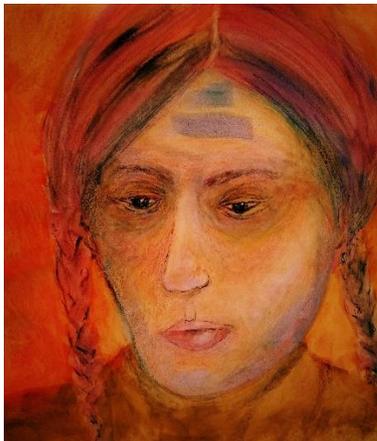




UU ORIGINAL VOICES

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A Collection of Our Writings



The Make-Up Mirror

As a teen, I was “counterculture”. My Dad despised my long hair, frayed bellbottoms, and absence of make-up. I had no mother at home, but TV served up countless role models for me to emulate in dress and adornment: Marlo Thomas, Raquel Welch, Nancy Sinatra. So why, he wanted to know, in God’s name, would I choose to look like a drop out from the Manson family? All I needed to do, I was told, was to spend some time each morning getting “dolled up”. Goopy mascara, slippery green eye shadow, icy pink lip gloss, and some better clothes. Then I could attract a promising young man from a good family.

My Dad’s girlfriend was alarmed at my disinterest in the feminine arts. I had been raised by wolves, and it showed. She was sure I just needed a little nudge in the right direction. So she presented me

with a lighted, magnifying make-up mirror. It had a gold-painted knob to turn so the light of the bulbs would filter through tinted plastic to replicate daylight, soft warm home lighting, and a horrific greenish office light. This technology would enable me to apply my war paint to best advantage.

I thanked Iva graciously and that night, alone in my room, I fooled around with this oh-so-essential tool of the beauty trade. My complexion looked as healthy and youthful as it actually was when I used the “Daylight” setting. The “Indoor” selection made me look a bit more tanned. That was nice. But the Office setting was a shocker. Tiny blood vessels glowed purplish. Eyes went glassy. My chestnut hair looked dull and muddy. I stared in horror at my suddenly middle-aged self. Was this the “me” that I would become? It was as though I had nibbled at a magic mushroom and could now glimpse a disturbing future: Me, the dispirited office drone. In the lighted box.

More determined than ever to escape this zombie fate, I switched off the device, never to turn it on again.

-The Northwoods Writrix



gasps of "precious ebony" ? Followed by harsh puffs into each keyhole, the horn blown outside-in until whistling clear. She swabs her horn, dusts & rubs the wood to an auburn-streaked coal shine. Selects evenly gouged & split bamboo to soak. Prepares a surgeon's tray of knives, mandrel, cutting block, spools of twine, plaques & cork staples - indomitable whittler as ever - so she may play again.

See studies, while sorting for music manuscript, much skill in the design Emm drew. Apparently a family knack for whittling! She vows - after practicing hard, before Sis reclaims their studio as her own - to tuck bell & barrel snug inside the case, a royal blue velvet oboe home. C J Lee

Part Two (con't of Basement Studio)

Emm descends at dusk as oboe guides low-B into a crack extending across the concrete floor. All low notes so dire, land tentatively, then leap falsetto - from groan into vibrato. Emm heads down but hesitates. She smiles, hums on entry announcing stew. To that, a starving See licks bruised & puffy lips, grins back, and dashes up the stairs.

Her sis soon scouts for any discarded cane, at once absorbed, plans a cricket cottage with a porch. She will concoct a frame from twigs & broken Lincoln logs, studs & joists from notched bamboo, employ perhaps - even weave - lean cracked reeds for ramps, whittle kindling into a couch, then spoon in dirt flooring.

Such insects pets - to be true crickets of the hearth - merit acorn caps of juice & clover hors d'oeuvre with nasturtium, placed nearby the furnace. Less chirp-chatter by midnight when Emm lifts some slate, finds a cigar box of chalk, leans before her easel, sends flying clouds of chalk. Even under discerning bulb, dear woodwind lay unseen, grenadella powdered, its polished keys a marvel no longer.

Next day, a blueprint rests on the music stand; Emm's design awaits telltale creaks on the steps, those whistles of Bach. But a sharp inhalation ? That

Charles the Chickadee



Charles has been trying to cozy up to the funny looking lady named Aloha. She seems very kind and she allowed him to eat the food she puts out for the bigger birds. He has finally figured out that the bigger birds are just fancy looking chickens, as he has seen the lady pick up eggs from their boxes and take them into her house. He still doesn't know where he is or how he might be able to find his way home, but the strange looking lady has been talking to him and he still can't understand what she is saying.

Her face is very strange looking - contorted and splotchy. Her eyes are not the same. One is very dark and mostly closed up. But it is her hands that

are the strangest looking. They are all black with on a few fingers on each hand and look more like claws than hands. He knows he has a pretty good thing going here, but also knows he must find some other chickadees to explain to him where he is, and he might get home.

So, he starts flying off on short excursions to scout out the area. He never goes so far away that he can't find his way back to the woman's house. He sees some really beautiful things on his short journeys. He sees lush green vegetation and pretty little creeks with small waterfalls. He sees lot of other birds, but they are mostly larger birds – some kind of goose he thinks.

Finally, after several days of short excursions, always going back to Aloha's house for the free food and companionship (after all, he is feeling like he is getting to know her even though he can't understand her), he finds a few titmice.

He finds them in a small bush by the side of a small stream. Very excitedly he joins them in their bush and calls out a merry "hello" to them. They look at him a little startled but then one of them says hello back.

Oh great, Charles thinks, finally I found someone I can talk to. In a very hurried, excited voice he starts telling them about his frightful weeklong journey in the wind and landing at the funny looking lady's house.

To be continued.....



Gnarly

I've had a few accidents in my life. I've recovered from them all, but my body carries reminders of every misfortune. Aches and twinges rise up to remind me of a night of wet pavement and sirens. Or a fall. Weak spots. Vulnerable areas.

It is much the same for emotional injuries. They all left a mark, even those incidents I can no longer recall.

In the forest around my home, I see myself in some of the more wretched trees. Not the big magnificent oaks, but the smaller, twisted wild cherries. With crusted, peeling bark and broken limbs. Leaves that turn yellow and spotted with disease. Those irregularities do not make it less of a tree.

When hiking in the woods, I stop and gaze at the gnarly trees, oozing sap, split open bark. Sometimes I photograph them. Sometimes I come back later with my sketchpad. I never do this for the young, smooth saplings. They are lovely in their freshness, but it is the Old Trees that are my sisters of the forest.

-The Northwoods Writrix