

GENERATION

CHRISTINE WADE

I have made distinctions
Between the child and her mother,
Yet the difference between
The wind
And the sound of the wind at night
Often makes me dream
Of falling sparrows.

Barbara Grossman

C.'s mother M. is five feet two, weighs one hundred and eight pounds and speaks the King's English. She is Protestant. She always wanted C. to speak properly and often corrected her mid-sentence. Even so C. doesn't stutter. C.'s mother M. has blonde hair, green eyes and high cheek bones. C. hates to be told she is like her mother though in some ways she is. They both have small hands. C.'s mother M. was born in September in 1916 in England. C.'s mother M. is British but took American citizenship in 1957. She was raised by her great aunt in Preston, Lancashire, and went to Catholic boarding schools. She had long light blonde hair and the nuns were angry with her when she cropped it short. She liked to ride horses and play cricket. She was required to dress for dinner in her home and to eat each course with the correct utensils. C.'s mother M. sometimes complained about the trauma of C.'s birth. It was evidently very tiresome and painful. She could not breast feed because of heavy anesthesia. C. weighed a lot when she was born. She had a big head, was fat, and cried a lot.

K.'s mother K. is five feet five, weighs one hundred and forty pounds and speaks with an upstate New York accent. Her A's are flat and nasal. K.'s A's are not as flat as her mother's. K.'s mother K. has grey hair and blue eyes. K.'s mother K. recently dyed her hair brown and K. thinks she looks funny. She is Catholic. K. always insists that she looks like her mother K. even though she looks like her father too. K. will reluctantly admit that her legs are bowed like her father's. K.'s mother K. lives in Buffalo, New York, where K. was born and where K.'s mother was born too. K.'s mother K. was born in 1924. K.'s mother's mother was Irish but K.'s mother K. was raised in Buffalo. K.'s mother's mother was a maid for wealthy families. K.'s mother K. used to go sometimes with her mother and play in the homes of wealthy families. K. was born to her mother K. when she was thirty years old. She is the middle child of five children, two sons and three daughters. K.'s birth was difficult relative to the other children, but she was a medium sized and healthy baby.

R.'s mother J. is five feet nine, weighs one hundred and forty pounds and has a Brooklyn accent. She speaks loudly and is Jewish. She has red curly hair, blue eyes and freckles. Her hair used to be bright red but it is faded now. R. looks very much like her mother J. but she is not as tall and she has blonde hair. R. is sometimes taken to be her mother over the phone although she speaks very softly. R.'s mother J. was born in 1930 in Brooklyn, New York. Then she moved to New Jersey by way of Queens where she raised her family. When R.'s mother J. lived in Brooklyn she very much wanted to go to the public school but her parents insisted that she go to the more prestigious private school. She eventually went away to Syracuse University. R. was born to her mother J. in 1954, was the middle child and her mother's first daughter. R. weighed seven pounds when she was born. R.'s mother J. was in labor with R. a long time but her birth was not painful.

C.'s mother M. has been a secretary and a sales clerk, although she had wanted to be a veterinarian. She is now a housewife, although she does volunteer work for the Westminster Theatre Company and takes painting and French in an adult education program. While she lived in Munich C.'s mother M. was not allowed to work because wives of officers in the State Department were not allowed to work. C.'s mother M. lives in London now and is not allowed to work because it is difficult for American citizens to get working papers. C.'s mother M. supported C.'s father through graduate school at the London School of Economics, but this was before C. was born. When C. was six her mother went to work part-time but she didn't tell anyone that she was working for several months because she felt she had to prove that she could work and be a good mother too. C.'s mother M. always told C. that she could be anything she wanted to be and encouraged her in any area that C. showed promise of talent. C.'s mother M. wanted C. to be a doctor, dancer, scholar, writer, artist, linguist, a good wife and happy. Most of all she wanted C. to be happy.

K.'s mother K. used to go to work sometimes with her mother, the domestic servant. This was how she got her first jobs babysitting and cleaning. K.'s mother K. was a secretary before she was married. After she was married she typed sometimes at home for extra money. She typed for Amway Co. at one-half cents per page so that she could buy a bicycle for her daughter. Later K.'s mother K. worked in a factory so that K.'s father could collect unemployment. They each got fifty dollars per

week, which combined was more than K.'s father could earn as a carpenter. K.'s mother K. hated the factory. The workers that worked there were mostly men and she would come home covered with grease. The other women who worked there were very masculine and unlike K.'s mother K. K.'s mother K. now works in the Post Office. She worked at night for many years. K.'s mother K. chose the night shift because she thought she would have more time to spend with her children that way, but the result of this was only that she was perpetually dazed. K. resented that her mother K. had to work so much and couldn't spend more time with her family. K.'s mother K. is really glad that K. could go to college. It was very important to her that all her children could go to college. She feels better for that.

R.'s mother J. left Syracuse University and transferred to Adelphi University when she married so that she could live with her husband in Queens. The single-most motivation for her marriage was her belief that she could not take care of herself, economically or psychologically. Just before she married she wrote to her mother asking her to discourage her from marrying. She did not. R.'s mother J. didn't work after she was married but started having a family. Later she went to a psychiatrist because she was very depressed. She went for ten years. Six years after starting therapy she got a job as a social worker and went to graduate school at Columbia in social work. R.'s mother J. likes her job but feels that she is underpaid and that the work is overwhelming. She was fired once for taking a sixteen year old girl from a Catholic home to have an abortion, but the American Civil Liberties Union initiated proceedings and got her job back, but without back pay. R.'s mother J. wants R. to be able to take care of herself. At the same time she wants, in any way that she can, to help take care of R. R.'s mother J. wants R. to be happy and she is impressed that R. is living in New York and taking care of herself.

C.'s mother M. used to tell her she was sick and tired of her derogatory remarks. C.'s mother M. used to tell her she had a headache. She used to tell her she was a good girl. C. remembers the sound of her mother's voice when she told her she was a good girl. It would make C. flush with pleasure. C.'s mother M. was uncommonly proud of C.'s ability to be bad. When C. was very young C.'s mother M. used to tell her friends that C. was a regular terror that one couldn't keep up with for she was always into everything. C.'s mother M. was particularly convinced of C.'s intelligence and spunk. C.'s mother M. used to tell her about Nazi atrocities.

C.'s mother M. drove an ambulance during the bombing of London. She used to collect her sugar ration for months to have birthday parties for orphans and relocated children, victims of the war. One time the sugar was really salt and the children were disappointed. One night she drove the ambulance into a bomb crater and hurt her back. She had to soak it in hot baths after that but hot water in London was difficult to come by. When C. was eight she went to school and told the other children about the Nazi atrocities that her mother had told her about. C. was fascinated by war stories. C.'s mother talked a lot to C. about the war and with a peculiar enthusiasm.

K.'s mother K. used to tell her how pretty she was, especially in the days when K. had long hair and wore make-up and short skirts. K.'s mother K. tells her about fires, plane crashes, fatal illnesses and deaths due to exposure. K.'s mother K. thinks these things are terrible and tells K. about them over the phone. They also discuss their family and politics. K. can usually convince her mother K. of her political views if she talks to her long enough. K.'s mother K. has been a worker for many years. K.'s mother K. has worked at the Post Office for ten years. When she worked at night she used to come home in the early morning to take care of her senile and bedridden mother. Her biggest fear as she was climbing the stairs was that this was one of the nights that her mother had shit and then, in anger at not having her calls answered, had flung her shit around the room. K.'s mother K. did not like to face this in the early morning after working all night. K.'s mother K. would clean up, wash her mother and then get her children ready for school.

R.'s mother J. likes to tell her about the bargains she buys. R.'s mother J. tells R. that she is too self-critical and too critical of her mother too. R. admits that this is true. R.'s mother J. tells R. how pretty she is. R.'s mother J. told her once about how when she was young her mother would say to her if ever she indicated any fear: "Afraid? What are you afraid of? There is nothing to be afraid of," and R.'s mother J. would mimic her mother's tone of voice. It was painful for R.'s mother J. to have her fears mocked and she vowed that she would give credence to the fears of her children. When R. was fifteen she once made a list of all the things she was afraid of. When she came to item sixty-eight she began to think that the list was pretty funny. She showed it to her mother J. and they laughed together about there being only sixty-eight things to be afraid of. Later R.'s mother J. told R. that she had shown this list to her

psychiatrist. R.'s mother J. was very apologetic, for she was usually invariably moral about respecting the privacy of her children, but R. felt relieved because the matter had been taken up with the proper authorities.

C.'s mother M. often tells lies. This pained C. very much when she first discovered her mother's lies. She cried. Later she felt relieved. It meant that C.'s mother M. was, in fact, crazy and it meant that if C. didn't lie she wouldn't be crazy like her mother M. C. started discovering her mother's lies when she was thirteen. She broke the glass of a picture that her mother had done and discovered that the picture was actually a print of somebody else's. C.'s mother M. knit her a pair of mittens, but the mittens had a store label in them. C. wanted to show her mother the store label but C.'s sister convinced her not to. C.'s impulse was always to treat her mother like a real responsible person. C.'s father and sister often tried to convince her that C.'s mother could not be treated like a fully capacitated person. C.'s mother M. is after all quite crazy and is to be treated with condescension. C.'s impulse is to confront her mother honestly, but this causes C. and her mother so much pain and it causes others such discomfort and it begets them so little that C. often refutes this impulse. She is encouraged in this restraint by her father and sister for it makes things go more smoothly. It is for the sake of expedience. C.'s participation in this paradigm of protection and this conspiracy against her mother, this tampering with reality and this denial of her mother's experience causes her much guilt and anxiety. She identifies with her mother and yet she betrays her.

After her last child was born K.'s mother K. thought seriously about abandoning her husband, taking her four children and leaving the baby with his father. She realized then that she was trapped and lonely in a large house with someone who didn't love her and was never at home. She didn't have anyone she could discuss this with. K.'s mother K. realized then that her children were her only life. She stayed. K. hated the way her father used to humiliate her mother in front of his friends. K.'s mother K. would be serving coffee to K.'s father's friends and he would deliberately demean K.'s mother K. in front of his friends. K. despised this more than anything. K. hated her father with vehemence mostly for what he did to her mother. In collusion K. and her mother K. used to make jokes about K.'s father. They would get back at him privately by making fun of him and making him ridiculous. This was not difficult. Now K. and her mother K. no longer make fun of her father. He has less power. K. realizes how pathetic and deflated he is, and how her mother K. will need someone to grow old with. K.'s mother K. is now slightly embarrassed about making fun of K.'s father. After all she married him. The pain of her marriage is distant and removed. The worst battles have been fought and won and are of a different time. K. feels that much of her mother K.'s energy has been wasted. K.'s mother K. is not one to make much of her own needs or her pride. K. feels that her mother K.'s close relation to her children, in spite of economic hardship and great personal sacrifice, has kept her fundamentally human and enriched.

R.'s mother J. lived for a long time with insufferable depression. R.'s mother J. would wake up very early in the morning and fear that she would not be able to get up. R.'s mother J. would feel so depressed she would be physically sick. R.'s mother J. was afraid that her

depression would prevent her from taking care of her children or that she would create this facade of taking care of her children but she wouldn't really be taking care of them. R.'s mother J. is a large and strong woman; she is athletic, intelligent, sensitive and capable. It took R.'s mother J. a long time to believe that she had the power to get up in the morning to take care of herself and her children. R.'s mother J. once threatened to jump out of the car because R.'s father was driving drunk again. R. always believed that her father was trying to kill them. R. was convinced that her mother J. was really going to jump out of the car and leave her with her father who was trying to kill them. After they were home R. repeatedly asked her mother J. if she really would have jumped out of the car. R.'s mother J. assured her that she only would have done it if she could have taken her children with her. That night R. slept with her mother J. and R.'s father slept downstairs on the couch.

C.'s mother M. used to brag about C. to her friends. She often exaggerates C.'s accomplishments. C.'s mother M. is very threatened by all of C.'s ideas and achievements. C.'s mother M. contributed to C.'s achievements by her sacrifices. She read to C. by the hour when she was small. C.'s mother M. has contributed to C.'s success by her failures. C.'s mother M. is afraid C. is going to suffer from being strong and single-minded. C.'s mother M. has contributed to C.'s strength through a passionate and intensive faith in her. C.'s mother M. loves her very much. C. hates her mother M. and is sure that her mother is determined to destroy her. She exaggerates this hatred in order to protect herself from identifying with her mother M., who she perceives as a defeated person. Recently however, in an unguarded moment, C. felt overwhelmed with compassion and gratitude towards her mother. It was a tremendous relief to C. to feel compassionate towards her mother. C. identifies with her father. Her father embodies and symbolizes intellectual freedom, economic independence, and the ability to reason and articulate. To identify with her mother means destruction and defeat but to identify with her father means she betrays her mother, who loves her very much.

K.'s mother K. always talked to K. about most things but never showed extreme emotion or despair. K.'s mother K. never cries. K. doesn't cry. It doesn't make K. feel better to cry, so she doesn't. The only time K. feels near tears is when she is talking or thinking about her mother K. When K. went away to college she had to leave her mother K. It was the most difficult thing K. ever had to do in her life. It has been the hardest separation, but the four years of K.'s college education have separated her permanently from her mother. K. often fantasizes about being reunited with her mother K. She jokes about her mother coming to live with her. She jokes about moving back to Buffalo, New York, to live with her mother K. when she gets old. K.'s mother K. didn't send her a valentine this year. K. fears that her mother will stop loving her if she tells her she is a lesbian. K. fears that this is the one thing that would come between her and her mother K., although her mother K. loves her very much. Recently K. started work as a carpenter. She used to be a waitress. Working as a carpenter makes her feel odd because her father is a carpenter. When she is having a particular problem she swears, muttering to herself, and swings her hammer recklessly.

This behavior reminds her of her father and she fears being ridiculous like her father. Identification with her father is dangerous and oppressive to her, but carpentry pays better than waitressing and is more gratifying.

R. sometimes cried when she was a child for reasons unknown to anybody else. R.'s mother J. would comfort and soothe her but R.'s heightened sense of pain perplexed her mother J. R. used to cry sometimes and get hysterical. She would panic and have trouble breathing. R.'s mother J. would come to her room and hold her and R. would listen intently to the beating of her mother J.'s heart. R. was terribly afraid that her mother J.'s heart would stop beating and her mother J. would be dead. Once when R. was twelve she went away to camp and was hysterically homesick. She panicked. She was afraid that she was going to have to either jump over the balcony or go home. Both choices were frightening and humiliating. R.'s mother J. came to see her and convinced her to stay at camp. R. had been afraid that her mother J. would be overcome with guilt and allow her to go home. R. was afraid that her mother J. needed her as much as R. needed her mother J. and that kind of bond would be terrible and terrifying. But her mother J. was very calm and talked to R. quite normally. Her mother J. instilled her with strength. Her mother J. took her to Great Barrington to visit a friend for the day and they went for a walk beside the lake. R.'s panic went away. R. went back to camp for two weeks and had a pretty good time. R. was grateful to her mother and proud of being able to stay at camp.

C.'s mother M. punished her severely once for lying about spraying her friend with moth killer. C. was afraid of being punished for what she had done so she lied about it. Her mother explained to her very carefully that she was not being punished for spraying her friend with moth killer but she was being punished for lying. C. always felt very guilty about lying but she compulsively told stories to make her life more exciting, to present herself in a better light, to exonerate herself, to present herself as someone else, and to protect herself. She was terribly sensitive to the opinion of others and spent a lot of time figuring out what was expected of her. Nevertheless C. was naughty, mischievous and disobedient. C.'s mother M. both encouraged her and punished her when she was bad.

K. was always a very good girl like her mother K. was when she was young. K. never had any real conflict about being good. It hardly ever occurred to her to be bad. It almost always made sense to be good to help and please her mother K. When K.'s mother K. worked in the Post Office K. would take care of the younger children and make sure they got to school. K.'s mother K. used to prepare dinner and serve it to her family. When there weren't always enough places at the table her mother K. would stand while everyone else ate. Nothing would induce K.'s mother K. to sit with the rest of them until K. stood and ate beside her mother K. Then her mother K. saw how ridiculous it was and sat down with the rest of them to eat. K. wants to protect her mother from the deprivations of working class life. K.'s mother K. never wants or will take anything for herself. She spends all her money on her children. K.'s sister once remarked to K. that there was no way one could ever repay Mom. K. thinks she is right. K. is eternally grateful to her mother K.

R. at times has been her mother J.'s friend and confi-

dant. When R.'s mother J. was getting her separation and divorce R. would come home from school on vacations and she and her mother J. would have long talks about the situation. They would cry together. R.'s mother J. told R. that she never felt as intelligent or as capable as R.'s father although now she realized that she was. R. had known this for a long time. R.'s mother J. told R. that she finally realized that their friends as a couple were really her friends. R.'s mother J. asked R.'s advice about breaking the news to R.'s younger sister. R. was the first to know. R.'s mother J.'s divorce was long overdue. R. was relieved that it finally happened. It made both R. and her mother J. feel autonomous. Two years after her mother J.'s separation R. told her mother that she is a lesbian. R. felt that her mother R.'s not knowing was a prevarication not befitting their relationship. R. knew that this would not please her mother J. and it was the first time that she had ever consciously displeased her mother J. Telling this to her mother J. created a certain distance and caution in their relationship, but R. feels that this is, for the time being, a necessary relief.

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C.'s mother M., K.'s mother K., and R.'s mother J. are afraid that C., K., and R. will suffer from not being loved by men. C.'s mother M., K.'s mother K., and R.'s mother J. have suffered mostly in their lives from the loving of men. It is a strain this thing called loving of men because it means the serving of men and their interests. Having sacrificed their lives they also want to sacrifice the lives of their daughters. Limited in their choices they see the extension of their history through their daughter's lives as logical, natural, and inevitable. C., K., and R. reject this and hurt their mothers' feelings. They reject their mothers and separate themselves to avoid identifying with their mothers. They feel guilty when they hurt and reject their mothers and their mothers' notions of their lives. Life is about sacrifice and giving of self. Life is not complete without the loving of men.

C.'s mother M., K.'s mother K., and R.'s mother J. are afraid that C., K., and R. will suffer by loving men. They say that their husbands and men in general are selfish, insensitive, and incompetent. They have warned C., K., and R. that men are dangerous and ruinous and can hurt and maim. More often they say that men are ridiculous.

C., K., and R. say that men are selfish, insensitive, and incompetent. They tell their mothers that men are dangerous and ruinous and have hurt and maimed. More often they say that men are ridiculous. Their mothers feel guilty about denigrating men to their daughters. They reconsider. Not all men are so bad as their husbands. Even their husbands are not so bad—not quite so bad as they might have previously indicated in a moment of unguarded anger or frustration. Nothing is so bad as hearing their daughters denigrate men so severely, thereby ruining their chances for happiness through the loving of men. Twenty or thirty years of marriage with someone who is selfish and incompetent was really not so bad. These were their lives and they

had their children. They made their sacrifices for the general good and for the good of their daughters. It was really not so bad.

C., K., and R. are painters. It is their primary professional identity, although they read, write, dance and play basketball. They don't wish to explain why they paint and what they paint. They paint because it enriches and intensifies all other aspects of their experience. They paint because it is the most poignant way to be alone that they know. They paint abstract oil paintings. They paint small awkward images. At times they have trouble getting into their studios to paint and at times it is a relief to them to go into their studios to paint. Often working for money gets in their way and sometimes their social life does. Sometimes they retreat from their social life into their studios. They are looking forward to a time in their lives when they establish productive and even-keeled working patterns. There is something about completion that frightens them. If they complete a work and say that it is finished they invite judgment from their public. They invite others to consider them seriously as women who are artists or as artists who are women. As yet their audience is very small. They try to work eclectically. The idea of the "Big Idea," the masterpiece, encouraged so systematically by their art professors in college, is an anathema to them. They are gathering little ideas and putting them together in their studios.

C.'s mother M. likes art and even draws and paints herself. C.'s mother M. likes the Impressionists but doesn't like Picasso. Recently C.'s mother M. walked through C.'s studio and told C. that her work was dreadful. C.'s mother M. thinks that C. is wasting her talent. C.'s mother M. thinks that non-objective abstract painting is "on its way out." After this incident C. asked her mother M. not to comment on her work.

K.'s mother K. likes art. She likes the Impressionists, Turner and Frank Church. K.'s mother K. reads art books. K. took her mother K. to see the Clyfford Stills in the Albright-Knox Museum in Buffalo, New York. Now K.'s mother K. likes Clyfford Still. K.'s mother K. doesn't understand K.'s work and K. feels it is beyond her power to explain it to her so they never talk about it.

R.'s mother J. is not very interested in art. R.'s mother J. doesn't understand R.'s work but recognizes its importance to her. When R. was at college she always told her mother J. that she never did enough work. In the spring R.'s mother J. came to see her show and cried at seeing the huge space that R.'s work filled up. She told R. that she had believed her when she said that she had not worked enough, but here was evidence very much to the contrary. R.'s mother J. was very pleased with R.'s work.

C., K., and R. are dedicated to the difference between their lives and their mothers' lives. Both the dedication and the difference are spontaneous, impulsive and reactionary. Both the dedication and the difference are calculated, controlled and premeditated. It is absolutely necessary that distinctions between their mothers and themselves are recognized and ritualized. Although the compulsion to preserve alternatives in their lives makes them contrary, recalcitrant and enigmatic to their mothers, they feel great compassion for their mothers. C., K., and R. feel that very easily the choices of their lives could be circumscribed and narrowed. They feel

that their destinies could be stolen from them. The world that took power from their mothers' lives is still dedicated to taking power from the lives of their mothers' daughters. They protect themselves by living without men. They feel safety in their tangency and take pride in their marginal status. Often when dealing with the world beyond their lofts they feel angry, ostracized and endangered. It is a confusion in their minds as to whether they are the elect or the outcast. Whether they have been saved or damned is a question they have not quite settled in their minds. At times they feel that their identity as lesbians and artists is fierce and pronounced and they wear it on their sleeves. At times they feel small, doubtful and powerless and they are silent.

C.'s mother M., K.'s mother K., and R.'s mother J. are intensely involved in either their children's lives or some mythological concept of their children's lives. It relieves responsibility and urgency from their own lives. Their children give them a sense of purpose and make it all seem worthwhile. They are both proud that their daughters are different and terrified that their daughters are different. They have experienced both the privilege and the bondage of their particular class of women and in their realized value system they endorse the choices of their lives. But in their secret places where the shards of unrealized self-worth and independence lay scattered and disguised by years of subservience to their men and their children, they are envious—are even glad for the difference in their daughters' lives, although they must keep this gladness secret, even from themselves.

There is a joke among C., K., and R. about whose mother loves them most. It is a perpetual contest and won in various ways, at various moments by various contenders. If K.'s mother calls her long distance then she loves her more than C.'s mother loves C., but if R.'s mother sends her home with half a turkey and lasagna then her mother loves her most. C.'s mother knits and sends her a cable knit sweater which fits her perfectly. C.'s mother loves her more. Mothers' love is unconditional, all-embracing and expressed directly with aid to real survival needs. If their mothers care about them they are at least partially immune to the taxation of survival and the terrors of the world.

There is a joke among them that they can do anything they want because their mothers aren't present. Their choices and capacities are limitless because they are beyond the realm of control of their mothers. They are free to be mean and ugly and go out immediately after washing their hair, while it is still wet. They stay up late, eat poorly, and dress improperly. They can drink beer out of cans. They can come and go as they please, earn money, and yell coarsely at men who harass them on the street.

C., K., and R. sometimes think of their mothers when they are with their lovers. They think of their mothers' shock and repulsion that they are with their lovers. They think that their mothers hate them. They think how extraordinary to be enfolded once again in the arms of a woman, flesh of their flesh. They think that their mothers love them. They think that if their mothers had this loving of other women instead of the endless battle in which women are culturally predetermined to submit economically, socially and psychologically to men, they would have had a better time of it. They project their hopes onto their mothers and fantasize about their

mothers seeking and finding the tenderness of other women. They make jokes about discovering their mothers in a lesbian bar. The lesbian bar is often a desperate setting for those seeking tenderness and affirmation. But perhaps not so desperate as the setting of their mothers' lives. There would M., K., and J. sit in a corner as their daughters might sit, looking at other women and discussing sexual politics. The impossibility and the possibility of this vignette provides the laughter that buffers the painful recognition of the limits of their mothers' lives. They want the best for their mothers. They only want their mothers to be happy. In moments of a more earth-seated reality they do not fantasize about the possibilities of their mothers' lives.

In spite of contemporary technology and a deep-rooted, puritanical sense of responsibility, C. has become pregnant twice and has had two abortions. The pregnancies were detected within the first five weeks, the operations were paid for by medical insurance and were painless. The surgeon and anesthesiologist were highly qualified and competent and she received emotional support and solace from her friends and lover. She stopped sleeping with men. K. dislikes penetration, its concept and its physicality. Incidental friction is not adequate criteria for sexual fulfillment for very long. She stopped sleeping with men. R. feels that the men that she slept with presumptively raped her. She stopped sleeping with men. Sex with men is irreversibly connected in their minds with violence to their bodies and their psychologies, and their participation in the phallus-oriented sexuality of their past is irrevocably connected in their memories with a willful and shameful masochism and an unnecessary risk of death. Through lesbianism, C., K., and R. axiomatically and coincidentally reject phallus-oriented sexuality and the institution of motherhood. They believe that the revolution begins at home.

C., K., and R. hate and fear the power that men have in the world. They make fun of male genitals in a way that would shock and frighten their mothers. Their mothers, in varying degrees, prefer their daughters to be polite and demure. Making fun of male genitals is unnecessarily defensive, adolescent and unkind. It threatens the god-head. It threatens the idea of mutual respect.

C., K., and R. fear rape. They fear that having seized the means of production it will be seized back from them. They wear sneakers with the possibility of escape in their minds. They walk in the street psychologically prepared for attack. Sometimes they take cabs. They feel angry that their lives are circumscribed by the imminence of rape. If they were raped the practical control of their lives would return to men. The doctors, the police and the courts—the vehicles for protection and retribution are too connected with the perpetration of the crime. There are no vehicles for protection and retribution. The power of recovery would have to be generated from within. It would tax their capabilities and undermine their humanity. The thought of what it might require of them is beyond their imagination and beyond their imagination is the realm of their fear.

C., K., and R. read a lot; voraciously, but never enough. They will readily and easily discuss whatever they are reading with each other and with other friends. With new or hard-to-find books there is a general clam-

or to be either first or next. It is a matter of pride to be first to track down and acquire certain books. C., K., and R. want to be writers. It is a more acceptable profession to them and to the world than that of the artist. They enjoy the power of the word. It is so tangible. They sleep with their dictionaries beside them in their beds. When either of them finds a new word to their liking they give it, almost as a gift, to the others; and when acknowledged it is added to the lexicon of the community. They read voraciously but never enough. They scribble in their journals. When they apply for part-time jobs in the business community, they say, by way of explanation of their desire to work part-time, that they are writers. They don't wish to explain why they paint and what they paint. Mostly they disdain not being taken seriously. Women as artists are not taken seriously. Women in general are not taken seriously. Their mothers were never taken seriously and C., K., and R. have been mocked in their lives for taking themselves so seriously. They are sometimes afraid to take themselves seriously, for this is a great demand which they, at times, feel unprepared for.

Recently they went to a free health screening clinic. Each of them took something to read. C. took *The Spoils of Poynton*, by Henry James. K. took *Our Blood*, by Andrea Dworkin. R. took *Gothic Tales*, by Isak Dinesen. They ended up reading pamphlets about gay venereal disease. At the clinic they pretended they were each trying out for the leading role in a film. They argued about who got the part. All three had to come back for another appointment. K. and R. had slight vaginal infections and C. had to reschedule a Pap smear because it was the first day of her period. C. insisted that the nurse put down on her chart that she is five feet seven although she is only five six. R. and K. discussed the pleasures of having their breasts examined. None of them had anemia in spite of a poor and irregular diet.

Although C., K., and R. all want to be movie stars they are afraid to be romantic or sentimental. They are more comfortable with their cynicism. They are afraid people will think that they are romantic and sentimental. There is a certain myth that women in their thoughts and language are sentimental and this sentimentality undermines and diminishes the content and validity of their ideas. This myth pervaded the atmosphere of their education and it strikes fear in their hearts that they should be thought sentimental. The people that they meet and know think that they are unusually hard and articulate. C., K., and R. are afraid to talk about ideas—especially ideas about art. Their education provided a language for this purpose and it is used most deftly and casually by the boys in the business. But C., K., and R. choke on it and it makes their tongues swell. It makes them avert their eyes. They avoid using it, have nothing to replace it and they think that they are better off without it. This language is deficient in its ability to describe the motivating force and purpose of their art. This language bypasses all the immediate feelings involved in making art and imbues the work with a false pride and a false esoteric theory of making art. Sometimes when dealing with the double-edged myth of what constitutes womanhood and reacting to its destructive polarity they are caught between its edges in a place where nothing is yet defined or understood; no language, no concept—only the impulse to repudiate. They are left with the necessity of inventing a suit-

able language for sharing ideas, but as yet they are often mute. Their silence both protects and isolates them.

Rather than pledge themselves to love they have pledged themselves to their work and they romanticize about their commitment as diligently as others romanticize about love. They resign themselves to the clarity of loneliness as others resign themselves to the confusion of love. And for the same reason: they see no other way to live. It has become a noble idea. They will, however, probably be no lonelier than others, nor will they love less, nor be loved less. It confuses their mothers sometimes that they refuse to dedicate themselves to love. Their daughters cynicism is cryptic. They can't understand what caused it, although they above all should know.

C., K., and R. are interested in what they euphemistically call "the work"; ie. painting and literature, a body of feminist/socialist ideas, as yet ill-defined and inchoate. These interests take a certain responsibility from the role of love in their lives. They prefer to depend on friendship, for after investing in a friendship for awhile it seems more dependable and sometimes more interesting than love and investing in love takes energy from their work. Not investing in love, however, closes them up, limits their vision, narrows their experience and eventually takes energy from their work. They try maintaining a balance somehow between love, friendship and work. As in any triangle, however, one is always betrayed: the love, the friendship or the work. At any given moment one of these things is in some way betrayed; one of these things is always a usurper, uncontrolled and recalcitrant. The idea is to integrate and coalesce, but the difference between the conception and the reality is often great. There is conflict. They dream. They fantasize. They talk a lot. They discuss these things and they think about them diligently.

There is a joke among C., K., and R. about the pilfering of ideas as if there were too few to go around. This joke is a parody of professional competitiveness. They have seen it often among the Artists, and they

were educated in an environment where this concept of sacrosanct Idea—pure in its divorce from personal feeling, large and conceptual and abstract—prevailed. Naturally the Idea is coveted. The Idea is the means to recognition. What they have been painfully conscious of is that they are afraid that their ideas are poor and at the same time that someone might steal their not so good ideas and perhaps put them to some better use or make them somehow seem more glorious than they can make them. They protect them by casually intimating their subject matter for certain projects and by announcing certain intentions and by staking claim to certain contents and constructs. They want to be both original and brilliant. They want individual recognition. This joke about the pilfering of ideas rests a little uncomfortably with them. If most of the professional recognition (and with it, money) is for men and women's ideas aren't pure anyway then what morsels or esteem are left to split amongst them? Who gets what? But what they also realize is that they are forging with their lives a collective of ideas, a new concept of idea; perhaps even an ideology. By implementing their ideology they will beget a forum. They will recognize themselves. Whereas their mothers suffered in isolation, without hope of individual recognition, without support and without ever being taken seriously, they have in their small circles, intermingled with their political struggles, a wealth of information and a beginning of a counter system. Their hope is that they don't ponder alone, that their ideas belong not to any one of them, but to all of them at once. That which one of them can't articulate in a moment, another of them will in the next.

What interests them most is that which is not yet expressed; ideas that have not yet found words, a body of experience and a system of education whose processes are not impaired (at least at the instance of conception) by the dogma of male institutions. It is the Little World, this interaction between them, and it is their opportunity and the purpose of their lives to endow the Little World with the credence and magnitude ordinarily attributed only to the Big World.

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