

# Lyn Lifshin: PARADE



WR: 134





# Shaker House

They knew what  
to leave out

like backpackers  
who know you

must get rid  
of what you

don't need or  
it can kill you

Lyn Siskin



SHAKER HOUSE: 1

they know what  
to leave out

like back packers  
who know you

must get rid  
of what you

don't need or  
it can kill you

SHAKER HOUSE: 2

They wanted to  
transform earth  
into heaven

wasted no effort.  
Craft people  
rarely signed

their name. They  
invented clothes  
pins, a new

shape of broom.  
Clocks, oval  
boxes, chairs.

Their work, an  
expression of  
themselves,

the simplicity  
and care, how  
they lived

SHAKER HOUSE: 3

Men on one side  
of the dwelling,

women on the other.  
Separate doors,

separate stairs.  
They dressed the



right side first,  
used the right

foot on the stair  
first. To please

God and prepare  
for him, lay

straight in bed  
at night

#### SHAKER HOUSE: 4

Work was worship

all labor was  
consecrated

a man can show his  
religion as much  
by measuring onions

as singing Hallelujah.

They spun wool and  
cotton flannel grew  
seeds for asthma

made circular saws to  
help make life

joyous. No ornaments  
nothing that was  
not needed,

order, the only beauty

#### SHAKER HOUSE: 5

They studied plants  
to see what  
the tree liked

when they found  
neighbors were  
stealing corn,

they planted more.  
Some for the



Shakers some  
for the thieves.  
Some for the  
crows they  
need to eat, too

#### SHAKER HOUSE: 6

They bound books,  
raised silk worms,  
distilled whiskey,  
ran hotels, sold  
opium. They were  
into photography,  
sold seeds, grew  
the biggest melons,  
the biggest  
cucumber. Shakers  
believed they  
were indebted

to God, got up  
at 4:30 in summer.  
Men did a day's  
work before

their first  
meal which  
always in winter  
included apple pie

#### ONE OF THE LAST LIVING SHAKERS

My mother passed  
away when my father  
remarried his wife  
didn't like us  
so he gave us  
to the Shakers  
we loved them  
they took us  
in we couldn't  
believe we weren't  
related by blood



## SHAKERS

We bought  
a black man  
who had believed  
in us for years

bought him  
so he wouldn't  
be sold South

accepted him  
as an equal

## SHAKERS: MARCH 1843

temporal duties  
were laid aside  
we were to  
look over our  
lives all one week

some indian spirits  
made themselves  
known this week

we had a good  
meeting 32 hours  
when we found some  
of our vegetables  
were being stolen  
by poor neighbors

so we planted more  
some for the crows  
some for our neighbors

well thieves and  
crows have to  
eat too

## MADONNA WHO DROPPED ACID IN THE SIXTIES

to deal with  
the world,  
now drops  
antacid  
to deal  
with it



MADONNA OF THE PUZZLE DOESN'T KNOW WHY

the grass does  
look greener  
on the other  
side of her  
street, wonders  
what the prime  
minister of  
Japan thought  
when Bush's  
head was  
heading toward  
his lap

CLEAR MADONNA

makes you suppose  
what is transparent  
and colorless  
is more pure

MADONNA OF THE SO MANY BEST SELLING BOOKS

has wrenched  
her hand  
from autographing  
first editions

she's in too  
much pain to  
write more

MADONNA HEARS OF THE OTHER MADONNA'S

used panties  
sale, how much  
many pay, that  
wild for anything  
that was near her,  
especially down  
there. She  
remembers the  
Jesuit who just  
wanted something  
that had been  
close to her  
and tho she knew  
what he wanted,  
sent him a  
book instead

MADONNA FOUND FLOATING

dead in a tub of  
milk surrounded  
by sliced bananas  
a little sugar  
on her skin  
had to be  
targeted  
by the  
serial killer

STEAM ENGINE MADONNA

you can ride her  
across Nebraska  
it's soul shaking



LIKE EATING BOLOGNA SANDWICHES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE  
NIGHT

you keep  
coming back

in poems

BUDDHIST MADONNA TO THE HOT DOG VENDOR

"make me one  
with everything"

POLITICIAN WEATHER-REPORTER MADONNA

sticks her finger  
outside to see  
which way the  
wind is blowing

NOT GOING TO TAKE SEXUAL HARASSMENT STANDING UP OR  
LYING DOWN MADONNA

knows not  
only she  
but the  
law's been  
violated

TIRED OF SATIRE, QUIPS AND JADED WIT MADONNA

puts all her  
ironies in  
the fire

MADONNA WHO'S SICK OF COMPUTERS AND MEN

feels they're  
down more often  
than they are up



1040 MADONNA: 1

her form  
drives you  
crazy

COUCH POTATO'S MADONNA

is rump-  
led

1040 MADONNA: 2

her schedule  
always changes  
just enough  
to throw you

USED CAR SALESMAN'S MADONNA

thinks she's got  
a great deal

1040 MADONNA: 3

even if you  
are not in  
the mood,  
not ready,  
when she  
wants you  
to fill her,  
you'd better

COWBOY'S MADONNA

likes to  
straddle

anything that  
bucks

OPTOMETRIST'S MADONNA

knows he  
is into  
specs  
appeal

1040 MADONNA: 4

is out to  
take you

DANCES WITH WHALES MADONNA

learns to use  
her tail to  
get around

REALTOR'S MADONNA

wants a lot

DANCES WITH SHEEP MADONNA

dreams of  
being rammed

YES MAN'S MADONNA

gets consensus

DANCES WITH BATS MADONNA

feels her world  
has been turned  
upside down

SMOKER'S MADONNA

is always  
in a cloud



DANCES WITH GOATS MADONNA

likes how  
they're so  
horny

DANCES WITH CAMELS MADONNA

gets humped

POLITICALLY CORRECT MADONNA: 1

proposes new  
laundry laws  
prohibiting  
separation of  
whites and colors

POLITICALLY CORRECT MADONNA: 2

says the  
Nobel Prize  
discriminates  
against more  
mediocre persons

POLITICALLY CORRECT MADONNA: 3

insists Santa  
get extra reindeer,  
Ahmad, Jorge and  
Motohiro to join  
the sleigh

POLITICALLY CORRECT MADONNA: 4

insists candidates  
seek verbal consent  
before kissing babies

CHAMOMILE MADONNA

is sweet as  
apples but leaves  
a bitter  
after note. She  
can treat  
everything,  
malaria,  
indigestion.  
Clears your  
skin, makes  
you sleep

WINTERGREEN MADONNA

is cool,  
wispy  
  
spreads fast

PERSIMMON MADONNA

has a tough shell  
  
seems hard but  
if you get inside  
  
her bright ruby,  
shiny places  
  
will dazzle you

GINSENG MADONNA

can make you  
do what you  
do longer  
and stronger

THYME MADONNA

is always ahead



## PROUST, AFTER HIS MOTHER'S DEATH

He went to  
Versailles,  
never left his  
room for 5 months,  
slept until  
sun went down.  
"I know nothing  
about the season's  
change," he wrote  
in a diary, "am I  
really in Versailles  
or elsewhere?"  
Then, one morning  
he drank 17 cups of  
coffee, hired  
someone to  
take him riding  
in a car. "It  
was," he said,  
"like being shot  
from a canon."

## PROUST

with the money  
he inherited he  
sound-proofed  
his bedroom to  
keep the outside  
world out,  
paid the maid  
in the flat  
over him to  
work in slippers,  
paid her double  
if she did  
not work

## BEATRICE TURNER

In a garbage pail  
in rain, 20 paintings.  
But it took years to  
piece her life together,  
how she grew up in a huge  
old house, chose  
Victorian clothing.  
When her father  
died, she propped him  
up in a chair for two  
weeks and painted  
him then she painted  
the house black,  
began staying inside,  
resented her mother.  
3,000 paintings  
found after her  
death. Until then,  
she painted herself,  
always as a young  
beauty, was afraid to  
become a pauper and  
turned off the gas  
and electricity,  
ate little. I am, she  
said, leading a life  
I did not choose as she  
drew nudes of her  
self, more lush and  
open as she got  
closer to death

## AFTER TEN WEEKS OF CHAOS, TERROR

what clutched  
gives a little  
relaxes a claw  
becoming a  
hand again



MATISSE

don't, someone told  
him, go to Picasso's

studio: your portrait  
of your daughter

is being used  
as a dart board

by radical cubists  
tho Picasso says

you have sun  
in your belly

PICASSO: 1

he's a gypsy  
but while other  
gypsies go  
with the wind  
Picasso masters  
the wind

PICASSO: 2

he loved to turn some  
thing into some  
thing else

PICASSO: 3

I never have hesitated  
to take from all  
painters anything I want

but have my horror  
of copying myself

PICASSO: 4

he kept moving  
his face changed fast

it was more exhausting  
to take a photo

graph of Picasso  
one photographer says

than shoot a whole  
day in Vietnam

PICASSO: 5

painting is not  
to decorate  
an apartment

a good painting  
is a weapon to  
wage war

ANDY WARHOL: 1

under his photo  
in his 1945  
high school  
yearbook,  
"genuine as  
a fingerprint."

"when I read  
his philosophy,"  
one plump, smiling  
aunt says, "I  
was surprised  
how much, like  
us he was, odd"

ANDY WARHOL: 2

Our labels, Campbell  
says, have been  
popular but Andy  
came along, saw  
it, recognized  
a goodness. His  
brother says,  
Campbell's was always  
our favorite brand.



Priced at 100\$ a piece, now Andy's soup cans are 20 million. When I saw the soup can, a woman at the exhibit says, I started to cry, they were my life, coming home for lunch, my mother opening the chicken, the tomato

JIM DINE: 1

my grandparents moved from Georgia to Cincinnati a northern city but it had a southern feel. I was born near the river. The light always moving, the river a thousand blues

JIM DINE: 2

I paint inside worlds. I remember my crib, the heat in summer. White enamel paint, tools, hammers and pipes. I loved how pipes went downstairs, liked the sound, the cold wood floor. I was so close to the floor, I

watched the colored glass, how it made patterns on my skin, how my legs stuck to the floor. In old photos, I look so intense. How could anyone question I wouldn't remember every detail of my life

JIM DINE: 3

The hardware store was a main part of my childhood. Pipes, 60 years of nails, metal. You could hide in corners with the rats. Yellow light fixtures, pipe threading machine — the beauty of it like sculpture

JIM DINE: 4

I was afraid of dogs. My mother warned me of hydrophobia, rabies. I was afraid of polio, flies, all insects, of crossing the road. The first born, I got the brunt of my mother's fear, never a minute alone. She sat with me at the piano, sang, "Can't we be friends,"



all day. I couldn't  
get away from  
her. She was  
my muse, she  
revved me up  
every day. It was  
too much

JIM DINE: 5

my mother sent me  
to the art museum.  
Afterward, I  
sat down on the  
trolley tracks  
with paints.  
I just sat down  
and did it.  
It was a gift,  
a magic thing  
to make leaves  
that look like  
leaves, branches  
black and shiny  
through them

JIM DINE: 6

I wanted a father  
in a uniform.  
When they closed  
the store in  
Kentucky, he  
was supposed  
to be in a  
specialist corps  
but they dissolved  
it. I'd wanted  
him to be a  
soldier, wanted  
him out of the  
house so I'd  
have my mother  
all to myself  
but he just got  
into an air raid  
patrol

JIM DINE: 7

all these objects  
in the hardware  
store: gloves,  
hammers, all  
linked together.  
They had their  
own space but  
worked together.  
I lived among  
hammers. Even  
the pliers  
look alive

JIM DINE: 8

when tv came,  
we were scared  
my grandpa warned  
if you sit too close  
the set could blow  
up in your face  
so we had to sit  
to the side,  
saw everything  
at a different angle

JOSEPH CORNELL: 1

his boxes, like  
daydreams you  
lose yourself in,  
the shifting  
colors of  
a broken wine  
glass sand  
falls thru. He  
was obsessed  
with Europe,  
with women in  
films, in  
advertisements,  
hardly left his  
house, wrapped  
in fantasy, redid  
old films to amuse  
his bed-ridden



brother, cut and  
edited what  
was to make it  
as he wanted it

JOSEPH CORNELL: 2

he hunted objects,  
collected clippings,  
photographs from  
junk shops,  
cut out cats,  
searched for old  
marbles, fans,  
feathers and  
kept them in files  
with notes he'd  
update and slide  
into boxes  
deep in his  
cellar to hold  
memories to  
let someone in  
front of the  
glass feel what  
he was feeling

JOSEPH CORNELL: 3

he photographed  
brides frozen in  
windows, a wheel  
of cheese with a  
sun on it, liked  
to juxtapose what  
didn't go together,  
birds and dice,  
lace, leaves the  
barrenness of  
benches Coney  
Island in snow

JOSEPH CORNELL: 4

he loved watching  
children, wanted  
to be like a child.

How can I, he asked,  
express the inner  
joy of stepping  
into the backyard,  
the light, the leaves.  
The spires of Manhattan  
seem beautiful  
to me as Chartres,  
the ceiling of  
Grand Central  
Station, heavenly

THE BLIND BASKET MAKER

pulling reeds  
into what can  
hold peat and

linen in a  
cottage with  
stone floors

the sea from  
his window he  
hasn't seen it

since he was 5  
weaves willows  
into baskets

knows the color  
by the thickness  
of the reeds

he says in the  
wind they have  
separate voices

that they sound  
as different as  
different women



PAST PORNO STAR WHO WANTS TO RUN FOR SHERIFF MADONNA

says she could  
get to the  
bare facts  
do under cover  
we'll get on  
top of it  
says she knows  
the ins and  
outs

MCDONALD'S MADONNA

is 25 years old

but her buns  
still seem fresh

UNSATISFIED, FEELING UNLOVED, MADONNA TAKES UP JOGGING

just, again,  
to hear some  
heavy breathing

MADONNA WHO'S SICK OF NOT BEING ABLE TO SAY NO

always feels  
under someone  
is so tired  
of having to  
satisfy those  
above her

MADONNA WHO LETS A SMILE BE HER UMBRELLA

gets wet teeth

MADONNA OF THE MAN SO JEALOUS

he decks anyone  
who just  
oogles her

so hard

when they wake  
up their clothes  
are out of style

OLD MAID MADONNA IS SO

old when she  
does get married  
her teeth are  
new, her support  
hose are borrowed  
and her veins  
are blue



MADONNA OF DIS: 1

is distant,  
disoriented

disobeys, is  
disgruntled

disfigures  
your calm is

disdainful,  
disconnected

discounts what  
ever you do dis  
courages dis

colors dis  
combobulates

disciplines in a  
way you become  
a disciple of

MADONNA OF DIS: 2

disagrees,  
constantly

disputes, disables  
is disloyal

isn't discrete

but, is  
disarming

makes life  
a disaster

E. COLI MADONNA

gives you a  
run for your money

TWO 222 MADONNAS

i.

she lived on 222  
Packson had a  
friend on 222  
Lark took 222s,  
Canadian aspirin  
laced with codeine,  
that she smuggled  
over two borders  
twice; two bottles  
in her panties  
two in her bra  
two split in two  
to numb what is  
burning when  
she wants to  
too much

ii.

this madonna's  
cholesterol  
count was 222  
until she decided  
8 lovers (two  
times two times  
two with at  
least that many  
meals, that  
many goodies,  
goodbyes all  
making her feel  
she was at  
least two  
people pulled  
in two directions)  
was more than  
two times  
too many

UNENJOYMENT MADONNA

what she is  
not getting  
is more central  
than what  
she is



NEW CRAYOLA COLOR MADONNA: 1

her acapulco gold  
is like any color  
you want, man

NEW CRAYOLA COLOR MADONNA: 2

is prozac: rose  
colored, no  
hint of blue

NEW CRAYOLA COLOR MADONNA: 3

like liberal gilt is  
gold, but not  
ostentatious

SCHICK RAZOR MADONNA

is a cut  
above the rest

EUREKA VACUUM MADONNA

really sucks

MIDAS BRAKES MADONNA

there's no  
stopping her

CHIQUITA BANANA MADONNA

spoils you rotten

SCREW DRIVER MADONNA

turns your head

FLOOD MADONNA: 1

puts your old  
water mark  
under water

FLOOD MADONNA: 2

takes your  
seed downstream

HEAT WAVE MADONNA: 1

makes you take  
off your tie

HEAT WAVE MADONNA: 2

keeps you inside

MARCH APRIL MADONNA

instead of warm  
lips, she showers

you with ice,  
breaks your

branches ices  
your door down

she freezes  
anything you

expose that  
was melting

LATE SPRING MADONNA

starts to  
come, then  
doesn't



SEARS AUTO REPAIR MADONNA

"no problem"  
she drawls  
"we'll fix it"

COMPUTER MADONNA

is interactive,  
friendly

put her on your  
lap and she

will bring up  
your file

SCREW MADONNA

moves into  
you with  
a swirl  
that keeps  
you tight

FORSYTHIA MADONNA

out of what  
looks scraggly,  
dead, if you  
force her  
bring her into  
your rooms  
stick her  
in water  
wait about  
11 days she will  
open first  
a little slowly  
tips of jade  
tips of sun  
then she goes  
nova

MISTLETOE MADONNA

you like her  
green take her  
home to celebrate  
winter solstice

as if she could  
stop your days  
from darkening,  
keep evil spirits,

disease from your  
house you hang  
her over your  
door wrap her

around your  
bed and thighs  
only to find out  
she sucks

strength from  
what she twists  
around she's  
all parasite

EASTER EGG MADONNA: 1

she seems  
pastel and  
soft, a  
spring color

but she's  
hard inside

EASTER EGG MADONNA: 2

tho painted  
and bright,  
she's a  
little  
cracked



## Mistle toe Madonna

you like her  
green take her  
home to celebrate  
winter solstice  
as if she could  
stop your days  
from darkening,  
keep evil spirits,  
disease from your  
house you hang  
her over your  
door wrap her  
around your  
bed and thighs  
only to find out  
she sucks  
strength from  
what she twists  
around she's  
all parasite



MY MOTHER DWELLS ON SMALL THINGS, PAINS, TERRORS,  
WORRIES: THE HUGE ONES ARE TOO ENORMOUS

wants me to move  
the radio away from  
the edge of the bed,  
pull my hair back,  
hang the towel in  
the center, not let  
it drip. She rages  
at the sheet  
that's crooked,  
the way her pocket  
book's out on the  
chair, she wants  
the flash light  
here, a spoon to  
bang with if no one  
hears her, wants  
the blanket folded  
in two but not on  
her, not too far  
tho so she can  
reach it  
desperate to  
control the  
little she  
can

DO YOU THINK PEOPLE HAVE  
SOULS MY MOTHER ASKS

"Souls?".  
I ask and she  
says "yes I  
didn't use to  
but when Nanny  
died," she says  
"I was there  
and something  
went out of her,  
one minute it  
was Nanny and  
then, someone,  
something was  
gone her face  
marble. Honey  
do you think  
I'll see her  
soon?"

IT'S THE NIGHTS SHE SAID I REMEMBER

we'd go berry  
picking my  
grandmother  
would drive  
across fields  
say don't tell  
your grand  
father some  
times we'd  
come back,  
just have  
strawberry  
cake for  
supper on  
the porch on  
huge white  
biscuits

MY MOTHER AND THE COTTON CANDY

pain free for  
3 hours my  
mother goes  
wild over the  
pink fluff  
she could be  
seven wants  
to tear at  
the sweetness  
as if to grab  
even what  
melts and  
stuff it in  
side where  
so little is



MY MOTHER, IN HER LAST HOURS

wants to go in  
the car. Murray  
she calls out,

is he mad at me?  
and when I tell  
her no, it does  
not help her

eyes roll back,  
her fingers are  
so cold. I can't

do anything —  
I don't know if  
those words are  
hers or mine.

Lyn I want bread  
and butter she  
moans, looks at

the plate they  
are on blankly

WITHOUT OBJECTS, PEOPLE FORGET

"Objects show that someone  
made a difference. And  
objects show that some  
one died, was missed  
very much"

— Text from the New York  
State Museum exhibit  
QUILTS AND REMEMBERING

Mama,  
your address book stings but  
not as much as your  
raincoat, the Cream of Rice

green jar you kept your  
teeth in, and your pocket  
book, like a dark animal  
now in my closet. I think  
of hair wreaths, strands of

a whole family's hair,  
the living and the dead  
braided together, hung with  
shells and flowers,  
feathers right in the

living room and I think how  
in the last weeks, Mama, your  
hair glowed, like a halo, wreath  
of whiteness, not dry or lank  
but full of body, of life



## STARVED FOR HER HANDWRITING

Mama, when I  
saw your comedy  
and tragedy  
plaques carried  
away from the  
garage sale in  
stranger's fingers,  
your peach and  
black silks, even  
satin underwear  
in the costume  
manager's hands  
it was as if pieces  
of you were being  
carried off, like  
parts of a body  
in velvet. I wanted  
to get it down,  
photograph what was  
dissolving. But I  
was packing my own  
past off, leaving  
bundles at curbside  
as footsteps were  
sanded from floors  
and I was throwing  
out cancelled  
checks, it seemed  
so much was void,  
had holes in it

### GARAGE SALE: 1

Old photos  
falling out  
of a trunk  
of when the  
family was  
happy, auto-  
graph books  
and diaries,  
it's as if  
you were  
breaking  
and enter-  
ing

### GARAGE SALE: 2

Fingers like claws  
grab the Ronson  
cigarette holder,  
the comedy and  
tragedy plaques —  
the dealers, like  
muggers, break thru  
past the 9 AM  
start sign at 6  
AM buzzards,  
vultures swooping  
down to clutch  
games we used to  
pull out of the  
storeroom closet,  
spread on the grey  
spiral rug or under  
the carmel glass  
over the dining  
room table, carried  
off like prey.  
Someone steals a  
boxed silver star.  
Gone are the old  
crazed chipped pots  
beans and barley  
soup was baked in,  
the blue violin  
vase there never  
were flowers in  
that stood on the  
white bookcase  
where my mother  
waited for my car,  
my Maverick, my  
Mustang, my T-Bird,  
refrigerator dishes  
from the '50s with  
red boats painted  
on white, things so  
ordinary, like her  
voice on my answer-  
ing machine when I  
was longing for some  
man, not her, to call  
me that sting



## THE MAD GIRL FEELS SHE STILL HAS SO MUCH TO LOSE

tho tuesday seems a  
gulch nothing could  
fill only night  
slithering in, a  
black emerald, she  
presses her head up  
to see something  
more than red eyes  
in she feels her  
hands are tied  
dissolve behind  
her she's a  
hostage feeling  
her wrists burn  
lace bikinis stiffen  
under the bed as  
her thighs itch  
for what she  
knows will never  
help her

## DEPRESSION

onyx moonlight  
glazes the wrought  
iron that's rusting,  
a steel grey exhaust  
turns air to soup.  
cars collide in my  
wrists. May is a  
cloverleaf highway  
the exits come up  
on too fast. love goes  
on near a dune I can't  
get off to get to  
like weather in an  
atmosphere where  
wind pushes seaflowers

## COUSINS I'LL NEVER KNOW

like books I wanted to  
read but never got  
around to cities in  
countries I hadn't  
learned the language  
for but remember a  
dream of lips on

Rue de Feu the  
smell of brandy  
4 o'clock plum and  
cantaloup stained  
glass light fresh  
cut maple burning  
as snow blurs  
trees in Dresden

## MIGRANTS

the light pale  
lemon and canteloup  
icy still, chattering  
in candle glow  
water bugs in dreams  
long sleeves and  
denim pickin'  
clover spiders  
crawl over cotton  
sweat the sweet  
rot of oranges, limes

## AFTERWARD

where what had  
pounded is numb  
a woman punched  
on for so long  
she could be meat,  
feels bloody as  
hamburg, that  
unique. light  
nuzzles and moves  
away from where  
shapes in the  
dark were fire,  
lick stairs she'll  
never whistle up  
as she had



## IT WAS LIKE

wading into  
the Mohawk  
to cool off  
a hot July  
and finding  
what turns  
out to be  
the last  
person on  
the bridge  
that collapsed  
in Schoharie  
two years  
ago washing  
up against  
you

## CAMPING WITH J, TRAVEL TIPS

spread the  
map spread  
the canvas  
careful don't  
get it uneven  
spread the  
ground sheet  
spread the  
bags spread  
your legs  
shut your  
mouth

## HE MOVES FAST

as a politician  
slashing thru  
cities a dancer  
who prefers  
allegros to  
adagio he's  
fast as a fan  
spinning so quick  
you think it's  
still until you  
lose what you  
put too near  
he changes quick

a quick change  
artist he wants  
illusion magic  
he's got some  
thing up his  
sleeve he hot  
foots he's all  
fancy foot work  
as if to obscure  
his real moves

## THIS TIME

it was less like  
chemicals oozing  
out from dumps  
slowly poisoning  
the water you've  
become used to  
tasting a little  
strange like  
certain words  
but was belted  
out more like  
poison flooding  
up out of an under  
ground valve  
leaking thru  
pine and cotton  
to blow what seemed  
could hold up  
awhile apart

## HE SAYS HE NEEDS SPACE HAS AN EMOTIONAL SHUTDOWN

he unplugs the  
phone disconnects his  
heart and his penis  
no light gets thru  
dark cloth over the  
window he pulls quilts  
higher to shut out  
what was like  
demerol and darvon  
after Nam when  
one leg blew  
off as cut  
off as I  
feel



REMINDS ME OF A MILITARY STORY, DON'T KNOW IF I SHOULD  
TELL IT, WELL ...

It was down at Parris Island. They had a big thing, the military chain of command. We were recruits, new. It was confusing when we were new, they put us out to guard these empty barracks, made us stay out there all night. They were empty, nothing to guard. It was deserted, just to get us used to it. The D.I. said, "there's only one thing a marine cannot allow anyone to do, you can't let anyone take your weapon. You understand, if you come back without it you're in big trouble." That was the worst sin, letting anybody take away your weapon. You'll stay here two years if anyone comes back without it. They scared us. Well I'm out there. It's 3 o'clock. You got to go thru all this "Halt. Who goes there" stuff and if they don't respond, you're supposed to get them. You know you're on an U.S. island. You're not in Saudi Arabia. So up comes this off-duty D.I., probably had a few drinks. You know how they harass you in boot camp. Well I'm standing there with an M14, bigger than an M16, and I'm thinking this is a test. Are we going to react or let this go by and I think he's trying to get me and I say "Halt. Who goes there?" He smirks, "don't give me any of that stuff, don't you see my hat and my uniform?" And I say "Halt," it's 3 o'clock and he says give me that weapon and I give him a butt stroke across the jaw taking all his teeth out and an ambulance came, took him away. They'd ingrained this in our heads. We didn't have live rounds. If we had, I'd probably shot him. He went out cold. But later, my own drill instructor said, "Don't mention this but you'll make a fine marine, just don't say I said it."

## LIBERATION

with the Allies  
near, the Nazis  
locked us in a  
building, set  
dynamite charges.  
But it rained so  
nothing went  
off. I was 68  
pounds, my hair  
snow. When the  
first American

came I said, "I  
am Jewish," he  
said he was too,  
held the door  
open and in that  
one gesture, five  
years of being  
hostage at gun  
point, dirt,  
he restored my  
humanity



GETTING THE NEWS AFTER GETTING THE NEWS

like a soldier  
in the Falklands  
stepping on an  
invisible mine,  
both feet torn  
from his body  
48 hours after  
the cease fire

SARAJEVO

Himzo Babic  
roams thru blasted  
stores looking for  
cardboard to burn  
in his 12th floor  
apartment so his  
18-month-old infant  
would not freeze  
to death. Without a  
saw or axe to forage  
for fuel, it's easier  
to collect cardboard,  
to burn anything  
loose around him.  
"I have burned most  
of my furniture,"  
he said, "the wood  
parquet of my  
floor. And, harder,  
I've burned my books."

SOMEWHERE BEHIND MIDNIGHT

an old lady  
with palsy  
bedridden is  
burned to  
death only  
the still  
smoldering  
flesh of  
her belly  
remains

SISTER OF THE PACK RAT

we've lived together  
38 years she's slept  
8 years on the couch  
her bedroom a pile  
of newspapers junk  
mail magazines we  
even moved to a  
house with bigger  
closets but they  
filled up all the  
drawers are bulging  
the food closets have  
cans spilling out I  
could call the depart  
ment of health I  
packed papers and sheets  
up once filled baskets  
big enough for a  
Sears dryer but she  
filled it all again  
I'll stay if she  
cleans up or I could  
just leave, get married



## BOOK THIEF SENTENCED TO SIX MONTHS

For ten years Fitzeae Lee Opie stole from the Library of Congress. Yesterday a judge threw the book at him. Opie, an Old Town fixture, who is the great great grand nephew of Robert E. Lee was sentenced to six months in prison. "Grim" was Opie's only words. The 62-year-old Opie had no excuses. He told the judge he did not have an alcohol problem, had never taken drugs, had no history of mental illness and had very fine parents. On the other hand, "I've been obsessed with books all my life," Opie said. That, combined with severe financial difficulties in 1982, led to frequent visits to the Library. Last March 7, a member of the library security saw Opie, who had long been under suspicion, take 3 books to a secluded area where he began pulling material out of one of the books. Soon after, he was arrested by a library detective. Two maps were found under his sweater, both relating to Pacific Railway surveys. A search of his car revealed 2 gutted military books, both stamped: Library of Congress. The total value of the 4 items was calculated at \$1,200. Opie described to the court his practice of buying for a few dollars "cripples," a term for books missing a plate or a chapter. He would then take the same volume from the library, remove what he needed



and rebind it in his copy. The result: a whole book that could be sold in his Old Town bookshop for much more than he had paid for it. Sometimes he merely stole plates and sold them. "This is not the case of a mother getting a loaf of bread for a starving child," Opie acknowledged to the judge, "I was wrong, dead wrong." No one knows how much he stole; a lot, the prosecution argued. After he was caught, the bookseller said in court, "I took 4 to 6 little plastic bags of books and plates out of my store to dumpsters in Alexandria. I threw out anything after my arrest that in my panic, I thought could possibly contain an illegal shred of evidence." Opie was ordered to pay \$1,200 restitution. He was ordered for three years not to enter any federal library

#### CHICKEN LAW BROKEN, WOMAN DOES TIME

Linda's gone to jail to keep her brood together. Goobelle, Bobba Buff, Nippy and the others, 18 pet chickens. She's serving up to 18 days. "She's been good, so she's probably in for 10 days," her 9-year-old daughter Leslie says. Charged August 14 with a brood but no permit. When village Police Chief Capuzzi sighted the chickens, Linda was arrested and jailed. She got the first chicken in spring when her husband brought chickens home to



slaughter but her daughter  
saved one, Chester, from  
the knife. He was the  
best looking, the daughter  
said. Since then, the family  
added 17 more. Eight-year-old  
John goes out each morning to  
feed them, collect their eggs,  
hug them. "They're almost  
like dogs," he said. His  
brother likes to ride his bike  
thru the village with  
a chicken under his arm,  
"They all think I'm crazy, car  
after car goes by and laughs."  
Keeping chickens he says is a  
basic American freedom. The  
Sheriff says it is a first,  
we've never locked anybody up  
because they were harboring  
chickens

#### VOLLIS SIMPSON, WHIRLY-GIG SCULPTOR

You need common  
sense, I learn  
as I do it. My  
Daddy never  
went to school  
one day but he  
ran a mill. I  
love to work,  
figure I could  
be disabled any  
minute work's  
what I know, I  
don't know how  
not to. Folks  
drive miles to  
see my lit-up  
whirly-gigs,  
come back with  
others. Someone  
said what you  
do is art, they  
named it



DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME MADONNA

makes you feel  
you can stay  
up longer

JUMPS YOUR PICKUP TRUCK MADONNA

gets what  
you thought  
was dead  
going

MADONNA OF THE NO CRYSTAL BALL LAWYER

says she never  
gets it straight  
says he tells  
her when she  
asks what  
will happen  
that he says  
he has two  
of those things  
none are  
crystal

TERRORIST MADONNA

her message  
is never subtle

MADONNA OF THE DOOR PEEP HOLE

sees every  
one who  
passes in  
a distorted  
way

MADONNA OF THE DEPRESSIONS

it's as if  
the black  
she's dressed  
in has stained  
her that color



ABORTION PROTESTING MADONNA

proliferates

IN VITRO FERTILIZATION MADONNA

keeps more  
than you can  
conceive of  
on hold

NORPLANT MADONNA

what's under  
her skin  
isn't you

MADONNA OF THE CASTANETS

has her clique

MADONNA OF THE ICE SCULPTOR

knows he can  
make magic  
that won't last  
more than  
12 hours

SICK OF COLD WEATHER MADONNA

each shiver  
an avalanche  
what's freeze-  
dried in her  
waiting for  
warm water  
instead  
goes dust

CALCIUM MADONNA

takes your  
bone and  
makes it  
strong  
and thick



LAUNDRY MADONNA

you put your  
quarter in

and she spins  
you wildly

bubbles, squeezes,  
grips. Her hips

have a motor,  
she turns you in

side out in her  
frothy juice

takes what you  
wanted to

get rid of

PEE WEE'S MADONNA: 1

says he has  
everything in hand

PEE WEE'S MADONNA: 2

says he  
brought it  
on himself

PEE WEE'S MADONNA: 3

thinks he got  
a raw deal

thinks everyone  
should be  
behind him

(certainly not  
in front)

BAD GIRL MADONNA: 1

doesn't loosen  
a few buttons  
when it's hot,  
makes it hot  
by unloosening  
a few buttons

BAD GIRL MADONNA: 2

doesn't wax  
floors just  
waxes her  
bikini line

BAD GIRL MADONNA: 3

when she can't  
sleep, heats  
up some  
body instead  
of milk

BAD GIRL MADONNA: 4

doesn't blush  
at blue movies  
knows she could  
do it better

JULY MADONNA

makes you want  
to be naked

in her green  
she's hot and

wet wraps your  
root in her

mulch smells  
like what

she is



## MADONNA OF THE PERFECTIONS

lives by a list  
is over extended  
feels no one quite  
appreciates her

feels ragged resentful  
can't be intimate  
doesn't have fun  
gives and gives

feels she can't  
decide what she  
wants to do  
fucks on demand

talks 3 hours a  
day every day the  
last 17 years  
to her mother who

twice that many  
years has told  
her she's never  
done the dishes

right

## TRASH WHITE MADONNA

is a very  
common shade  
of white

## ROAD RUNNER MADONNA

bolts for  
snakes and lizards,

scorpions her  
claws make the

sign of the  
cross in sand

## SALAMANDER MADONNA

needs a pool  
that dries up  
so the eggs  
she lays  
won't be eaten

some years  
nothing she  
deposits  
amounts  
to much

## GECKO MADONNA

can hang on  
to what you'd  
never think  
she could

## WORRY MADONNA

has elephants  
for luck,  
worry beads,  
is sure when  
the phone rings  
it's disaster  
she won't  
start a trip  
on a Friday,  
esp the 13th,  
avoids onyx,  
cats, ladders,  
has seven 4-  
leaf clovers,  
still takes  
her temper-  
ature on the  
hour sure  
she's got  
whatever she  
most wanted  
not to



CIRCUS MADONNA

glitters  
you want to  
get in her  
ring ride  
her bare

back walk  
her high

wire would  
jump thru

hoops of fire  
to be inside

when she comes

PENNY MADONNA

tho bright  
you won't  
get far  
with her

RAIN MADONNA

when she gets  
all over you,  
your hair frizzes

GLOVE MADONNA

wants your hand  
deep in her

RETIN A MADONNA

when you spread  
her over you  
everything wrinkled  
smooths out

SCRABBLE MADONNA

when you  
put her  
pieces  
together  
you can  
score

G SPOT MADONNA

if you find  
her you  
know it

SPAM MADONNA

takes your pork  
into her grinder

FBI MADONNA

traces where  
you put  
your hands  
and will  
get you

EVE'S MADONNA

feels as if  
she has a  
bone inside  
her that  
isn't quite  
hers still  
isn't the  
bone she was  
promised



OLD FASHIONED WALL TELEPHONE MADONNA

is into  
crank calls

CRACKER JACK MADONNA

brings you a  
little prize

JACKPOT LOTTERY MADONNA

even in the  
hottest sun  
people line  
up for hours,  
hope to get her

BUCKINGHAM PALACE MADONNA

has a  
gilt complex

GOODWILL MADONNA

gives you only  
what she can't  
use

MADONNA OF THE THIRD EYE

is reborn  
so often  
she weaves  
umbilical cords  
into a lasso  
she almost chokes  
on trying to  
press her 3rd  
eye into trees,  
white candles

VANILLA MADONNA

she's the only  
orchid you can  
eat but you  
have to  
pollinate her  
by hand

NUTMEG MADONNA

too much of her  
and you hallucinate

CARDAMON MADONNA

is peppery

many enjoy  
her in India  
in Africa

where she grows best  
in 150 inches of rain

her seeds sweeten your  
mouth but once  
opened, her

flavor's lost

INSOMNIA MADONNA

comes in the night

keeps you up,  
when you don't

want to be



CAROLINA EXTERIOR: MAUDEL STEEL'S MAGIC GARDEN

gold flowers,  
zinnias, yellow  
roses, marigolds

explosions of guava  
pale lemon,  
mango, melon

her blue sky dress  
shimmers apricot  
and honey

gold on the  
barn wood zinnias  
zinnias gold

gold, gold

PORCHES

in Bean Blossom  
or Jefferson City, a  
maiden aunt in her  
'80s in a cane  
rocker sipping elder  
berry wine, a calico cat  
curled near her.  
Across the street, a  
ten-year-old sorts base  
ball cards on the  
slanty slat-board floor,  
calls his kid sister  
names. An overhead  
fan cuts the heavy  
July air over the  
creak of a wood swing.  
Rosewin, a 16-year-  
old girl in a halter  
top flirts with the  
neighbor boy as the dark  
folds in on itself.  
Fireflies in hemlock.  
Citronella candles,  
moths at the screen,  
in the wet grass.  
The night train  
so Erie Lackawanna

THE MAN WITH NO SPINE

They didn't want us  
to get married,  
said we were too  
young but both of  
our mothers were  
16. I walk on  
my hands. If I'm  
going long distance,  
I'll take my skate  
board. We don't  
want children but  
we could have  
them, if you know  
what I mean. People  
stare, yeah, esp  
in grocery stores  
and giggle. She  
gives them the  
finger. Would I  
try a prosthesis?  
I did. Cut it up  
and burned it.  
Do you know what  
it feels like  
being a statue  
standing still?

PAULETTE, LIVING IN HER CAR

I was a ballet dancer,  
then I got divorced.  
I tried to be a  
secretary but  
learned that tho  
I'm healthy  
I couldn't get  
any job. I fill  
my car with things  
that don't let  
you know there's  
a person in there,  
a lot of bags and boxes  
and I cover myself  
with newspaper  
and hunker down



RODDY McDOWELL IS GETTING OLDER

grey temples  
on Joan Rivers  
not the 16-year-  
old heart-breaker  
in The Secret Garden  
to my 5-year-old  
pudgy face  
looking up in the  
campus theatre.  
Margaret O'Brien,  
my idol in braids.  
The dark, the plush  
of velvet seats as  
safe as arms holding  
me until the blast  
of light walking  
out into Main St  
stinging like a  
spray of iced water  
from Otter Falls

THE ARCHITECT

In Sweden  
light is  
something you  
want to  
celebrate.  
Since you get  
so little in  
the north  
we dream  
of Italy

LARAMIE HISTORY PROFESSOR

I WAS A NURSE

I fell in love  
with a doctor  
who sold drugs  
my life was  
threatened  
when they knew  
I knew once I  
carried drugs  
unknowingly  
when I was asked  
to, I said no,  
went to the  
police became  
an undercover  
cop

Fundamentally, I  
am an Easterner.  
I do not care for  
the outdoors. I  
don't hunt, don't  
fish, don't ski.  
To me, the out  
doors is the exact  
distance from the  
door of my car to  
the door of an  
enclosed shopping  
center. You know  
there are very  
few people out  
here who are  
basically Eastern.  
And one way you  
might find a few  
is in a Jewish  
Community Center



THE 18-MONTH-OLD 32 FEET DOWN IN A DARK HOLE, TEXAS

stumbled like a  
woman in love falling  
the rocks bruising  
maybe or she saw  
a deer in the  
damp moss the sun  
going the blue  
sky a locket  
on the neck  
of someone leaning  
to soothe her  
skin, good  
night, her moving  
backward into grey  
she has nothing  
to hold on to with

THE RAG SOCK DOLL

squeezed under my  
mother's kitchen  
shelf, I nearly  
dumped it packing  
what, later, I'd  
sell or keep,  
have, I imagined,  
time to sort thru.  
Five socks safety  
pinned together,  
only the eyes and  
lips, the same  
pouting rose  
bud mouth, huge  
long lashed  
flirty eyes my  
mother doodled on  
phone books and  
college English  
texts in ball point  
and red pencil,  
made me pause,  
use the doll to  
pack gold rimmed  
tea cups. When I  
unpacked it for  
the garage sale  
a year later,  
nothing anyone  
would buy, I was

about to toss  
it but its  
softness, the  
eyes with what my  
mother sang were  
Barney Google eyes,  
sucked on me until  
I brought it back  
to my own house  
to stay probably  
longer than the gold cups

IT WAS THERE THEN IT WASN'T

like a cat  
embryo absorbed  
into the mama  
cat's blood

or egg plant  
that starts  
then isn't

a shadow in  
the shape of  
a roach at  
the edge of

where your eye  
almost focuses

— Vienna VA



It Was There  
Then it wasn't

like a cat  
embryo absorbed  
into the mama  
Cat's blood

or egg plant  
that starts  
then isn't

a shadow in  
the shape of  
a roach at  
the edge of

where your eye  
almost focusses

Lyn Ibbin



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