

## Tough Sledding

I have commissioned you to listen to my uncomfortable truths. It actually works out very well, because I often underestimate the level of impact it all has, as I spit out whatever dreams happen to come. The fear used to upset me, but now, I find that I do better when I accommodate the need for gentle coercion.

So you need a bottle of wine with a straw, fair enough. I prefer a toke, myself, but hey, different strokes. You might need something stronger than wine, maybe a shot or two.

Because, I haven't even scratched the surface! Cindy Gladue who died in Alberta, was a sex-worker, so please keep your hands and feet inside the car.

Well, a working hooker that lives long enough, gets a pretty good look into the hearts and minds of man. No, not just men, women, too. Cindy might have survived what killed Donna Jones, but in Cindy's case, it happened too quickly. Exsanguination only takes a few hours or a few minutes. Sepsis takes days.

Think of it as continuing education, and sensitivity training. There are a lot of "hard" women coming through. Hardness is formed by battle survived, and in most cases, wisdom gained. It's hard to pretend that there is anything sacred about sex, as a subject in itself. To steal joy from a woman, it is a rich victory.

But come on, we all feed on each other beyond discretion. For all of society's years, it has been a tried and true method for women to gain one small measure of power in a patriarchy. And there are always men trying to horn their way in. I think it should be up to me, how and when, and if, I chose to use my cunt as a tool. So, when I bring it up, I'm referred to the local church...they'll help me sort it out.

What, I'm supposed to keep that out of polite conversation? Out of professional conversation? Wait, that would be impossible, wouldn't it? So this really is all about the relative value of commodities? Well, then, it would be imprudent of me to allow you to devalue the commodities I possess. You say that my commodities are immoral to barter with?! How convenient....That's about how it usually goes.

So, I guess the most rudest way to put it would be that, like Alice, I'm drinking, so you are too.

Art is made by the maker, and the evocation of emotion is a goal...that's what makes it art. The language of battle and survival and intrigue is meant to pull you in. So, I spill my vision, and take you to a moment, and you feel something, but there in the experience, is also an explanation of how I found my way out...or didn't...or didn't yet...

So, I hereby slam you, headfirst, into a wall of objectivity, and then drop you into the moat. You can swim or drown, that's up to you.

But confrontation is the medium this season, so please allow me to continue.

Donna Jones, Mark Hutt, Ottawa, 2013. This is all the info you need to find out what I already knew, when I asked for more information.

This was the scene:

Dawn texts: Heads up that the Donna Jones rabbit hole is a freaking nightmare.

Steph: Well, I'm a total Alice, so...

Dawn: Ok Alice. Go ahead and drink it.

So now you're my drinking buddy.

We already got compared to each other, we all do. The assailant of the madonna is in jail for life. The assailant of the whore was acquitted. But I wasn't really the madonna, and I wasn't really the whore. I could not be effectively categorized simply because I was still alive, to brazenly resist being called either one.

Perfect, that the actual reason for my conviction was finally declared, dissent...dissent, with a touch of insanity. With a stamp like that, I am in very good company, indeed.

So, the women in these two cases were not just madonna and whore. And before their bodies were rendered lifeless, including their mouths and hands and eyes and ears and pussies, they were complex creatures. Complex creatures are tiresome to litigate against.

Those photographs were so quiet compared to me, and in most of them, you don't get to see the look on my face, a look that prosecutors and judges...and fathers and husbands...find insubordinate.

I got to see the pictures in court several times, I had them waved at me angrily, like in the movies. That's why I want them so bad, it's my turn to wave them. These pictures, in Court, were definitely intended, just as Dawn and Rashmee theorize, to depersonalize me. I was the one that allowed them to be taken, I had my own intent, that nobody wanted to hear about...nobody.

In certain hearings, I was meant to go along with the portrayal of the helpless wife and mother, and that didn't go smoothly at all. Later, they were used to testify against me, not to establish fact, but simply, and only, to discredit me.

All of the assailants wanted me powerless, but they fought with each other over what was to be done with me, when they caught me. They all wanted to eat me, but some of them wanted me roasted, and others were more in the mood for soup. When I wouldn't cook at all, I was declared insane, and once more, the pictures were used to prove it. But even then, I was still in trouble for going crazy like a man, instead of crazy like a woman. Why on earth do I have to be so fucking hostile all the time?!

So, back to Donna and Cindy, and then again, back to me. I am living witness to personality, and the existence of soul. Their bodies became evidence. I can imagine how that might feel. After all, my dead body will, someday, be the last exhibit of so many I've been forced to produce.

Previous convictions leave you with the mark of Cain. Some wear it on their forehead, others have it more discreetly placed. Some of us have to be strip searched, but if that doesn't work, we can be medically imaged and even, if need be, dissected.

Ok, ok, I know that you're just saying that you're sensitive to my existence, and I appreciate that, for real. But this is what real, existing me has to say. The details of my objectification are hard to witness because you know I'm not just an object. But neither are any of us...I'm afraid...

That is one of the things you learn when you, impulsively, eat a mushroom, offered by a mischievous, hookah-smoking creature, whoever it happens to be...

-SLH 2018