

Response to an article in the Globe and Mail, June 21, 1990

"One held her as the other man raped her"  
talk about group bonding God that must have been excellent.

"The man and a friend chased her through a field, caught her"  
How did they catch her? Grab onto an ankle—when did she start running?

"She was walking home from a meeting of A.A...when she saw her former boyfriend's car coming." Walking home in May. A soft May night. Quietness calls birds' calls crisp. Did she wrap her jacket around her waist, did she impatiently tie her hair back, take off her heels, wonder about dinner?  
Did she recognize his motor? Did she tell herself not to be silly and keep walking?

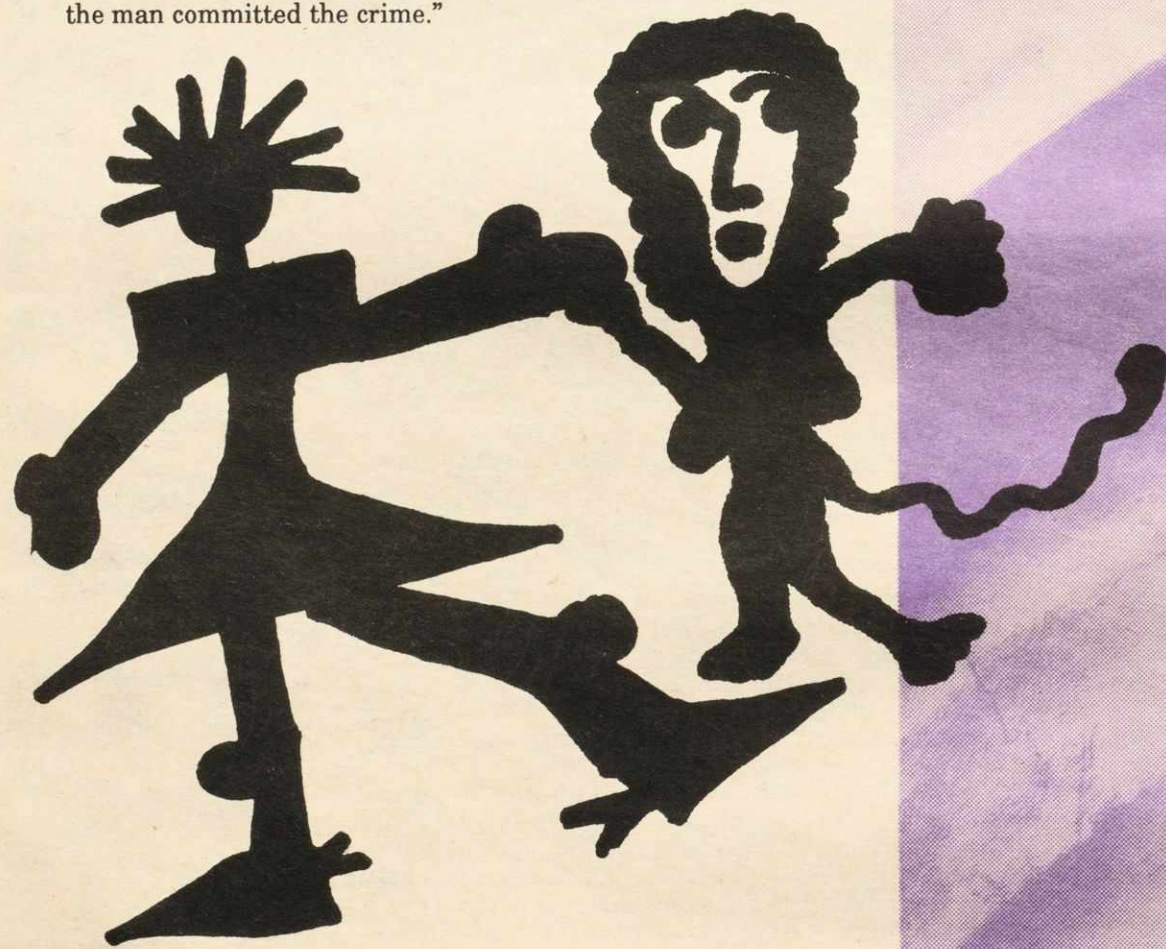
"She had stopped seeing him because he had begun beating her when she refused to have sex." Did she know it was him when the car slowed down as it approached her, did she force herself to walk on until he screeched to a halt and slammed the door open and she began to run? Was the field newly harrowed did she trip and yell was she angry did she scream was she mad and did she yell at him 'till she fell badly and crumpled and did she start to cry or crawl and did he goddammit.

There are societies that kill a man for rape. For smiling and gnarling just above your face as they tear your shirt and wrestle with your pants or was it a skirt that he toyed with as she screamed until his friend covered her lips and whispered love words as her wrists twisted and her body fought and his friend grunted.

The Tahsis, Kyuquot, Clayoquot, Ehatisaht, Kelsemaht, Opitsaht, Kallicum went to war for that crime.

"A convicted rapist was sentenced yesterday to one day of probation by a District Court Judge who said he did not believe the man committed the crime."

-Barbara Leiterman



The grass is wet. Todd and Doug stand a little way away from me talking for a minute. Todd's hair is short but Doug's is wavy and blowing in the wind a bit.

"Hey, let's play tag," Todd says, "You run, we'll catch you." Todd smiles and bends into a runner's pose. I spin fast to my left to make a sprint. The trees follow my turn and wiggle sideways like rubber. There is a bi tree a little ways away and I move.

I am moving very slowly. My right foot is very far away from my left foot. One step. All my weight follows each step as if I were lopsided. A goose. I am a goose. I'm carrying all my weight back and forth in a zigzag. The tree is very far away. If I could reach the tree I'd be safe, I think. But it's miles and miles away and I hear footsteps in the grass. I hear a buzz like an airplane and my foot hits the grass with a hollow thud.

"Come on, run!"

I hear my breath in and out like a goose's short breathing, beak open. A hand is on my back, goose's beak bites for the grass. My hands are forward. I fall on my elbow.

cont'd  
**THE GOOSE**

"Oh, you wanted to get caught. You wanted it."  
I'm on my back and I see leaves of the tree spread like little hands above me, waving back and forth. And teeth, I see very straight teeth. Something is pulling across my arm. My sweatshirt is pulling across my arm, up, up past my elbow. And I'm very heavy, a rock, or a dead goose.

When the geese die in Stanley Park the attendants throw them in the water. They sink to the bottom. If you look you see only white shapes, big, white rocks through the water.

There is a heavy shape and it is pressing on my ribs and thighs, my hip is twisted. There is hard dirt under my back. Breath in my mouth. There is breath in my mouth that isn't mine and it is heavy with a rumble of wordless vowels behind it. There is a kiss pressing and twisting like coiled rope, and awkward. The leaves are waving. Then the leaves are waving and wavy hair is blowing just a bit. Everything is painted with white speckles. My legs are cold and wet. And there is not consent in silence, I'm

thinking. And this is not seduction.

I'm trying to see the geese, I'm trying to see the geese and they are coming across the wet grass. And they are running, their beaks held in V's, open and calling like sirens. They are climbing over Doug, webbed feet over his back, his wavy hair in handfuls in their beaks. Beaks are aiming at his brown back and red spots on his straight legs. Red spots, beaks biting at his arms. They are held straight and stiff. They cannot hold his weight. And beaks are biting and his arms are folding and red. And the geese are coming and screaming. I'm trying to see them. I'm wishing I could see them.

But this isn't Stanley Park. And there are no geese. I'm wanting to say something. Something loud. I think it must be wrong that I can't say anything. I can't hear me say anything. I hear the airplane noise and I taste scotch. My Adam's apple is covered in scotch. I swallow it again and again and the leaves are waving at me and I'm very heavy. I'm heavy and I'm heavy and I'm sinking like a dead goose in the water.

Who are you, brown woman?  
Brown, dancing woman.  
What are you, brown woman?  
Brown, laughing woman.  
You decide my colour,  
my gender,  
my sexuality.  
When you want- I'm  
white-  
educated,  
articulate,  
beautiful.  
When you want- I'm  
brown-  
underrepresented,  
mysterious,  
token.  
I'm white,  
straight.  
I'm brown,  
lesbian.  
I am chameleon, you change me to suit your needs.  
I am not a white male with brown and female skin,  
Touch, and I disappear.  
Your definition is my reality,  
brown, bisexual and woman.  
I challenge your whiteness.  
I challenge your manhood.  
I challenge your sexuality.  
I'm not like you.  
I'm invisible.  
You don't see me.  
I don't want your equality.

-Anonymous



substitutes  
or something that might have been read  
at an evening of women's erotica  
on valentine's day.

inappropriately

after feminism class  
i went out for dinner  
with the man who other people call  
my boyfriend.

sex sells

later on that night  
i watched the war news  
it gave me a headache  
but i couldn't turn it off.

flowers

the ad characters bombed my mind  
fucking and sucking it dry.  
as i tried to sleep  
their lifestyles swirled in the left-over sperm.

in the dal SUB

do you have a babe?  
do you want one?  
i had read on the bulletin boards  
earlier that day.

hey, which reminds me

let's go get some babes  
let's go get an easy chair  
let's go get our carpets cleaned  
and while we're out

-ariella pahlke

The truck is very cold. The plastic. I feel it through my sweatshirt. I feel Todd very big sitting on my right. And Doug's elbow as he shifts gears.

"I really love my girlfriend," Doug says. His teeth are very straight. He looks at me. My stomach is pudding that is all squishy and nervous and moves around when we hit bumps. I could have said something, I think. I'm not dumb. It was me. I'm strong. I should have said something.

The garden around the house is empty and the tail lights disappear.

I try to see Paul in the garden as he used to be, gently touching blossoms and vines.

He sees me and smiles, stands. He is young with tan skin and says, "Look, Jen, the bees have come." And the honey bees are flying through his garden. He holds my hand and I'm not afraid of them.

There's one light left on in the kitchen. A note says that everyone has gone to sleep, breakfast will be at nine.

In the bathroom, in the mirror. I'm looking in as if I were looking through water. There is a white blur, a pale face with little eyes looking back.

There is a grass stain on the sleeve of my sweatshirt. I really don't like the color purple. I don't know why I wore this sweatshirt. It's purple, purple. One of those colors that you can't just find by walking outside. One of those colors that you have to spend a lot of time mixing blue and red to get the right shade. I hate it.

I wash my hands with soap. They feel white, my skin feels very thin. There are grass stains on my palms. I wash them harder with a washcloth.

I walk to the guestroom and sit on the bed. Paul and Irene are years away lying asleep across the hall.

I'm getting up to go to the bathroom again. There is some dirt under my nails. I'm going to wash my hands again. They aren't clean at all.