous woman,” as opposed to her definition of an “unambiguous woman”: “putting a man at the center of one’s life and allowing to occur only what honors his primary position” (1988:21).

Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland (1983) argued that the cost for self-development is higher for the female subject in literature, as she is threatened by isolation from society, and even death, in a way that her male counterpart is not. In as much as social equality is often a theme for the male hero, and though the classic female hero is generally from a middle to lower class as well, gender equality is an exclusive concern of the female novel of development. Hence, while the male is occupied with climbing the social ladder through vocation, the female is doubly active rebelling against society in general, when desiring of vocation outside the home. This is why, overall, it was found that “Bildung takes a greater toll from the heroine in that she embarks upon a quest or self-discovery [...] seek(ing) equality where it has not before existed, even as she enters spheres where she was formerly excluded in fiction as in life” (Labovitz 1986:255).

Ellen Labovitz explains that the heroine has to, as well, regain a sense of self,

lost in childhood, unlike her male counterpart, and that she has to gain her freedom in order for her growth to be successful. This loss of self involves, in part, “efforts to gain control over their own minds” (1986:248). This loss is often one of voice, as well, and generally happens at a time when the female child is on the brink of entering society and necessary to the patriarchal structure for its continuation. Gilligan argues (2002). In Gilligan’s study of adolescent girls, she encountered a split in consciousness that appears at puberty, a period of time when mothers teach their daughters to hide their knowledge in order to survive and succeed in the patriarchal world. The mother in *Lucy, Go See* does the opposite by encouraging her daughter to speak about what she knows.

More than marriage or death, it is closure itself, and the hope for it, Heilbrun wrote, that is the delusion that needs to be abandoned for women to live adventure in literature and life: the idea that one reaches a point where everything is over, settled, and the character will now live happily ever after. She argues that men have always known that another struggle begins as soon as one is finished, and that the end point of a quest is only the threshold to another. The majority of literature available to women in the three hundred years discussed here, and the ancient story of Psyche and Cupid, have suggested that marriage and motherhood are considered the end point for females, a closure where everything is settled, happily ever after. This literature has thus suggested that a woman’s life can reach a fixed point where everything is settled. This notion is, as I have pointed out, changing, yet there is enough evidence in the films and literature of popular culture to support an argument that the myth of old plot is deeply ingrained. Thus, when one marries and finds that it is not in fact the beginning of happily ever after; is that not why many female literary characters felt a failure and the need to walk into the ocean, or stick their head in the oven, or commit adultery? A culture creating female literary subjects occupying themselves with the construction of their lives, independent of marriage and love, yet not excluding it, might

create a different society.

Love itself is both a quest and a bildung, a never-ending one as well. Referring again to Boone's finding that courtship was the exclusive activity of the female bildungsroman, this arguably caused feminist critiques to place love, at least romantic love, aside as an inferior quest to vocation, financial independence, social equality, and all of the other rights that have been won for women in the 20th century. Thus, at least for the female literary character, love went from all-important to not-important-at-all. Gilligan explores love's resistance to patriarchy, and concludes that while love is always sacrificed for honor in patriarchy (men sacrificing loved ones for their country or honor), it is only love can dismantle this hierarchy. This setting aside of love as less important is a repetition of the pattern of men in patriarchy. The female character sacrificing love, instead of the male, for honor within the patriarchal system. Thus, there has been no escape, no way out. Hooks states, "Feminist critiques of love made it difficult for progressive, powerful women to speak about the place of love in our lives. This silence has undermined the freedom of all females to be fully self-actualized, which women's liberation first championed [...]." The silencing of love is like the silencing of vulnerability, and both leave a power tapped. Hooks continues, "Women, along with the culture as a whole, need constructive visions of redemptive love. We need to return to love and proclaim its transformative power" (2002:15).

In the following section, I will situate the novel *Lucy, Go See* in relationship to the genres of quest and bildungsroman, and their gender limitations, as a constructive vision, which narrates the power of love to transform as it appropriates the structure of the male quest in order to reveal the value of the strength contained in a vulnerable subject.

2.2 A Pilgrim's Quest to Be

2.2.1 *Lucy, Go See* as quest

Lucy, Go See is a bildungsroman based on a quest that uses the subversive character of Lucy Pilgrim as a probe to explore the terrain of human relationships and vulnerability in a society where women traditionally come to power through relationship, and men sacrifice relationship for honor (though there has been evolution, the foundation of these power structures remain intact). Following Campbell's monomyth pattern, the "ultimate boon" of Lucy's quest is her discovery of the value of vulnerable interdependence. As the novel dramatizes the influence of relationship on self, its female protagonist, Lucy, follows an adventurous path through a variety of relationships which move her toward learning and transformation, without sacrificing self for these relationships.

Lucy Pilgrim's quest for paradise on Earth is also a quest to feel at home in the world. The novel's three parts, *The Manner of Her Setting Out*, *Her Dangerous Journey*, and *Her Safe Arrival at the Desired Country*, were directly appropriated from Paul Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* (1678). The name Pilgrim was given to *Lucy, Go See's* protagonist, as well, in the interest of achieving resonance with traditional mythic structure and the notion of the coming of a new world. The narrative accords to the aforementioned quest pattern of departure, initiation, and return. However, whereas the hero of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian, is on a religious journey, Lucy Pilgrim's final destination of freedom is less defined and concrete than Christian's, who passes through a Protestant's challenging quest, testing his worthiness to enter heaven alongside God. Lucy, too, passes through trials and tribulations that render her worthy of her own love and admiration, rather than, first and foremost, an other's. Allegorical

references, similar to place and character names in *The Pilgrim's Progress* are also used in the bildungsroman.

Lucy, Go See ends untraditionally, as well. The female subject accepts that she must become her own hero and her final decision, in the novel, is to continue questing. There is no closure, even the wound that she brings to voice remains open. Her maturity culminates in her recognition that she is wounded, and her acknowledgement of her vulnerability. Maturity is gained yet unfixed; it is considered an on-going work.

Notable in this quest plot is the manner in which it is replete with instances of the female subject's unconscious attempts to "restore love to its rightful place as a heroic journey" (Hooks 2002:21). Lucy Pilgrim sets out simply to go and see, her adventure is not an accident. Her story is the development of a character who places as much value on love as on the other activities of her life, then demands that those in relationship with her do the same.

2.2.2 *Lucy, Go See* as bildungsroman

Because this quest novel narrates a subject's self-construction, it is a bildungsroman. As stated above, however, it is more of a coming-to-voice, than a coming-of-age novel, fitting the argument for an on-going maturity, and the coming-to-voice belongs more to a shared wound than to one character's voice. The female subject's quest for agency, the key to self-construction, accords to the standard plot lines of both the classical and realistic bildungsroman, according to Moretti's (1988:239) standards, and accords to the genre outline observed by Buckley (1974:92). Lucy Pilgrim is an average middle-class child of emotional and artistic sensibility interested in reading, who grows in a rural setting where she finds both social and intellectual constraints placed upon her imagination, who then journeys to an urban setting

where she experiences even more than the two requisite love affairs Buckley described—and as far as their exalting and debasing nature is concerned, these qualities are contained in each and both of them, and in her non-sexual love relationships. These experiences definitely engage her in the genre's required moral and emotional reevaluation, making Lucy's predicament, too, a personal one, as fitting Buckley's definition of the classical bildungsroman's hero struggle.

The novel only differs from Buckley's concrete definition in that the hero is a female, not an orphan, and her family *does* recognize her ambition, though they consider its aims questionable. Lucy does suffer rejection by her father, another component of the traditional bildungsroman, and she is youthful, dynamic, unstable, mobile and restless, while wondering how to fit into normal society, similar to the classical bildungsroman hero as described by Moretti (1988:250). Rather than separating mature hero from youthful hero, however, *Lucy, Go See* synthesizes these natures in its protagonist by bringing open youthfulness to the definition of a maturity that foregoes closure.

The closure of *Lucy, Go See* is purposefully and starkly open, ending in the sky, to emphasize that vast openness. The traditional solved predicament is the voicing of a wound, which leads to the subject's recognition and acceptance of her vulnerability. The traditional compromise with society is thus an acceptance of truth rather than a conformity to standards, creating a closure by opening space for the possibility of evolution. It is but one stage of a continual ripening of individual and community rather than a finality. The subject has gained important knowledge and has discovered that total independence is impossible, and that interdependence is a more accessible, attractive and realistic aim, tempered with the recognition of vulnerability. She also learns that the "otherness" readers are told she feels in the prologue is a distinction, rather than an affliction. In the final chapter she begins to see that one can be in relationship and different, without sacrificing oneself or becoming involved

in the struggle for dominance or superiority that gender hierarchy has put in place: “She recognized herself [...] related and distinct” (LGS:271).

In regard to Moretti’s classical and realistic distinctions of the genre, wherein he sees a shift from the apprentice to the realistic, opportunistic hero, *Lucy, Go See* can be placed in both domains there as well. Lucy Pilgrim ascends the socioeconomic hierarchy yet also descends to the bottom of it. Like Frédéric Moreau, Lucy does not want to conclude her apprenticeship, but does consider youth, and all of life, a training ground. She is seeking meaning in the world of consumption and capitalism that began to value having over being, which Moretti (1988) defines as the realistic era. That world of consumption is the same world that enables Lucy’s mobility, as its advertising of unnecessary products and fantasy creates employment and income for her as a model. Protracted youth, however, in an irresponsible sense, as represented by Stendhal’s hero, is unattractive to Lucy Pilgrim. If she is looking to master anything, it is herself and her life. She is a perennial, an apprentice of living, of *being*.

Lucy, thus, considers having youth and money as tools that can enable her being. Hence, she does what she does both because of who she is (her position in society) and who she would like to be (the self she is becoming, discovering, recovering, re(dis)covering). In contrast to the realistic hero who hides his values, however, the only thing Lucy Pilgrim attempts to conceal as she seeks opportunities is her vulnerability.

According to Bakhtin’s (1986) assessment of this genre, how does Lucy emerge along with the world, What is the new, unprecedented type of human being she is forced to become? Lucy Pilgrim, as mirror for the subject’s place in the world, dramatizes a movement toward interdependent relationship, toward recognizing and giving voice to wounds as a way to reclaim personal territory, and, while accepting we are all wounded, valuing the strength

contained in vulnerability.

2.2.3 Lucy's gendered adventure

Lucy, Go See narrates several years in a female subject's creation of her life, revealing a manner in which girls are wounded in patriarchy and how those wounds affect life-construction. In this instance, the revelation of a primary wound inflicted upon granddaughter by grandfather, the base and summit representatives of the patriarchal hierarchy, exposes a greater wound. This wound affects the vulnerable and dominant positions in a phallogocentric world. It is the inability to love, and it involves all humans in patriarchy.

Despite fifty years of radical change brought about by feminism, the change is perhaps more easily evidenced in the material world, than in the relational. Rather than blaming patriarchy, however, we can instead simply look at how the disturbance in relationships caused by the structure of a hierarchy that places one sex above another can be repaired. In regard to Campbell's statement that the female character is a place—which hence affords the colonization of her/that space, *Lucy, Go See* can be read as an exploration of female possibilities to self-colonize, “to establish political control over oneself, to settle as a colony or countries in the developing world, to take over the territory, to put down roots, to pioneer, to open up.”²

Lucy, Go See is definitely not a narrative “shaped to reinforce and sustain male domination” (Hooks 2002:34). Viola, in referring to her own husband, clearly denies that claim when she asks her daughter: “What, is he God of the universe?” (LGS:262) Here, the mother, a voice considered “the most absent voice in literature” according to Tillie Olsen (1995:39), asks a fundamental question of phallogocentric society: who appointed man “God”? This question

² The American Heritage Dictionary, Fourth Edition. 2000.

enables Lucy, along with the reader, to see patriarchy as the obstacle to female self-respect, self-determination, and self-reliance it is.

Lucy, Go See is a “fiction of desire,” which Heilbrun deemed necessary (1988:45). The novel breaks from the traditional idealization of the female and of courtly love; in it, we see a female subject courting and mating without marriage as a destination. The reader is given insight into Lucy’s quest for knowledge and vision, as she dares another activity Heilbrun deemed necessary: to “write” her own quest plot. There is nothing accidental about Lucy Pilgrim’s quest; from the start we learn that she wants to lead an adventurous life in the public world, and to live it as well in loving partnership(s), rather than pitting ambition against love. In this way, the plot plays out the aforementioned tension between the erotic and the ambitious, the classic female character’s dilemma according to Heilbrun (1988), as it follows a female subject making consequential choices aimed at keeping herself at the center of her life. However, though her goal is to freely connect with others, she fears dependence to such an extreme that she loses perspective of the value of the dependability and vulnerability that makes interdependence possible.

Ironically, it is through modeling [trading beauty and sexual appeal (the female’s traditional way of attracting men in order to attain power in an androcentric society) for money, i.e., financial power] that Lucy tastes the wide, cultural formation, professional mobility, and full social freedom deprived to female characters in bildungsromans traditionally. Fooled by glossy images of what appear to be autonomous women—“Leafing through the magazines down in the pasture, Lucy saw modeling as a fabulous ticket out. What enticed her was how happy, independent, and cosmopolitan the young women looked” (LGS:15)—she enters the world of fashion modeling, where the traditional patriarchal paradigm of women trading sex and beauty for financial power is still strongly intact. As a means to “go and see,” in the

sense of seeing the world, Lucy colonizes her own body, putting it to work, painting it, even starving it, as she works at making it thin enough to exploit it as a model. At one point in the plot, she attempts to disconnect herself from her body: Lucy thought “she could detach herself from her body and watch this stranger moving her breast around like furniture, as if it were a breast on a body she happened to be inside of but not connected to” (LGS:59). Throughout her journey, she receives many offers to trade sexual favors for material goods, or career advancement, and continually resists. This resistance, however, is not materially lucrative.

The novel is domestic and mobile, and it contains many worlds—private and public, national and international, rural and urban. As it moves back and forth between them, it blurs their boundaries and opens them to each other. This female subject has similar desires as Jane Eyre, created two centuries before her: Lucy is an individualistic thinking and passionate young woman who wants a full and interesting life. She is also highly moral albeit in a non-traditional fashion. For example, she considers her virginity as ignorance or innocence rather than as a virtue or merchandise. For Lucy, virginity is not a value because she rejects the idea of herself as another’s possession. However, Lucy deters others, most notably her father, from defining her as promiscuous on such terms. When her father insinuates that she “wants to go hopping into bed with every guy she meets” (LGS:245) she counters that she is selective. When her father suggests that she needs to marry a doctor or lawyer in order to fulfill her wish “to live in nature and sculpt and draw” (LGS:255), Lucy questions him, “You mean be a prostitute?” (LGS:255). This gives her father pause. “She watched the difficulty in his eyes as he registered that, and saw he had never looked at it that way before. ‘You’re right, I guess that is what it would be, like that’” (LGS:255).

Thus, in allowing Lucy Pilgrim to love more than one man, and more than one at a time, the novel’s plot lines contain traditional aspects of the male and

female bildungsroman and the love-story plot, as well as the quest. Yet it goes beyond them: the reader follows her sexual experimentation, her search for work, her marriage and subsequent divorce, her adultery, her falling in love, *and* her struggle to keep her quest primary while loving others. The novel questions the value of marriage, though it is neither an argument for or against it, and certainly does not end with it. For example, when Lucy is traveling, working and living alone in Tokyo, she encounters a man who responds to her independent lifestyle, by stating: “You women don’t need husbands” (LGS: 232), inferring that husbands are providers above all, and that women only need them for the material aspects of life.

The novel *Lucy, Go See* dramatizes the value of loving others, above all, as it narrates the protagonist’s determination to follow her desire rather than any need. The love in the novel is beyond romantic love, courtly love and conjugal love. It can best be understood in the sense of Peggy Kamuf’s definition, “we can easily assume love is simply that which would not destroy what it loves” (2000:165). This suggests construction; what can love build? In *Lucy, Go See*, the historically common love-story-as-only-plotline-available-to-women critique is connected to many plot lines but rather than considering love stories as only of a romantic or sexual nature, the plot lines include tension and development in love stories with family, friends, and lovers, opening up the experience of love, considering it in a wider space than the romantic and/or sexual.

Like the traditional female subject, Lucy marries before she has found her career and place in society, though vocation and social position are not vital concerns of hers. Though Lucy sees marriage as a building site rather than a goal or reward, she has entered into it as a safe closure, and the false sense of this security is revealed. It is an effort to assume the traditional role on her own terms, and rather than this brief marriage being a hindrance to Lucy’s self-development, it becomes an aid, because she uses it as such, thus

acquiring agency, rather than considering herself a victim, and in so doing, she learns that it was premature to marry before she had first become fully self-reliant.

Lucy approaches the fate of her literary female ancestors who commit suicide, she does contemplate it, yet this is also another plot point which turns away from the traditional in a significant manner, as Lucy learns that no hero can save her; she must save herself. It is interesting to note Lucy's resistance, and mental attraction, all the same, to the myth of safe closure. One reads her intuitions of the need to become autonomous throughout the plot:

She knew she had to go further on her own way in the world first, that it was still too early to enter into full partnership, and she was as scared, as she was desiring, of that. [...] She began to see how she had trapped herself with her longing for security, and now as it was crumbling she could see how false it was. (LGS:156)

Yet, when Lucy risks remaining alone, she revives herself in a way that moves her toward more autonomy while also maintaining relationships with others. As a sexually active literary figure, she passes through and confronts the stigmas that linger in society. In fact, this subversion results in her thriving, opposed to dying, and leads to the open closure, far from any fixed destination and potent with possibility.

Furthermore, in the traditional dilemma of the female subject's sexual experience, Lucy Pilgrim's self-directed sexual evolution leads her to discover her sexual agency, and the powerful way in which *jouissance* seems to be linked to subjectivity, intertwined with building the life she wants for herself. Through it, she reappropriates her body, even her life, as she gains sexual agency. The novel, again, subverts the traditional *bildungsroman* male hero's evolving formation by appropriating it, as Lucy's sexual development is definitely integral to her overall formation, in the same way that it is for a man. The price that Lucy pays for subverting acceptable social scripts for

women is, what affords the space for eros to remain alive in her life, because that subversion, or self-formation, is precisely what excites her.

In contrast with Fraiman's (1993) findings on the lack of mentors encountered by female protagonists, Lucy considers everyone she meets a potential mentor, yet she resists the role of "perennial novice" associated with traditional female subjects, even as her unending quest for knowledge implies an attraction to the ongoing education of such a stance in life. Attracted to those she somehow wants to be, she also links the arousal of eros to self-creation: "She was attracted to authorities, teachers, managers, professors, people she wanted to be, who had qualities she wanted to develop in herself" (LGS:20).

In light of Labovitz's (1986) observation that the female heroine loses a certain sense of herself in her childhood, the abuse Lucy suffers at the hands of her grandfather is a loss of wholeness as it fragments her and silences her, and "made her feel dirty somehow [...] a certain sickness lingered inside of her whenever she thought about what she was hiding in order to be close to him" (LGS:14). It is the first moment we witness her becoming undone, losing a sense of ideal relationship; it marks her loss of trust in the way society handles desire, which "she sense[s] [i]s at the base of creation, not to be messed with, without messing up the whole system" (LGS:6).

This results in her loss of trust in this "system" which she sees as "obviously very messed up" (LGS:6). As she remains silent about this abuse and loss of a vital trust, she takes on a responsibility that is not hers. Meaning, in her knowing silence, she becomes responsible for keeping the grandfather's secret, which can be considered one of patriarchy's secrets. Hiding his wrongdoing, she unconsciously is an accomplice to her own abuse in the same way that any or all are accomplice to, and responsible for, the abuse of patriarchy as long as no voice is given to it.

This silence, this willing absence of voice, in protection of her grandfather and father (from the knowledge of his own father's abuse of his daughter) is thus an unconscious protection of patriarchy in the name of love. Lucy, out of love for her father and grandfather, supports the very structure that is prohibiting her freedom, thus bearing some of the responsibility for it, as she allows her love and her desire for relationship to override her knowledge of wrongdoing. She is silencing the wound all involved share, inadvertently blinding all to the vulnerability of the system.

It is difficult to assess, however, whether *bildung* takes a greater toll on Lucy. It is difficult to assess whether Lucy is doubly occupied fighting the social and the gender hierarchy as she builds her life. This is because Lucy is unconcerned with climbing the social ladder through vocation, and rather, simply uses the occupations available to her to afford to go where she wants to go, to see what she wants to see. This also can be seen as an impediment to her success in the material world, because as a model her intent to bend the traditional career trajectory toward her desires for mobility and freedom do not coincide with the traditional path of success in that world. She uses her body, or in other words the male-standard of beauty of her body, to acquire the means to live a more autonomous life of her own choosing, rather than a socially prominent one. Ironically, she reappropriates her body in this way, and eventually reappropriates what in her self was lost when her grandfather inappropriately grasped her, which was above all, the value of her vulnerability.

Finally, referring to Hooks' argument (2002) that feminist critique put love aside as inferior to vocation, financial independence, social equality and all of the other rights that have been won for women in the 20th century (which is perhaps the reason that emotional independence was not explored), *Lucy, Go See* reunites all of these activities.

In the following pages, I will interpret the traces of eros, voice and wound throughout the novel, considering how these traces can be useful to the creation of an interdependent subject.

2.3 Eros, A Vulnerable Territory

2.3.1 Eros and desire

In this section, I will trace the arousal of eros in *Lucy, Go See* and more specifically in the character of Lucy Pilgrim, in order to proffer a more ample understanding of the nature of its territory and its relationship to subjectivity. I will use this understanding to argue for the value of vulnerability and its creative and connective power. I consider eros a verb, as I consider love a verb, yet I place eros in the realms of the unknown, the unconscious, where love is not. Though I consider both useful to construction, I use the arousal of eros specifically as an intimate ally on one's personal quest, rather than as an outside enemy. In reference to Anne Carson's answer to what a lover wants from love: "To feel its current pass through her" (1998:62), I also relate eros to an inner movement through our most vulnerable terrain, our sexual lives.

Rilke has argued that it is society, and Christianity in particular, which has separated us from this unknown force from which we, ourselves, are issued forth. He asks, "Why have they made our sex homeless?" (2004:32). I will explore Lucy Pilgrim's experience of eros to consider the ways in which a human, a female in this case, can own this experience, can claim this territory, specifically of body, and in so doing realize her subjectivity, and acquire sexual agency along with the creative command of her life.

I choose to use the term eros, rather than desire, because desire is most often involved with psychoanalytical discourse, and this interpretation is not. Moreover, the understanding of eros as only a desire to mate and/or copulate does a significant disservice to love, and sex, as well as self-construction. *Erotica*, "the porn of the elite," as Angela Carter aptly called it (1979:17), can now be found in abundance, in media, films, and literature, and in society in

general. Eros is consumed, and even colonized, in the sense of exploiting it for profit; erotic pleasure is constantly being peddled to the human being in one form or another. Broadening this understanding, to consider arousal as ally, adds a dimension lost in the consumption of it. This broadening, of course, takes us to the edge of the known and unknowable, and in this way suggests a personal quest.

The movement of eros brings us to the limits of ourselves, sometimes even “beside ourselves,” to the limits of knowledge itself as we wonder what it is that seems to overcome us, opening, even prying it could be said, the possibility of our connection to the world. Eros moves, is alive, in that connection, in the attraction to differences. The sensation of becoming undone, losing control, being beside oneself that often accompanies the arousal of eros, carries the possibility of recognition of our vulnerability. In this endeavor eros is an ally as “our willingness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of becoming human,” as Judith Butler noted (2005:136).

For Lacan, the essence of desire is that it never arrives to an end, or a goal, which would be satisfaction. In this way, it is a state of being. In his seminars, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge* (1972-1973), he stated “when one loves, it has nothing to do with sex” (25), which I relate to the conscious and unconscious aspects of the verbs love and eros, as I write of them above. I do not limit eros to sex, however, though I am unable to define the vastness of it, there is violence related to sex, and violence is impossible to relate to love. Thus, Lacan’s comment that “what makes up for the sexual relationship is, quite precisely, love” (45) resonates with the possibility of connecting these two verbs in a relationship of repair. Sex has the ability to wound, where love does not.

In these seminars, Lacan goes on to proclaim his intention in speaking of sexuality and love. “The course I will try to continue to steer in our next classes will show you where love and sexual jouissance meet up” (50). Finally, he comes to the conclusion that “there is some relationship of being that cannot be known” (119). Jouissance as a state of being and love as a state of being, could be this unknowable relationship of two states which may or may not connect, unknowable, perhaps, because it is unspoken of, unheard of, not allowed into the dominant discourse, as Lacan plays with the missing middle term of this syllogism, the mean of this logic, that it cannot be known, simply because the information is not available: “This is where I play on an equivocation—that impossible knowledge is censored or forbidden, but it isn’t if you write ‘inter-dit’³appropriately—it is said between the words, between the lines” (119). In the following pages, as I interpret the traces of eros in the novel, *Lucy, Go See*, I will work with the voices between and under the words on the page.

2.3.2 Tracing eros as plot line

Lucy, Go See tells the story of a young woman who is filled with the desire to go and see, as well as to love. One could say she unseals the envelope Rilke alluded to when he stated that love was one of the two problems (death being the other) that generations carry unwrapped and hand on without opening. “And those who live the secret wrong and badly (and they are very many), lose it only for themselves and still hand it on, like a sealed letter, without knowing it” (2004:43). From the start, we see the inklings of this quest in Lucy’s life, a sense of knowing what seems unknowable:

³ A French word meaning prohibited, here separated to use the past participle of the French verb “dire”, “dit”, to say inter-said, said between.

She knew, too, that what most people called love was not, and that love was not easy. And she knew that desire was something altogether different, too. She had a feeling that sex was much more important than anyone seemed to realize, much more sacred than anyone would like to believe and even more powerful than anyone had already imagined. (LGS:6)

Though her grandfather is only the first in a succession of men who inappropriately reach out to grasp her in a sexual hold of sorts, his inappropriate touch is a primary wound that she immediately hides. This wounding, originating from his desire, not hers, leads her to protect herself from further touch, and to “organize love and sex like divisions of labor” (LGS:19) in order to understand what he has done as separate from his love from her so she may continue her relationship with him. In this way she can maintain her ideal vision, fed by films and literature, of that relationship: “strong, wise, caring grandfather and curious, smart, brave granddaughter” (LGS:14), which is arguably a peddled image of patriarchy. To maintain that illusion, Lucy remains silent about his touch, which has wounded her, even though she feels it is wrong. This causes her to question the nature of sex, and “what all the whisperings and giggling [are] covering. Not just at school but everywhere. Sex seemed so delinquent and important at the same time.” (LGS:18) and “She decide[s] to approach it (sex) as an equation, and set[s] about deducing its unknown values” (LGS:19).

Though she has learned a need to protect herself from the violence of abuse, she remains curious, as she listens within in other situations in her life: “She deferred the rushes and vibrations mounting in her because she had never heard sex talked about in the way it seemed to be coming alive in her, and she wondered if there was something wrong with her” (LGS:20). Thus, the current is alive though unrecognized within her. “Deeper pleasures ripple in her groin when she [i]s in nature, or in her nature: feeling good in her skin, happy and working on something exciting, sculpting or drawing, or even reading” (LGS:

20), which suggests how creativity might be linked with eros, creation being sex's primary function, after all.

The arousal of eros can be linked to the creation of her subjectivity as “she found she was attracted to [...] people she wanted to be, who had qualities she wanted to develop in herself” (LGS:20). Yet, this also suggests a consumptive tendency, a desire to absorb the other to enlarge oneself. As she experiments, she is disappointed by her first sexual intercourse, which leads her to believe that “her desire [i]s more powerful than its consummation and the best she could do was carry a good shield” (LGS:20). Here she is bringing disparate incidents together, that of experimenting with a young lover and that of being abused, as well as the condition of desiring (the traditional male role) and the condition of being desired (the traditional female role). She links desiring with power, and being desired with a need for protection. However, because Lucy has never heard anyone speaking about desire the way it is coming alive in her (“This arousal seemed too volatile [...] to be trusted” [LGS:20]), she considers it as something alien to her, as if an enemy. Her strategies to protect herself from others extend to herself, as if she must protect herself from her own desire. This stance suggests a belief in invulnerability, and her distrust of what is rising within her, the very force she will later come to understand as her internal compass, creates a closure to connection and blinds her from her sexual agency.

As Lucy continues her “research on the pleasure of touch” (LGS:19), she also marries in an attempt to live as society expects her, in other words, “to feel more like her family” (LGS:58) “though her body [i]s begging her not to” (LGS:61). Here Lucy is using her body, while on a deeper level disrespecting its wishes; in this way, she is colonizing her own body. She is subjugating it to her control, against its own wishes, in order to be accepted by the dominant societal group. It is as if she doesn't trust it, either. The primary

wound, which caused a separation between her and her body, her wound and her, along with love and sex, has fragmented her.

Thus, when she meets Julien, the lover who will present her with a key of reappropriation, reunion with herself, “Her body rev[s], her mind warn[s] her to stay back” (LGS:68). She resists her body until

she couldn't get rid of the feeling that she had something important to learn through Julien more than from him, as oddly transparent as that sounded and as utilitarian as that seemed. It was as if touching him was a land she had to travel through to find a treasure: She was sure she would come out on the other side; he was not the destination. (LGS:103-104)

Here, she is exploring, rather than attempting to colonize. She wants to move through him. It is interesting to trace the movement of eros in this way, as in her quest to understand where her desire is leading her, she must trust it. As she does, the arousal of eros she feels in the presence of Julien, as one sees in the progression of the novel, aids her in the development of her subjectivity, her sexual agency and eventually toward the unification of her fragmented self; it also eventually leads her home.

However, first, her husband endangers her (by canceling her use of their credit card and thus stranding her in Hong Kong alone) as a consequence of her truth-telling, she realizes she is both unloved and freed from the societal guilt that has been blocking the enjoyment of her pleasure in desiring Julien, in other words, her *jouissance*. Her husband's material punishment (for her adultery, or more precisely for dispossessing him of her) serves only to highlight the nonpossessive nature of Julien. When Lucy reveals, in ecstasy, that it is her desire alone (in this case, for Julien) that excites her, his response, “it is not me that makes you feel like that. It is you—it is what you are giving

me—it is yours” (LGS:147), replaces Lucy to her owner’s rightful hands, her own. This is a key catalyst for her self-(re)discovery:

She could take responsibility for her desire more clearly and joyfully with this understanding that it wasn’t something that happened to her, but was something that came from her. She could use it constructively instead of always thinking of it as something she had to submit to, or conquer. It was becoming clearer and clearer that it was the way she loved, more than was loved, that turned her on. (LGS:148)

As mentioned earlier, by suggesting that humans are responsible for each other’s arousal (as the victim is often blamed in sexual abuse incidents), society has created the belief that the other is the subject of one’s own desire, rather than the self. Lucy’s entire life is changed with the realization that she, or at least the current moving through her, is the subject of her desire.

When she returns to her husband she sees he intends to punish her again, for what he considers her “weakness”, which she now sees as the courage to follow her desire (LGS:154). He imposes rules for their continued union, the cancellation of her solo going and seeing, being one of them. Also, in patriarchal form, he seeks out Lucy’s father, instead of her, in the interest of “making things work” (LGS:163). After she refuses to call her relationship with Julien a mistake (LGS:153) and, notably, in standing up for herself, in refusing to engage in sex as a duty (LGS:158), and in trusting herself and doing as she desires, an echo of the erotic excitement she felt as a young woman reappears:

It felt to her, at the beginning, as other excitement had, but yet it sprung from no apparent desire. If she desired anything strongly at that moment it was simply to be, freely. And to be loved, or at least left alone. She felt a power surge within her. Maybe it was the approaching summer, she thought, with a smile. Or maybe it was

because she had lain more claim to her self than ever before [...] and her body was responding in celebration, saying yes, yes, yes, keep going, yes like that. [...] everything around her took on a sort of oneiric glow after coming like that, and it was more difficult for her to discern where her skin ended and the earth, grass, water, sun and other people began. It was as if her walls were dissolving [...] as if it were, her, Lucy, coming out of and into herself at the same time. (LGS:158-159)

Here it is interesting to consider Lacan's discussion of female sexual *jouissance*. Lacan, though he inferred more than female sexual pleasure when using the term, did mention a sexual *jouissance* that women do not talk about, that has nothing to do with men, yet he left his source unmentioned, only suggesting knowledge: "There is a *jouissance* [...] a *jouissance* of the body that is [...] 'beyond the phallus' [...] that is hers (*à elle*), that belongs to that "she" (*elle*) [...] about which she herself perhaps knows nothing if not that she experiences it—that much she knows" (1975:69-70). He also argued that he had been "begging women on his hands and knees" (70) to tell him about it, and even the women psychoanalysts he knew would not divulge a word. This is interesting in light of Carter's observation that sexual relations reflect social relations (1979:2).

It is remarkable that women (Saint Teresa, Hadewijch d'Anvers) who did write about such ecstatic experiences, still needed to frame their experience in relationship to a male figure (usually a male God) and attributed—or perhaps were required to attribute—what was rising in them to another. The novel refers to this when Lucy is staying in a nunnery in Zurich:

the familiar arousal began, Lucy enjoyed it, wondering afterwards, and again; was it life's way, her body's way, of bringing her relief when she needed it? [...] She then wondered if the sisters, too, knew what she knew. They were hiding it well if they did, she thought. She remembered the story of Saint Teresa, and other religious women in ecstasy, but she had read it was their communication with God, their devotion to "Him," which was reportedly turning them on. Lucy could not

deny there was an unseen force involved, but it did not feel like a man, or like devotion to anyone but herself. (LGS:194)

In the earlier-mentioned seminars, Lacan opened the discussion using the legal meaning of *jouissance*, stating that he was going to talk about what the law talks about, and how the law allows for the enjoyment, the “usufruct” or *jouissance* of one’s means, but not the waste of them (1975:2-3). Thus, the same could be said of the way Lucy begins to understand the use of the means of the arousal of *eros*, rather than the waste of them through abuse or consumption.

This novel and exegesis offer a status of knowledge on this “unknowable” issue, somehow connected with *eros*. The novel also suggests that those people and places within whose presence *eros* is aroused share a mutual involvement in the construction of selves and lives, a creative activity which obviously is not only sexual. Lucy’s early excitement is aroused when sculpting, for example. Julien’s presence in her life arouses her to build more of the life she wants for herself. Later, when she is traveling on her own, “it seemed the excitement mounted at moments when she realized her life really was totally her own to do as she wished” (LGS:173-174). At the height of *eros*’ arousal, in Lucy’s “hot spot” (LGS:179), Barcelona, where she is finally doing what she always wanted to do, going and seeing. “Lucy definitely felt on the edge; she didn’t know anything about it other than that it happened, and her favorite guess was that it was connected to guts, joy, and being loving, finally doing what she wanted to do with her life” (LGS:184).

Divorced from her husband, both attracted and repulsed by Julien, drawn toward her own independent experience of the world, she experiences a new way of relationship as she travels. Yet she longs for Julien’s desire, she woos him from afar, yet stays away from him, yet cannot understand that he does not follow her, until she asks herself, “Was it him she wanted; or was it

confirmation of the reliability of her own instincts, some proof that she had not been wrong about his sincerity? Perhaps. She did not know” (LGS:195). Carson relates falling in love with coming to know, as activities that make us feel genuinely alive, and links the reach for the other with the reach for knowledge, as she writes, “There is an electrification of sorts in them—they are not like anything else but they are like each other” (1998:70-71).

Furthermore, as Carson traces eros’ route, she finds “it moves out from lover, toward the beloved, then ricochets back to the lover himself and the hole in him, unnoticed before. Who is the real subject [...]? Not the beloved. It is that hole” (1998:30). At different moments in the novel, Lucy contemplates that emptiness in herself, in Paris, for example: “Why did she want to be with this man; were all those qualities she admired in him in her, just waiting to be recognized?” (LGS:196). As she develops herself, and near the end of the novel, after she has done much work on the hole inside her, we find her “skim[ming] through three pages covered in his handwriting, thinking how strange it was that she could no longer imagine being with him, it was like searching for a hole that was no longer there” (LGS:259).

Carson’s observation that the moment “the actual self and the ideal self and the difference between them connect [...], the connection is eros” (1998:62), suggests that the moment one can sense the more one can be, one becomes aroused. If we consider the Hegelian tradition, which claims that all desire is always a desire for recognition (Butler 2004:2), one can imagine that the recognition one desires from the other through eros is the way one would like to recognize oneself. Lucy finds it is. The hole inside oneself, as well as the difference between actual and ideal, is vulnerable. Eros moves through this vulnerable territory.

Speaking of the hole in Lucy, and the primary wound mentioned, it is interesting to note the question she asks of herself after realizing she cared

more about herself than Julien: “Was it maybe this possibility—that she could deeply love a man—could that be what she was most in love with?” (LGS: 196). Here, she is approaching her wound, the ability to love, yet she cannot see it clearly because she has not recognized the wound. I will discuss this more thoroughly in the following sections.

Recognizing the power in desire, Lucy wants to be the lover, the role historically assigned to men, rather than the classical female role of beloved. Moreover, she is seeking a relationship without roles as she approaches Julien, surprises him in his city, leaves him, courts and woos him through letters and gifts, even brings him flowers, an act that can be read as a reversal of traditional roles. Lucy is fulfilling her share of Julien’s description of the best kind of relationship: “each giving one hundred percent and fireworks happening where it all meets” (LGS:149). Yet, Lucy interprets Julien’s not begging her to stay, and not coming to her as a sign of unrequited love; it is interesting that she wants him to need her, but she does not want to need him. The novel teeters between an old and a new paradigm of relationship. This extremely nonpossessive relationship is unfamiliar territory and when Lucy listens to Julien, via telephone from New York to Paris, saying, “Lucy, what is important is that we both live our present the best we can” (LGS:210), because there is no sign of movement of one toward the other, she understands this as the end. Yet, Lucy decides to trust this, too, as a dark part of her quest she does not yet understand, and uses this, too, to construct more of the life she wants for herself.

Eros, thus, leads her home, to “face all those who had hurt her again” (LGS: 211). Her grandfather, doubly ironically (because he seemingly forgets the position he has put her in), reflects the patriarchal stance when telling her, in reference to her adultery with Julien, “If that man really loved you he would have never put you in that position” (LGS:214). Once again Lucy is responsible, claiming her “I,” owning responsibility for that position. Symbolically,

after questioning her, her grandfather makes a connection between Julien and Lucy, as he says, “So he is a traveler like you?” (LGS:215), which is a poetic representation of lovers as seekers that comforts Lucy, and suggests an equality between women and men that patriarchy lacks. Lucy, in the meantime, remains silent about her primary wound.

She remains as open to relationship as she can, continuing to trust that her arousal, if followed with care for her self, would lead her where she needs to go. Notably, when she follows arousal into the arms of a kind man, who, too, does not try to possess her, but rather cares for her, she has a dream that suggests to her that she may be wounded, as well as healed, which confuses her:

She looked between her legs and saw band-aids falling from her, floating like leaves on the water of the basin. [...] She opened her eyes, and then lay for a while, enjoying the smell of coffee brewing, staring at the ceiling, and then out the window at the bare trees, wondering what had been wounded there and what had healed. Tenderness is what she felt. (LGS:220)

Later, in Tokyo, as evidence of the change that has occurred in her sexual life, and a reversal of her own situation in Osaka, she tells Hope, who suggests she have sex with the handsome Marcel for pleasure alone:

I want it to be a celebration, a communion, an adventure in intimate ecstasy filled with both of us, all that’s in us. I think he wants it to be a stolen relief, a surrender to sex for sex’s sake so he can tell himself he was still true to his wife because his heart was not in it. (LGS:230)

When Hope responds, “You think too much; just enjoy it” (LGS:230), Lucy tries to return to her former exploration of sexual activity, until she senses

a subtle change [...] like a light going out somewhere in the house [...] as if she disappeared as a human being under him and became a receptacle [...]. She felt powerful for having stopped what felt wasteful, for having refused, for having said, “Not like that”. (LGS:230-231)

Months later, in Chicago, Lucy is tired of missing Julien (perhaps tired of the hole in herself), as well as exhausted from deflecting interested men’s desires and finding herself in uncomfortable intimate situations with them. She also “c[an] hardly bear to stand in front of the camera anymore [...]. It had been too long since [a photographer] had looked through the lens for her, instead of at her” (LGS:237-238). It is as if she senses that she is being considered an object, rather than a subject, yet cannot articulate it in this way. Poignantly, considering the opening pages of the novel, and Viola’s warning to Lucy about men interested in her for her beauty, Lucy senses her mother may help her understand what is evidently eluding her and turns toward home, and eventually a reenactment of the primary wound.

This desire “to walk around barefoot in the grass” (LGS:239) of home is aroused soon after her mother has told her, “You are rich,” surprising Lucy, who responds with the amount of her bank balance, which Viola shoos away as unimportant: “I’m not talking about money, I’m talking about experience” (LGS:235-236). Perhaps it is this validation from her mother that is powerful enough to make Lucy feel safe enough to go back to the place she dreamed of leaving: “I feel like I need to go there and settle something inside myself. I can’t explain it, only that it feels like the right next thing to do” (LGS:239).

It is here that the novel traces the last lines of a patriarchal religious distortion of the life force coming home to roost: by creating rules to control and govern sexual relations, it corners Ernst Pilgrim, a vital old widower, the crowning member of the hierarchy, once again in the position of abusing the most vulnerable member of his family hierarchy, in order to find release for the

arousal of eros, understood narrowly, within him. To highlight this metaphorically, this second scene of abuse occurs after Lucy and Ernst return from church, and granddaughter is a somewhat captive passenger caught in grandfather's vehicle, an evocative image of patriarchy itself.

Ernst sputters his excuse, echoing through the years since the primary wound: "I just need some love, honey" (LGS:248). Lucy feels his desperation and in it, she senses everyone's, yet there is a gift of freedom contained in it as well:

She, too, knew the relief that could feel like love in sex, and what comfort that could be, for a while. But love is love and sex is sex, and involved as the two may be, Lucy knew they were not each other. Had his own common sense been stretched out of whack by the power of his unquenched desire coupled with his inability to live up to those values he was passing on? [...] How terrifically sad it was that her and her grandfather's desperations, their life forces, had collided in such a way. Yet how fortunate, even if unbeknownst to Lucy at that moment, because now she could set herself really free. (LGS:248)

This is how the path of eros leads Lucy home to herself, as well as to a confrontation with her grandfather's experience of it. She can finally release the weight of not living up to all the values her grandfather represents. Furthermore, she now has no choice but to face the primary wound, to bring it out of hiding, as will be discussed in the following pages. For what concerns this section, the traces of eros, following a long trajectory, have brought her here, and even his abuse of her, and his abuse of the arousal of eros within him, opens her life (and his, if he so wishes) to creating more of what she wants with it.

Eventually, Lucy "began to wonder if people had seen through her all along, and if she, perhaps, was the only one who had believed her charade of invincibility" (LGS:270). Tracing Lucy's trust of the arousal, as an ally, it leads her to create her life along her desires and to the knowledge that

complete independence is impossible and “What was clear to her was that people did help” (LGS:270). Ultimately, it brings her to recognize that she is wounded, and vulnerable, and strong.

Eros moves Lucy as Lucy moves with it, opening her life. As the novel teeters at the edge of an old plot (albeit a reversal of it): girl-meets-boy, girl-loses-boy, girl-gets-boy-back, *Lucy, Go See* twists that plot to girl-meets-herself (Lucy looking in the mirror as a young girl), girl-loses-herself (Lucy fragmented), girl-gets-herself-back (Lucy looking in the mirror in Hong Kong, and then, Lucy at the end, allowing herself everything, flying into the unknown future). The quest’s movement from the familiar to the unfamiliar world, crossing the threshold of the known to the unknown, and back again, is as constant to *Lucy, Go See* as it is to eros.

Moreover, the novel plays out how eros, this creative, not only reproductive energy, can be an ally, and be used in ways that revive rather than consume,. This opens the possibility of thriving interdependent relationships instead of consuming dependent connections as the constitution of one’s own subjectivity leads to the possibility of two autonomous subjects in one relationship. As the protagonist acquires the strength to recognize and contain valued vulnerability, the possibility of a life of continual becoming opens. The novel offers this vision of freedom through eros, a possibility of coming home to oneself at the edge of the limits of knowledge, where we all live whether we recognize it or not.

2.4 Voice and Wound

2.4.1 Tracing voices to the wound

Tracing the voices in the bildungsroman of *Lucy Pilgrim*, it is remarkable that the novel is not a story of her coming-to-voice, as bildungsromans titled with the protagonist's names traditionally are. *Lucy Pilgrim's* voice is vividly on the page from the start. At the outset the reader is informed that Lucy trusts her inner voice, and is suspicious of others': "She listened more to the voice inside than the multitude hawking their wares out" (LGS:5). Within the novel's first and following pages, this young girl's voice is confident, "I'm going to see the world [...] that is what I am going to do" (LGS:11); curious, "Grandma, did you ever want to see the world?" (LGS:11); rebellious, "I don't think God really cares which church I go to" (LGS:13); and resistant, "I'll mow the lawn, I'll shovel snow, I'll walk the garbage across the road, let them come inside and do what I do" (LGS:15). Her voice rings clearly throughout the novel, and is always present. When she chooses silence, she believes it is to her advantage.

Only one voice is missing among the many that fill the pages of the novel: the voice of the wound. "Make the wound speak. The wound speaks" Cixous writes (2011:25). Though *Lucy Pilgrim* insists on being defined by her own voice, her early silencing of the wound's voice renders it inaudible, and it renders her unable to care for it. In this way, she blinds herself to her undeniable vulnerability. Just as Foucault asks, "How much does it cost the subject to be able to tell the truth about itself?" (quoted in Butler 2005:120), *Lucy* wonders what it might cost her to speak about what has happened to her. "The thought of telling her parents, because if she told anyone it would be them, only brought images of pain" (LGS:14). She decides the cost of the truth is too high, and thus silences the wound's voice, which costs her a separation from herself, yet maintains family relationships as they are. Voicing a

patriarch's mistakes is dangerous, while and yet "our capacity to reflect upon ourselves, to tell the truth about ourselves, is correspondingly limited by what the discourse, the regime, cannot allow into speakability" (Butler 2005:121). As the voice of the wound is hindered by a discourse that discourages dishonoring the patriarch, Lucy's self-reflection, her ability to know herself, is limited by what she cannot say. In this way, the pertinent coming-to-voice of the novel belongs to the wound. In other words, as a bildungsroman, *Lucy, Go See* is concerned with vulnerability's coming-of-age.

Gilligan asks if our culture's attraction to the tragic love stories that have upheld patriarchal patterns are perhaps society's way of repeating a traumatic experience, as Freud suggests humans do, as "an attempt at mastering loss— (and) the fantasy that it will come out right this time. But it never does" (2002:163). In *Lucy, Go See*, a traumatic experience leads to transformation, through loss, as the characters resist tragedy. The mother's voice, and the grandfather's vulnerability invest this transformation.

Furthermore, in Gilligan's research of Western civilization's foundational stories as stories of trauma (*Oedipus*, *The Oresteia*, and the book of Genesis are a few of her examples), she looks closely at how the trauma occurs and notes that all of the tragedies contain a triangle composed of two men and a woman (father over son, man over woman), and the trauma occurs when a father's or a husband's authority is challenged, and then, a man, wounded in his love, responds by unleashing a cycle of violence (2002:6-7). In *Lucy, Go See*, the wounded unleash, instead, a cycle of repair.

Also of note, before delving further into the voices of the novel, is Gilligan's focus on the tale of Psyche and Cupid in the *Metamorphoses*, mentioned in Part I of this exegesis as containing the first female quester in literature. Gilligan reads this story as a map of a resistance to tragedy and as a way out of patriarchy. To this end, she studies the patterns that mark a patriarchal social

order in order to break them; “the silent mother” (Gilligan 2002:19) is among them. Tillie Olsen noted that “the voice of the mother is the largest absence in literature; it is the voice that haunts the tragic love story” (1976:151). Heilbrun wrote for her part, “The heroines of most nineteenth century novels by women have either no mothers, or mothers who are ineffectual and unsatisfactory” (1988:120). More recent examples, those mentioned earlier, are McCullers’ *The Member of the Wedding*, in which the protagonist is motherless, and Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*, in which the mother is ineffectual and unsatisfactory. The mother’s voice is often present in *Lucy, Go See*, and the wound’s voice emerges from contact with it. In the following pages, I will trace the mother’s voice amidst other resounding voices as they call forth the voice of the wound so that it may come to its own.

2.4.2 The resonant voices

As the prologue’s melodic harmony abruptly ends, a wound is poetically described as “kneaded,” and a disorder is highlighted: “Something in the system was obviously very messed up” (LGS:6). It is interesting that the source of disturbance is identified as a systematic disorder; this directs attention away from the characters and toward an undefined “whole system”, apparently related to “the base of creation” (LGS:6). The reader is conducted toward a focus on the system that has been “messed with”, rather than the people who are, perhaps somewhat unwittingly, a part of that mess.

The mother’s voice is the first spoken voice on the pages of the novel, and a telling one, as inquisitive as it is suspicious: “What’s that? [...] Who gave you that?” (LGS:9), she speaks in reference to the beauty contest application in her daughter’s hand. Then, when Lucy nods toward an unknown male, her mother’s voice is commanding and prophetic, “Throw it away. That’s all you need is to be getting yourself mixed up with characters like that” (LGS:9).

Viola Pilgrim, the mother, is named after Viola, Shakespeare's character in *Twelfth Night*, who "speaks from the heart, says what she sees" (Gilligan 2002:212). Though her going is more limited than her daughter's, she definitely sees. Her warning to her daughter about men luring her into beauty competitions, her eventual resistance to her daughter's interest in a modeling career, and her suggestion that Lucy has, albeit "supposedly" (LGS:18), too many brains for that, are a feminist stance, questionably articulated, from a woman who does not use the word anywhere in the novel. The mother's voicing of the frivolity of artificial beauty (make-up and fashion courses), while her daughter focuses on how to use it to go and see, recall the literary dilemma presented earlier through Heilbrun's assessment of the necessary choice between erotic or ambitious plots for female protagonists, suggesting a choice must be made between the cultivation of beauty or intelligence. Here, the mother simply discourages her daughter's focus on her beauty, by referring to it as "phony bullshit" (LGS:16).

Far from being absent from the pages, there is a trio of mothers' voices in *Lucy, Go See* present in the first chapter, and they are all heroines, in their way, and victims, too, of an androcentric society that placed many obstacles between them and their going and seeing. Yet they are all effective in inspiring and informing Lucy, if only for having spoken. The grandmothers' voices offer clues to Lucy's ordinary world:

I'd just like to go somewhere. Ask your mother if she goes into town, if I can go along, even if it's just to sit in the car. [...] I could get on a bus and ride, and ride, and never come back. (LGS:11)

I only finished the eighth grade, honey. My mother made me quit school to stay home and help her. (LGS:22)

I was twenty. I'd been taking care of my brothers and sisters since I was thirteen. [...] One day your grandpa was coming to pick me up, and I was wearing what we called

knickers then, short pants just below the knees. My mother told me I wasn't going anywhere in those. Your grandpa drove up in his jalopy and I got in and rode into town with him. Never looked back, never went back. (LGS:22-23)

These voices move Lucy to invent a way of life for herself, different from the women before her, and through this movement aid in Lucy's self-construction. In this way, these mothers' vulnerable voices are creative and constructive.

At puberty, Lucy is "petrified" by her grandfather's touch on her thigh, a touch delivered with the words, "You've got legs just like your grandmother's. You're built just like her" (LGS:13). Lucy tells herself it is harmless "even though it didn't feel that way" (LGS:13). A battle of her voice against the wound's is underway, one neither wins. Lucy is silent while acknowledging the pain: "She couldn't even imagine being able to speak the words rising in her: Grandpa squeezed my breast really hard and acted like it was normal and didn't even say he was sorry" (LGS:14). This voice(lessness) belongs to the young female Pilgrim's vulnerability. The voice of the wound, of vulnerability, thus is silenced before it has a chance to speak, and remains deep in the body, which she now protects, strategizing ways to prevent any further abuse, "darting, dashing, or ducking when need be. When she did hug him, she covered her breasts with one arm, and wrapped the other around him" (LGS: 14). The wound, however, seeps into her a childhood song about things that "just don't belong" (LGS:19).

As she grows and experiments, she wonders why she does not get asked on dates, and her brother suggests her silence is more attractive to high school boys, "If you didn't talk, they would" (LGS:21). As she sits in modeling agent Bill Zabub's (ironically named for Beelzebub) office, she realizes in order to make money as a model, it is perhaps more lucrative to "load [...] her eyes" instead of her voice, "with the information that her mind [is] indeed hers" (LGS:29). Though the wound remains unvoiced, her body seems to

carry a magnetic imprint of it, as if the wound is calling for attention, for a voice of its own. However, as developed in the prior section, Lucy is not listening to her body, therefore cannot hear the wound clearly, though it appears in her thoughts, for example, as she witnesses a man masturbating and pleading for sex as she strolls through Central Park:

Did life really all boil down to that for men? [...] ‘They only want one thing and don’t give it to them. Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?’ She’d heard that back in Iowa and thought moo? Me? Do I moo? I think not. Am I for sale? I think not. But suppose it for a split second; what milk? Ah, so that was the magnet in her breast and others’ hands. (LGS:29)

Over time, however, the wound’s voice becomes so buried to Lucy that when a photographer “scoop[s] his hand inside the cup of the bra and lift[s] her breast to fit it more perfectly [...], Lucy ask[s] herself if it would be unprofessional to tell him to stop” (LGS:59).

Part I of *Lucy, Go See* is *The Manner of Her Setting Out*; it is so-titled to resonate with Part I of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Campbell referred to this section in monomyths as “The Ordinary World.” Thus it can be said that Lucy Pilgrim’s ordinary world has prepared the wound’s voice, her vulnerability, to be unrecognizable to her (and therefore to others), as a way to maintain relationship in a man’s world. In the closing pages of Part I, Lucy reflects on a photographer’s request to keep looking at him “that way” as she studies the images of herself afterwards. She sees “vulnerability and fear” yet also something she likes: “a willingness to remain open and receptive,” and wonders, “What was it about this combination of fragility and strength that men found attractive?” (LGS:61). Though “the ordinary world” has disabled the wound’s voice, it is here apparent that it is curiously attracted to it.

In Part II, *Her Dangerous Journey*, Lucy becomes intensely and inexplicably attracted to Julien, who voices a will to love her without possessing her. His

voice also inspires her to more independence rather than insisting on dependence. One can imagine the wound's voice attracted to Julien's when he speaks of his grandparents, and specifically when one reads: "All Julien seemed to be hiding was pain and Lucy could relate to that" (LGS:99). When Julien places his hand on Lucy's thigh for the first time, she is hypnotized, as if he has connected to what lies under the "thick plasma spreading and fixing itself into a transparent coating" (LGS:10), she felt quivering around her leg when the wound went undercover. This connection to her vulnerability leaves her speechless, even deaf: "Lucy could see that he kept talking, she watched his eyes, lips, face and free hand move, but she heard nothing." (LGS:71-72)

As Lucy enters more vulnerable territory with Julien, they are in the "Belly of the Wound," resonant with Campbell's "Belly of the Whale," the place of the hero's severest challenge. Lucy is there with Julien, exploring and opening the difficult world of sex and love where the wound lives. The fear that she has of loving Julien speaks for the wound:

She was hiding and waiting, wanting him to prove his love first, and then, well, then maybe she'd fess up to her own tender feelings for him. [...] Because god forbid what if that made him think she loved him? Then god knows what he might do to her, right? (LGS:112-113)

Unable to speak about what has happened to her through loving her grandfather, she is unable to understand her fear of loving another. Of note here is Butler's research: "In the case of incest, the child whose love is exploited may no longer be able to recover or avow that love as love" (2005:159).

Yet, Lucy is beginning to question her silence: "It occurred to her that sometimes she worried if she said what she really thought she might lose [their] love, [too]. She wondered if [...] not giving voice to her real thoughts was a lack of generosity" (LGS:115).

“Be strong. Go your own way. Drive your own life, do not let the energies and pressures of those around you steer you. [...] Go now, and don’t look back.” (LGS:128-30) is the voice of Julien, the lover Lucy cannot forget. “You have to admit you were weak” (LGS:134) is the voice of the husband she leaves, the one who insinuates that vulnerability is a weakness instead of a strength, that opening herself to danger is wrong, rather than strong.

“Why’d you tell him?” (LGS:136) is a question that comes from both her father and grandfather in reaction to her telling them about the affair and her crumbling marriage. “You take care” (LGS: 143) is her father alone, when she announces her divorce and upcoming travel. In other words, she dares to say what is on her mind, and is told to keep her distance from her family. Thus, it appears to her that through giving voice to her thoughts, she loses her father’s love and her family’s acceptance. Her mother, however, reaches her to say “I didn’t want you leaving the country without a kiss and a hug from me” (LGS: 143) as Lucy and the wound set off to travel through the United States, Europe, Asia, and eventually “home” again.

One can read that she refuses her vulnerability while in Paris with Julien when she says “It’s not about needing you. It’s about wanting you” (LGS:176). One can hear traces of the wound’s voice when she is feeling most vulnerable: “I am frightened by the strength of my feeling for you” (LGS:146). One can also hear the echo of the wound in the grandfather’s voice when he asks, “Tell me about your life, honey; did he hurt you?” referring to Lucy’s ex-husband, and one can hear it again in her answer, “No, but you did” (LGS:185-186). In this scene, the reader is also given the information that both Lucy and her grandfather “hated asking questions; they both figured that people told you what they wanted you to know” (LGS:186), which suggests that silence is not ignorance. As she explains the demise of her marriage to her grandfather, he

shows hints of his vulnerability through speech, as well: “We all make mistakes” (LGS:187) and “I sure do worry about you, honey” (LGS:188).

We see Lucy’s vulnerability when she weeps in her father’s welcoming arms, months later, though he remains silent. When her father finally does speak, it is to say: “Your whole problem is that you are too defensive” (LGS:193), exhibiting his lack of awareness of what has made his daughter defensive from an early age, and it pains her so much that she leaves, asking her grandfather to help her escape. Her grandfather’s response burrows into the depths of the wound, and pushes at the walls of protection she has set up for herself around it:

You’re just a loner in the world now [...] and this is no way to be. You will find out. You can’t get through this life all by yourself [...] You are totally independent [...] and it can’t work. You need people. (LGS:194)

Lucy receives this proclamation as a compliment and thanks him, the wound speaking through her with bravado when she aims the question “What kind of people? That’s the question” (LGS:194) at him, as if to say how could I need you, how could I need anyone who hurt me?

The wound appears with other lovers, as well. When in New York City, she comforts Mick, who has abused her verbally moments before: “She smooths his forehead, repeating a pattern she was not even aware of” (LGS:184). The wound speaks to her in dreams when she allows herself to be vulnerable and experiences tenderness with the unnamed lover mentioned in the prior section, who cares for her (LGS:192), and the wound is between the lines in Tokyo when she is “confused by the pleasure it br[ings] her to watch [Marcel] wander [...] through her apartment erect, as if searching for a lost object while carrying it” (LGS:202). It is arguably the wound, exhausted in Chicago, that speaks to her mother and asks, “Would it be okay for me to come home for a while?” (LGS:208).

In Part III, “Arrival at the Desired Country,” the equivalent of Campbell’s “Return,” Lucy finally gives her voice to the wound. The tension rises as Lucy questions herself there, at “home”:

What they all shared was love, Lucy knew, or at least thought, and that was worth keeping quiet for. But why did she think she needed to keep quiet in order to be loved? When she paused from her work and looked around, she glanced at her grandmother’s bedroom window. It was as if her ghost was a vigilant fugitive captive there. (LGS:212)

It is as if her grandmother is watching and waiting for Lucy to give voice to the wound, and her vigilance is caring for it, which keeps her fugitive nature captive. The ensuing scene is loaded with woundedness as Lucy approaches her grandfather, and he inquires to her aloneness, which she informs him she enjoys. In response, he reaches out and grasps her face in his hands and says, “You know what I’d like to do with you?” (LGS:213), and the wound becomes vivid. Lucy attempts retreat and he manhandles her again, twisting her face in his direction to say, “I’d like to open up that head of yours and see what the hell is inside” (LGS:213). One can argue that he, too, wants her to speak about the wound, that he knows he has done some damage. The bravado that Lucy developed in protection is clearly apparent when she laughs, then retorts: “I am as silent as you are. But there’s stuff going on in there; you can count on that” (LGS:213). In an interesting way, this waiting for her grandfather to speak about what he has done to her before she does, echoes her waiting for Julien to confess his love before she will.

Her father’s stabs about her short-lived marriage also touch on her inability to avow her love, and the tension around the contrast between her and her family’s sexual values only mounts now that she is back in the cauldron of her civilization, where she is constantly reminded how different she is. This allows her to see what she loved about living in foreign countries, it felt familiar to her to be the outsider. Yet, it is difficult for her to see that this difference is,

too, in a way, how free and open she is, as reflected in an intimate moment with her mother when Lucy easily asks her if she has ever had visions while making love. Her mother shakes her head, then suggests Lucy ask her father to see if she perhaps inherited this ability from him (LGS:217). Yet, Lucy can't even imagine asking such a question of him, because she also feels captive in this place, where he, her father, throws buckets of cold water on her for sunbathing topless in a secluded spot with the words: "Put some clothes on. We came out of the jungle a long time ago, you know. We're civilized people around here" (LGS:214).

It is at the height of all this tension that the wound is re-inflicted and once again leaves Lucy speechless, but not Ernst, her grandfather. Ernst "sputters [...] 'I just need some love, honey'" (LGS:217). Whether he is speaking for the wound or for himself, as they cannot be separated, what is clear is that a grandfather is looking for love in his granddaughter's mouth. As the pattern repeats, Lucy once again walks toward home swallowing her pain and then secludes herself. The wound's voice can be read between the lines as trying to speak to her in her surprise at "how vividly the image of Marcel in Tokyo, trying to figure out how to love her, entered her mind" (LGS:217).

The word "wound" is read on the page for the first time in the novel shortly after, as Lucy is forced to recall the years of pushing the voice of it deeper and away from her, excusing its infliction:

Squeezes, kisses, naming these things made them seem minor until she considered their source and how they were wounds inflicted where love and trust should be. Lucy felt like she was thirteen again, nothing had changed, and all she wanted to do was run. (LGS:218)

She seeks travel money from her father, who refuses; in other words, he will not aid her flight from the wound, unwittingly, thus he, too, is calling for its

voice. She even considers telling him what his father has done as a fundraising strategy but her integrity will not let her use the wound in this way (LGS: 218-219). She remains silent as the wound howls.

It is remarkable, considering the history of the mother's voice in literature, that Lucy Pilgrim's mother, carrying a similar unexposed wound, serves as the liaison between Lucy, her grandfather, and the wound. This is as remarkable as it is to note that it is the mother to whom the grandfather risks exposure, it is the mother he asks to speak for him as he shows his vulnerability, crying while asking her the question he must know the answer to, the very question which will uncover the wound, and dishonor him, thus a question itself filled with vulnerability and the desire to know: "Why doesn't she come and see me anymore?" (LGS:219). This question is indirectly on the page, delivered through the mother's voice to Lucy. It is arguable that the grandfather, or the silenced wound that he is blind to, wants his granddaughter's mother to know of its existence as he places this dilemma in her hands. We see the patriarch relinquishing his authority, whether consciously or unconsciously, to the mother and her voice.

Then we see a daughter hesitating to give voice to it, hesitating to say what she knows. "Do you really want to know?" (LGS:219) she asks first, to confirm, and upon receiving an affirmative brief response, answers succinctly and graphically. Viola's response to Lucy's voicing of the wound indicates a prior knowing along with immediate support, as she even offers to speak for her daughter (LGS:220). Lucy, though not yet ready, wants to speak for herself. Yet her mother's response, reminiscent of Lucy's own darting and dashing response to the first wounding (which remains in the silence), suggests that Lucy cover herself more thoroughly as protection in the future, by commanding that she wear a bra, as if that will solve the problem. It seems she believes that as long as part of Lucy's body is invisible, she cannot be hurt. When Lucy laughs and her mother insists, Lucy suggests "a suit of

armor” (LGS:220) as the surest protection, which Viola agrees is a good idea. This scene resonates with the notion of possible invulnerability.

In this scene, the reader also learns that Lucy has never felt closer to her mother, and when she is called by her and sees “a dab of fear in her eyes, something Lucy has never seen in them” (LGS: 221), Lucy sees her mother’s vulnerability for the first time since her mother’s mother’s death, when Lucy noticed “her mother’s knees buckling, and her heels spiking into the wet ground as she strove for balance on the gray, sad October day Grandma Bighart was buried” (LGS: 47).

With this fear in her eyes, Viola voices a hesitant and studied question: “Has your father ever tried anything like that?”, which resonates with vulnerability and strength. Her subsequent revelation, “Because mine did,” provides Lucy with the knowledge that her mother is wounded, too, by her own father, and not only has survived, but she “slapped him hard across the face, and told him he had better never do that again” (LGS:221), which leaves Lucy wondering how she had missed out on that gene and lends the reader insight into Viola’s character.

Interestingly, the grandfather invites Lucy, her mother, and father to dinner through the mother’s voice as well. Lucy’s anger is now free to rise, unquestioned, and the wound becomes more clearly a weapon as it is now undeniable. “Lucy shot glances filled with ire at her grandfather throughout the meal, and was either silent, or blunt, when she spoke to him across the table” (LGS:222). Lucy is still unsure about how she is wounded, however, even though she is sure that she has been hurt.

“*Écrire*, c’est peut-être ce qui vous *reste* quand on est chassé du domaine de la parole donnée’ vous dit-il. Alors, m’écrire au vol du mot. M’écrire, me faire le portrait, feindre une première couche, fausse naturellement, en rajouter

plusieurs couches,” writes Cixous (2011:42-55) on the wound. This is how Lucy begins to see the wound more clearly, as she writes to Julien, as she attempts a portrait of herself at that time in order to explain why it is not the right time for him to come:

different letters that she never sent, in which she circled around what was really going on, asking and answering herself until she got to the end of her line and realized she had formed a spiral. Rereading them [...] she saw what lay beneath it all: the open wound of her relationship with Ernst. (LGS:228)

The wound is finally visible to her on paper now, but she is still unable to speak, “She could feel him in the house at her back, moving around, not knowing what to do either, but she still didn’t want to deal with it. She just wanted out” (LGS:228). Though the wound is now visible to her parents, at least the most recent occurrence of it, it is still not talked about. Lucy wishes her father would, but he doesn’t. Her grandfather doesn’t. She doesn’t. Her mother has. The wound waits as Lucy struggles.

The crowning influence and effectiveness of the presence of the mother’s voice in this tale, is when Viola Pilgrim blazes with the question: “Who is he, God of the universe?” (LGS:230). This is in response to Lucy’s lament that she may have lost her father’s respect forever for having shown him her weakness. By asking her daughter this question, Viola is asking her daughter to question the validity of patriarchy, and thus enables her daughter to see the obstacle to self-respect it is for any woman. “And that’s how Lucy realized he wasn’t” (LGS:230).

Before she is able to voice the wound directly to her grandfather, however, Lucy must regain the independence she feels she has lost living in her parents’ home again, and depending on her mother for support. This exposure of her

vulnerability has changed her, has made her more aware of it, yet she knows she must leave. Interestingly it is her father who helps her flee, and her mother, though reluctant, even gives voice for her, as she quits her miserable job for her. “Lucy glance[s] at her grandfather’s house, and fe[els] cruel and right for not saying goodbye” (LGS:233).

Other voices appear in her life in Chicago, to call forth her own, and more importantly to call forth what she needs to say, in order to see. A European traveler asks, “Why is someone like you insecure? It doesn’t make sense” (LGS:237), which prompts Lucy to ask herself, and the Japanese newspaperman she works with tells her: “You should not think of yourself as a bad person, Lucy. You are a lovely person, growing.” (LGS:238), which enables her to see her vulnerability as well. What these voices do for Lucy is to help her glimpse the possibility of interdependence mentioned earlier, “What was clear was that people did help” (LGS:228).

Lucy even finds herself able to love and be loved more fully than she ever has: “She [...] found communion. It was possible, which she had known deep down, but now here was proof when she was no longer looking for it” (LGS: 241). When she expresses her bother that her father never spoke about what his father had done, her friend Theo tells her, “Maybe your dad thought that you could handle it just fine on your own” (LGS:243). And this opens her to ask, “When people tell me I am too independent, it sounds insane to me. What do you think about that?” and to hear Theo say, “I think in being independent, we are all interdependent” (LGS:244), which makes perfect sense to Lucy.

Again, it is first through the act of writing that she is able to tell her grandfather directly how she feels, by letter. When she returns home, she is able to finally give it her voice. Before he can say he is sorry, it is as if he cannot speak it either, he cannot give it voice because he does not want to

believe it about himself. This can be read in his words: “I don’t know how a girl could think such terrible things about her grandfather” (LGS:245).

It is Lucy who is able to see and to say, “I don’t think you are a terrible man. You are a man, just a man. All I know is that I never want it to happen again; just tell me you understand” (LGS:246). Her grandfather is unable to speak, and Lucy, knowing what that feels like, “is not going to make him” (LGS: 246). For her, it seems to be enough to simply have given voice to the wound. Once clearly and directly voiced, the tension that has been holding the novel taut from the very start is released.

It is at this point of the narrative that the reader sees who Lucy was perhaps hiding the wound’s voice from most deeply: the woman who had taught her how to read and how to love, who had instilled her with the desire to go and to see, and whose absence had drawn her to the place of the wounding. As her grandfather gurgles, his voice obstructed, “I love you, honey, I really do,” Lucy looks toward her grandmother’s room, and seeing her grandmother there, as she often had, Lucy is able to speak once more, “I didn’t want you to know anything about all of that” (LGS:246). The grandmother envelops her granddaughter in a comforting embrace, and the tension of the novel unravels.

Though this novel is more about a chorus of voices that draws the wound’s voice to speech, Lucy Pilgrim’s on-going maturity does hinge on her ability to speak that wound. Once she does, she is able to see and accept that she is, as we all are, wounded. As she recognizes her vulnerability, encouraged by her mother’s voice and provoked by her grandfather’s, she sees their vulnerability, as well, and learns that they, too, are among the wounded. The hero of the novel, in this sense, is speech itself as it saves the wound from isolation and oblivion. The wound(ed)’s strength, its power to move and to love, is evident as it comes-to-voice.

In the following and final section, I will trace the wound through this process of transformation, this coming-to-voice.

2.4.3 Tracing the wound through vulnerable territory

The spine of *Lucy, Go See* is the relationship between Lucy and Ernst Pilgrim, granddaughter and grandfather. It is also a story of a wound resulting from a defensive response of an invasion of the most intimate of spaces. As mentioned earlier, all narrative is born of some sort of desire. In this novel, a wound is born of desire (of arguably abused desire), an old man's desire for what he later calls "love" from a young girl who "kn[ows] love [i]s not a feeling; it [i]s work; it is what one d[oes], how one live[s], and it [i]s easier with some people than others" (LGS:10). Traveling through the novel with this intimate spine in mind, an exploration of this wound's vulnerable territory can be traced. Being the story of a wound's coming-to-voice, it is also the story of the wounded's, Lucy's, self-construction, as opposed to destruction, and as a response to invasion. Being of an intimate nature, this novel dramatizes the value of vulnerability, and the strength required to remain open while wounded, and the advantages acquired by doing so. *Lucy, Go See* is a dredging of the depths of what it means to be human.

Hélène Cixous writes of the primary wound each person carries, which she posits all literature springs from. "Everyone carries a wound, different for each, hidden or visible" (2011:23). She argues for the "entretien" or care, of that wound, in the title of her work: *Entretien de la blessure* (2011). It is interesting to consider the *entre*, the space between, and the *tien*, what is yours, of this word, the space between one and one's wound, and the infinitive from which it comes, *tenir*, to hold. Cixous also points to the fruitfulness of wounds, as she interprets Genet's work, "Of our loss, we make our profit"(*rière d'insérer*:2011). Butler also writes that our persistence as a

subject depends on our ability to do something with what has been done to us. She also speaks of the fruits of the wound, when she writes, “If I am wounded, I find that the wound testifies to the fact that I am impressionable, given over to the other in ways that I cannot fully predict or control (2005:84). In other words, and precisely, what can we do with what has been done to us while recognizing our vulnerability as given, and holding the space between ourselves and the wound, ourselves and each other?

Lucy Pilgrim’s primary wound is inflicted by the grandfather she loves. From the moment he interferes with her body, in other words, her territory, she puts the wound out of sight, under the map, so to speak, as “she decide[s] to pretend it ha[s]n’t happened” (LGS:10) and begins to constitute a self who imagines the possibility of immunity to further abuse. Lucy has to make the choice between voicing the wound and risking the loss of recognition as “being close to her grandfather also made her feel special in a world where she often felt overlooked” (LGS:10-11), or accepting recognition for pretending she has not been wounded. As she chooses silence, she establishes a pattern: she becomes recognized for not being recognized.

The Middle English etymology of the word recognize is *recognisen*, “To resume possession of land.”⁴ In invading the territory of her body and intimate space, her grandfather has attempted possession of it. In a sort of land grab, he has attempted colonization of her, and she, in her physical protection of herself thereafter is in a sort of vigilant process of resuming possession of her land, yet without a clear verbal claim to it, without a voiced act toward decolonization. Postcolonial feminists, Spivak among them, have related decolonization and the female body, using the trope of the female body as country, or territory, that has been raped, or dominated, and needs to be (re)conquered by its proper owners, common in anticolonial discourse. They do this to demonstrate how this reduces the female body to a symbol, and

⁴ The American Heritage Dictionary, Fourth Edition. 2000

gives a reductive image of women as silent territory, victims unable to speak. Lucy reduces her own body to a symbol when she imagines that it is a breast her grandfather wants to touch and hers, being most accessible, fulfills his need. Separating herself from her body, while gaining recognition for being unrecognized, she becomes “the good granddaughter,” loving and protective, defining herself in relation to her grandfather rather than herself. This affects her entire life as it links the hiding of her vulnerability to gaining recognition, which, ironically, is very much the traditional male hero’s way of being. The wound, in this way, forms her more like a man, in the traditional sense.

Because of this covering of vulnerability in order to succeed, she creates a hidden wounded world, lodged in her body. Butler writes of the manner in which violence toward the body outlines the physical vulnerability we, as humans, are unable to slip away from, a predicament we can never resolve and not of our choice, yet forms the limits of our choices and in so doing grounds our responsibility. Butler, like Cixous, sees being wounded as a way of understanding “that none of us is fully bounded, utterly separate, but, rather we are in our skins, given over, in each other’s hands, at each other’s mercy” (2005:101). Lucy seems to understand this at an early age, yet because she is a child, she understands it as she is the one at mercy, more than others. Butler reminds that we are not responsible for this abuse by another, yet “it creates the conditions under which we assume responsibility” (2005:101). Lucy’s management of her wound develops her responsibility, more to the point, her response ability, though more for others than for herself.

Lucy hides this wound in order to maintain a loving relationship, thus she now also associates it with love and sex. In this way, her characterization dramatizes the “difficult position of remaining ethically responsive to those who do injury to us” that Butler writes of when she suggests, “Even the other who brutalizes me has a face” (2005:85). It must be remembered that Lucy is thirteen when this happens, and though “she ha[s] no idea what to do [...] she

kn[ows] [...] it is wrong” (LGS:10). In order to deal with the pain of confusion, she creates a clear separation between love, as a task, and she approaches sex as an equation and “set[s] about deducting its unknown values” (LGS:14).

Considering the wound the abstract protagonist of the bildungsroman *Lucy, Go See* means to consider vulnerability its protagonist. Gilligan considers that the tension between tragedy and comedy is evident in the answer to the questions: “is it possible to know and also to love? Is it possible to love and also not to know?” (2002:218-219). The novel answers yes to both questions, especially as it sees love as a task, a willingness, an active verb, in other words, a choice. Yet, reflecting on Butler’s question, “Have we ever known the human? And what might it take to approach that knowing? Should we be wary of knowing it too soon or of any final or definitive knowing?” (2005:36), one might ask if it is possible to love, alone? Is knowing important? Who knows if one knows if one is unable to know oneself? More to the point, knowing the other requires at least the other’s exposure of vulnerability. Most precisely, knowing is impossible without recognition of vulnerability.

Here, once again, inserting Kamuf’s definition of love as non-destructive (2000:165), how do we know and want without destroying the other and without being destroyed ourselves? Butler states, “Recognition takes place through communication, primarily but not exclusively verbal, in which subjects are transformed by virtue of the communicative practice in which they are engaged.” She explains, “For if it is the case that destructiveness can turn into recognition, then it follows that recognition can leave destructiveness behind” (2005:124). Thus, what is necessary for Lucy’s maturing is recognition of the wound, and herself, as wounded.

In the following pages, I will trace the wound(ed) and the fruitfulness of valuing vulnerability, as Lucy relinquishes her futile search toward a state of

unwoundability, and the illusion of becoming an invulnerable hero. In the end, Lucy realizes it is, instead, more fruitful to “accept the inevitability of injury,” as Butler points out that Adorno and Levinas do (2005:102).

“Where did people get the idea that a painless life was possible, anyway?” (LGS:167) is one of the questions the novel *Lucy, Go See* asks.

2.4.4 The coming-of-age of the wound

In the opening pages of the novel, the reader is introduced to a Lucy who wants to know, “She want[s] to go and see what lay beyond the rolling green hills” (LGS:4), and a grandfather who wants to feel, which is evident by his “kneading” touch (LGS:1). Two types of yearning are in a room alone; their combination is erotic, as delineated in the section on eros, and thus, electric. The grandfather, aroused and alone in the cage of patriarchy, reaches out and grabs what he is hungering for from the unsuspecting child who loves him. This is the physical representation of the wound; the emotional wound goes much deeper. Butler comments, “By refusing to consider what happens to the child’s love and desire in the traumatic incestuous relation with an adult, we fail to describe the depth and psychic consequence of that trauma” (2004:155). Perhaps the degree of trauma is considerable, yet it is trauma all the same: “Squeezes, kisses, naming these things made them seem minor until she considered their source and how they were wounds inflicted where love and trust should be” (LGS: 218). In the novel the reader is witness to what happens to Lucy’s love and desire in response to this trauma.

It is interesting, first of all, to use Butler’s thinking in order to obtain insight into the character of Lucy Pilgrim, and perhaps why she accepts this wound as a cost to remain in relationship. Butler writes that to respond to injury by the other as if we have a “right” not to be injured, or treated as such, implies that

we are treating the other's love as an entitlement, rather than as a gift (2005:102). Lucy wants the gift of a "tender relationship" and "in her determination to make one, Lucy ke[eps] showing up for the job" (LGS:11). In this way, she understands a need or desire (the verb kneaded ironically resonating with needed) of her grandfather's as valid, though misplaced, and thus, removes his intent to hurt her from the injury. This is where she separates from her body, as mentioned earlier, when she thinks: "He wanted to touch a breast, she guessed, and there had been hers in front of him" (LGS: 10).

Yet remaining in relationship, she remains susceptible. Butler writes, "We must think of a susceptibility to others that is unwilled, unchosen, that is a condition of our responsiveness to other. To be responsive is to be responsible" (2005:85). Lucy accepts her susceptibility as a responsibility, and it is in this way the wound stimulates the development of her responsibility, as mentioned earlier. However, in responding to him, more than to herself, she hinders the development of this ability toward herself, thus inclining her toward assuming responsibility that is not hers: "She was blind to how she had carried, and was still carrying responsibility that was not hers—protecting the son from the father and the father from himself" and "that [...] made it impossible for her to feel her own true weight, because she was carrying someone else's" (LGS:218).

With this response able tendency, Lucy embarks on her quest, called to adventure by her search for knowledge of what is under or behind the wound. The body of the novel, thus, can be read as a voyage of the wound, as it travels with Lucy through relationships and solitude. First, she experiments sex as if it were an "equation" as mentioned above, again driven by a desire to know as "all the hullabaloo and desperation surrounding it [which] told Lucy there was more than propagation involved" (LGS:14). In this way, Lucy is exploiting her body by herself, using it as a guinea pig, of sorts. Love, for her, as already mentioned is "a task she can perform with whomever she chooses" (LGS:15).

Her attraction toward Julien, the man she meets in Japan, insists on a reunion of Lucy with her body, and of these separated parts of her life. This meeting also asks her to defy the value of fidelity with which she has been raised, a vow she ironically and purposely left out of her marriage, as if unconsciously unable to let anyone claim to that space other than herself (LGS:52). More poignantly, Julien's presence moves her into a more loving and sexual relationship with herself, as he points to her as the origin of her desire, rather than him. It is as if he is leading her directly to the wound, to the place where she separated herself and love from sexual desire in general, and thus, in particular. When Julien suggests that she "be a good girl for herself" (LGS: 128), rather than for others, he is holding the wound's fruit in his hand, recognizing what she does not.

When she reenters her marriage, less fragmented, she begins to see the colonial rule her husband believes he has a right to establish: forbidding future solo travel and communication with Julien. "She'd never in a million years thought that he would consider he owned her" (LGS:134). Her husband's insistence on rights of ownership to her, and his insinuation of sexual rights (LGS:137) to her, also drive Lucy to lay more claim to herself. It can be said that she is reuniting with the wound as she recognizes the fragmentation it caused.

Cixous observes a reciprocal longing between the wound and the wounded, and their care for each other, as the wound itself is vigilant of its carrier: "I will keep you forever. Signed: Your Wound" (2011:23). Interestingly, Lucy's wound keeps her close to it, and in this way, somehow to herself. Though the wound is there, under the lines and her voice, she is still not claiming it. Perhaps because it would be understood as weakness, perhaps because in only seeing herself as strong, she is unable to see it. She is firm in believing in the possibility of a total independence and invulnerability, easily deduced in the

scene where she thanks her grandfather for telling her she is totally independent.

In any case, she continues to protect the territory of the wound in her encounters with men. Yet as she grows, and goes, and sees, she begins to ask herself questions about why it is difficult for her to love, as in Osaka with Julien, and why she enjoys watching Marcel's frustration when she refuses him in Tokyo, and whether she really loves Julien or not during his lengthy absence from her life. The protection around the wound unravels as she softens, as she gains self-sufficiency, and as she feels more responsible for herself alone. It comes to the point where she seems to have forgotten the need to protect herself, especially from her grandfather, because she is shocked when he grasps at her territory once more. In so doing, he brings the primary wound vividly to the surface. Here, too, the wound can be seen to have a life of its own, larger than either of them.

The narrator understands the fruitfulness of this reiteration of abuse before Lucy does and delivers this information as if to ease the brutality of the scene. "Gifts come in such awful packages sometimes we do not realize that is what they are" (LGS:217). This brings to mind Cixous's understanding of the wound:

And now I understand that all we did not understand was not taken from us but on the contrary entrusted to us to keep in the shelter of a non-understanding that conserved future treasures frozen until our spiritual coming-of-age. All that remained painful, closed, foreign, is in truth our dowry. A lode of torments, we think, mistaken. There comes the day when these sleeping clots wake into revelations. (1998:188)

The wound rushes out from behind the scenes when the grandfather intensifies it by forcing an inappropriate kiss. In this sense, he is overpowering and

penetrating her territory, and the wound becomes even more undeniable than his earlier attempt. The suffering brought upon Lucy from comparing herself to her family's values and not measuring up is lightened as his action makes a mockery of them. As the narrator describes: "He shatter[s] the weight of all those values she [i]s not living up to."(LGS:248) However, first, and in line with her pattern of being more response-able for him than herself, Lucy wonders if "his own common sense had been stretched out of whack by [...] his inability to live up to those values he was passing on?" (LGS:217). At this point the wound is vivid, and there is a sense that it is shared, that he is wounded, too. In response, "Lucy f[ee]l[s] like she is thirteen again, nothing ha[s] changed, and all she want[s] to do is run" (LGS:218). It is interesting that she no longer thinks of hiding her wound, she appears ready to give up relationship now.

She cannot, however, there is no longer an escape. She must face the wound, and she even seems to know it, as "something in her told her she had to see this thing through another way" (LGS:219). As discussed in the section 2.5.1, it is Lucy's mother, and grandfather, who provoke her to speak the wound. Yet, she is able first to only speak it to her mother. There is still not a sense that she sees herself as vulnerable, detectable in the taunting she inflicts on her grandfather in the restaurant soon after the wound has been voiced. Oddly, this is when she takes on a job she does not want, in order to impress her mother because she now feels indebted to her as an "ally" (LGS:222). She begins a rapid falling into suicidal depression as she feels she is back at the beginning of her life and has made no progress at all. Furthermore, when she realizes there is no quick way out of her predicament and there is no knight in shining armor who will come in and save her, alluded to as her sister comments that she is amazed that Lucy thinks Julien will show up at their doorstep, she destroys any possessions that remind her of "all the men she ha[s] ever known" (LGS:224). She would like to begin again, she would like to be new,

it seems she would like to be unwounded, still. This is, notably, when she sends out a last admission to Julien, starkly showing her vulnerability to him:

I thought I was so smart, I thought I had it all figured out, but now I see I know nothing. [...] I only want you to know that I am not who I have appeared to be. I wanted to be a “hero” but am facing the reality that I am not strong enough. (LGS:225)

Her illusion and image of the possibility of being an invulnerable strong hero is clearly visible in those lines. As Lucy looks to family, friends, books, psychiatrists, psychologists, looking for anyone to tell her what is wrong with her, and why she is feeling weak, it is as if she cannot accept that she is wounded, vulnerable, like everyone else. It seems she is also unable to see that strength does not mean the absence of pain. Amidst what she later considers the crumbling theatrics of letting herself go, Julien’s response to her flair for help, in other words, her admission of vulnerability, arrives. When she reads that “wherever she [i]s, he would like to come and share her space, and *by fact, her spirit*” (LGS:228), she learns that she can show her supposed weakness, her vulnerability, and still be loved and desired, perhaps even more so. This is crucial to the recognition of her primary wound, the wound she has hidden in order to be loved.

At this point, Lucy begins to wonder if her falling apart has in fact been a somewhat unconscious desire to fully expose herself in order to find out if she would still be loved in her vulnerability. The wound is moving her to do this, it can be argued, and in this way, the wound can be seen as an adolescent acting out while approaching maturity. What is interesting here, in relation to the wound, vulnerability and eros, is that this is when Lucy realizes that she no longer feels the hole inside herself. It is in this instance, when thinking of Julien: “Lucy skimmed through three pages covered in his handwriting, thinking how strange it was that she could no longer imagine being with him, it was like searching for a hole that was no longer there” (LGS:227).

In her attempts to respond to him, to explain why she prefers to be alone, she writes, as mentioned earlier, “circling around what was really going on, asking and answering herself” (LGS:228) until the wound speaks. She is doing as Cixous observes we all do, “Everyone licks their wound” (LGS:40), “until she g[ets] to the end of her line and realize[s] she ha[s] formed a spiral” (LGS: 228). This symbolizes the breaking of a pattern. In caring for the wound, Lucy is able to see it. When she finally reads what she has written, she sees “what lay beneath it all: the open wound of her relationship with Ernst” (LGS:228).

Recognition is the first step, voice comes later. What first becomes clear to Lucy is that she is wounded, it is interesting how this both silences her and fills the hole, as if that hole is her vulnerability and no longer questing to be heard. It is as if her vulnerability or her wound has matured, and mature, it waits for her to speak as it no longer has a need to, now that she has heard it.

As Lucy returns to her quest, and leaves her familiar world again, the wound, of course, travels with her, now a more mature and recognized companion. As Lucy meets others, who clearly see her vulnerability (those voices mentioned in the section prior), “She beg[i]ns to wonder if people had seen through her all along, and if she, perhaps, was the only one who had believed her charade of invincibility” (LGS:237). As she accepts this, it enables her to claim her vulnerability as part of her territory, enlarging her recognition of territory, so to speak, and while being able to use her wound, to do something with what has been done to her, she increases her subjectivity. The strength this requires, “It continued to amaze her how much guts it took to suit herself” (LGS:236), enables her to recognize that strength is contained in vulnerability and the value of it. It demands great strength to resist colonization while opening one’s borders undefensively.

Lucy's story suggests that in caring for our wounds we enable them to mature as we care for ourselves and others. The wounds are useful as they enable us to understand what it means to be a human being. Perhaps it is enough to recognize that we are all wounded, rather than concocting strategies to prevent or eradicate injury. There is no way to solve the predicament of the vulnerability inherent to human life. As Butler states, "To be human seems to mean being in a predicament that one cannot solve" (2005:103). The traditional bildungsroman compromise Lucy Pilgrim makes with society is to accept that to be alive is to be susceptible.

In the following conclusion, I will link eros, voice, and wound to subject creation and the quest for home, as if home is love.

3. Conclusion

The intention of this thesis, overall, has been to create literature and a critical discussion of it that is impossible within the pages of fiction. The point of departure of the novel was the common desire to tell a tale and a desire to create an original female subject who shared a foundation with her ancestors yet went beyond. The intention of this exegesis has been to illuminate the novel, and the broader human story the novel tells about female subjectivity, patriarchal wounds, and the way eros, voice, and wound can be used as tools of self-construction. When asked by another author what I wanted to give with the novel, after thought, the answer was courage, and here the Oxford dictionary's definition of it is appropriate: "strength in the face of pain or grief." This means strength in the face of vulnerability, and the inevitable wounded condition of being human. What I wanted to give with the exegesis was a scholarly discussion of the value of vulnerability. The novel is richer in resonance for the writing of the exegesis, and the exegetical interpretation of the novel is richer for the writing of the novel. Both texts have been intense probes into the experience of being human and have required balance of the emotional and the intellectual, the creative and the cognitive. The overall quest of the thesis, too, has been a quest for home.

The poet Novalis left an unfinished *erziehungsroman*⁵ behind at his death, the story of a poet's coming-of-age, a poet referred to as a pilgrim in the text. In *Henry von Oftendinger*, Novalis asks and answer the question, "Where are we going?" "Home, all the time" (Novalis 1990 (1802):159). Lucy Pilgrim's progress is the building and care of a home, the house of joy, or "mobile home" (LGS:1) that is hers. Tracking the way eros, voice, and wound lead Lucy away and back to home, and self, is to decipher how recognition and

⁵ This is similar to a *bildungsroman*, but more narrowly pedagogic in nature, in this case, it is the story of the apprenticeship of a poet.

love are impossible without valuing vulnerability and openness. This tracing leads one to see how the recognition of vulnerability may be impossible without a wound. This quest reminds, too, that life is impossible without eros, without desire, which creates and forms the self. Lucy Pilgrim's self-construction, too, suggests that the claiming of one's territory is impossible without voice.

Threads and traces of domination or colonization of another's territory can be followed through antiquity, and these, too, can be called quests for home, as they are quests and (re)quests, to call more and more territory home. As this exegesis illuminates Lucy Pilgrim's quest to self-construct, or in other words, to colonize herself, it suggests that human beings, descendants of colonization, unconsciously or consciously attempt colonization of the other as a way of life, thus wounding each other as they approach the building of lives and relationships in strategical rather than organic terms, mistakenly claiming other's territory as one's own. In this approach, vulnerability is seen as a weakness, yet the aim of invulnerability is as futile as it is illusory.

The majority of female subjects in literature, though this has been changing in the last fifty years, have stayed home, that home generally being an other's, a father's or a husband's. They have generally occupied an inanimate position, as highlighted by Campbell's explanation of the absence of female questers in ancient literature: woman is "the place" men want to get to. Yet, the interpretation of the tale of one of the first female questers in literature, in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, as a map of resistance to patriarchy, suggests that the thread of resistance to the above-mentioned conquests and contests, to colonization in general, has also run throughout history. Hooks's argument (2002) for restoring primacy to quests to love, rather than to quests to dominate, is a (re)quest to dethrone the quest to colonize, and suggests inherently that love, perhaps, could be home.

The turning away from focus on love, intimacy, and relationships in female bildungsromans in response to critique that female plot lines were simply love stories, inspired Hooks's argument (2002), as well, that this feminist critique pushed love aside as inferior to more tangible achievements. As literature can be considered to reflect society, at the same time that it shapes the latter, one can ask if the feminist movement in society has also caused human beings, women especially, to consider heterosexual love inferior, and any quest for it invaluable. Lucy Pilgrim's quest dramatizes the social and personal complexities of Lucy's efforts to employ love while seeking those achievements believed to be superior, as she learns that, contrary to traditional literary quests where marriage and motherhood are offered as the Holy Grail of sorts, in life she must become her own hero for herself, rather than waiting for a man to save her, or grant her territory in the world.

Annie Dillard asks:

Why are we reading, if not in hope of beauty laid bare, life heightened and its deepest mystery probed? Can the writer isolate and vivify all in experience that most deeply engages our intellects and our hearts? [...] Why are we reading if not in hope that the writer will magnify and dramatize our days, will illuminate and inspire us with wisdom, courage, and the possibility of meaningfulness, and will press upon our minds the deepest mysteries [...] Why does death catch us so by surprise, and why love? We still and always want waking. (1989:72)

Reading and writing interpreting one's writing, in the hope that the probe will clarify the mystery, is an exercise in constantly asking what one means by what one says. Is it possible to really isolate and vivify an experience? It is perhaps insane to imagine that one can illuminate and inspire others with wisdom, courage and the possibility of meaningfulness, one can only hope to do that much for oneself as one presses again and again on the mind, asking the unanswerable questions, searching to know the unknowable. The state of

bewilderment that Dillard writes of may be similar to that of recognizing one's own vulnerability, which is the knowledge gained when making the passage from the familiar to the unfamiliar world of the quest. This thesis suggests that rather than questing to overcome that vulnerability, the real quest consists in living with it.

Dillard, too, with her question about the surprising grip of love and death, evokes Rilke's sealed envelope, passed on from generation to generation unopened, depriving us from our ancestors' knowledge. Dillard's words are addressed to writers, whom she tells, in the same volume, to write as if their subjects were a room of terminal patients, as we all are anyway, and to ask themselves what they would say to a dying patient that would not be considered trivial. How not to trivialize what we do not know? The word trivial has its roots in commonness, the public space. Perhaps to trivialize love and death is to move them from the intimate space, to the public. Perhaps it is intimacy that is in peril, perhaps this is the hesitation that causes the hand to deliver the envelope sealed.

Eros, voice, and wound are intimate and vast subjects, concerns of all humans, and most precisely between two. They are all quests to connect to another, and they all have the power to take one away from self, to become beside oneself, and to bring one home. They are all useful in the construction of a self and a life, and they all carry the possibility to destroy as well. They can be threats to territory and they can establish territory. The autonomy of an individual depends on the ability to recognize and claim oneself as one's own, and the interdependence of a community depends on the mutual respect of those personal territories. The price for this recognition can be high, and it is arguable that Lucy pays a high price to understand that she owns herself. As Rudyard Kipling states:

The individual has always had to struggle to keep from
being overwhelmed by the tribe. To be your own man is a

hard business. If you try it, you'll be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself. (Gordon 1967:7)

To sum up the traces of the quests of eros, voice and wound in *Lucy, Go See* as a dramatization of the human quest for home, I will briefly consider each one, starting with desire as the source and ally of human beings. Perhaps all desire is connected to a desire to be at home in the world, a yearning to unite to source and to be one's own agent in life. Desire leads Lucy home, symbolically and figuratively, in place and in person. This is why the exegesis considers the possibility of eros as an ally, rather than as an enemy, as a current of power to employ at one's will inconsideration of optimal maintenance rather than consumption. This is why it argues for caring for desire as one cares for the wound, caring for desire as a connector that brings us to our limits and expands us, while increasing our awareness of others' limits, other's boundaries, other's territories. Trusting and listening to desire leads Lucy to trust and own herself, and finally to claim herself as her own territory, instead of being colonized, or attempting colonization of others.

Her experience of the arousal of eros as a personal compass of her own territory leads her to question where it wants to lead and why. Because she links the arousal to creation, and thus to creativity, she asks what can be created with this arousal, instead of what or who can be consumed by it. In her exploration, Lucy learns that it is her connection to life, her open relationship to it, and the daring to create the life she wants for herself that arouses her, and, thus, her character links subjectivity to jouissance. In deciding how to use the force of her arousal, rather than feeling a victim of it, she develops sexual agency. Her evolution from a distrust of what is rising within her, which closes her and creates a stance of defense, to an understanding of arousal as an internal compass, opens her first to the unknown power in herself, and then to that of another, if she so chooses. This evolution reveals the way in which society has hindered human sexual agency in general, and female sexual

agency in particular. The ability to situate her arousal as intrinsic rather than extrinsic leads Lucy Pilgrim home, and to a feeling of being at home in herself.

If one cannot speak, one is not at home. When one speaks, one situates oneself at home, one claims one's place as home. As Lucy listens to the voice within, she is eventually led home, though it is not only her inner voice that leads the way. She also chooses to listen to other voices, when they resonate with hers, or when they arouse her. As we have seen, tracing the voices in *Lucy, Go See* leads to the understanding of the novel as a coming-of-age of the wound, of vulnerability. The voice of a primary wound scurries undercover throughout, disabled in a society that devalues vulnerability, and by a discourse that intimidates dishonoring the patriarch. The exegesis reveals how this unspeakability impedes a young woman's ability, in this case, Lucy's, to know herself and claim herself as her own, and how this lack of self-knowledge and self-possession impedes relationship. When she finally gives voice to the wound, she is able to see her own vulnerability and value it.

The presence of the mother's voice, and the grandfather's, via the mother, drive Lucy to give voice to the wound and in so doing expose the power of the mother's voice to dismantle patriarchy. The chorus of these voices reveal the grandfather's desire to expose the wound he has inflicted and to repair the damage. Voice leads to wound, which leads to revelation, which leads to repair.

When the wound speaks, vulnerability speaks, and is at home. It is as if the wound waited for Lucy to be mature enough before she could give voice to it, though her care for it is evident throughout the novel.

Lucy's care, in general, is evident throughout the novel. The novel suggests a life of caring for self and other as a creative act, and a caring for eros, voice, and wound as means of constructing a lovable life.

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