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TO THE NEW GIRL

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First Printing, 2013

Made in U.S.A.

ISBN 978-1-934962-75-6

*Also Available From
Original Works Publishing*

EIGHT

by **Ella Hickson**

Genre: Drama

Cast Size of 8

EIGHT swept the board at the biggest arts festival in the world, the Edinburgh Festival, in 2008. An underground hit propagated by sensational word-of-mouth, it went on to win a coveted Scotsman Fringe First Award, the NSDF Emerging Artists Award and the Carol Tambor 'Best of Edinburgh' Award, awarded to only one show across the thousands of productions at the festival.

Introducing eight beguiling oddballs, struggling to define what it is to be normal amidst the dissolution of social, moral, sexual and cultural boundaries in *The Naughties*. From high-class hookers to those who make friends in morgues, to single mothers and bereaved gallery owners, *Eight* gives all of these otherwise neglected characters center-stage, including the moving, politically punchy portrait of a man who has lost everything except his memories of the 7/7 London bombings ("*One of the finest pieces of writing I've yet heard about the aftermath of that terrible day*" – Joyce McMillan, *The Scotsman*).

Radio Star

by **Tanya O'Debra**

Genre: Comedy

1 Female

Synopsis: *Radio Star* is a 1940's radio detective spoof. In *The Case of the Long Distance Lover*, Nick McKittrick; Private Dick, is hired by femme fatale Fanny LaRue to find her husband's killer. The plot is a standard mystery, but *Radio Star's* contemporary sense of humor sets it apart from the pack. A laugh out loud radio romp, easily produced with one actress or a larger cast.

**To the New Girl:
Sound Advice for my
Former Husband's
Wife or Mistress**

A full-length play
By Samantha Macher

“I do not think that there are any men who are faithful to their wives.”

- Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis

CHARACTERS (AND AGES):

ZOE (LATE TWENTIES): A young lady in a kinky relationship finds out that there's more than one woman in her town willing to diaper a grown man.

MIRIAM (OVER FIFTY): A Jewish grandmother finds out at Passover that her husband has fallen in love and is getting married to a Catholic girl he met on a business trip.

BETHANY (THIRTIES): A "good Christian girl" discovers her pastor husband's love for a man could threaten his televangelism career.

SHEILA (FORTIES): A woman who is unable to conceive her husband's child finds out that his mistress is pregnant with twins.

FAYE (LATE TEENS): The naive wife of a felon writes his new girlfriend to ask for her engagement ring back...or else.

ALEXIS (FORTIES): A woman with a waning sense of self tells her daughter's nanny that her husband's advances are all a part of her household responsibilities.

KAREN (THIRTIES): A teacher tells the student who is sleeping with her husband how (and why) she should make his favorite pork chops.

MELANIE (THIRTIES): Wielding a meat cleaver, Melanie warns her abusive husband's mistress to stay far, far away from her.

ELISSA (EARLY TWENTIES): Her husband's old flame threatened the sanctity of her home and marriage to the point of no return.

HARRIET (OVER SIXTY): Recounts the story of her marriage to a woman in a nursing home who is in love with her severely ailing husband.

SETTING:

The time and place where people become unfaithful.

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PRODUCTION HISTORY

The World Premiere production was performed at SkyPilot Theatre Company in Los Angeles, California in August of 2011. It was directed and the sound was designed by Jeanette Farr-Harkins. This production was stage managed by Arden Haywood. The lighting designer was Sarah Templeton. The show was produced by Bob Rusch, Shelby Janes, Jennie Floyd and Julianne Homokay. The show was double-cast. The original casts are as follows:

ZOE: Mackenzie English

MIRIAM: Mary Burkin, Jennie Floyd

BETHANY: Niki Nowak Tolnay, Michele Martin

SHEILA: Lindsey Mixon Atkins, Monica Lawson

FAYE: Chera Holland Bashor, Shelby Janes

ALEXIS: Ashley Fuller, Jennie Floyd, Jamie Puckett (understudy)

KAREN: Alexis Zibolis

MELANIE: Tifanie McQueen, Chera Holland Bashor

ELISSA: Samantha Carro, Heather Roop

HARRIET: Rosina Pinchot, Patricia Atkins

The East Coast premiere of TO THE NEW GIRL was performed at Studio Roanoke in Roanoke, Virginia in July of 2012. It was directed by Cheryl Snodgrass, and produced by Melora Kordos. The cast and crew of this production is as follows:

ELISSA: Caitlin Coleman

ZOE: Mary Kathryn Noel Taylor

MIRIAM: Rae West

ALEXIS: Sherilyn Lawson

FAYE: Elizabeth Kelley

BETHANY: Stevie Holcomb

KAREN: Zoe C. Newman

SHEILA: Melissa E. Kennedy

MELANIE: Margaret Brandon

HARRIET: Martha Boswell

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: Brian O'Sullivan

STAGE MANAGER: Kaitlin Heath

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: Jordan Doyle

SCENIC AND LIGHTING DESIGNER: Brandon DuMonde

MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGNER: Charles Alan Reynolds III

ORIGINAL MUSIC: Charles Alan Reynolds III

VIDEO DESIGN: Dan Reynolds

POSTER DESIGN: Susana Hernandez

COSTUMER: Tina Hampton

PROPS: Megan Froeschl

LIGHTBOARD OPERATOR: Debbye Green

The first workshop production was performed at the Manhattan Repertory Theater in Manhattan, New York, in March of 2011. It was directed by Ben Kawaller and the stage manager was Lauren Samuelsen. The cast for the production is as follows:

HARRIET: Elizabeth Albrecht

ALEXIS: Margaret Catov

MELANIE, KAREN: Jill Catherine Durso

FAYE, ELISSA: Amanda Miller

MIRIAM: Felice Perlman

BETHANY, ZOE: Dominique Salerno

SHEILA: Akiyaa Wilson

DEDICATION

The playwright would like to thank *everyone* (at this point well over fifty people) involved with all of the productions and readings. Without your generosity, creativity, and beautiful artistic spirits, the show would not be what it is today.

Additionally, I would like to thank NO SHAME THEATER, Roanoke, and Todd Ristau at the Playwrights Lab at Hollins University for allowing a space to workshop each monologue in a safe, collaborative environment, Julianne Homokay and Tira Palmquist for being advocates and dramaturgs for this piece, Jeff Goode, Bob Rusch, Eric Curtis Johnson and SkyPilot Theater for putting gender parity in their mission in choosing this play to produce in their season, and my parents for not being offended by all the bad words in this play,

Finally, I would like to dedicate this play to anyone whose significant other (current or former) has (or had) a significant other.

You're not alone.

ZOE: THEY PREFER TO BE CALLED "ADULT BABIES."

Zoe is at least partly southern. She is texting.

ZOE

Dear Xxlovemykitty69xX:

It's known as paraphilic infantilism
but I'm at least pretty sure by now you know
that he prefers the term
Adult Baby.

Yes. I found you out.

No. He never turns off his instant messenger*

*(*If out of date, please substitute "instant messenger" for
most current internet chat technology/terminology, e.g. g-chat, face-
book messaging)*

Yes. I find your screen name to be in extremely poor taste.

Now you might remember me from chatting.
You sent him (me) a message saying

"r we mtng 2nite @ the houseboat?"

And he (I) said "Ya what time?"

And you said "whnevr ur rdy 2 cum by, baby man."

Baby man?

Baby man?

You know?

I cringe.

You know!

Someone else knows!

Then,
I reread the message and cringe again,
Because I can't help but notice your spelling.

"c-u-m" by?
That's fucking disgusting.
Who spells come like that?

Something else I noticed is that your grammar is pretty bad.

I mean you didn't capitalize anything.
You spelled an entire sentence with only five vowels
And I'm pretty sure night has a "g" in it.

Come on, now. Really?

Look, Xxlovemykitty69xX.
I'm not saying you're a bad person,
hell, I'm not even saying I haven't done some kinky shit myself:
I spent at least one year as an internet dominatrix.
I enjoy light bondage and the occasional spanking.

Sometimes,
in my weaker moments,
I'm even willing to strap on a set of udders
and engage in cow play.

But this whole situation begs the question
"what is wrong with you?"
Because I'm assuming you know about me.

I mean, because he had to tell you about me, right?

There had to be at least one time, one time maybe when he looked up at
you,
his other surrogate mommy,
suckling at a bottle of warm formula,
that he whispered my name.
The name of his life partner
And girlfriend of four years.

MIRIAM: GIVING NEW MEANING TO THE TERM
“BITTER HERBS”

MIRIAM

Miss Kathleen Sullivan:

You may not know this,
But Passover is a very sacred time of year for the Jews.

It's a time of year, when family and friends are joined together
To celebrate
When we as a people were freed
By the goodness of God.

It's a time of year
when we make,
and eat,
the spiritual and symbolic food
which sustained us in the desert
as we wandered for forty long years;
Desperate and yearning
For our promised land--

the homeland from which we were exiled
Only to be enslaved
By the cruelest of Pharaohs--

It's a time of year when we give thanks
That we are oppressed no longer.

That we are now a free people:

That we are a people strengthened by our diaspora.

That we are a people made to
Absorb and to change the culture of the lands we inhabit all while never
losing ourselves,
Our God
Our culture
Our traditions--

Maybe the reason you don't understand is
because your people have never been enslaved,
have they, Kathleen?

Hmm?

Catholic people?

Have they been scattered across the globe?
Or systematically killed by the thousands?

Hmm?

What about Irish people?

Have they been starved?
Driven out of their beloved countryside?

Did they have to flee to a new, and harsher land,
where they were discriminated against?
Called horrible things?
Made to work terrible, back-breaking jobs in order to feed their families?

Now, I'm no history buff,
But I pretty sure the answer to that question
Is a resounding
No.

Everyone loves the Irish.
They always have.
(I think it's the accents.)

It's on account of this,
That I almost can't blame you
For ruining the Seder dinner
I spent days preparing.

The one I slave over every year
So I can share the joy
of our triumphant liberation
with my grandchildren?

BETHANY: IS A GOOD CHRISTIAN GIRL.
REALLY. SHE IS.

BETHANY

Dear *Trevor*,

I am a good Christian girl.
I am.
I promise.

I read the Bible,
I pray for the sick,
I vote Republican

and I go to Church every Sunday.
Sometimes I even go on Wednesdays when I'm not at the gym.

I'm so Christian, in fact, that I married a TV preacher.

A HOT TV preacher.

With his thick,
wavy,
dark hair.
Blue eyes,
dashing smile--

I sometimes imagine that if I could go back in time,
and look in on the Garden of Eden,
I would see his likeness reflected in Adam.

The first man.
The one made in God's own image.

Now, all the women in the congregation,
they seem to agree with me.

They'll come up to me,
take my hands and say:

"Bethany you are so lucky."

And I just smile, gently correcting them:

“No, dear, I’m blessed. Just blessed.”

Lord, he is such a handsome man,
and a good one on top of that;

In fact,
just last year we went on a mission trip to Africa,
and he literally built a mud hut with his bare hands.

And bare chest.

Muscles, rippling in the sun.

Tan skin dripping with
earthy,
salty
sweat--

Now, I know it’s not right for a woman to lust,
but I did.

I lusted mightily for my husband.

I simply could not help myself,
All he had to do is look at me and I was a goner--

Lately though, he seemed a bit less interested in me.

He’d get home from work
And kiss me on the cheek,
where before he would kiss me firmly on the mouth,
letting me know I was his woman.

I guess bedtime also became something of a chore for him because lace
teddies and ruffled purple undies seemed sorta,
well,
overdone,
and although he was always nice about it,
I still didn’t get what my heart was desirin’.

Then one night,
just as I was about to demand physical satisfaction,
he turned to me and asked me if I wouldn't mind--
You know.

Believe me.
I minded.

I looked him square in the eye and I said to him
"Now Andrew, I love you.
I would do anything for you.
But what you are askin' is just plain sodomy,
and we don't sodomize in this house."

Then I rolled over and turned out the lights
As felt my needs deflate
Like a birthday balloon.

It wasn't too long after that I found out about you, Trevor, and at first it
was hard.

He told me he loved you,
But that he wanted me to stand by his side,
To be his wife and his partner.
To love him in spite of his wretchedness,
To help him protect what he had worked so hard to build.
He begged me for my silence and my fidelity.

I told him I needed more time.

I spent all that afternoon trying desperately to come to terms with my
husband's sinfulness by vomiting in the second master bathroom.
And while I lay on that cool tile floor
Staring up at the fresco we had painted of the two of us as angels in
heaven,
I actually thought about leaving.

I was going to leave him, Trevor.

Then I did what any girl in my position would do:
I drank a box of wine and when I finally sobered up,
I went home to my mother.

SHEILA: IS PRAYING FOR YOUR CHILD.
TO BE THE SIZE OF A WATERMELON.

SHEILA

Stephanie,
Stephanie,
Stephanie.

Sometimes,
I'll be watching the news
or reading a book and someone,
usually some man,
will say something like:

"We attempted to besiege the castle, sir, but their fortress is impregnable!"

~Or~

"We tried to convert the people, sir, but the beliefs of the natives are impregnable!"

Or a personal favorite

"True courage is a result of reasoning [sir, but] A brave mind is always impregnable!"

Like they know what impregnable is--
Like you know what impregnable is--
You know what's impregnable, Stephanie?

Me.

I'm fucking impregnable.
In fact, let me tell you just how fucking impregnable I am:

Three miscarriages
And two ectopic pregnancies followed by the cauterization of my fallopian tubes.

They had to burn my tubes shut, that's how fucking impregnable I am!

Now I come from a huge family,
and I'm not talking "huge" like two-point-five-children-suburban-
bullshit "huge,"
I'm talking HUGE.

I'm talking family-reunions-where-you-didn't-know-everybody huge.
I'm talking eight-different-shades-of-lipstick-on-your- face-from-your-
aunts-kissing-you-when-you-visited-grandma's house-for-Christmas
huge.

I'm talking two-full-roster-teams-when-we-had-our annual-
Thanksgiving-Day-Flag-Football-game huge.

Get it?

HUGE, Stephanie.

The women in my family were built for babies
and I didn't think I was any different.
Why should I be?
Why would God make me different?

But soon,
After enough trial and error
After enough loss
I knew that I was different.
I knew that it was going to be hard for me to even get pregnant,
let alone bring a baby to term.

So I did what anyone in my family would do
If they found out that they couldn't have a baby:
I prayed.

And I don't mean going-to-church-on-Sunday-chewing-a-wafer-
demurely-asking-God-if-he-wouldn't-mind-giving-me-a-baby- praying.

I mean PRAYING.

I mean having-people-lay-hands-on-my-empty-belly-
Sunday-after-Sunday-at-church praying
I mean joining-an-infertility-support-group-and-prayer-circle- that-met-
at-Denny's-on-Tuesday-nights praying

I mean rededicating-every-month-just-in-case-God-thought-I-wasn't-
praying-hard-enough praying
and because of that eventually every breath I took became prayer.

My God became vast.
Infinite.

I saw God in a badly designed waiting room
With uncomfortable chairs.
Or in an ugly exam room,
Even a in pipette holding my most precious assets--

I put my all my hopes in medicine
Because I knew I had seen real miracles there.

But my miracle didn't happen
And now it never will.

Since the day I was wheeled from the hospital,
newly sterilized,
I've tried to reconcile my belief in God,
my belief in the power of prayer,
And in the power of medicine
With this gaping hole in my existence.
My childless existence--
and let me tell you, Stephanie, it has not been easy.

Nights awake,
crying on my husband's strong shoulders.
Sitting in an empty room,
Now an office,
Where during my first cautious pregnancy
I had painted the walls sky blue
Good for a boy, or a girl.

I became so focused on what I was missing
That I didn't see what I had done to my marriage,
And what you were doing with my husband.

Did he ever tell you how he told me, Stephanie?
That he sat me down to dinner,
At our restaurant,
And whispered--

FAYE: BOTH LOVE AND ROBBERY CAN BE BLIND

Faye is pregnant.

FAYE

Looking back, Patricia,
I think that my first clue
that our marriage wasn't going to work
probably should have been his rampant cocaine habit.

It might have been that.
But I dunno--

I guess it coulda been
The DUI's too.
Or maybe the lack of a driver's license,
Or decent credit,
Or a job.

Mighta been the felony charges.

It's hard to say.

All I know is
these are easy things to overlook.

I mean, what did I know about cocaine?
I always thought this town was too small for street drugs--
And the DUI's,
You know,
Those were a mistake.
"Youthful Indiscretion!" He said.

Besides, he was already in AA when I met him,
so I thought that was a good sign.
Showed real promise.

The lack of driver's license had to do with the DUI's,
so I couldn't really hold that against him twice.

Bad credit was a result of no credit.

I mean, who was gonna give this guy a credit card right--
Especially with no job?

And as for the felony charges,
well those were a surprise until after the wedding.

Yep.
Pete was just one a those guys trouble followed.
And I'm one a those girls who follows trouble.

So I spent long days
And nights

Trying to get him to come around
To being the marrying kind:

To be the man who spends his days looking for a job
Instead of drinking away his unemployment check.
The man who helps with the dishes
Instead of passing out on the toilet.
The man who shows up when his daughter is born
Instead of skipping town with his junkie girlfriend.

I don't think it's that hard.

Not in the grand scheme of things,
Not after all he put us through--

It's funny but,
Before I knew for sure that Caroline was conceived
I thought about leaving him, Patricia.

I imagined throwing him to the wolves,
Or in his case the county cops,
Just to see if he could make it without me.

But before he even knew I'd considered evicting him,
I took that pregnancy test
Which came up positive, obviously.

So when he got home,
I told him what was what.

I told him that things just had to get better
That it wasn't just about me and him anymore

We were a family.

And then,
Amazingly,
Things got better
They really did.

For about sixteen hours.

Then, came the infamous Conception Reception the guys threw for him
downtown after they heard the news.
I heard it was quite a rager.

I probably woulda gone if I'd known there was a party to celebrate my
pregnancy.
Or if I'd known that he'd meet you there.

Leave it to Pete to pick up a girl at his own baby shower.

Now Patricia,
You might be wondering why I'm writing you.
And I'm writing to ask you something,
And what I'm asking for is pretty reasonable
So before you get all huffy
And up in arms I want you to know

I'm not trying to win him back,

Hell, I'm not even trying to get him to pay child support
Because I think collecting it'd be more trouble than it's worth--

All I really want from you,
and I guess from Pete,
is my ring back.

It's kind of important that I get it,
and I know he took it when he left
because he threatened to stab me if I didn't hand it over.

ALEXIS: YOU ARE THE NANNY. YOU WORK FOR MOMMA.

ALEXIS

Oh Pilar,
I know your English leaves something to be desired
But just try to stay with me?
Okay?

Wonderful.

Now,
I've given this a lot of thought,
And I've decided that I don't care
If she calls you "Momma" every once in a while.

In fact, the women in my mother's groups
Say that it's normal for children
to attach to people like you.

The people who spend time providing them with most basic care:
The feeding
The diapering
The comforting--

But as children get older
And the need for physical comfort
gives way to the need for emotional
(and financial)
support,
the one they cling to,
the one they rely on,
Is their real Momma,
As nannies fade into their memories
Like wallpaper from childhood bedrooms.

Someday, when Rebecca is old enough,
She'll see that you are not a mother to her,
You are a servant to her family;

One missed soccer practice,
One unwashed window,

One missing piece of silverware
away from deportation.

So you see,
it's totally fine that she calls you that.
Totalmente bien, even
because you're not her Momma.

You're her Nanny.
You work for Momma.

Pilar,
I like to think we've welcomed you,

That we've accepted you into our home.
Allowed you to stay with us.

We've given you a room,
Sundays off,
Christmas bonuses,
Sick time,
We even let you relax pool side when we're not home
(We don't let the gardener do that, you know).

All we ask,
is that you do as your told.
Is that too much?
Because apparently,
it has become something of a hassle for you.

When you came to me the other night
In tears
Covered in those bruises
Telling me that my husband had been touching you
What was I supposed to say?

He touches you, Pilar.
What am I supposed to do about it?

I can't control my husband.
I can't quell his desires for the tenderness of a woman.
I don't get to determine,

KAREN: TO MY STUDENT, A FINAL LESSON:
THE WAY TO A MAN'S HEART IS THROUGH HIS STOMACH.

KAREN

Maureen Pender:

What the fuck are you doing in my house?
I leave town for one week,

One week,

And I come home to find
Your underwear in my hamper.
Your soap in my shower.
Your boots in my closet.
And your crappy country music on my coffee table.

You creepily cleaned my fridge.
You did my laundry.
It also looks like you may have vacuumed the rugs
And dusted the mantle.

If I didn't find it so fucking weird,
I would say you were Martha Stewart:
A picture of Domestic Goddess-ness.
But it is fucking weird because you're eighteen years old!

Shouldn't you be out watching a movie with your friends?
Or planning what you're going to take to college
Or better yet, doing your goddamn homework for once?

Because that's what I might be doing, if I were, say, I dunno, a high school senior.

Look--

--I let you walk our dog because as your teacher, I wanted to help you out. Let you earn a little extra cash before you left for college.
God knows, no one else would hire you, I mean
You're a sweet girl, but not motivated.
Pretty, but not popular.

and from what I can tell,
your parents are assholes.

I thought maybe, I could be a positive influence.
Or at least provide some distraction during what I'm sure was a formative, and probably tumultuous time for you.
And you know what?
Maybe I did.

Of course this was all before you knew--
Before you knew Malcolm,
in all the ways you came to know him both behind my back and in front of my nose.

Which, shouldn't have shocked me, really,

I mean, what could be more appealing to a selfish man
Than a beautiful girl
With everything to lose
And no self-esteem whatsoever?

No big surprise there.

What's surprising,
Even to me,
Is that now
You're telling me that you love each other?

Really?

Fine,
You want him,
You can have him,
But I do have one last thing to teach you
Before I am out of your life forever.

Before my name is a faraway murmur on your lips when you talk about the time before you (plural).

I wanted to try and teach you one last lesson,
And under the circumstances, it might be the only thing I ever taught you that was worth a damn:

MELANIE: WITH A MEAT CLEAVER

MELANIE

Tiffanie Renee Hoyt:

If I ever see you.
I'm going to put a meat cleaver.
Right.
Between.
Your.
Eyes.

Not really.

Because I'm actually going to rip into your stomach with my bare hands.
Twisting my fingers around your intestines.
Then pulling them out.
Wrapping them around your throat.

Maybe then.
If you're still gasping for air.
I'll put what's left of your insides in your mouth.
So you can taste your own shit.

I don't reckon you've ever eaten shit. Have you, Tiffanie Renee?

You see.
There was this one time, just the one time
The dog had an accident in the house.
On the carpet.
Beige carpet.
New beige carpet.
After I begged Chris for hardwood.

"Hardwood's too expensive." 's what Chris told me.

The dog got in the trash.
Ate half a dozen raw eggs.
Post dated.
Some coffee grounds.

Maybe some paper.
And he shit.
All over that new beige carpet.
Before I even knew I left the garbage pail on the kitchen floor.

So I get home from work.

Park the car.
I put the key in the door, pushin' it open with my knee.
Holdin' a small bag of groceries.
New eggs.
A purse.

And then the smell hits me.
Like a ton of bricks it hits me.

I look down.
And there's shit everywhere.

I find the dog under the dining room table.
And I wail on him for awhile.
Partly.
(Mostly.)
Out of fear.

He knows what I'm in for so he forgives me.
For leavin' the garbage pail on the floor.
For makin' him so sick he couldn't wait for me to let him out.
For beatin' on him so bad he couldn't stand.

Then I gotta stop.
Because I gotta think.

And before I can start gettin' real scared.
I go under the kitchen sink.
Get a bucket.
Get some water.
And I start scrubbin'.
I scrub until my hands are raw with blood.
And lye soap I made myself.

Hardly any time passes before I hear a click.

ELISSA: AN ODE TO DIDO
THE LONELY QUEEN OF CARTHAGE

*A retelling of the myth of Dido and Aeneas.
Elissa wears a wedding dress.*

ELISSA

I was going to go more traditional,
but I decided,
as usual
to follow my heart
so I picked this one.

It's not quite white,
but I always thought white made me look,
I dunno,
sick,
or pale,
or just generally yucky so--

He liked it, Lila, he did.
He liked the way it hugged the curves of my figure, and the way the, uh,
sparkly things--

the beading,

sparkled in the light of the reception hall.

And I'm pretty sure he liked it best,
at least I think he liked it best,
when he unbuttoned it,
button by button,
down the back of my trembling body,
in the honeymoon suite,
while our guests downstairs
danced the night away.

I think he liked this dress best
as a billowing pile of lace
and light
and beauty
gently lain on a hardwood floor--

We heard the music playing
softly downstairs
as we climbed into bed.
He held my cold hands,
pressing his lips to my neck
“It’s okay.” He said.
“I love you.”

He tried to comfort his nervous bride
as I lie beneath him for the very first time.

Looking back on it,
nervous isn’t the word I would use for someone
who waits until their wedding night:

Stupid might be the word.
Naive is another good choice.
Bleeding maybe.
But I wasn’t nervous, I was in awe.

I had waited my whole life for that moment,
a moment that intensified our relationship,
solidifying our commitment to one another
In an indelicate exchange of bodily fluids.

It was supposed to be magic.
I, personally, had envisioned rose petals,
Fireworks
But instead,
as everyone had told me it might be,
it wound up being sort of awkward.

Which was fine.

In the months that followed
the silly awkwardness was replaced
with tender affections.

Evenings spent trying to figure out the other’s body
turned into mornings relaxing comfortably
with entwined fingers and legs.

Wasteful, dewy kisses matured into the
deep, passionate embrace
of tongue and breath and lips
that led once more to
un-awkward
tender
affecting.

Our bed was our own private fort
That became a sanctuary of body and mind:
I told him my secrets,
my fears,
and he named our first three unborn children.

I spent many lazy hours
With my head on his chest
listening contentedly
to the sound of his softly beating heart.

I was never happier in my whole life than I was in the moments that we
wasted there;
In the feminine bed I adorned
with soft, pink sheets
For it was between them that we forged a bond
Wrought of iron.

You might ask then
Why I'm writing you this letter.

Why I'm not ensconced in the arms of my beloved
Courting his fantasies of wife and lover.

Why the bond of iron has become
Like the soft gold of our wedding bands
Worn away by brutal time.

Lila,
At this reunion of yours,
He saw you dance
As though time had stopped.
Crystallizing you at sixteen
And himself barely seventeen.

GIVE 'EM HELL HARRIET: FOR MY GRANDPARENTS,
R AND POP.

HARRIET

My Dearest June,

I met Harold for the first time on a Friday evening in 1951 at a USO dance organized by my big sister, Clara. Her husband Edward was a career Naval Airman and she'd roped me in to a hostessing a canteen dance for a group of boys going to Korea. I was only sixteen at the time, much more interested in baseball than a bunch of rowdy, desperate, teenagers in uniform, but my mother figured it might be a good chance for her peculiar daughter to get out of the house.

Usually on Fridays, I'd listen to baseball on the radio with my Dad. We were lifelong Brooklyn Dodgers fans (which wound up breaking our hearts a few short years later), so when we couldn't be at the park, we were at the kitchen table listening intently to every broadcast. I know all the stats, and I oughta. After all, my Dad had been quizzing me since I was six, and by the time I was twelve, I knew everything there was to know about the Dodgers. We'd be at a game, or a party, or even at the coffee reception after Mass and he'd say something like "Hey Peaches, what was the batting average of Pee Wee Reese in 1947?" I'd think for a minute. "284." The crowd of guys he called over would hoot and cheer and my Dad would laugh. After six girls, my Dad finally had a buddy. Lost in a sea of ribbons and curls, high heels and lipstick, he had someone to relate to. Though he loved us all, he spent lots of time with me. One summer, he taught me to throw. To catch. He even taught me to hit my cousin Mikey's toughest curve ball.

The dance was nothing special to say the least. With it's schmaltzy music, stars and stripes crepe paper decorations and crumbly cookies, it was certainly not something I would have missed my weekly date with my Dad and the Dodgers for. Content to ladle punch into cups and stare at the clock, I passed the time wondering if Newcombe was gonna pitch a no-hitter that night. He'd had a good year so far, one that wound up being his best ever with one hundred and sixty-four strikeouts. I didn't even notice Harold looking at me until he came up to the table.

"Wanna dance, Harriet?" He said, reading my name tag.

"No." I told him.

“Come on, sweetheart, I’m goin’ to war. I could die.”

I stared him down.

“Fine.” I said, “But that excuse only works once.”

He laughed.

“I’m not kiddin’ you.” I said.

“Alright, alright. I’m not a bad guy. You’ll see,” He promised.

That’s what they all say.

The two of us danced under the dim lights of the Knight’s of Columbus hall; my hands on his shoulders, and his on my hips. He told me all about his family in Brooklyn, his dog, Rex, and his big brothers who fought in World War II. I probably couldn’t have been less interested in anything he had to say until suddenly he goosed me. Just to make sure I was paying attention. I squealed, and he grinned at me with his Cheshire Cat teeth.

“You awake there, sweetheart?”

That was when I slapped him across the mouth and walked out.

I was a lady, after all.

As it turned out his father worked with mine (much to my embarrassment), and the next time I laid eyes on Harold was two years later on Long Island where my father’s company was hosting a Labor Day picnic for employees and their families. Harold was home from Korea and tagged along with his folks. He didn’t recognize me, but that big mouth father of his caught me out of the corner of his eye at the goddamn punch bowl and said: “Hey! Isn’t that ‘Give ‘em Hell Harriet?’”

“Give ‘em Hell Harriet” was my nickname after the dance.

It was the height of the Truman administration and everyone thought that it was very clever.

“Yeah, that’s her.” He said. He was dressed in his uniform.

“With an arm like yours,” he said, “You should play in the softball game this afternoon.”

“As a matter of fact smart-ass, I’m pitching.”