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deCoy Gallerina

this autobiographical story

is so over the top

I think I'll make it a black comedy

CABIN

Sunk comfortably into the lush couch, brownish-gold cushions piled around him, his eyes alert, tuned in, his voice restrained...

My back to the view; lush pine trees, damp, grey, two lane highway beneath, an expansive grassy meadow beyond. Many small, one room, mountain cabins occupying a spacious, green landscape. Leaning on the window sill across the small living room from him (ten feet away, never less than 10 feet away ever).

History sounding in my blood

I'm looking at the woody (plywood walls and floor) kitchen, clean; linoleum swept and mopped. There's a soft filtered forest light filtering into the small, homey, cheaply built mountain cabin, not a vacation spot, but a year round habitat.

Mom is behind the bar style kitchen counter which has a dank odor from wet-rot. The couch back leans against the counter wall. Mom's washing second hand dishes, soap suds covering her creamy olive-brown skin. She's listening passively, glancing up occasionally to look at me over the counter and the back of his head.

His voice is low, to keep her from hearing clearly what he's saying to me, this is added by the sound of running water mom is rinsing the dishes with. He's projecting his voice so that only I can hear exactly what he's saying, or so he hopes. He underestimates my mother's hearing abilities and her intelligence...as always.

I glance at him, absently.

He was not a surprise to me...

I'd seen everything by now

Or been near someone who had

Between my mother and the life I lived after she took off

I'd been around everything

I'd been lucky enough to have the influence of my grandmother when I was younger, her love and protection. She had been a very pious and gentle woman, whom I loved and emulated. I'd been blessed with her acceptance and companionship until she left when I was 12...leaving me alone with my mother.

PINE

I was a "good girl", emulating my grandmother, with the exception that I liked to 'boost' stuff whenever I could, a teenage 'clepto'. I got a little power rush when I got away with it. Then, one time, I got caught, I was so embarrassed that my face flushed magenta as the blood rushed in heat to it. I stopped stealing after that. Before that, though, between stealing, designing and sewing I had some terrific outfits.

Kenny, my 'incorrigible' boyfriend, was a young, 16 year old con artist. He had been in and out of San Francisco and Oakland juvenile detention centers constantly, mostly for stealing cars and joy riding. Once, I was with him, we snuck into a parking garage on Broadway street, San Francisco's strip club area. Late night, a busy time there, a full garage, we crouched low as he tried car doors to see if any were unlocked. After just a few tries he found one that was unlocked, we slipped onto the soft, plush, caramel colored seats, our small bodies sank deep. He adjusted himself under the steering wheel, fiddled with something on the steering column and the engine roared. He told me "If the attendant asks, its your dad's car." We were off in a huge ass caddy...cruising.

He was what was known as a 'bona-fide' thief, and it was probably him who broke into the apartment where my mother and I lived on Pine street. Mom accused Kenny of robbing us, although, it easily have been her boyfriend Eugene. Eugene was on the run at that time. He was quiet, seemed very sweet, was a big, soft guy. But, he had to have been very desperate; one night on television I saw that he had been arrested as a member of the Simbanese Liberation Army; for the murder of his wife. I called my mother to hurry and come see this, she wailed. She said she knew why he was on the run, he was a member of an underground resistance group. He had always worn a black beret. He had been living with us for many months prior to this and one day I came home from school and the electricity was off, the basement apartment was dark, cold and creepy. Mom said she wanted to see if he would help pay the bill before it was turned off...it was turned off. She always went for the underdogs.

My mother also accused Kenny of giving he crabs?! I don't know how she worked that one out, the two of them never interacted...let alone...sex!? And, I didn't have any...and he and I did have sex?! Mom always was a little loopy to say the least.

One day she called me into the bathroom while she was bathing one night. She said "Get in here!" I cautiously entered the bathroom and knelt down beside the paw claw footed tub, where she was soaking. The tips of her fine, long, shiny black hair were floating in the hot clear water. He large black eyes were burning a hole through me "WHAT'S THIS!?" she jabbed her finger at her pubic area, I squinted my eyes trying to see what she was pointing at. Directed by her angry gaze to focus on a little black critter that was crawling through her wiring black pubic hair, I said "I don't know." I'd never seen a 'crab' before, shit I was fifteen. She almost screamed "CRABS!!" Mom was very promiscuous with all sorts of boyfriends; drunks, addicts, Scottish, French, musicians, this was her 'Black' phase...so many men...and, she blamed the crabs on Kenny, my only boyfriend. I thought the whole thing was extremely weird.

I was the underdog in our household.

Maybe Kenny had robbed us...but, she was just to quick to dump the blame on him. She had a bad habit of blaming me for things she was responsible for, and he was connected to me.

Mom had been bullied by her older siblings, she was the youngest and possibly my grandmother's favorite until I came along. Her dad used to beat her next oldest sibling badly, he in turn was always trying to beat her up.

That older sibling had been asked by an older boy to go get her and bring her to a barn. That sibling was just two years older than her, she was two. He went and got her, told her to climb a ladder to a loft where the older boy was waiting. The older boy raped my mother. I think my grandfather blamed that little boy...but, he was only four, how could he have known? She told me that her mother would not let her out of her sight after that. What a horror. Mom said that after that she was always in a sort of a fog. She was always 'spacy', not quite connected or focused, after a trauma like that, who would be. Men took advantage of this, she was beautiful and vulnerable.

The uncle who had taken her to the barn and led her to the ladder to the loft, ended up with shell shock from being beaten by his father, from a rifle shot going off right by his head during the war and from boxing. He also developed schizophrenia and would walk around angrily talking to himself. He was very violent and would beat people if he could get close enough.

Underdog; I was the only one smaller than her, she bullied me as she had been bullied. She often said "I'm not mean, just strict!" I was a gently, quiet, sensitive and shy girl, she didn't need to be 'strict' with me. My mother had a very tiny voice and was very submissive, except when she was screaming at me or yelling back at my aunt who constantly criticized and picked on her. I tried to protect her from my aunt and men. My grandmother was always trying to protect her from herself...she taught me to do the same 'take care of my mother'. Thus, I became co-dependent with my mother. I felt like I was the mother and she the child.

When I was eleven, I was watching my favorite program, which I watched liked clockwork, each week. I loved the show (Lost in Space). My mother told me to do the dishes, like kids often do, I procrastinated...I was engrossed in my show, it was almost over, but, she couldn't wait. She came in and demanded that I do the dishes immediately. I was in the process of explaining that this was my favorite show, that it was almost over when she blasted me with her fist on the back of my head, I felt a searing pain. Her African boyfriend came rushing in, picked me up and rushed me to the bathroom, closed the door and asked if I was ok. He went out, I could hear him telling her never to do that again. He was a terrible drunk and once he came to our apartment covered in blood seeping from head wounds. He had been attacked while he was drunk. When sober, he was gentle, nice, but was a mess the rest of the time.

I had met a boy who was maybe 16, I was 12 now, he called me and asked if he could come over, I said sure. Mom was on her way home, but not there yet when the boy arrived. He was much taller than me, African American. As soon as he arrived he picked me up and was carrying me into the bedroom, at that moment mom's African boyfriend showed up. He grabbed me out of the boy's arms and told the boy to get out. He saved me again.

We had been living in this Castro district apartment for some years, it was my favorite childhood home. My mother had been having a lot of problems with drinking and my aunt who didn't like "Blacks" (prejudice) and who was always trying to emulate white women like Zha Zha Gabor, Gina Lola Brigida, Sophia Loren (she did resemble the latter a bit), who spent thousands on cloths to make her look glamorous who ate the Hollywood hype, lock stock and barrel, who only dated white men and always put on 'airs'; with whom we lived intermittently, had just moved out. After an incident where my mom's African boyfriend had showed up bleary drunk and tried to come into the house, my grandmother and I beating him with a broom until he left; grandma moved away also.

After that, mom and I moved to an apartment in the Haight. I was in middle school in the far reaches of 'the avenues' somewhere with all the other kids from the Haight/Ashbury area. I hung out with the Black kids, they looked the most like my relatives, were more like my relatives than the whites and I was accustomed to Blacks because of my mother's boyfriends. One of the girls I hung out with sometimes, she lived on the corner across the street, was thirteen and already had two kids, another friend the

DECOY GALLERINA: SHORT BIO 2022

STATUS & ORIGINS: Rebel Irish/Chiricahua Nde' (Chakonen, 'Fort Sill' Apache; the group Geronimo & Cochise are from), Matriarch/Elder, Culture Bearer, Two-Spirit, Cross-Platform/Cross-Genre Life Long Artist & direct descendant of Cochise
Raised in San Francisco/New Mexico/Apache/Oklahoma

STYLES: Psychedelic Stomp to Deep Traditional works

GENRES: Beadwork master, costuming, painter, installation and performance art, video, lyricist, composer, writer, performance artist, actress, singer, dancer, visual artist, perpetual student

MEMBER: Chiricahua Warm-Springs Nde' (Apache) Tribe of New Mexico, Theatre Movement International, Radical Medicine, Idle No More, Member/Curator Komotion Int'l SF, more...

TRAINING: Nde' ceremonies, several decades study and research in Chiricahua cultural aspects with Tribal Historian, Cultural Expert, Linguist & tribal member; Leland Michael Darrow, extensive private training in music, dance, arts & training with Nde' Grandmother Minnie Nicholas in writing, beadwork, painting and with mother Caroline and aunt & Mary Zurega in costuming, music appreciation and San Francisco 'Live Culture'

INFLUENCES/TEACHERS: diverse Bay Area culture, Leland Michael Darrow, Jill Parker, Rene Yanez, BadUnk!Sista, Rudradeep Chakrabarti, Charles Justin Hoover, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, Janeen Antione; American Indian Contemporary Arts Gallery, Black Panthers and their artist; Emory Douglas, American Indian Movement and Richard Oakes, AIM WEST; Tony Gonzales, La Pena, Standing Rock Red Warrior Camp, Pennie Opal Plant & Isabella Zizi; Idle No More, Upward Bound, Oakland Intertribal FreindshipHouse, Leonard Peltier, Alanon, Ceremony, David Solnit, Norm Sands, Annie Sprinkle, Malaquias Montoya, Juanita Barry, Phil Foss, Santa Fe Opera, Steven Paul Judd, American Indian Film Festival SF, BAAITS Powwow, First Nation/Indigenous culture and struggles far and wide, many more teachers and inspirations

BFA DEGREES: San Francisco Art Institute, California College of the Arts, College of Santa Fe, Institute of American Indian Arts

PRESENTATIONS: San Francisco International Arts Festival, Allan Houser Garden Gallery, Santa Fe, Studio 23, Alameda; Displacement Show, High Street Gallery London, deYoung Museum, IAIA Museum, POWPOWPOW SF, REAL FACES interviews of 500 artists (youtube), Playwriter/performer of "Homecoming" Chiricahua Nde' Apache Odyssey' and 'Haunting Our His&Herstories; Indigenous Children's Boarding School Experiences', Yerba Buena Gardens First Nation Festival, Berkeley World Music Festival, Ivy Room, Venice Biennale, Counter Pulse Theater, San Francisco Independent Arts Festival, United States Arts and Crafts Board, La Pena, Stork Club, Galeria de la Raza, San Francisco Art Institute, many more...

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