

SOME GIRLS WRITE A FEARLESS AND MORAL INVENTORY

“Some Girls give me children I never asked them for/ I only made love to her once.”

—Mick Jagger / Keith Richards

“I wish I were a rock,' he said, and he became a rock.”

—William Steig, *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*

1.

Some girls want horses, credit cards, drunk nights on golf courses. Some girls want forbidden lipsticks, pierced ears. Some Girls listen to the Stones, and Some Girls to the Dead. Some Girls in 1981 get pregnant listening to songs they don't fully understand, songs that get in their brains. Some girls get told they are selfish if they don't wash their brother's plate, shuck the corn, or become irate. Some girls want straight A's and homecoming dates. Some Girls want babies because they have no luck. Some Girls are the types Mick Jagger wants to fuck. Some Girls is a racist song, sexist, all along.

Back then, in 1981, I was a Some Girl. I was selfish for babies. I was selfish for unconditional love. Crazy for baby smell, their baby beating heart and baby head with fuzz. I am selfish still for the milk stink of them, the hum and vibe of their rooting, the perfection of their small strange ears, the new car smell of their baby souls. I am selfish for their little

toes: I am selfish for my pregnant belly and it's creamy swell. Some Girls want new starts. I have been Some Girl.

I was a Some Girl who grew up in an apartment where a woman's place was in the house and in the senate-- not in the delivery room. My mother was not a Some Girl, she frowned at every baby, crying or not, though she had three of her own. She frowned upon babies with or without sun hats in public or private, mostly in restaurants and on planes. My mother frowned upon sewing, and so I gave it up. At fifteen a baby meant—*I was here*, longer lasting than my signature on the bathroom stall wall where we smoked cigarettes and sometimes weed. The only thing in school that thrilled me besides boys was learning about DNA, a mysterious graffiti deeper inside my body than I could fathom.

I was a Some Girl submerged in the pool of adolescence. Our gym teacher told us when we dreamed of water Sigmund Freud said it meant we were really dreaming of sex. She didn't tell us what Freud said about periods, because he was not a Some Girl doing Jane Fonda workouts to make up cut gym classes, a sanitary pad lumping up the crotch of leotard.

I never really meant to start having sex. I never really thought about what it might be. I didn't know for instance that it was devised for pleasure, connection. I didn't know anything about the erotic self. I lived outside the outline of my body by three inches. God was like a broadband strip around my head directing me, but my will was too haughty. My will was heavy like a rock at the bottom of the sea made out of the fossils of a whale that swam a million years ago. Conscious: Unconscious. I was a doppelganger to my real self.

My mother slept with other women. Once I walked in. My mother and her English lover were not Some Girls, and couldn't help me negotiate. They never acknowledged me at the door or spoke of it afterward, as was the way back then with closeted Westchester housewives. I found her copy of "Joy of Sex" and its manual nature made me think of car repair.

My father pinched Some Girl's bottoms, secretaries in which he found delight. I was scared of the Hell's Angels, and also bums who peed on the outside brick wall of

My Father's apartment building. I wasn't yet scared of fire or hallucinogens, gluten or food dye, or AIDS. I was selfish for oblivion, which I thought was a higher order. I was selfish for complete immersion into the pool of *fuck-you-all*, a baptism of zoned out living. I was selfish for *Seventeen* magazines and royal blue eyeliner, Daddy's attention, Boston cream donuts, *The Nation* subscription my grandfather gave me each Christmas.

Morality was broadcast by my commie liberal grandparents as a penance for Republicans, the Moral Majority, the PTA mothers, and Junior League women whose pony tails were clearly too tight with gingham grosgrain ribbon, and whose tennis shoes were laced up with vigor over their pom-pom med ankle shorty socks.

Standing by my orange locker, my Some Girl best friend had just become a vegetarian. She showed me nasty pictures of what the world did to animals. We were going to go to law school someday to make the world safe against locker searches and having to say the pledge. At some point she turned on me, showed me pictures from her church group of aborted fetus/babies. *Look, look*, she shrilled. It was before photoshop even existed, which meant we believed everything we saw. It looked like a nest of mashed up hairless marsupials. I was selfish not to believe her. I was selfish to think I was smarter. She didn't try to save my soul; she was a Puerto Rican Lutheran. She just showed me a picture "really gross, right?!" and fixed her "Mick: I Like It!" button with the Stones tongue logo on it that she had pinned on her green and white fair isle sweater like a generation earlier girls pinned virginity circle pins on their twin sets. We were *so* smart.

There are many kinds of selfishness and self-seeking and most stems from the will's use of desire and desire's use of the will. Vaguely each deadly sin is involved with selfishness: Those seven deadlies of lust, avarice, etc., etc. etc. But my selfishness has to do with mostly with words not on list: emptiness and nothingness. I didn't believe in anything the world told me. Life was a grand illusion made by the Grateful Dead where cartwheels in the grass by the river were the only answer. I didn't know how to pray or that I was myself a prayer. Sometimes the closest I ever got to a prayer was an image or a memory.

In a picture I have of my favorite girl cousins and me, we are in Palm Beach at my Jewish grandparents, on what is known as the Gaza Strip between where the WASPS live and the city limits. In the picture I am fifteen and sitting between my cousins, squished on a large beach chair. I am pregnant and I don't know it, yet. I have lovely big bosoms and healthy shampoo commercial girl glow. Everyone thinks I am so healthy! I look really happy. I love those cousins, one with her thick Russian novel, and impenetrable black hair; the other with her secrets of back handsprings and the ticking time bomb in her manic brain. I look the healthiest I have ever seen myself from childhood or adolescence. I am radiating pure and angelic vibes as if I was part of the Allen Ginsberg poem I was memorizing. I am the queen of all Some Girls, and—Mick—I liked it. My grandfather called us Some Girl cousins his *bathing beauties*—second generation Americans and who were going to college. No matter what. He wiped off our lipstick when we wore it and taught us how to fish, which we all thought boring. At night we'd sneak cigarettes in the pool house cabana under the Jewish side of Palm Beach stars when he fell asleep reading the *New York Times* or his how to “Become Fluent in Spanish” book that he carried around. “Mi querida,” he'd say to us as he wiped off that lipstick. Our grandmother pretended not to notice.

But in this picture I can recall my body wanted one thing and my mind and family and place another. Teenage motherhood was a verboten lowbrow Some Girlhood that I wasn't allowed by my family to consider in 1981. They would have thought it super trashy for a teenager to have a baby. I had a spiritual hunger, but followed the wrong spiritus. I followed the syllabi of cold war era girlhood and the lovely booze I bamboozled from whomever I could. I am not sure what the booze followed. I was scared of tainted salad bars (for fear they had been laced with drugs by a villainous trickster), trick or treating on Valentine Road (for fear of razor blade apples), my father's international house of girlfriends (for fear of jealous women), and, of course, the Doomsday Clock.

I won't describe the silly vanilla sex that lead to the Some Girls 1981 pregnancy I had because that was written in my sex inventory I wrote in 1998 where I detailed where and how my relationship to sex had been selfish, self-seeking, dishonest, or afraid. I made a list of every person I had a sexual encounter with and looked at the relationship honestly. I made a separate list for the sex that I never asked for and made it a burnt offering. Then I

stashed the rest of it in a box and duck taped it while I figured out who to read it to. One day my place was robbed, everything was thrown around. The box was open. All the extraneous diaries and mementos were strewn on the floor, but my red folder with the words INVENTORY written in block letters across the front was neatly put on top of my bed and Laura Ashley comforter from TJ Maxx. Some anonymous burglar had been my priest, my rabbi, had read my sex inventory and had laid the tome of it on the altar of my Sealy Posterpedic. And that is not being dishonest.

2.

Some girls lie for attention. Some girls lie to get out of trouble. Some girls lie because they are pretty sociopaths. I was not a Some Girl who lied to anyone but myself. No need to lie, my parents permitted everything and anything. Back then I didn't know there were ways to lie by remaining silent or giving a partial truth, or what lying to oneself was or that it was even a thing. Back then Some Girls shoplifted Stones albums. Back then I didn't know shoplifting was a lie, just a way of life.

I was a Some Girl who would one autumn afternoon do cocaine deep into the day, deep in the woods with a much older couple who had just left the Dobbs Ferry Abortion clinic, too. Back then I didn't know drugs were a kind of dishonesty. But right now, I might be lying. I lie to myself sometimes and don't realize when I am doing it. I walked into the woods then with my boyfriend and this older couple after we all had met in the abortion clinic. We weren't celebrating, but we were marking the occasion.

Back then, I thought I remembered everything clearly. Now, if I don't remember something correctly it is not necessarily dishonesty. Some Girls tell the truth of events in chronology. Some Girls tell the truth in metaphor. Some Girls tell the truth with a capital "T". I suppose, also, my disassociation is a kind of dishonesty, so I don't have to feel things or remember them in their totality.

Here's a big lie from 1981: I was barely fifteen not sixteen. Another big lie (not mine): My boyfriend told his big sister (who was definitely not a Some Girl but more of a "That Girl") who had her own apartment in Manhattan that he had vandalized the windows at school one night after a keg party by "accident" and needed two-hundred dollars.

My boyfriend had once stolen sneakers from Kmart even though he was from an affluent "special" family in town. He got sent to Outward Bound in Colorado instead of prison, because in 1981 that is what privilege looked like (and still does). My boyfriend told his sister, because his parents would have sent him to military school if they found out he wasn't walking the line.

In the Dobb's Ferry abortion clinic I told the Nurse Ratchet of the Laughing Gas and the scratchy dry hands that I was sixteen because I thought otherwise I'd have to get my parent's permission, which I was sure they'd give, but I didn't want any truck with them and their ambivalent lives and closed doors.

I guess that is technically a lie, but back then I had read "Our Bodies Ourselves" and though it didn't prevent me from getting pregnant, I thought I had that right to lie about my body to anyone and also myself. I didn't even know what an orgasm was *exactly* though I was bedded down many times.

Bedded down on the examining table, feet up in stir-ups to ride to the other side, the mask was upon me. Apparently, as I was sedated they couldn't get me to stop screaming. I'm not sure if this is the complete truth. I recall screaming before laughing gas and after. In the post-procedure room I continued with my crying-screaming. The post-procedure room was a beige and white striped with six beige vinyl recliners, three facing three like a train to hell. There may have been a fern in there, too. A clock ticked. It had black hands and a white face. For all I remember, it might have said two minutes to midnight.

In the recovery room, my apartment building's superintendent from where I lived had a mistress who was staring at me in her own kind of drugged stupor. She was twice my age, wearing turquoise earrings, braids. Her turquoise earrings matched the blue songbirds on our

matching abortion johnnies. We also were wearing matching little blue slipper socks, and mine had a drop of blood on the left right toe. We were like girls in our matching Christmas pajamas full of some ennui even worse than Santa Claus bringing-coal-terror for the naughty. This much older Some Girl was trying to calm me down, telling me everything would be okay even though nothing was ever going to be okay, and that I was going to have to be okay with that.

“How old are you?” she kept asking me. I kept screaming: “I’m sixteen. I really am sixteen.” I kept thinking I was George Washington and that I had cut down the cherry tree. “I’m sixteen! I’m sixteen!” I continued to chant. Some Girls are sixteen. Some Girls are fifteen. There were bloodstains red as Virginia cherries on my johnnie by then. I cannot tell a lie: My cherry had definitely popped, was thrashed, suctioned, fucked over.

I was still delusional when the apartment Superintendent’s Some Girl mistress with turquoise earrings helped me to the lobby where my boyfriend waited with his moped keys and stupid orange helmet. No one had told us not to ride a moped to or from an abortion, but now it seems kind of obvious. We only had one helmet and because my boyfriend was a gentleman who eventually became the master of a huge publishing empire, he let me wear it. Because he is so important now I will lie and say his name is Luke. Back then we used to like to watch General Hospital stoned, and Luke was the hero. So, I will call him Luke.

Luke and I got offered a ride with the apartment Super and his mistress in the Super’s truck.

“We can give them a ride,” the Mistress said, as she listened in to the nurse telling us we couldn’t ride a moped if I ever wanted children. My eyes locked with the apartment Super’s eyes and we both understood that if either of us said a word to anyone about this event (I babysat for his kids, knew his wife) all hell would break lose. It would be war. Luke’s mother and everyone at her anti-Semitic country club would know.

“Sure, baby,” the Super said, looking at me with a sidelong, suspicious glance. He smelled of cigarettes and weed and Sure deodorant. His fingers on the right side of his hand were yellow from smoking. His eyes were a deep brown, like maybe once he had been handsome. I thought he was an asshole.

“Here, follow me,” the Mistress said, linking arms with me. Luke followed scratching his head.

“What will I do with my moped,” he said.

“Don’t worry about it. We’ll put it in the back of my truck,” the Super said, winking at me in a creepy uncle way.

“I’ll kill you if you say anything,” the Super whispered in my ear as we got into his white truck and headed down the street to a heavily wooded area.

“I know a nice picnic spot,” he said, and we all piled in the truck.

Perhaps this was why the Super shared his cocaine with two stupid teenagers, by way of bribing us for continued silence. His coke was his hush money. He was not warm and fuzzy with his long dirty blonde hair and a black Led Zeppelin T-shirt and jeans with holes before they were a fashion statement. We all need further medicating; we were having a bad, long day.

We did a lot of coke with them in the woods way behind the abortion clinic. I was ninety-five pounds small and getting smaller. Psychic blood was being sprayed all over the walls of my memory with each snort I took. No memory could see out. This is a kind of lie, leading oneself to one’s own slaughter of innocents. I began to understand the Super was a dealer, the mistress was an “artist”, and my boyfriend was the ruling class. I hated myself some more that day, but partied like it was 1999. I began to know this: The sun went down quickly on all my passing realizations. It was autumn. It smelled of earth’s humus of leaves and dried buds. My nose was numb. I was thinking about how I felt like Peter Rabbit. I had gone into Mr. McGregor’s garden and it was curtains. There would be no chamomile tea awaiting me at home, just an empty, dirty apartment with no parents, no food, no throw pillows. Even though I was a Some Girl my favorite writers still included Beatrix Potter and William Steig. I still lived in the imaginary world, so the abortion took on mythic proportion and developed its own kind of philosophy and worldview.

The trees all around our picnic spot where we sat on the Super’s blue and gold and brown Indian tapestry were bursting in red, like maybe they were on fire in a different reality. In this reality they were just red, angry trees, and I thought to dig a hole to pee in and let the blood

drain out of me into the tree roots, so whenever it would turn red again in the future it would be made of me and my lost progeny.

3.

There is an old saw that says fear can turn you to stone, meaning you can't move, and you have to sit heavy upon the earth. We all have to survive until we die. Survival requires we sacrifice needs for a higher order of consciousness. I made the self the center of my decisions much like a donkey I identified with in a children's book I still liked to read at fifteen, William Steig's "Sylvester and the Magic Pebble".

Sylvester was a lonely, but carefree donkey. For a lot of the book I was very AFRAID for Sylvester in the same kinds of ways I was afraid for myself as a child and as a teenager. It is said that *fear is false evidence appearing real*. Fear also got Sylvester into binds with a magic pebble that he finds. When a lion confronts him he chokes as to what to wish for, so he asks to be turned into a stone. The pebble falls off the stone, and Sylvester is stuck, as it must touch the wisher to work. Really it's about how do you turn back into your true self when you have lost yourself? Or how even when you are turned to stone you still are effected by gravity and electromagnetic signals. You have rock consciousness.

In 1981, however, I was a Some Girl that imagined that huge rocks and boulders had once been whales and that was how they held consciousness. I totally believed that rocks and stones and pebbles had consciousness, as a Charles Simic poem I read and love suggested: "From the outside the stone is a riddle: /No one knows how to answer it./Yet within, it must be cool and quiet. "

I believed the center of the world was a secret place where whales convened with God. I was a Some Girl who had also heard on a nature program that there are times of year when whales travel across the world and our human sonars actually lose them for a while and we don't know where they are. The center of the world is made of imagination and matter as

thick and true as blood and the whales hang out there and dream us all into being. Socrates would say that while Sylvester's pebble gave him the means by which to do good, it did not supply him with the knowledge of what good is." That, too, was my dilemma. I held so many contradicting views inside me it was no wonder I felt like a lie itself. I didn't want to be part of the Moral Majority, but I didn't think the womb invasion was nothing. Even if it was like a rock, it might have a voice trapped inside it like Sylvester the donkey trapped inside the rock.

Like Sylvester I wanted my parents to find the real me but also not. When high I constantly asked myself: "Is Sylvester still a donkey if he has become a rock?" As Steig says in the book when Sylvester sees the lion for the first time, "he could have wished for many things, like the lion would turn into a butterfly or a daisy or a gnat, but he panicked and could not think." Sitting among the red leaves of autumn, I thought of this: Did I exist? Had there been an actual person existing inside me metaphorically and in reality? I did not think my parents saw me as an actual person. It occurred to me, even then, I wanted a baby, so I could have someone really love me. But soon Luke handed me the rolled up dollar bill, and I took it and snorted in like I was drinking in rock consciousness of another kind. I saw myself in the mistresses' makeup mirror we were snorting cocaine from. I was afraid to look in my eyes in the reflection. I was afraid of the consequence I had become. Who knows what is right use of will, and that very fact has scared me ever since.

"Pass it here," the Super said, and I passed him the paisley compact mirror and shitty, cocaine laced dollar bill. The Mistress winked at me. She reminded me of my old babysitter that my father had slept with and, thus, got her fired by my mother. I was pale from cocaine. Was I a person or was I merely a rock with a Some Girl inside?

4.

I was a Some Girl who could never reconcile consciousness with brain activity. Was a fetus not part of humanity because before thirty-three weeks it has no brain activity? Didn't all matter have mental properties? In the end maybe it comes down to the narrative itself of

which this is a part. What was the difference, I thought, between having a life and being alive. I wanted to find that out, but the coke made me so edgy the idea kept slipping away and back.

Where was the shadow life that was never to be lived? Where did the glimmer go? I made a decision to create a different narrative. I had made my self the center of this decision not for myself, but for fear of all other selves living and unborn. I was haunted by their voices mimicking the birds that flew overhead. I deposited all that could not be on the big rock I touched on the way back to the Super's truck from the woods.

Maybe it was the cocaine that made me think of "Sylvester and the Magic Pebble" that day in the woods behind the abortion clinic. Those were average Hudson River Valley rocks and boulders we sat upon. Maybe I was feeling how everything contained life and being unborn was like being a kind of rock that had made a wish and was stuck, unmovable, yearning for parents. I considered the rock I was sitting on might be communicating with me. The Philosopher Swedenborg once said, "Everyman, immediately after death, comes into (this) universal language."

I was afraid that the rocks like my fetus might have been ensouled, even though the fetus had been before sixteen weeks. Who knows how old the rocks were exactly, old enough for souls, I'm sure. It used to be in the old days of abortion, you might try swallowing lye and die. Or the abortionist would require you fuck him before he would proceed with the procedure. In 1981, people were starting to bomb and picket abortion clinics 1981. Protesters hooted and hollered at people entering the clinic, holding up placards that said, "Baby Killers!" I felt like a murderer. I was afraid I had become a murderer. As a newly minted murderer, I received my due welcome home, an empty apartment, where later our delusional, homeless nanny arrived with beef stew, crazy eyes, and no clue as to what shape I was in. She never really noticed me, she was merely a broken robot herself, delivering food for a free place to crash for the night. I wasn't sure how my mother found her or how I was entrusted to her care or her mine.

I was a Some Girl who believed the Rabbi's truth: that life began at first breath. But now I wasn't so sure. All the picketers. All the Bombers. Reagan. The Bomb. The Iron Curtain. The coke. The mirror. The whales. Sylvester's sadness in being a rock without a family. I understood the telepathy of the unborn; I had had it with my twin who miscarried and I absorbed. The feeling of this unborn memory is absolute, even if my brain has blocked so much of reality out. I am a smart Some Girl when it comes to tricking myself. I was pale from cocaine. I was pale from abortion. In the cocaine "healing" circle, my boyfriend "Luke" passed me the rolled up bill in a loving way that suggested doing coke after an abortion was a loving thing. What kind of Some Girl did he think I was?

The rocks were singing like whales and only I could hear their low hum. As a Some Girl I believed in the life force of the child. What had I done? I was going to law school to work for the ACLU and against locker searches. I was going to go to Grand Central that weekend and was probably going to get groped on the platform again. I was going to go to Florida next year and pose for a picture with my cousins. What had I done? I was a Some Girl in need of a magic pebble. Like Sylvester the Donkey I once believed the world had things to wish for—like a family to care for me, but on that day I just turned, like Sylvester into a very large rock. Unmovable. Perhaps my boyfriend "Luke" or the Mistress with turquoise earrings or the apartment Superintendent would find my pebble and put it in a safe. I was so afraid all I could do was wish for a wish for a wish for a wish.

Some Girls turn to stone and don't have the pebbles to make wishes that turn them back into girls. Some Girls fear the oncoming night. Some girls feared riding in the back of the Super's car into the black autumn night, the sounds of the unborn like whales only certain Some Girls can hear.