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Bearded Circus Ladies

By Jan Derbvshire

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Smoking Can kill you. Life does.

Helen Keller walks into a fish market. Hello Ladies.

...
We've tried everything to try and cover our true essence up but,
where the inside meets the outside, in the hole down below we
smell like fish. I don't like it either but it's true..

Another little fact we keep hidden. All women have beards. Each
and every one of us. Only the naked truth reveals but...

We're bearded Ladies. Freaks. Just like Annie Jones. Barnum And
Bailey's Most Famous Bearded Lady. She made her living being
unique. In 'the spotlight they came 'to see, the bearded lady. Head
of man, body of woman, Believe it or not. For twenty years,
Barnum's most profitable curiosity. But in public....

She hid by means of heavy veils.

The Evolution of the embarrassed woman.

Barnum and Bailey's Bearded Lady. Believe it or not. In the spotlight I wear fancy ball gowns and rubies, sapphires, diamond Tiaras

Drive you crazy trying to figure out what I am. But outside the spotlight . . . I've taken to wearing Levi's, Gap jackets, ball hats and smoking big fat cigars. No one recognizes me as a woman. Happy go lucky. Oh I've held onto woman's intuition so necessary to good clear judgment but, I walk through the world as a man. And it's the little things that make me smile. How I get the first cup of coffee and the last piece of pie. The way car salesmen talk to me seriously, how I can scratch my ass whenever I want to, how I can walk alone at night, how ICBC never questions my claim. But the strangest thing has happened walking through the world looking like a man. I've found myself...talking to women. For the first time really. I talk to them freely on my opinions of feminism, justice, womankind, amour. And well, some of the women fall in love with me because,. . . I listen. True romance is being heard. Ectasy is being understood.

One starry night. A mutual kiss was found. Hmmm. I was told it was the sweetest ever tasted. So sweet and full of care that the woman invited me home to her bed. Despite my insistence that I too was a woman. Aren't we all she giggled. Of course she did come to believe I was a woman. Nothing like physical reality to bring a romance down to earth. Still, we swore it didn't matter. We'd found true love.

But in the end, we just couldn't hold each other because, there really is nothing like the love of a woman but, ooooh, for the fuck of a man.

Well, that's the fortune cookie slip of wisdom I pulled from the reams and reams of paper talk spent trying to figure out exactly what all that meant.

A paradox is all I have to remember those times by. Black, yellow stitching,

"You're not like any woman I've ever known .I'll also love you, I'll never forget you," she whispered in my ear and left.

Here's the killer. The last man I've loved. Left me on precisely the same lines, Of course that was years ago before the beard. I was born into the circus. A lion tamer's daughter. Fully trained by my father. He said I had a magic touch for taming wild beasts. I worked with him everyday. Just the practices though. He wouldn't let me have a show of my own. All the young men would be running out of the stands to save me I was such a cute, little thing. It's not like my father wasn't proud of me. Once he even said, "You should have been the son." See, my poor brother was afraid of lions. He preferred sawing women in half.

Anyway, as I grew older, I got a mind to by-pass my father's approval and seduce the ring **master. And** by the time we were engaged I had my first lion show. Pussy for Pussy.

And I'll be damned, If right when I was sticking my head in the lion's mouth, he ran in to save me. From what ? He was the one who got his arm chewed off. He stood there bleeding. You're not like any woman I've ever known .I'll also love you, I'll never forget you," he whispered in my ear and left.

That was the first time I really didn't understand. No Love. No career. And yet I was lovable and talented.

The next morning I woke up with horrendous cramps. My period had contracted itself into a question mark. What's really going on ?

Nobody had an answer not even the finest doctors in the land so they put me on testosterone which took away the pain and gave me this beard.

And that's when I got the job as the bearded circus Lady. I learned to sit pretty And I've stumbled into a new kind of loneliness. For men, for women, not feeling like belong with either, although I appear'to be parts of both. Making as boring living makes a boring life.

And on this very real bridge tonight, silhouetted by the moon in that hunched over, no thanks no dairy products for me,. osteo..shhh. way middle ages women have, I look like what might well be the missing link in the evolution of womankind. My desire is to jump to the water three hundred feet below and return to my primordial fish beginnings.

I look to the end for the beginning of this story, this evolution of the embarrassed woman. After all revolution didn't work in getting women to their rightful places maybe evolution will. And now, for all bearded ladies...a fish story, a reverberation of the vertebrae. A true story full of lies. The evolution of the embarrassed woman. What's real, what's not, it's all a matter of what you're looking for. The jokes you see are the jokes you'll get. A fish story, told straight up from a slightly bent spine.

Before we were bearded ladies. Before we were looked at. Before we lived in the world of mirrors, preferring instead the world of windows. We looked at life through a magnifying glass. Wanting to understand, to get closer, to get through. **To** get inside the inside the inside. Of course, this was sometimes destructive like when an ant got burnt up on the sidewalk. Life lesson. 757-b54. If you look at something too closely, you have the potential to destroy it.

I must say no one missed the Aunt much. She was my mother's youngest sister, Aunt Grace. She suffered from anorex...shhhh. Maybe her living as the living skeleton posing on the covering of Vague, 5 6 times a year. No one knew she was dead because she was always missing. We were forever losing her down heat vents, under rugs, the wind blew her all the way to Chicago once. If she were alive today she could do the GAP ads. Anorex Tomboys..endangered species. On the bridge between girl and boy.

This is how I like to chew my gum. I think it makes my brain jump.

My mama says I'm gonna get big muscles

On the sides of my face. So I heard something the other day,
Tuesday, the other day, Wednesday, that there's this disease
called Lock-jaw. And that people die. Your jaw... loooocks. Like
that. And you can't swallow and you drown in your own spit.

I wanna make sure mine doesn't lock.

My mamas mad at me, my mamas mad, my mad,
mymasmas mad.

There's no reason to wear a dress, just because you're
going to Grandma's, Grandma has trees, you wear a dress
you end up sitting inside, sitting pretty. in the living room
anyway, why do they call it a living room anyway. Everything
always exactly the same, in exactly the same place. Nothing ever
moves. If there was an earthquake nothing in my Grandma's
house would move. I don't want to sit in there and drink tea
with too much milk from a fancy cup. I want to drink
lemonade, from an outside cup, the plastic ones she
keeps on the porch. I want to drink my lemonade after climbing
trees like my brother does. My brother never comes in the house,
cause he's filthy, he's a pig, a dirty pig. He just comes to the
back porch and Grandma pours him a glass and he gulps it down and
goes thanks Gram.

I don't think they're ever gonna come get me this time. ohhhhahhh.
I hate when my mom's mad at me. It makes my heart hurt. Ah, I
should have just worn the dress. It's not like it would kill me. My
heart hurts..help, help, I'm dying of lock heart.
I've been in here forever. I can hear my mom cooking. She
cooks a lot and crotches. The ladies are coming over to
knit. . .pick.
Maybe I'll have a...Fire drill ! That's a good idea. Okay,
there's a fire. The flames are burning everywhere.
But I'm the super-hero of the family. I've planned the
fire escape routes. Hurry ladies take the
alternate exits. You, Mom, Dad, out that away. Me out the window to
the tree, slide down, grab the hose, fight the fire myself. The
hero of the universe. Me. Who will not get lock-jaw. Never forever.
I won't. God, you can't talk or nothing'. Help me, I've got lock
jaw. What . . .Help me, I've got lock jaw.. And you drown. First
you can't say anything and then you drown. If you had a piece of
paper and a pen, you could write something down, but only if you
could write really fast. Help me I've got lock...ahhhh Dead. You
could do charades. Help me, I've got.... Help me, I've got lock
jaw..Help . . .me...I've g...got.....a sore heart. Mom.
Mommy . . .Mom. Mom. I'll be stuck here forever. Grounded if you
wear a dress, grounded if you don't.

Where have all the Tomboys gone, long time passing. Where have all the tomboys...

At Charm school, doing remedial work. Practicing Marches of beauty, they should have learned a long time ago. Thick lips, thin thighs, no compromise. Keep time, keep time, Drills of etiquette Ladies don't masticate, they don't even chew, They nibble. Reflections of the outside, keep the insides quiet ! Shhhh. We don't care what's between your ears, just as long as its nice to look at it. If your carrying the world on your shoulders, you'll never get a husband girls. Stand up straight, it rolls off and you're at least in, I'm a little wobbly tonight. I've lost my heel. Divorce will do that to a gal. I'm tipsy. Pick me, pick me, so many fish in the sea. Here's your Tuna Charlie. A divorced, drunken, drag drag queen over-educated, under dressed, in-between just about every fucking thing there is.. So we've come to this, have we. The Bridge. Lost our passion or have too much for this world too hold. Passion from the Latin Passe. ..to suffer. Poets corner. Mutual Fear brings peace. William Blake said that. Impressed. The point is were all scared shitless so lets just jump into endless serenity shall we. It's over. Easy Over. Move Over. Over and out. Over there. Over where. what was your room number. This is ridiculous.

You know loves not suppose to hurt. Hahahahahahaha.I know it's hard to believe, I don't even believe it myself but, love's not suppose to hurt. and if that's true, we've never know love right girls.Jesus Christ all that time spent in higher education pouring over the poetry and philosophy of dead guys looking for that one phrase could make sense of it all.God Damn it !

Could we just let go ? We're not made for this world.It's not like we're those sensitive girls who wear their hearts on their sleeves No. We're too smart for that aren't we ladies ? We protect our hearts, beneath quite pitiful little breasts I must say, little hearts, nicely hidden...during the day. ..but at night they lead us. Our ribs part like the shutters on the doors of those dreamy French cafes and our heart extends itself six feet forward, on a platter, nicely arranged among romantic memories and poetic ideals, and our heart screams eat me, eat me ! God, why are barf bags just available on airplanes, you don't just get sick from motion you get sick from not being able to move. Shall we. God I need a joke, I never should have quit joking. Knock, knock, who's there, Dwayne, dwayne who, dwayne the tub we're drowning.

On the edge. Angel of the dark. Holy Bat Possessed by women's intuition. Answering the call of blind faith. Hanging upside down every night to empty my head of any thoughts of organized, patriarchal religion. Retch Retch Retch.

Preferring instead a kind of wild, missing in action, catholic sort of dogma.

emphasis on the ma. Powerful shit Catholicism. More addictive than heroine. More mind altering than LSD. No matter how long you been clean. ..They'll get yah. Numbers really went up the year the pope was shot. The pope had been shot and miraculous he survived what should have been a mortal wound. And millions thought hey, that guy's on the right side of whatever's out there, maybe I'll be catholic again. Take out a little after life insurance policy. But then what did the pope do as a show of his faith, the pope returned to his people in a jeep completely enclosed in bullet proof glass. In other words the pope looked death in the face and was scared shitless. So what's really going on ? And now that's the only image we have of the pope. In his little white suit, with his big white hat in a clear plastic vehicle. I don't know about you folks but doesn't he sort of look like the last tic tac in the pack. Just one calorie. Either that or that game we had as kids. Trouble, trouble that's Popematic trouble. 666. Yeah I got Satan's number and he's got mine. I know I hate too much to go anywhere near heaven. . .if there is one. See I hold my doctorate in religious studies, Sister Marty Margaret Bat. Ph. D.

Occupation, Ring kisser and baker of communion wafers. I can't even give a sermon in church. Why, cause I've got breasts nobody's allowed to touch. Because I'm a wo..ssshhh. Made from Adam's rib. Least they could have done is used the funny bone. so we could laugh at all the shit you put up with just because you were born a womasshh I know I'm angry. Not good for a woman of the cloth. A Good nun just needs a good prayer not a good joke. Look where prayer got me. The bridge. Haha. So funny I forgot to laugh. So I'll confess before I go. Just in case. Tonight. I was a little drunk on sacrificial red wine, is there any other kind ? And heartbroken, Because like so many other women, the man I married was ignoring me. Problem is...I married You. ..God. And you refuse to hear me. Just once I like to deliver mass. Just once. Shocking but true. But it's not going to happen. Not in this lifetime. And being the good little Catholic I am .I can only believe that this is the only lifetime I've got. So. I just snapped tonight when some fat bishop fell asleep during his own mass and then had the gall to remind me to kiss his ring. Kiss this. I just grabbed the wine and started walking. Broke into a toy store.and switched the talking chips between the Barbie dolls and The G.I. Joes. So now G.I. Joe says, let's go shopping and Barbie screams vengeance will be mine. There weren't any priest and nun dolls. If there had of been. I would have the priest doll say Hail Mary and the nun doll say everything that she's never been allowed too.

Judge Not The first woman in my country to sit on the Supreme Court's Bench. Some say I'm the fairest in the land. I live in a castle, I built and paid for myself. I live alone, fair of mind, not of face.

I defend myself, a bad habit left over from my young lawyer days. I don't like to think too much about how fulfilling my full potential success wise has had something to do with choosing between my mind and your love. I've made peace with that thought by ignoring it. That's what lawyers do, you dismiss what might hurt your case. Hoping the prosecution doesn't bring it up. Oh, I've felt happiness, setting precedents in my job and my gender. But When I dream of what I've accomplished it plays in slo-motion. It's taken so long to get so few obvious things right. I never think of my biological clock, I hear the ticking of repeated history, more like a physiological bomb. If I can think it why can't I get it changed. What year is it ?... was all I could ask after the Simpson Case.

Oh yes.... Judge Not famous for my professional decisiveness I had unwillingly got caught up in the networks, the coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial. Current events always carry the river of history behind them. That night on the screen of my little blue meanie.. The alien t,v, people told me... a man who beat his wife regularly got off with a movie of the week and a book deal When I heard the verdict I feel into a deep sleep.

Instinctively in an attempt to make myself feel better I went to the grocery store to pick up some Sara Lee Brownies and a pint of Haggendaas Ice-cream Peanut Butter Burst. But the hummm of not knowing what's really going on... seems outside me now, I wasn't the only one humming I could hear the humm of others, the hummm meeting in the sky, the buzzing of contained rage, the sound of lightening before it happens. And then an enormous wind, swelling up from the ground, the collective sigh of all women everywhere who could not think of what to say, who could not even begin to find language for this strange pain.0.J. Simpson's not guilty. ..of anything ? A wind so strong that all women knew without knowing that we had been blown backwards at least into the 1950's, and probably beyond.1 just continued walking backwards, My head too full to even hold up anymore. Until I came to the bridge. A bridge. I helped to build, between what is and what should be, But the bridge was torn in two by the unprecedented sigh, hanging loose and tattered. Turned out it was only ever met for decoration. for show. I see what it's made of now. The Onion paper rustles like crinolines against unshaven legs and the balsam wood has snapped into the size of toothpicks perfect for canapes.No Justice. Just Us Not Knowing what's really going on. I can't believe it's 1996 And I stand on the precipice Thinking about jumping over the moon.Big fat cow.Peanut Butter Burst. When I was a little girl I always thought the cow was jumping up, moving on to somewhere higher, somewhere brighter. But even ambitious cows go down sometime.

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Now Judge not Not Judge. In the difficult equations life presents two negatives seldom equals a positive. Case closed..Equal is nothing more than a sugar substitute. Believing I was, was all the sweetness I required. But it's not real sugar. It leaves a nasty after taste for a life you never had. One last subtitle...Twice as many women **as** men suffer from depression. In the end this is the only dent in the whole problem I will leave.

A bus, full of empty nesters, bored and looking for something to nurture, spotted.. .what's that on the bridge. In this light, in this time it's hard to say. Beauty or beast. Bat or angel, man or woman. Only the driver, will risk the unknown, rolling out the emergency door to stand on an edge I've been on before. The line between helping others or helping others. Oh. I feel bad about my impulsive decision to leave the ladies in the bus to help these could-be creatures but, there are more animal shelters than shelters for women for a reason. Pets are so much cuter, I've been looking for a stray to bring home every since my children left and then my cat died I didn't think I'd survive that one. I'm afraid to look down the road My oh my The bus hasn't crashed. It's sticking to it's route Of course it's a present from my husband. An automatic pilot homing device had inflated in the driver's seat and will get all the others back to their place.

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The automatic pilot will probably go inside my home and spend the night with my husband. I'll never be missed on -the bridge

between never having lived life for myself and never having wanted too. There's a reason they say illusions shatter. I'm cracking up. My porcelain face is falling to pieces and the painted on smile falls into the water below. Just tears of happy. Everything's fine Everything's fine Just let me set down this big sack of guilt Guilt the gift that keeps on giving. Oh my. I just thought we'd end up here. Sweet little girl You know what's funny. I'd never thought I'd be a mother. I used to joke that my favorite form of birth control was going over to visit a friend with a baby. I'd hold the baby until it cried and then I could actually feel my tubes tying themselves. But in some biological decision made by my body not my mind. I became pregnant. I had a little girl. She's 12, 34..16 55.2010. I forget. Mother loading's so heavy. Too profound. This beautiful little girl looking up at me. Everything's fine, just fine. The questions increasing in difficulty every day. Can I do anything mama. And I don't know, is just not acceptable answer. Not when you're a mother. I'm not really crying honey. Let's just you and I call it brain rain. Oh honey, don't look. If you don't see it, it doesn't exist.

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Mother Load needs a kleenex. nothing up her sleeve So, she'll try her pocket and I'll fall out. **Falling in the backward** motion of what can only be a perpetual teenager. Free falling not a care

of consequence in my head. Just into the experience. Look A thin rope unravels behind me. An apron string ? No actually, -the original bungee, the umbilical cord. All perpetual teenagers remain attached. Leaving home in the most dramatic way possible, bouncing back just as quickly. Again and again and again until.. motherload can't handle the weight anymore. No more welcome back with open arms. So eventually, in a matter of moments that seems like 34 years, the perpetual teenager is left hanging at a much lower social position than she had anticipated. Still there's always time to wax philosophically

Why do we say human why not humman. Human along singing a song... Then I could say human. mo. women are the hummmm in human and I could say without lying. Im a humanisit. . . .i don't know what to say hummmmm, but I'm thinking. . .i just can't find the words. . .so leave me in my wondering. . .Yeah. Woman the humm in human. . .the murmur, the sustained sound of closed lips, the words left in the thinking and never said...

What was I saying? The human race. Humanists practicing humansynthesis. Like trees practice photosynthesis. Photosynthesis. Why don't humans just do.

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Why do humans need everything to mean something, why don't they just let it move through them, Maybe, that's the natural process of being human too. Take the light or the dark as it comes a tree doesn't expect it to light all the time. If it took in too much

sun,it would catch fire from the inside out... poof. Life's a motion picture, and movies are like 60 % black. There's no editing and you don't have time to make sense of what you've just seen and you really cant follow the plot so you have no idea what's coming up so really have is what's right in front of you.When you die that's when you're whole life plays before your eyes. And those people that almost died and come back and say they say the bright light. It's cause they -were facing the wrong way, they were looking into the projector and then they knew their film was still going so they had 'to come back. HMMMMMMMMMMMMMM.

On 'the bridge between laughter and anguish. Between then and now, between earthand sky. between set-up and punchline. Sort of in the dot dot dot that follows a long run on sentence that makes no sense. In the unknown. Inthe space between mind and matter. The blank page. No point left at the end of the pencil

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All those words and still nobody had an answer.Sad but, true , reflections are illusions, in mirrors, in words, in the waters of ~~melted~~ snow. And thinking what we'veall probably suspected before, that language is not action some was taken.

The seven in-between-s, the seven women, stepped off the bridge, falling towards the ~~scat~~ of salt water the smell of tears .The starlings under the bridge flew away. This was one cry they didn't

want to mimic. Great expectations. Hoping to hit the water with all the Grace of Grade C bovines They landed instead on the deck of a boat. A houseboat. Two story. The gravitational force of the fall, had compacted them into one form, one body..I fell with them. we had fallen for each other, of each other into each other. A common entity, landing on the deck of the houseboat...the fallen woman.

A banner 'was flying from the masthead. 14th Annual REAL women convention. On the deck was a grand old lady looking like a geriatric Buddha, sitting on a la. chaise, smoking a cigarette.

"You've come a long way baby," she said. She didn't seem surprised to see me nor did she bat an eye at my appearance.

With senility comes acceptance. "What lands you here," she asked. I was just in the neighbourhood and I thought I'd drop by.

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Then I just started to cry The geriatric budda sprung into action. She took me to the galley room behind the kitchen where all the other real women were.

She wrapped me in a homemade quilt that said Families Forever. fed me soup, nutritionally complete, all four food groups in the same bowl. and For dessert she snapped off two of her long, slender lady fingers saying, "Theres more in the oven." She started talking and drew out Motherload. who said, "I love what you've done with the boat, not a house boat at all, a homeboat, And the

Geriatric Buddha said are you okay ? I'm fine, everything's fine, just fine. Then I spied with my little eye, crafts everywhere. . . pinecones with eyes and felt wings, little knitted dolls covering toilet paper rolls, decopage, macrama, crocheted booties, spoon collections, jars and jars of jellies and jams and a 14 foot long needlepoint mural, that must have taken years to make. It read, Real women. Real equal active for life, founded 1983. I'd always assumed Real women had been around a lot longer than that. HMMMMMMMM. It's an organization. I didn't realize there was something to sign up for. So this feeling of not knowing our place, might just be a matter of paperwork... Let's sign up. The geriatric budda let out a deep belly laugh and then quickly sucked it in, squelching the rest of her laughter with her 3 fingered hand. I don't think you'd be interested she said, It was then I notice the convention souvenir and sale table.

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Covered with books I'd never heard. There was one on date rape entitled, Nobody said you.. had to easy. I flipped through another, a red cover, it, it was about about the bill passed that prohibited a woman's sexual history not being allowed into a sexual assault or rape case. Judge Not got that one through. It took her 15 years. I closed it to see if I got the title right. There it was in black in White. The despise men amendment. There were talking books, plugging the dyke, how to shut-up angry lesbians, A video called spotting male impersonators, with candid camera sections featuring Kim Campbell, Bertha Wilson, Shelia

Copps, Beverly McLachlin, Roberta Bondar, Manon Rheum, the NHL Goaltender and almost all the women who've ever taught women's studies. A book of photos, on not wanted posters, called weird sisters in power.

a documentary on the history of leaders of the woman's movement called, The Miss Guided Pageant, All the losers 1921 - 1995..and several thousand fridge magnets, No means maybe, There was no wife beating before feminism, Dykes free zone, Just say no to subsidized daycare. Single Mothers are single for a reason...Men belong in their fields , woman don't. Home is where the women are. Woman's rights but not at the expense of human rights. Homosexuals made their bed, let them die in it. All artists have aids. God is my father. Goddesses only appear to women on drugs. Eve was wrong,...

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I popped one last lady finger in my mouth and thought, there is no such thing as a free meal.

What exactly does this organization do ?" The geriatric budda said, "Listen I don't really think you want to hear my story and I know I'm too old to hear yours, so I suggest taking one of the little boats outside and rowing off to wherever you need to go. And I don't really want to know where that is either."

There was a little dingy hanging from the back of the boat, covered with some lovely stencil work, roses, no thorns and ,stuck on macaroni letters that read pro-life boat.Oh my God we've landed on a boat full of Anti-feminists-real women... isn't that an oxymoron. I've read about them, they don't like the women who've made in to power positions in the government because most of them have no children and can't sustain long term relationships. Innocent souls or ignorant chickens, they're c'ompleeUy unaware that few women can rise to power and have those things too. a few is right, how many we got in power now ? three } Things are really getting out of hand. Domestic or not irony is woman's work.

Just then the president of the REAL women association barged in, Come OLd woman, she chirped,were about to play pin the penis on the feminist .Her hair was done up in a tight bun that looked like a lazy Susan, On her glasses were hologramed eyes of her husband, her name tag read, Mrs. Social Norm.

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Then she me, the Fallen woman What are you. ?Only real womn allowd. I am a real woman, I said quite naturally. Prove it, she hissed.And then I was left with that haunting feeling...how to prove your a woman...And so, risking a fruedian slip to fill the abyss with an absebnces rather than a presences I showed Mrs. Social Norm the beard of all woman kind.

.And a scream like a bird caught in the engine of a sufferjet came out of Mrs. Social Norm. and then the insults, like stunned bumble bees, that shouldn't really be able to fly, flew out of her honey hole man wanna-be, or mental ill homosexual, man hating feminis. what are you? Like, I'm a humanist. I'm a woman. But, Mrs. Social norm was on a tear, Prevert, sicko, red alert freak on board. Creep, creep, creep, creep. The other real women responded to the alarm and came in, hands on ears, whats wrong, what's wrong. When they saw the fallen woman, they pulled some of the plastics swords from the trays of canapes sandwiches they'd brought with them, just in case someone was hungry. And poked at us, like girls, I spotted the butter knife and frightened the whole pack back with some street wise dogma moves I'd picked up in Catholic school. Then the gereatric Budda, who couldn't stand all this truly domestic violence, stepped into the middle of it all...

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Suddenly both of her's breasts popped, the hissing sound of escaping reality sssssshhh double masectomy. and for a moment we were united in the silent truth . We may live for different reasons but we could all die from the same disease. White ribbon anyone ? The gereatric Budda fainted. It's hard for any woman to lose all that weight at once.

Now, The real women were mad, real mad. because, one of their own had fallen. They grabbed the pins from their hats and to the

dyslexic version of an old favorite song of mine, the redneck mothers had us up against the wall.

It looked hopeless till I yelled, look a man...

All the real women turned in a ballet of feminine ritual, perfectly synchronized, lipstick out, roll up, apply, turn, smile and curtsy. Only to see.... no man.. That was all the time I needed to run out to the deck, the rain had just begun and to my surprise only one real woman followed, the rest were frozen in fear in the doorway. I watched as the one real woman dissolved before my eyes. Apparently real women were once real little girls, made of sugar and spice and everything nice. That explained the lady fingers. Our one remaining heel had broken off on impact, sensible shoes helped us sprint to the pro-life boat but it was full of holes. What to do ? I could throw one of them overboard, their domestic animals they. All follow the leader.

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Then the food fight broke out. Some of the woman had grabbed day old muffins and failed souffles and plates of dinner left in the oven .too long and were hurling them at me. I was practically unarmed, one stale snickers bar. Then I, the fallen woman, in a quite uncharacteristically said something, in quite a together voice.

Heh Ladies Please. Is this for real, this is womanhood here, evolving, rolling out, diversification of the species, necessary

to survival. And then The Mrs. Social Norm boomed, over my dead body, Lynch her laadies. I watched the real woman digging inside their purses for woman's weapons, mirrors, tweezers, scissors, lipstick missiles... mascara, they were preparing for a massive make-over.

Suddendly a storm came closer and closer and clouds funneled up like steam from a tea kettle and formed into what could well have been i dream of jeannie cross dressing as the michelen man. It was Mother Nature and she was Pissed. I'm setting you adrift babies, you're on your own, with just each other. Find where your loyalties lie.Until you figure out the battle raging within each one of you, don't bother going to war with anyone else.

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And the ocean waters waters parted, just like they did for Moses, a trick she'd apparently just won back from God in a poker game, and the waves folded into each other, A sunami lifted the boat skyward, carrying all of us outpast the ocean, into the fraser river, we all held on to each other. Nothing like crisis for bringing women together.The Gereatric Budda came to and saw us all hugging and said, just like the old days. A stow-away lesbian thinly disguised as a housewife in a plaid dress,stood on the deck bravely hanging onto the rail, blowing smoke signals until a band of renegade feminist pirates showed up to save us all. But when

they saw a boatful of women off their normal path of straight and narrow their motives changed slightly. Recruiting had really slowed down these days. This could be the conversion of the century. Of course some of the feminist pirates had more primal motives in mind. Conversion is possible in more ways than one. And no one more patient with a straight woman than a lesbian.

The feminist pirates immediately recognized the boat as belonging to the legion, apparently the patoons were full of vodka, they sypped it up to us in an intricate improvisation of panty hose, Saran wrap, clothes pegs and funnels, lady McIvars. And we all got drunk and laughed and danced. And told each other our stories. I organized Karajokkee night and we all learned to laugh at ourselves again.

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The spin cycle of the Sunami went on and on. Around day 14 some of the feminist pirates had gained a lot of ground. Some politically, see most of the women there had never imagined expanded their minds without repercussions. And some gained ground poetically. See,. Most of the women there had never imagined sex without the possibility of pregnancy and so, well the women cuddle closer and closer and the vodka kept coming, and lines of Sappho's poetry came back to all of us from the good old college days and the vodka kept coming and we thought well we might be dead tomorrow and the vodka kept coming . . .well..oo. some

extrodinary things happen on that ship. Beautiful, weird, wonderful, unique, freaky things some called it affection and some called it sex, and the vodka kept coming and so did the women, with all of us silently agreeing that if we got out of this alive we'd let bi-gones be bi-gones. But I believe there's some sweetly sick reason they call it liquor. And as we reached day 28 of the Sunami talked right out, listened too, well feed, all of us feeling the love of women in one way or another, all of us belonging, I'm not saying some of the women didn't stay in the kitchen, some buddy had to cook, did I say that. God times are weird, now everybody would like a wife to come home to. And as we reached day 28 all getting along, all together, mutal fear brings peace, especially if there's vodka,s The Sunami stopped.

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Time stopped. The houseboat stood suspended on the great divide. Where water returns to where it's beginnings. East goes west and west goes east. And In the stillness of possible change, we looked out, surrounded by the shores of reality we'd left behind. And the Hmmm. of not knowing what was really going on in the real world. was the rapidly thinning connecting between us. A group of real men are already building a real bridge to come save us. From what ?

The real women immediately begin cleaning, packing, freezing, preserving. After all they didn't perish, why should all that food. The Feminist pirates, ready their ship for war. Both sides invite me to come with them. Both mention new beginnings. And I, the fallen woman, falls again, falls apart, just when you think you've got it together, something asks you to make a decision. I have no idea what to do. Reality's not my speciality. I'll just slip away. back down into the stream. To see what I'd come up with this time. Slightly depressed I'm sinking faster than a I thought, Fantasy take me... back down into the depths, Where to be honest I kind of like it. All these random thoughts and images swimming by and I don't have to do a thing with them. It the cold unknown water, into the noir of not knowing, the dark place where no one can see you and you have no sense of yourself or time or space. Into the murky waters where ambiguous fish play,

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The uncertain squid, the man I thought I married, the uncertain tuna, the woman I thought I'd loved, semantic sharks, swimming by too fast to be recognized, the puzzling androfnfish, the suffering salmon, belly, full of eggs, imitating the suffering movements of the ones ahead and the ones continuing behind. Deeper still into the schools of untold stories. Virginia woolfe swims by still writing, but the word dissolving as soon as she'd set them down, Joan of Arc, still on fire, Janice Joplin, Sylvia

plath, several hundred just another teenaged girl, Mrs. O.J. Simpson, Sea anemones in the shapes of broken hearts, upon touch closing up immediately. her daughter swam by, the littlest mermaid, magritte's reverse mermaids, heads of fish and shapley legs of women,

Mona Lisa with a full smile, Diane Fossey, the virgin Mary. Amelia aerhart chugged by in a submarine, powered by the little engine i think i can i think i can, Rochelle Pitman, With her woman of the year award, posthumously in hand, Camille Claudelle still digging for clay, the 14 women killed my Mark lepine in montreal, pulling toe tags behind them, their names long faded Still no monument stands to them. 6 years later. Women Pro choice no choice, pro life no life back and forth between now and then and what would be now and what should be now. Deeper still into the unfathomable.

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Seeing all the little girls born into this world who may find themselves out of place for using their own minds, making their own decisions, doing what they want to do, guilt they'll carry with them for making a choice . . . and for all those who learn early that it's safer to believe in the fairytales for as long as you can until there slap out of your hands or shaken out of your head, and among those little girls who walk into bearded ladies and find themselves on the bridge between what is and what should be or on

permanent vacation at Club Med...prozac beach being the popular choice these days going hmmmnnun. What's really going on ? Women going down into the deepest depression, twice as as men as men, coincidence. It's still going and Which every way you look at it the true spirits of women are becoming extinct.Before birth say the anti-feminist, after birth say the feminists.

An Octopus waltzes by, in perfect four-four time. I think about how long it's been since I danced. Woman sssh 34, closest feminist, bi-heart broken and on hiatus from love, still missing both the man and the woman, making motherhood up as I go along. My heart and brain are barely connected. My secret desire is to to return to my primordial beginnings and be a fish. Dance with me. Why won't anyone dance with me. I begin spinning myself around, aquatic ballet, synchronized swimming is a snap on your own. I'm running out of air feeling giddy.

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Why are we adapting instead of evolving ? Why so many women permanently vacationing at Club Med Why do we look to others for self help. If we were meant to do it alone we'd be on earth one at a time.

This is way too heavy, I swim into a warmer current hoping it's not sewage treatment. Whatever it is, I feel slightly more bouyant. Maybe it's something simplier.

Maybe we have to start on the outside. I mean Make-up implies making up for something. Like something just isn't good enough. Like face you were given doesn't pass the test. So you apologize and try again. A small I'm sorry to our face everytime we put it on. Sorry eyes you're a bit too small, sorry lips, a bit too thin. Apologizing. for what we look like outside...could be making us apologize for what's really inside. Which came first, the chicken on the inside or the chicken on the outside. So what we do, give up make-up. Oh my God the beauty is the second largest industry in North America. ..just behind armaments. Boys make war, girls make pretty. If I bring that thought up, the world economy could collapse, we'll all be in depression.

And then I'm pulled up, quite viloently by a little girl, fishing alone at her age, shes been waiting she's only four, she's impatient for the end of the story.

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She's not frightened by me at all. She thinks I'm the littiest mermaid. Seaweed wrapped around my legs, a crown of coral on my head. She says I've been missing you like a hippopotumus with flowers in its mouth. She's making more sense than me. She starts skipping stones in the water. Ring. ring ring, hmmmmmmmmmm. No answer. But she's waiting. Okay well, other real women made themselves presentable and clamoured over to the real world and

the real men. The feminist pirates rev their engines. And the fallen woman, can't really make peace with herself, myself, and her mind goes it's separate ways. Motherload of course goes over to the real world, perpetual teenager in tow, as does the divorced drag queen, who was apply lipstick with a new vigour and at the prospect of all those men shouting never say die. Sister Bat opts for a spiritual retreat and hides in a cave. Annie Jones, the bearded Lady, goes with the feminist pirates, Full bearded and topless this time so there'd be no confusion. Judge Not boards that boat too.hoping The tomboy wanting to go with the feminist. Speedboat and all but she still needs her Mommy's love. The little girl says. And then. ? Then the evolution of the emarrassed woman continues. Is this a fairytale.No kid.. it's a modern day tragedy.It ends it anger where it began.

They all split up. Nobody real knows who they are but change is scary and I don't know kid. They forget anything good that happened, blaming the vodka The real women make a huge contribution to world over-population, and the poreclian masks go back up and some of them are happy I suppose,

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But, There's domestic violence at epidemic proportion, breast cancers kills 25 % depression renders another %25 useless..blah, blah, bla... The rest turn the other way, or secretly have optical lobotomies replacing their iris with pink lenses and cutting down their peripheral vison so everything passes by without notice. They blame hormones for lack of bad memorie they all die too young, singing hymns. That's the's the anti-feminists.

the feminist pirates take off in the speed boat, but run into a log jam. They spend the rest of their lives angrily throwing logs out of the way, exhausted but with no other route down the river, The feminist end up fighting and go their separate ways. The dykes leaving heading to the left the STRAIGHT WOMEN heading to the right. Both believing the other is certifiable insane. BEHIND AS NON-BELIEVERS. Both the anti-feminist and the feminist have asked me to join them but I don't feel comfortable with either. So I proclaim a small island for the humanist. But there's no real foundation. It turns out to be a sand barge and sink back into the depths. And I drown. of lock jaw.

Great now I've made all the little girls cry. I didn't make it up. Okay Let's go for the fairytale ending. That's what we all live for .

The Sunami Curves back towards a beautiful sunset and lands the women in Hope. By the end of the trip 28 days all the women have come full cycle into a new circle of being.

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Their all synched up. And have evolved into higher life forms. And they can know each other's stories jst by touching their foreheads together. They mutual respect each other's choices in a whole new way and then they change the whole world's perceptions. Now a lesbian can walk up to a homemaker and say, Hi I'm a dyke, I love women, this is my girlfriend and we were wondering if you could teach us how to make bana bread, Yes, says

the homemaker, hello woman, I'm a woman too and and please stay for dinner meet the man I love and do anything for and play with my six beautiful children. 2 boys, 2 girls and 2 undecided. And gossip ceases to exist And they tell the truth of their experiences to each other, The anger, the joy, the pain, the laughter..And a little girl grows up knowing she can do anything she naturally inclined to do. And everyone comes to accept that according to the laws of physics, if any woman was actually built like a barbie doll, she couldn't walk, feet that small, breasts that big and pointed, it just wouldn't happen she'd spend her whole life on her back. So all shapes and sizes of barbie dolls come out, and Ken gets a penis.

And so do some barbies. And there become an equal number of woman writers and artists suddenly there stories and work are accepted as universal, because we all share the same feelings and men come to know their feelings often through womens words or art or conversatioun and mutal respect is achieved. And human rights become human rights. They apply to everybody.

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Equal pay for equal work, nobody thinks twice about it, anybody can wear any color, any style, and we ll just call each other human...people. And everybody's accepted for exactly who they are, Anybody can marry anybody, but it's almost like we don't have to because men can marry men and women can marry women and fidility is in because people know how to give love again and everyone lives almost completely happily ever after.

And the evolution of the embarrassed woman continues because there is no real ending. No period at the end of the sentence. Just a little pain and more questions. Like what would happen if we stopped calling our period our period and started calling it our question mark ? Every month we'd have a new one. And somehow our mood swings would be more acceptable "Just let her be, she's fine, she's got her question she's thinking. Some days would be really heavy like, what is the truth of my experiences as a woman ? But then there'd be light days like, Why did Betty and Wilma going into the beauty parlor, spend a bunch of rocks just to come out with the exact same hairdo they went in with. Then there'd be in-between days... Where is Shakespeare's Sister ? Why do I forget to examine my breasts ? Why does my babysitter make more an hour than I do and how is that ever going to work out ? Why do we put friendships on hold for new love ? Does my insurance cover backlash ? Why can I take care of others and not myself ? YYYYY ? 'Because it's part of our genetic make-up. XY We hold the question X marks the spot Y dares to ask... Why this spot ? Is this my spot ? Can I have another spot ?, how about this spot ? So the fish story continues, the evolution of the embarrassed woman continues, no conclusion but a definitive statement for those requiring an ending to the fiction. In this world in this time, I am prepared to make the following statement. A woman's place is in the question,

The beginning