

ON THE WAY TO THE PEACOCK ROOM

By

Kimberly D. Dawson

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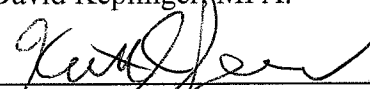
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Chair:



David Keplinger, MFA.



Keith D. Leonard, Ph.D.



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On The Way To The Peacock Room is a collection of poems and prose passages that investigates spirituality and sexuality. In it, I try to understand how my own desires have influenced my identity. And, my goal with this collection is simply to look at the meeting places, the interstitial spaces of human existence that I find most exhilarating, even when painful.

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I.

PRAYER TO THE NAME

To you, Adonai, I give my promiscuity.
An education in the stop-and-go traffic of tongues and wanton
hands
this tick rattles my reason, offers no respite
between lessons. Careless as open eyes in the Dead Sea.

Selah

Still in the symphony of wee-hour moans, watching for the
burning bush in every stroke, wrestling with many for even a
vision of the angel, begging for the wisdom of strangers. Master, I
love them as you love me. A daughter of two daughters drunk
with their father in a cave.

Selah.

Take my vibrating flesh to the till, Hashem.
Churn this cluster of grapes in new wineskins.
Churn and churn until I am covered
in the sacrament, the dust of my rabbi.

Selah.

A lamb nourished on fine wheat and naked barley, Jehovah
this sacrifice is supple beneath the belly. My offering. Tender and
already cured. Clean. Ripe. Pink. Your names, Lord, I worship in
the atom of my bones.

Selah.

EDEN FOR POETS

I promised you to love the questions, too.
To make a joyful noise when curious,
to love – honor - cherish the question.
I promised you to love the only truth,
to be the rib of that certainty, the un-
to your sure. I made this promise
back when I slept in colored cartoon sheets,
a child bride playing in our secret place.

TRYST

If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with success unexpected in common hours.

- Henry David Thoreau

If I make it through the thicket,
long nights of bitten nails and coffee
laundry that won't do itself
lectures that make me wish I still did drugs
people that need to be slapped
for how their eyes roll at others
voices in my head that speak louder than sirens
voices around me that shutter at words.

Around the time where day and night share a bed

I pass the place that words call home
and sit behind the old school naysayers
the ones who doubt that you and I will ever meet,

The sun's melted promise on skin always tells the difference between those who
hated

and loved too many.

To allow every impression and every germ of a feeling to grow to completion wholly in yourself, in the darkness, in the unutterable, unconscious, inaccessible to your own understanding, and to await with deep humility and patience the hour of birth of a new clarity; that is alone what living as an artist means: in understanding as in creation.

TRAVELING WITH RILKE

1.

Willkommen is under my feet. Thirty kilometers outside of Bremen in a cottage at the edge of the city, Herr Rilke greets me with two kisses and two warm hands; soft and limp, they prefer ink to people. It isn't the wet feeling but the rain that's in the way. I hold out my anxious palm with two double stacked, red beauties on the surface. A chipped happy face on one and Batman with a broken wing on the other. There is a doorway between us. Herr Rilke interrupts my thoughts with a medicinal smile and glass of Gluwine. He asks which pill is his. I want to say "take them both and take me. Sit with me. Explain it to me." Instead I feel a soliloquy graphing on my lips, words to make this great thinker proud, show him that I've travelled all this way and committed his words to memory. As soon as I sit, crossing my legs to a rhythm only he and I can feel a leg on the chair breaks and the pills fall in a crack on the floor.

2.

It was the smell of the carniceria, the skinned pig and carne in a peculiar marinade that made me remember the rations: Orange juice to keep energy up, check. Bottles of water so our brains don't fry, check. All this flesh on metal hooks around me. I wonder if he'll like pulp. Seven hours ago I checked me email and saw "Our Trip" in the subject line. Thank god Werner knew to get the internet for him. Patrons and lovers will do anything for him

3.

There is no one here to wake me. An epithet is all I remember: "But your solitude will be your home and haven even in the midst of very strange conditions, and from there you will discover all your paths." I decide to seek him in my sleep. Awake, I can't find my slippers. It's cold in here. Rilke, where are you? Do I have time for coffee and a shower? Where do I begin.

4.

He swallowed the broken Batman and I told him not to fight. Let the chalk turn to syrup in your belly. I offered him some juice while I imagined the pill traveling around this sickly liver: "Nein, danke" fell off his tongue as if he wanted my ears to catch the feeling and the words. Shame? Fear? I took off my clothes and sat across from him. Any minute the heat will rise and Rilke will sit, naked, across from me, too.

ELEGY TO THE TIC TOC

Becoming, is a time. A watch becomes such a small shackle.
Faces and hands on her, watching. Add shackles to any body, buy,
sell, trade. Vanities influence perception. Just in time, a
good watch implies maturity. She fastens the fashion. Is locked in.
Grins, prouder. Sure to find an even quicker way to grow up.

DOORS

I could never understand these doors
Passageways from one room of possibility
to another: chance.

Open is a space to measure times,
growth in splintered notches
closed is a revelation. A door,

a frame around a photograph
where in and out
are possible
and sometimes there's a key.

II.

FLY GIRL

At 5 years old,
I knew how to fly.
Just close your eyes,
then jump. Daddy said,
“People can’t fly, boo,
can’t touch the sky.”
“Uh huh,” I said,
watch me daddy.

RATTLE

What do you do when the black snake comes?

Do you throw a rock, pray it dies

by your freakishly human hand? Do you

chant for rain and reach the sky, beg

for colors to turn into weapons.

When the rain is replaced by the black of the snake,

a rattle is enough to invite fear, isn't it? What do you do

when the black snake comes and there's no rock for you to throw

at its head? Do you move in circles, turn your hips into a figure eight,

asking the god of you and the god of the snake to play nicely with each other?

JACKALS

Collectively, they wait for unsuspecting flesh,
crunchy bones oozing with bloody syrup. Colorless objects
caught between the night and its appetites.

What does a human do when it is the meal?

No phone, internet, cord, or battery,
can save the hearty, thick creature from being the jackals'
choice cut underneath a sugar bush.

When they creep up to you,
head cocked to one side, just enough distance
between the snout and moonlight to seem harmless,
holding your pearls, purse or crotch won't help. They are waiting for you to fight
back.

Jackals don't want your ATM card, your keys, or your watch.

Theirs is an ancient thievery.

Nothing will ever be stolen, but rest assured
there will be nothing left.

MIND SEX

On the February cover of the New Yorker, graphic artist Art Spiegelman showed a Hasidic male Jew and a Black woman wrapped in a kiss during the height of the Crown Heights riot in 1993. Blacks, Caribbean immigrants and Hasidic Jews heavily populate Crown Heights, a Brooklyn suburb, which is home to a synagogue and a number of Christian churches. Yosef Lifsh, a member of the orthodox community, ran over two Black children, injuring one and killing another, in an accident. Lifsh got out of the car to offer assistance but was attacked by an on-looking mob. When the ambulance arrived the police sent Lifsh to the hospital before the children. The outraged Christian community went on to attack several Jews and stores in the area for three days. But, this kind of tension is nothing new. From the Middle Ages to 1928, Jews were accused of killing Christian children for ritual sacrifice known as blood libels. Similarly, the Caribbean as well as the US shared slave ports for the human slave trade documented as early as the 1600's. Black blood and black bodies were used for rape and American savagery well into the twentieth century. Both of these communities share a commitment to god. And passion.

The Song of Solomon, or Song of Songs, depending on your translation, is one book of the Hebrew/ Christian Bible that talks about sex from so many perspectives it makes the encounter sound almost multi-dimensional, as if the bodies engaging in the act are part of a human story that will last longer than we can think. Teeth, lips,

neck, and breasts all described at length here with language that makes pomegranates sound like foreplay tools. The human body has religious value in a book that articulates kinds of worship, prayer, and divine intimacy with God. In fact, the Old Testament is full of sexual imagery, sexual encounters with multiple partners, some even familial: Lot's daughters, believing the world was coming to an end, get their father drunk and seduce him¹ and Onan was killed by God because he masturbated on the ground instead of impregnating his brother-in-law². Intimacy in its most physical form is part of something divine.

¹ Genesis 19:30-36.

² Genesis 38:8-10

Judah, an orthodox Jew, and I had this conversation on an airplane trip back to Los Angeles. Both of us were in New York visiting friends and family. He went for Passover and I went to celebrate Easter. We met outside the Delta terminal, smoking cigarettes and standing by our luggage. There wasn't much area for smokers and only one standing ashtray. Clearly it had never been cleaned. There were a few other smokers looking for space out of the drizzle. Not too much rain hit the ground this afternoon, but it sprinkled hard and long enough for the few of us to nestle as close as we culturally could under the available plastic awning. I don't remember how we started talking but in the course of two Marlboro Menthol's I learned he was 25, only a few years younger than I was; that we both grew up in different parts of Los Angeles (he lives in Brentwood and I in Watts); that we went to school less than 20 miles from each other; and we pray to the god of the old testament. A few hours later I'd learn that we both like to masturbate.

The Kaballah, or “receiving” as its called in Hebrew, is a mystical book that some believe predates Judaism. Contemporary Kaballist, Karen Berg, writes,

“... desire is the core essence of a human being. Desire is the stuff from which we are made. Desire is what fuels the entire human experience: art, literature, music, scientific discovery, and political revolution. They all begin with the ignition of a desire and longing that yearns to be fulfilled. And there is no more profound, potent, or potentially spiritual conduit for the expression of our desire than sex... Whether we repress that energy, compartmentalize it as somehow "separate from sex," or recognize it and eventually cultivate it, it's there. It pulsates and permeates our entire being as a profound desire to connect with someone... with something outside of ourselves.”

Everything act of intimacy is an expression of an innate desire, a desire to be closer the Creator.

Judah has studied the Kaballah for the last four years. al've been learning how to ask questions. We sat together on the flight. I've been interested in mysticism since I learned there was a way to talk to god in a secret language. I've talked to Hasidic Jews before but felt uneasy asking questions about the Kaballah. As if by doing so, I'm criticizing something that I shouldn't care about, something reserved for god's special people. I want to be that special.

The circulated air pumps out of the vents with enough force to seem innocuous on the top layer of skin. The kind of the air that leaves you with a tickle in your throat seconds after it's over. I mentioned something about the circulated air while the safety lessons reeled on. Judah smiled, slightly, showing only the bottom of partially chipped front teeth " It would be worse if they didn't do it, in a plane with this many people" he said. " I'd take heat over someone else's airborne virus any day". Judah, staring at his personal monitor, " we all get something from someone." I looked out the window.

Judah is still waiting for the Messiah. I believe he's come and gone. Between us is the tender kindness of strangers who learned similar lessons from the same books. We're both from big cities and learned our morals from narratives written in the time when hospitality was a cultural commandment and courtesy an expectation.

"A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." Sounds like that's a woman but from the rest of the passage you can't tell," Judah said.

"What chapter is that from?" I needed to ask because he said it as though I would already know where it could be found, as if I kept the entire Song of Songs on my tongue ready to lash at will. This kind of conversation is common among Haverim, men who partner with other men for study during Yeshiva, Jewish seminary school for boys. I suspect this kind of conversation is uncommon with strange females.

Somewhere in our airborne conversation about the bible, I asked him what he thought of the Song of Solomon. I listened to him provide an exegesis unlike any I'd heard before and found myself staring at his mouth, hoping he had absolutely no idea that I wanted to drop my head in his lap.

The waitress came around for our mid-flight snack. By then the plane was a bit quieter and almost all the window shades were drawn. Only the solemn lights above a few passengers, including Judah's, stayed on. The woman who sat in the aisle seat of our row couldn't get comfortable and turned often in her seat. It could've been the light that bothered her. It also could've been the silence between her row mates because we hadn't spoken for sometime. Judah and I were the same distance from each other as the other passengers, but I wanted more of him. I wanted to make myself fit in his mouth. Become so small that I'd glide down his throat and land in the place where his desire for god is turned into an energy for learning.

There is a constant debate between bodies when the word “ difference” is used to describe a person. A conversation that I can imagine happened the first time a vagina and penis played together. In the 15th century the difference was seen in the body. Odd shaped noses, large and scary foreheads, tails even, were the ghoulish physical characteristics that supported Christian claims that since Jews were so gravely different they cannot be trusted.

While I listened to the silence of our row and the rush of that dreaded circulated air, a passage from Songs of Songs came to mind:

“I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”

I wanted to let these words fall from my mouth. The parts I could remember at the time any way. But I didn't. I didn't elaborate on the meaning and significance to me. Instead, when I let my eyes play on the gorgeous, cedar undertones of Judah's alabaster skin and I marveled at all the beautiful differences between us.

III.

HARD DADDY, 1921

The hued cotton of your hair
reached back to its subliminal heritage
that day you took the picture, didn't it
Hard Daddy? You fought with those tamed curls,
pulled every inch into sculpted form, only
to remind yourself that black works hard
if it wants to be down
in the right place.

In *Song for a Dark Girl*, Hard Daddy, you squeezed
those once stained hands between
yellow thighs only to see if its flesh
looked like yours.

Those pursed lips kissed
the ligaments of her sex and his gender,
you gentleman's cowboy.

Chestnut takes on a new form in that suit you wear, not hard
at all, are you? A *Bad Man* doesn't pose
but a gangster does. One hand teasing
the other, holding only that Hard posture Daddy, you look back
not to the lens of an object that wants you,
but to the hands, eyes, and colors that want you still.

ON THE WAY TO THE PEACOCK ROOM

In this place no one will hand her her hat.
No hand will fall from these ethereal bodies in a museum
to offer the dilettante a share of gold.

But she wants at least a favorable nod,
an “I see you” notion from the gentry of learned eyes
anything that can welcome the acolyte to the ivory tower.

Alas, her want is not enough to belong here.

With a book and pen, she cradles in mind
the forgotten joy of pictures now called letters
the sound turned etch to word into phrase then bound for press
the unfortunate tryst of Mammon and Phoenicia.

Until a night guard in modern regalia,

Salaam, with cooked olive skin
spots the novice on the way.

He interrupts her silent plea,

with a question from his baritone vox,
“Excuse me dear, what are you doing here?”

She still doesn’t have an answer

SHAME: MY FIRST LOVE

BOY MEETS GIRL

You knew we would meet when my socks still had ruffles,
when the days of the week were glittered on my underwear,
and one barrette went missing from my hair.
When church was another name for home,
you waited to touch me,
your kiss on my Johnson and Johnson
beneath cartoon sheets
left a curious thing, a puddle.

S/HE IS THE ONE

Only you my debonair freak can take the whirlwind of a dance and change it to frost.
In just one stroke of your fickle stick I became " that girl over there". Oh,
but you my love, are my favorite secret.

LET'S PLAY HOUSE

You were my first Daddy and for that I am forever yours.
Weekend sleepovers and nightgown pillow fights ended
when I learned to make you come
by trying something new.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Lover, it's been too long since we've shared a bed.
Too long since your fingers walked along my back.
Too long since the quiet grew to a shrill in my unseen parts,
waiting for you to come first. Faithful,
you always stole the covers.

CAN I CRAWL

inside the space between what you know and what you believe
make a home
for us
in the transient opinions
of your
fluctuating beliefs
that I cling to
because I want you
even if
you don't want me
too.

through the chasm of your awe
sit next to your
impatient ticks,
hide you from
anyone
who is not
willing to
smile
when you

smile back.

slowly, to you
beneath your own
forgotten possibilities
with the speed
of the talented tenth
and help you
pick up
what you thought
you left behind.

"NOT NORMAL"

Gene Yen, an 18 year-old Chinese-American boy went down on me when I was 15 years old. I had no idea what to do. I knew what his tongue was doing, that he was licking parts of me that no one had seen and I had not even tasted. But I didn't know what to expect afterward; I didn't know what to expect, if anything, from the first person to taste me.

Is he going to kiss me afterward? Should I kiss him? Do we have to kiss? Dear god, I hope his face isn't wet and please don't let me start my period. These thoughts went through my mind in rapid fire as I burrowed my body and quiet thoughts under a lifeguard tower at Santa Monica Beach. When he came up from between my legs, grinning like he'd done something special, I could tell by his liquid stained face that something special was happening. With nowhere to run but in the ocean, I smiled back.

Tucked somewhere between the first time my chewed up nails and chapped fingers rolled tobacco and how I couldn't untort my hands fast enough to tie my shoelaces, this memory is permanent and on repeat. Sex had nothing to do with love.

I guess you could say my father was my tutor. The Kama Sutra and the Joy of Sex all books that I'd read with him when I discovered them on the bookshelf, a grown up book with pictures and words! Detailed, fluorescent images explained long-worded sentences that meant nothing to me. I was awe-stricken by the blended blues and yellows, watercolor and rainbow images that explained the movements of energy. Each photo looked like a small painting. Whenever he wasn't busy, these images and their meaning filled our father-daughter time :penis-in-mouth; vagina-on-face; penis-in-anus; vagina-on-fingers; standing back to watch her; talking while watching her. "Masturbation", "anal sex", funny sounding words for the drawings to a child, but for an adult they were expressions of energy command, energy trapping, energy transference and seduction. Movement is dancing, and talking, even in a whisper, is an art according to my father. Sex is living perfection.

When I was 19 years old, Mike, a club-guy I met a few weeks before my birthday asked if he could eat my ass. Watching the morning wake the water from my apartment window in Redondo Beach, I listened to him describe a fantasy with my ass that some might consider frightening. Mike had a number of tattoos, 10 piercings, including 2 in his tongue and 1 shiny silver bar that went through the skin of his penis. He was excited to talk about that last one. I'd never seen his penis. I hadn't had sex and definitely didn't want it to be with him.

Aside from the few people who have 9am-5pm jobs in Los Angeles three kinds of couples awake with the sun; dope-dealers and dope fiends, yard and house cleaners, prostitutes and johns. From my window I watched a truck pull up that dropped the brown-skinned day workers off on the corner. They were waiting with hands in pockets, shielding their fingers from the cold. I watched them while I listened to Mike, a 25 year old "aspiring actor" from La Puente tell me something that I stopped listening too when he said, "You're gonna like it." *Really? You want to hurt me, not have sex.* I thought. I can't remember what kind of sexual exploration took place between us but I knew then that we clearly had two different ideas about sex. I didn't want pain.

My grandmother was a prostitute by trade. The stories about her work always excited me. I wasn't the only one though. She was the family babysitter and took care of all 17 of her grandchildren when needed. Since we all lived within the same 6 blocks we went there to eat with her almost everyday. In fact, she cooked more than many of our mother's. Everyone's school knew to call Martha in case of an emergency. Unlike our parents she didn't punch a clock and could stop whatever she was doing, fucking or cooking, to get her grandbabies.

Granny was from the Bayou of Louisiana, she pronounced her name M-AHH-T-A,-the way its said in Patois. I grew up listening to stories that mixed in her like her stews.

" Papa, don' wok dah cane" She'd say.

" Where did ya daddy work?" I asked.

" Didn't you see ma' mouth movin'?"

" I didn't understand what you said."

" But didn't you see my mouth movin'?" The conversation was over. There's no right way to answer the question.

She raised six children including my father on a salary that kept them fed, clothed and sheltered. She had no pimp and they had no father. I learned from an older cousin that Grandma came to California by herself when she was almost

twenty years old. No one knew *exactly* when because she would always comment “that nothing’s for sure” or “then isn’t as important as now.”

Granny’s children took the last name of the only constant lover in her life. A john she’d met when she started working Figueroa Blvd. My father and his children took his last name and I guess you could say he’s their father, after all, he just might be. Blood or not, when she was couldn’t make rent , when there was a recession, or when money was a “little funny,” Dick Dawson would be there to help her out.

I worked at Zabumba a Brazilian bar off Venice Blvd when I was 22. Samba music played from the time we opened until we closed; there was always, always, dancing. We danced as we cleaned the bar, danced as we prepared tables, danced on top of the bar at the end of the night. There was always a joke being told, a drink being shared, a story floating through the bar about which waitress slept with which manager or patron the night before. We had 4 part-time waitresses, 2 male managers, 2 bartenders, and 1 very loud and flamboyant owner who claimed that sex with her patrons is how she kept Zabumba open.

One night after work, Monica and I closed the bar together. Well, I shut down the bar and cleaned the sinks and tabletops, she talked and told me stories, the kind of stories that come out with a little liquid courage. She told me that Zabumba has been open less than 10 years ago and should be able to run itself. I took this to mean that she shouldn't have to ask for financial help. "If Zabumba can't run itself I won't keep it." She slurred in her drunken Portugese accent. Not soon after she started to rattle off the names of regulars we both knew and told me what they're like "in bedz." I guessed her body and her bar were working together.

It wasn't odd for her to share these stories with me. We'd worked together for sometime and I like listening to her rattle on about the men of Century City who liked coming down to Venice to see her, who liked being in the "charming" part of town. They liked having a Brasileira, the exotic at their fingertips. Monica, liked it too. She liked being the definition of exotic.

Monica, liked men. More than men, she liked sex and wasn't at all ashamed to act like it. Like my Grandmother.

My father told me the only thing better than pussy is new pussy. He's a good dad; the kind of father that taught his children to make their own money, develop their own hustle and come to him, only if need be. No, he didn't bother with chastity, right or wrong. He did not know it was what scholars called "normativity." To him, it was bullshit. Daddy, didn't bother with "opinion" either, he valued thought and action, but obedience never.

"A woman should feel what she needs to feel." He'd say while reading to me. Making sure that the only thing I knew to value above him, was myself. And he promised to always do the same. And he did.

It was the post- Black Panther, post- "Say it Loud "era, when disco, cocaine, and women with bodies like Pam Grier were the current events in our neighborhood. I found lone pictures of my father and uncles with raised fists, donning black berets, shotguns, and holding banners for the black revolution used as bookmarks. My father didn't believe there was anything his daughter shouldn't read or hear. My mother was never with the men in the house. She was usually asleep or getting ready for work. If she tried to make me go to bed or say it was too late for me to be up, my father would smile, ask me if I want to go to bed and direct my mother to whatever answer I gave, usually no. She never fought him. My morsel of a person had complete access to him, the bookshelf, and the conversations. I can remember waking up at 3 am hearing the jubilation from my bedroom, climbing over my autistic brother, and following the shag carpet down the hall, into the living room and on his lap. He'd ash his joint, lean back and open his arms as I came to nest on him. Sometime my uncles, all of the men he associated with were my uncles, would say that I didn't belong in the room. That never mattered to my father. He promised to never treat me like a child. More times than not, I'd just go back to sleep and eventually find myself the next morning back in bed, all tucked in, next to my little brother.

Each night I'd try my hardest to stay awake for the conversations. When I did, there was so much to learn. Somewhere between conversations about Maulana Karanaga,

basketball players, or the difference between pussies, I'd find myself watching the way they spoke more than listening to their conversations. All different sizes and hues, the men of the living room at 3 am would shout, laugh, argue, dare each other to do silly things, and make bets on everything including women. They weren't talking about the women as individuals, they were talking about their body parts. Not laughing at them, but marveling at them. Desiring them. No, they weren't interested in the whole woman, but why should they be? They were looking to marry them, they were looking to fuck them.

They always left something behind from their conversations at our house. Something was always forgotten and up for the taking for any little fingers that could find it on a Saturday or Sunday morning. If I was slick and went undetected, I could snatch something and hold it in my hand until I feel asleep. Unless there was cocaine around my father didn't move me. He'd let me look at the books someone brought over or smell the weed they were smoking. If I were fully awake, he'd send me to the kitchen to make their whiskey and Coke's and light cigarettes or joints on the stove when there was no lighter.

Sex for money, sex for love, sex for crack, sex is always for something. So, I began to practice. The books omeone who is invested emotionally and mentally in making hyper-physical connections. Playing with penises, mouths, fingers, and vaginas, was a good way to learn how the body functions during sex. But without an emotionally invested partner, something was missing.

The drawers of our house were also places to find new things. I found naked Polaroids of my parents, individually taken in their bedroom. Surprised and wondering why they took pictures, I simply asked. My father laughed but my mother was angry. She yelled and shrieked so loud I knew I'd done something wrong. "These aren't for kids to look at," she said. But my father ignored her and reached out for me so I could sit on his lap. He asked me what I thought of the pictures, why I went looking for them. I told him that I didn't look for them. I found them in his drawer under his t-shirts. Being naked in our house was common. My father slept naked and my mother in her underwear. We'd shower or bathe with the bathroom door open so I didn't think anything of them fleshy and bare. It was the picture that startled me. I didn't know why they would take pictures of themselves naked. I didn't know naked was special until I saw the pictures. "What were you doing in the pictures, Baba?" I asked my father. He looked at my mother who was trying her hardest to ignore the situation by glaring death at me and said "... playing, Boobie. That's how grown people play with each other." Sounded like a great answer to me. No one would play with me like that because I wasn't grown. The pictures made it back to the drawer. After my father left for work my mother pulled out the thickest belt in the house and gave the spanking of my life.

I shouldn't have been surprised. We met at At 22, I decided to have sex. Oddly enough the act itself was a very scientific experience for me. The man I was living

with didn't appreciate my naive responses to his touch. Someone being inside me amazed me. He was in places that I could not, nor had not, ever been. I touched my stomach when I felt his penis shift direction. I laughed when I could see him thrusting. But, this biological amazement and comedy show told him that I was not a virgin. I also didn't bleed. According to him, I didn't have the "normal" reactions to first-time sex. There were no tears. I laughed often. There was no shyness. I told him how to move. I didn't cry. All my natural responses made him angry. He got dressed and left as soon as it was over. I spent the next two days trying to assure him that I was in fact a virgin; that I was excited and not scared; that I loved him and wasn't a whore. I thought...no. I learned, that I'd done something wrong. Immediately, my mother came to mind. Since we weren't married, what was I supposed to expect from him? I could hear her in my head telling me, "That's what you get." I wanted to talk more about happened. About the sex and his anger and my laughter. By then I was all grown up.