

SCENE 1

Spotlight on the stage where,
stage right , the actress stands.
Minimal set, an arm chair and a
piano. A scrim is down upstage
where pictures of could be
projected.

It all started long ago in someone else's story
When you grew up you believed it...
You believed you could do and be anything
Whatever your mind could imagine
Where ever passion was found
In...in...baseball, cooking, writing, macrame,
painting.
That thing that excited your soul, your drive.
The air that filled your lungs
And the joy in your step as you play
hopscotch on the sidewalk.
Everyone finds it at some point in their life
You found it, in a song on the radio,
And your Aunt playing the piano.
You ran to your parents begged to learn.
You wanted to play the piano like Diana,
you declared to you parents.
They made some calls,
You had to wait,
You weren't school age.
Patience is a virtue;
This, your first test of patience,
Your virtue is in tact.
You waited for your sixth birthday.

What happened to THAT girl
SHE knew exactly what she wanted.
That girl, so small,
Yet with a voice, loud and large
Much larger than you were in stature.
It's as if your soul,
The essence of you couldn't be contained
In such a minute container.
The girl who loved to sing and play piano

She crosses to the piano and plays
a simple tune. Music continues
under the dialogue, getting more
advanced.

Music lesson

You practiced on an old upright piano.
It was so decrepit, the ivory was missing on
most of the keys.
Some didn't play at all.
Your playing wasn't to be detoured.
When most children has to be coerced to
practice,

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

It was the opposite for you.
Music was your escape from the family trait of
abuse.
Your Grandmother abused your Father,
who abused you and your siblings.
Music took you away from the trauma.
You played and sang until his words were lost
in the lyrics.
Country music played non-stop at home.
You heard Tanya Tucker on the radio.
Tanya Tucker made it at the age of thirteen.
Why not you?
Your opportunity... a talent competition
The grand prize... contract with RCA.
That twelve year old girl
Stood, alone,
Your voice rang out...It echoed...
The last note of Delta Dawn had them on their
feet.
Over two thousand people stood...
Applauded...you.
It was the single most thrilling thing,
for a twelve year old.
Yet, the grand prize slipped from your grasp
into the bowed hands of a fiddle player
Such a difficult hit to the ego;
graciousness wasn't part of your vocabulary.

Church was a large portion of life
in the Bible belt.
Every Sunday and Wednesday you were taken...
Then dragged as you grew older
Your split from the church began
at fifteen, when you and the other cheerleaders
Oh My God--dance your asses off
to American Bandstand
Quite innocuous or so you thought.
To your surprise your previous nights
activities
were seen by your pastor;
then publicly announced to all in attendance;
all your impropriety and evil.
You danced with the devil
like a scene straight from The Crucible.
Nothing like a pastor throwing the Bible at
you.
You were not virtuous.
Your name was added to the list of those who,
unless the sins are professed and confessed
will surely never enter the kingdom of heaven.
You, sinner, are condemned to hell.
Betrayed by the pastor and your parents,
who seemingly supported his view.
Had you torn between the church
and their bastardization of it.
To be honest you loved church.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

Not the damn you to hell portion,
but the music.
You loved singing in the choir.
Music is what bound you to the Christian
service.
When the music touched your soul
it made all the issues of the day go away.
The hymns spoke to your emotional scars.
Words spoke to your heart.
You believed, when they sang the words.
Poignant images that tugged at your soul.
She crosses to piano, begins to play.

Let there be love
OH FATHER WE SING
HIS MESSAGE WE BRING
FOR LOVE
LET THERE BE LOVE
IN PEACE WE STAND FREE
UNITED WE'LL BE
IN LOVE
LET THERE BE LOVE

NO ONE CAN SAVE YOU
OR BRAVE THE STORM
NO ONE CAN CARRY
OR KEEP YOU FROM WARM

HIS LOVE BUILDS A BRIDGE
HIS LOVE BINDS TWO HEARTS
IN LOVE
LET THERE BE LOVE

OUR PRAYER FOR THIS WORLD
LOVE IS THE CURE
IN LOVE
LET THERE BE LOVE

NO ONE CAN SAVE YOU
OR BRAVE THE STORM
NO ONE CAN CARRY
OR KEEP YOU FROM HARM

ALONE AND AFRAID
GRACE FINDS YOU SAFE
IN LOVE
LET THERE BE LOVE

YOU'RE EMPTY AND BROKEN
YET ARMS ARE WIDE OPEN
IN LOVE
LET THERE BE LOVE

Throughout high school, each year the church
had talent competitions in every region
for scholarships to Southern Nazarene
University.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

The competition season always started
with an argument with your mother.
One you always lost.

(sarcastically)

She had such confidence in your
vocal abilities and musicianship--
So much so...she would go through
every competitor in each category;
determined which category you were to compete
in.

If a category was empty - she would sign you
up.

"This way you will win."

Every year - four years running- the same,
Your mother's belief in your mediocrity
punctuated
your own Salieri complex.

You could believe in love.

As a teenager, the terms misogyny and
patriarchy

weren't part of your vocabulary.

You felt trapped in that fundamentalist
cesspool

You tried running, but living five miles from
any town

and a mile from your nearest neighbor,

who were also your grandparents,

Not the most caring of people.

Your brother's first sentence, when asked about
Grandma -

"I hate that woman"

When your mother gave you loving advice to find
a man,

since you would never be able to take care of
yourself,

The only way you could survive was to be
married.

You weren't as smart as your brother or your
sister.

That was the antithesis of your relationship
with your mother. The scars she inflicted were
emotional.

Parkinson's shook your family. Your father
diagnosed at 35.

A move to another small town, where your mother
could teach,

Brought the added bonus, the Evangelical church
left behind

but church services were still a part of your
life.

You traveled with the teen choir, sang during
service.

You had the reputation as a strong belter

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

and are handed the lead with every production,
even if you don't want it.

That girl had a sense of where her soul
belonged
and where it didn't.
You don't belong here!
Your subconscious played the same line over and
over;
looping inside your brain, as the rest of the
cast filed into the choir loft.
Your extra-curricular activities
Disqualified you from Christian Teen of the
year.
If they really knew me...
If the Teen minister,
the preacher or your cast mates saw who you
truly were
They would have said
"You are a fraud." "We know who you really
are."
It was the same mantra that
projected itself in your mind,
like a flashing LED sign.

The Nazarene church had the typical giant cross
which hung on the back of the choir loft wall
The scraping sound, behind you
interrupted your internal condemnation.
You were stunned, shocked, even,
when that cross fell with a thud,
like a hammer made contact with a watermelon
The pain shot through the top of your head
to your jaw.
What the Hell!
An exclamation unacceptable
in polite church society,
Enough to make the blue hairs
clutch their pearls and gasp their indignation.
It only made your mother sigh and roll her
eyes,
which was her way of letting all know she was
annoyed.
Heed the sign!

Music led every decision, every moment
Junior year could have been your last,
However, your parents decided for you.
So, music filled your senior year schedule
Graduation topped this milestone with a
scholarship
and a solo, If You Really Knew me.
Song selections were made based on your self
worth.
This particular song seemed apropos
for your 18 years of life.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

Every single choice made in this life, altered
everything.
Your decision to attend Southern Nazarene
University
with a vocal scholarship.
The only one you were really proud of.
The one you auditioned for against your mother's
directive.
The sign - universal 4x4 on top of your
head...literally!
The sign - You're on the wrong path.
You ignore all the signs...
Go ahead make things harder for yourself.
Fake your way through.
This led to, yet another, stumbling block.
You have been used to being the lead, the star,
not the case at SNU
When you can't fake the testimony.
They wouldn't accept the passion of the song,
only the tearful spoken word
with uplifted arms to the heavens
These words couldn't fall haphazardly from you
lips,
You were pushed from solid ground that once
was your identity, the once gleaming star
faded at eighteen...a has been.
Your voice...silenced. You were demoralized .
Reverted to your go to ...walls up...fell back
on
acceptance within a relationship
love through sex
Which lead to...

The tall brunette walked into chapel;
sat beside you, had the bluest eyes - heaven
help your heart
You've ever seen , blue...no violet eyes stared
back at you.
Married him at eighteen, two kids...divorced by
twenty-one.
You looked back on those years
and wonder if you had just looked away from
those eyes.
But, you returned the look,
used every ounce of your flirtations to capture
him.

They all should come with warning labels, like
cigarettes or alcohol.

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!
WHY DON'T THEY COME
WITH A WARNING WARNING WARNING

May blame you for his imagined inadequacies.
(MORE)

(CONT'D)

After all, if you had just paid more attention.
MAY BE A HAZARD TO YOU LIFE
MAY BE HE DOESN'T WANT A WIFE
TURN YOUR MIND INTO A MESS
TEAR YOUR HEART OUT THROUGH YOUR CHEST
WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

If you hadn't have been pregnant with kid
number two,
his hands wouldn't have explored some freshman,
while you sought solace in an epidural.

You should have seen the signs.
Mr. Violet eyes, once a computer genius
who, previously, could get assignments
completed in hours.
Suddenly, had to spend nights in the computer
lab...
never could quite get his assignments completed
on time.
WARNING! Objects in the window are closer than
they appear.

That picture window framed your husband
Ensconced in a scene from some torrid soap
opera.
You carried your newborn with a two year old in
tow.
As you watched HER.
You felt her slither her way into your life
SHE slid in so easily, you stared, in horror,
Stunned...mouth hung open in disbelief.
Unable to stop the fatal blow as your heart
sputtered
Your heart stopped.
The shatter could be heard for miles
Echoed through the barren fields
Splintered off the canyon walls
atomic shards of ice cold,
blood red,
bitter knife in the back.
SHE filleted it, served it up with fava beans
and Chianti.
Mr. Violet eyes, didn't have a decent bone in
his body
To murder you to your face.
Nothing prepared you for any of this.
He regarded it all as insignificant...
It was only your heart, your stone cold heart.

Yet, after all that, you still wanted
reconciliation.
You offered forgiveness.
Mother's words, in an endless loop,

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

Reminded you that you can't make it on your own.
Mr. Violet eye's father gave "stellar" advice--
"You won't forgive him, you will never forget.
You will always have the power, now."
There is a moral of that sad story,
To the in-laws: Leave it alone. It's not your
life.

Your luck, or lack thereof ran out.
It ended the day he left.
Luck left tread marks as it fled from your
grasp.

Single mothers were left defenseless
At the mercy of the system.
One must work to live. Children must have care.
Slapped your hands, cut your pay.
Head to rock, life to hard place.
The shatter echoed far beyond the empty
battlefield.

Help doesn't know the way to you. Guess GPS
couldn't find you.
You want sympathy?
It's found in the dictionary, between sex and
syphilis.
Then, "help" came disguised... as a stranger,
staring at your misfortune
With the blue eyes that you once adored.
His face in a tight smirk pointed at your
clasped hands,
...begged for his help
your children's father....
Just please.... Please!
You're on your knees
Conditions are requested that tear your heart
Into mounds of bleeding flesh.
The price of assistance - rescind parental
custody.
What choice did you have?
What power did you possess?
You had nothing.
The only job was on the line.
Again, your Mother's voice echoed in your mind
You can't take care of yourself
You handed them over, along with the knife
Which he plunged deep.

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!
MAY KICK YOU WHILE YOUR DOWN.
AND TREAT YOU LIKE SOME CLOWN
BETTER HEED THAT WARNING!

That one was the first in your collection...
Of Heads in jars...
In the basement.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

You gave up the best part of you
Those blue eyes become deadly
How could you fight?
Run to you parents....
"You can't make it on your own.
Laughable!
In that situation... trapped
Begged for mercy.... you couldn't escape.
No matter what choice you made....
You found that your patience is tested.
You failed that test.
Again patience is a virtue.
And YOU are NOT virtuous!
You lose!
Where the hell was that warning?

How do you celebrate your twenty-first
birthday?
You celebrate with strippers, of course.
A lap dance from a Chippendale dancer
Followed by a bar hop
Dressed in your best 80's shoulder pads
And double breasted shirts ala Michael
Jackson.
Where you met, Mike or Mahmoud...
Whatever his name was...
Your next ex...the Arab ex.

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!
MAY HAVE A TOUCH OF NPD
YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU SEE
MAY BE A HAZARD TO YOU LIFE
MAY BE HE HAS ANOTHER WIFE
TURN YOUR MIND INTO A MESS
TEAR YOUR HEART OUT THROUGH YOUR CHEST
WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

If only the warning had been real.
You figured you'd just listen to some music;
have a couple of drinks, then leave.
You, then hear in your ear:
"Take off your glasses"
Four words that altered your world,
fall from the mysterious man standing over you.
That man called himself Mike; originally from
Italy.
Didn't drink anything but Coke,
Why?
When you asked..."didn't like to drink."
Though odd, you shrugged it off.
What a good looking
specimen...sexy...smoldering
Oh, what the hell.

He takes you back to his apartment...
Doubt nudged you...ever so gently

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

That good angel on your shoulder, taps
you...Ummm

"Do you think this is wise?"

But, you don't listen to your angel's voice.
All good girl voices were shut down.

Miss good angel knocked down and out by your
devil voice.

It wasn't a one night stand...

Your virtue, though dusty, wasn't soiled.

You knew he was hiding something...but what?

While he was in the shower,
suspicion prevailed.

What did this guy need to hide?

The drawers, cabinets....

Flew open.

Aha! Right there is plain sight...

A passport.

Ha! Mr. Mystery man.

How does he lie? Let us count the ways.

Lie number one,

His name was not Mike,

It took you numerous times to pronounce his
name. Mawkmoood, Mahhhhmud, Machmoo, Makkkmoood,
then finally, Mahmoud.

He was NOT Italian,

but had a Jordanian passport and was
Kurdish/Syrian.

The excuse given, by Mahmoud, people don't
accept Arabs.

Mike, an easier name to pronounce, was
accepted.

Ok, you gave him that one.

The smoldering Arab knew how to put forth the
charm

Would you allow him to stay until his flight to
LA

For his sister, since they weren't allowed to
travel alone.

Your daughters were used as an excuse to
refuse.

You were flailing in life -
like an undertow pulled you out to sea.

Your dreams turned to nightmares

The picket fence became a barricade

You were an outsider in your own life.

The Arab ex's week long trip to LA
turned to a month, turned to five months.

Well, it was good while it lasted.

Next!

Any takers?

You took this the time

to acquaint yourself with the city night life.

Your favorite club...

After Daddy's Money...

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

sounded more like a "gentleman's club...
First, as a customer, dancing took you far away
from the grayness of your day to day.
Then you tried your hand as a waitress...
a VERY short lived venture.
This led to dangerous choices in nameless men
which you used to fill the black hole in your
universe.
Ahhhhh...Your habit of multiple Kamikaze's,
melted your brain -
oblivion.. a welcomed respite from feeling.
Emotions were worthless - emptiness circled your
heart.
Like a gator infested mote
You didn't have the courage to off yourself
So you opted to allow your life to slowly be
eviscerated,
Multiple drinks at a time.
your guilt would be appeased.

The universe laughed, yet again.
like this was some sadistic game and not your
life
sent you a lifeline
The exotic, hot, foreigner
Reached through the phone line, begged for
forgiveness.
You had to admit his groveling gave you a
sorted thrill
After all, that smoldering Arab
didn't contact you once during those five
months.
Your crippled life, that held promise
allowed you to call this man.
You wanted to believe that this call was a
sign...
There's a light at the end a dark molding
tunnel...
Right?
You never imagine that it was a fucking
locomotive.
But, then again, maybe you did.
Just maybe, you wanted that train
to obliterate whatever was left of your
miserable life.

WARNING! Head on collision eminent.

The steaming hot foreign charm, slid over your
wounds
Hard to Say I'm Sorry -
the ammunition used to shoot down all
protestations
with very little effort.
Fear of homelessness closed the deal.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

The image of yourself in rags pushing a shopping cart
wasn't the look you were going for, at the age of twenty-one.

WARNING! May lead to loss of freedom.
But, this guy was completely different
He was exotic. His family had money.
LOADS of money.
Did you sell your freedom?

(shrugs)

You acquiesce to the demand
to keep locked in a room when Arab friends were over.

You found yourself a voyeur at the bedroom door;
foreign voices filled the space beyond.
Curiosity built -- you tried to listen,
But, you followed the strict instruction
and stood behind the door, like a well trained puppy.

Why?

In your feeble mind, you believed
That the outcome of speaking out...
If you let this man hear your objections
This would mean a life on the streets.
You walked into the cage
Locked it behind you
And handed him the key.
She crosses to the piano. Plays under dialogue.
Nothing better to do

There wasn't a proposal, on one knee -
no romantic gesture, no flowery declarations.
No words of love,
Just an agreement, if you will.
A Green card and citizenship part and parcel.
On that anti climactic day,
your girlfriend Ana called.
She was responsible for taking you to the bar in the first place.

She said,

HEY WHATCHA DOIN?
HAVE ANY PLANS TODAY?
I NEED A DRESS, LETS GO SHOPPING
GET A SMOOTHIE ON THE WAY

You said

I WISH I COULD, NO I'M SORRY
I'M GETTING MARRIED

She then moaned...

OH JEEZE DONT MARRY THAT GUY
HE'S A LOSER,
YOU KNOW HE JUST LIES

When you said

I'VE NOTHING BETTER TO DO
NOTHING BETTER TO DO
IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE

What more could be lost, by marrying this man?
How much more pain could be inflicted?
Love held no promise.
You married for love...once.
You figured it didn't mean anything...
Your heart was blackened.
Hurt couldn't penetrate.
You were virtually Dead On Arrival.
The universe, that perverse bitch...
said... hold my beer.

Mr. Arab used his love for cars,
followed in Mr. GQ and Mr. Mechanic's
footsteps,
Bought cars to sell...
The first, a BMW 500....a beautiful machine...
until he hydroplaned...did a 180 degree turn,
stopped in the lane headed in the opposite
direction.
The van couldn't stop in time
The impact caused the car to spin out of
control.
To this day you can still see the images
spiral...
Disjointed.
In those days, seat belts weren't mandatory.
A kind policemen stated it was a good thing
you weren't strapped in.
While the seat belt would have held you in
place.
two bars, which held the bumper onto the car
rammed through the back seat
into the front and pushed you into the
dashboard

Your habit of chewing your lip, when nervous
The impact forced your incisors through you
bottom lip
Knocked unconscious,
the roof of the ambulance came into view when
you regained consciouness.
The sexy Arab's sense of humor
came out in the most morbid fashion.
"Hey, how about some Jig Jig, (sex)?"
Sure hop on over! Then you passed out again
Huge, bright lights, overhead shook you awake.
A female voice asked your name--
Your memory was spotting at best.
Was it Zabel? Barnett? Alkordi?
Are you married? You couldn't remember

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

Cold, wet, cloth swiped your face and your eyes..
"Not the eyes...contacts"
Stitches in your lip and a neck brace,
plus somehow the muscle in your right arm -
mangled and torn.
Given as parting gifts from the hospital after
a 2 day stay.
Plus six months of physical therapy.
Once out of the hospital and able to sit
upright,
you visited the totaled car at the junk yard.
This once beautiful machine
had been left with only a front seat and a
hood.
The back seat sat even with the back of the
front seats,
With the gas tank unprotected,
stuck out from what used to be the bumper
Insurance adjusters questioned the events.
The Arab coached you as to what to say.
Why he told you, was never known, but
that wasn't an accident, it was all for
insurance money
Which he, years later, tried again and was
indicted for insurance fraud.

WARNING! Now that the universe took it as a
challenge.

Six months in....
The Arab left for London...
Once again, Mrs. Child Bride and her daughter
had to have a guardian
For these women, travel gave them something...
something they never had at home...
Freedom.
Home was not a place of solace.
Home, though twenty four carat, diamond
encrusted
Fur lined, silk cushioned
With rose colored glasses...
was Still a cage.
Go home, lock the door, hand her husband the
key.
Go home, lock the door, hand her brother the
key.
Hand her son the key...
On holiday, the bearded men held the key.
Bejeweled cages unlocked...
The birds flew, with a golden tether...
The credit card... in the bearded man's name.
Freedom had a price.
Then it was your time to escape.
(beat)

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

Two weeks in England, then Mr. Gold Card,
once again, dangled the tether;
sent all to Madrid.
In London... a rented flat.
In Madrid...a five star hotel.
Madrid, allowed you to really see a Muslim
woman
in her natural habitat.
Like a caged bird set free from bondage
her hair blew in the breeze. Her smile lit up
the room;
filled rooms with laughter.
Fetters, golden, though they were, fell away.

The hotel had a nightly show - topless.
Lots of breasts.
The obsession with breasts became quite evident
Mr. Arab even offered you the grand gesture of
a boob job...
the bigger the better.
You look down at the less than
impressive view of your own feet.
Cleavage wasn't a word you had ever
used in reference to your chest.
Eyes are glued to... the stage.
Folded arms did nothing to hide your
unfortunate ones.
Where his eyes became focused as if to compare -
where yours came up wanting.
It was at this moment...for a single moment,
you entertained the offer.

WARNING! FETISH!

You listened... this time.

There are two things you remember
whenever Madrid comes to mind
The palaces, the Chrystal palace...your
favorite
and the day you drank from a public water
fountain.
...NEVER drink the water from a faucet or
fountain.

It wasn't that you didn't know,
even though you never traveled outside the US.
Wasn't it common knowledge?
Yet, you believe your husband when he answered
Your request for a drink with,
..."just drink from the fountain."
You counter,
"you shouldn't drink water in a foreign
country."
His belittlement of your "paranoia"
silenced your objections and you drank.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

You drank from the bacterial infested chemistry
beaker

On the next flight --
every hour from Madrid to Damascus
proved to be a gastric cacophony...
echoing through the fuselage.
You were afraid everyone could hear the
rumblings,
like some giant beast inside your belly.
Hands covered your pressed lips...
in hopes to muffle the moans.
Your mind screamed, Not now!
Thank God, you weren't far from the lavatory.
Horrified by the embarrassing sounds from said
hazmat dump,
You returned to your seat next to your "loving"
husband,
Who found it all soooooo entertaining.
You would have given him a go to hell look,
but you don't have the energy.
Bearing the discomfort in silence you smile and
prayed for the plane to crash into the Alps,
which you viewed, so picturesquely out the
window.
The plane landed, your senses were assaulted...
the sounds ...the smells.
Snippets of language rolled over you
This new experience...
swirled in flowered phrases and sounds,
phonetically, bombarded your ears -
tones and strange sounding syllables wafted
through
tickled your brain without comprehension.
Understanding it was beyond your capabilities.
The words spiraled around you
Nonsensical phrases and terms
ricocheted off your ears with
spinning clusters of conversation.

Crosses to piano; plays under
dialogue.

Syria's theme

The land had a song of its own.
Rolling through the sand colored soil.
It blew between the fronds of the palm trees
Lifted to the heavens.

Fields of tan soil flew by
as the taxi sped down the highway.
The magnitude of the scene had you speechless.
The road to Damascus held traces of Paul's
conversion.
You didn't subscribe to the beliefs,

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

of the prophets
Yet, there was a marked entrance into the
mystical
the magical presence of ancient history,
Older than Jesus, Paul and the twelve;
the magic and legend under the footprints of
the prophets.
Minaret's rose above the masjids to the sky -
a closer view of heaven.

Damascus, the once sparkling city of
villas, flats, and ancient garden homes.
Her majesty still lived in your mind's eye.
Your appreciation grew...
until the call of prayer at five bloody a.m.
Alahuakbar vibrated the flat walls.
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! What was that?
Snores rose from beside you,
a harsh competition with the wails.
Were you being bombed? Raided?
The muezzin's, the man calling the
prayer, wailing ended.
Beside you, Mr. Arab lay peacefully asleep.
How could he have slept through that noise?
Was he deaf, and you hadn't figured that out,
yet.
"I'm yoo-zed (the way he pronounced the word
"used") to it"
Your annoyance ...He found amusing
By the end of the sleep deprived two weeks...
secret plans were made....
To end the source of the wailing....
Preferably, with a gag in place.

Lest it be forgotten.... the ill advised
bacteria beaker
Wasn't to be undone. Helpful hands offered
little white pills
Your protest was countered with "la la la....
Jidden moneeh" No, it's very good.
Your Blood pressure bottomed out...
your eyes couldn't stay opened....
A mad rush to the hospital.
Archaic, third world,
medical instruments are whisked in on metal
trolleys.
A stainless steel syringe with a needle....
as huge as a meat thermometer came at you.
That's gonna leave a giant hole!
Hot fire is pushed from the metal tube into
your arm....
Accompanied by your screams.
The doctor at the other end,
had the bed side manner of the Anti Christ.
Even though, you had to admit he was right..you
survived.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

Winding roads, lined with jasmine, perfumed
your way
up the mountain from Rukn Al-Din
The street narrowed..
Sunlight ricocheted off the alabaster
courtyard homes
gleamed on both sides of the path.
Jasmine combined with Syrian wild flowers
filled the air with intoxicating sweetness...
masked the smell of ancient soil.

In Islam, kindness is a mark of faith...
With outstretched arms,
the Arab ex's uncle embodied this tenant,
His smile was as bright as the sun on the
alabaster walls.
" Asalam alaikum. Ahlen...Ahlen...
Perfume, jewelry were gifted for your marriage.
The lamb served.... Eyed you from the platter.
Your eyes averted its dead stare...
The uncle reached over and turned the poor
lambs eyes away.

From the city of jasmine to the bride of the
red sea.

(beat)

Damascus... ancient, antiquated, weathered and
beaten...dusty.
Jeddah.... Bright, modern, maiden of the
dessert sun
That city shown with gold, jewels, cars....
Money was everything and everywhere,
street upon street of cleaned and polished
golden cages...
Change occurred mid flight.
Laughing, smiling, modern women...
Transformed.
Where bright swaths of colored cashmere
linen and silk entered in Damascus
Black silk abiyas exited in Jeddah,
some with covered faces,
Dark and mysterious eyes gleam from the
faceless black.
with hushed voices down turned eyes trailed
Gray haired men with flowing white robes.
You followed your silk clad sister-in-law
to a waiting silver Mercedes.
Shocked at their transformation,
their entire demeanor changed,
Joy disappeared as the black sedan
pulled into the gates to the three story villa.
Your internal question buzzed around your head;
How could there be such sadness if you lived
like this?

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

The question was answered when Mr. Gold Card.
His late sixties gray hair...his lined,
emotionless face;
Married at forty to her young and innocent
fourteen.
He already had a wife and two older sons.
Who, when he died, took guardianship over their
father's widow.
They wanted her villa, she refused.
They turned off her electricity.
She wasn't going to let their petty decades long
grievances
against her win out and render her homeless.

Saudi culture equaled misogyny squared.
Women did not drive and were not seen in the
front seat,
She sat in the back.
One evening, while out driving,
you sat in front with the Arab ex, stopped at a
red light.
A Mercedes full of white robed young Saudi men
started to slowly pass in front.
Traffic had stopped, where the Mercedes
halted in line with yours.
One man-boy in a white keffiyah (Saudi head
covering)
stared blatantly from the back seat,
As if you were an oddity in some freak museum.
You, very brazenly, stared back.
The man/boy was so focused on you,
he slowly placed the lit end of a cigarette, in
his mouth
Ash fell on his chest as his hands slapped off
the ash.
Arabic curses formed on his lips
His blustering and cursing caused eruptions of
laughter
The poor man was NOT amused
that you openly laughed and mocked him.
Mr. Arab, of course, used this incident as a
learning... actually, correcting opportunity.
He admonished you, like a petulant school girl.
How dare you! You insulted a man by laughing at
him.
You sat, without a word, and nodded.
Silenced.

Soon, the Saudi routine settled in.
Men disappeared during the day...
With such vast wealth bearded men and black
clad women
sought out entertainment, which may not be
considered
Halal with the realms of Sharia law.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

During the days you worked out and listened to
your walkman.
Remember those? You carried that thing
everywhere.
You found that the life in Saudi Arabia was one
of boredom.
Mr. Gold Card, presented your sister-in-law,
with a new villa
Actually, more like a monstrosity.
She was so proud of her new villa,
but you found it hard to find positive words
An office building, it was an office building.
A four storied, stark white building
With wall to wall marble and an elevator to
boot.
On the same street, many palatial skeletal
estates
stood half completed...abandoned.
One such buildings, built by a jeweler, for his
daughter.
in the shape of a solitaire diamond in a ring
setting.
If the Saudi Princess couldn't have them
no one would.
That was also the fate of your sister-in-law's
office building.

Bearded men waltzed in at two p.m. for food and
sleep...
back out at five.
Mr. Gold Card - the purse bearer,
carried stacks of cash
to the government...
Wealth...Controlled... moderated... paid off.

Insults became a form of manipulation and
torture.
Where was that warning?
You were fat...you're a cow. Why did you eat
that?
Your self esteem crouched - demoralized.
You stood there in your sweats
perspiration still glistened on your brow -
You must be a cow. The sum of your weight
equaled 115.
115 hurls around your skull,
then tossed it aside...irrelevant.
The ONLY words you keep are - You're a cow.
And You're going home...
Alone...
Rhymes and verse filled the final days by the
Red Sea -
a wealth of poetry
tumbled to the page.
The cage you had locked behind you....

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

Closed in...

Without a way to let those thoughts
and feelings out through song.

Words became your outlet, your notes and rhythm
Rhyme became your harmony

She crosses to the piano and
begins playing. She does not sing.
The poem is spoken.

Traces of time

(spoken)

YOU HAVE LOCKED ME IN A CAGE
YOU HAVE CHAINED ME TO THE WALL
MY WILL TO BREAK FREE KEEPS ME STRONG
YOU SAY MY LIFE IS YOURS,
MY LAND IS NOT MY OWN
YOUR HAND HOLDS THE KEY TO MY SOUL
CAN YOU SEE MY HANDS ARE TIED
CAN YOU FEEL MY PAIN AND GRIEF
ARE YOU SURE MY LIFE IS OVER
AS YOU LOOK UPON MY FACE
LOOK INTO MY EYES SEE ME AS I AM
I AM SO VERY MUCH LIKE YOU

Couldn't he see?

What had you done? Were you too moody?
Were you really fat? Did you turn him off?
When your flight from Jeddah had a lay over in
Frankfurt.
You landed in Frankfurt, you were determined to
change.
You would make the transformation to whatever
he wanted.
This had to work.
No, this was not a conventional marriage...
No romance... no love spoken.
But, divorce was not an option.
Because your mother's words echoed with every
thought.
Now, you put aside the Arab for a moment,
As the next leg of the flight...from Frankfurt
to Dallas.
The problem of Mr. Arab had to wait...
The hum of the engines lulled everyone to
sleep.
When the plane landed in Dallas customs was a
nightmare.
Your luggage did not arrive in Texas
So the only clothes you had were those on your
back.
Then, insult added to injury,
You missed your flight to Oklahoma City

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

A kindly couple offered up their seats in order
for you to continue your journey home - after
all it was Thanksgiving

As the lights of Oklahoma City drew nearer,
Then the plane landed, your first thought--
your daughters. You had called them
and sent them letters throughout your trip.
Many gifts, for them, filled an extra suitcase.
You needed to see them, first thing.
Their house, stark, empty and dark, as you
drove up
Ex number one's truck stood in the driveway...
Mr. Violet eyes came out carrying boxes.
They were moving...
He had married the usurper while you were away.
Her assumption of your life--complete.
But, things weren't all roses in his world
He lamented on his regrets...
Later, your daughter told you
He had kept your wedding ring,
which you had thrown in his face.
He wondered at an affair with you, now.
You, politely...why the fuck politely?
Yet, politely, negated his request.
Then papers were delivered...
His wife wanted...to adopt?
WTF?!?!?
One more blow...you returned to the U.S. alone
Your future with the Arab unknown...
Now this...?
If the old adage, what doesn't kill you makes
you stronger
were true, then you were fucking Wonder Woman.
His lies, "we didn't know where you were."
"We didn't know when or if you'd be back."
The facts were ignored -
the calls, letters, gifts, all omitted.
Mr. Violet eyes decided to throw you a bone
Said he would cancel the court papers if you
let him claim both girls for tax exemptions.
You agreed, it was better than losing all
rights.
Unbeknownst to you as well...your parents sued
for visitation...Your time cut in half. Thanks
Mom!

FADE