

NARRATOR

Part I

The Three

The space smells of perfume, aged text and sherry. There is a light on in the living room. Veronica sits with a Vogue (Marilyn Monroe on the cover). She sighs and contemplates her glass. She watches the clock, ruminating on time.

There is a small tremble of the floor. The sherry in her glass leaps up, escaping, and floats down the crystal stem.

Veronica

Nora! Nora, darling did you feel that? (no response) Nora? Nora, I'm speaking to you.

Nora enters. She is in an baggy argyle cashmere sweater and leggings. She sports dark-rimmed glasses.

Nora

You weren't speaking. You were yelling again.

I wasn't yelling. A lady doesn't yell. She may raise her voice so as to receive a response from her otherwise brawny daughter.

Nora

I don't think you are using that word correctly.

Veronica

Exactly.

Nora

Maybe petulant -- because I am perturbed.

Veronica

Look who just got done with her SATs. And what did you score again? Not quite enough to get into an Ivy.

Nora

Wouldn't know if had or hadn't.

Veronica

That's what you say. But who's to say you didn't send those applications off and just receive rejections.

Nora

Someone's been on the couch all day with a frosty glass.

Veronica

Don't throw that at me. I'm aloud. I had *a* week. Last week -- you know. What with the acquisition of that of those films. We're doing all we can to get those shown but the world still seems intimidated by forward thinking German cinema brought to life by brilliant Libertines.

Nora

Heaven forbid.

Veronica

Seems like it would be right up your alley.

Nora

Why don't you just gather some porn stars, drape them in animal skin, throw in some rifles and saturated pastels and call it a show? That's scandalous.

Veronica

Scandalous to maybe an Alaskan soccer mom who makes her daughters use pads because the insertion of a tampon is simply too graphic. But who's to say what we should show?

Nora

Apparently you are.

Veronica

(Ignores the latter comment) Speaking of which. Is it a choice to show that tattered bra-strap?

Nora

It's a baggy sweater. It hangs.

Veronica

Where did that come from? It looks familiar.

Nora

I found it in the attic last fall.

Veronica

In a box marked burn?

Nora

Maybe in your drug-addeled mind. It had no labels.

Veronica

(distant) Probably why it didn't get moved. (pause) Come sit.

Nora

I'm going out.

Veronica

Have dinner with us.

Nora

Why?

Veronica

Because it would be nice to see your smiling face across the table. Because there is something lovely about having three at the table instead of two. Two can drag. Each person feeling responsible if the conversation wanes. I can't take that pressure right now.

Nora

But it's just Nancy coming. You've known her for years. I've seen the two of you spend an entire afternoon saying not more than two words, "Pass the wine" and being fine.

Veronica

Three words. (pours another glass) You may be right but not tonight. I'm just so anxious. I need conversational distraction.

Nora

Don't know if I have much to say.

Veronica

Tell Nancy about your life.

(Nancy enters from behind with a bundle in a brown paper).

Nora

There's nothing to tell Nancy about.

Nancy

I'd disagree.

Veronica

Of course you would. Darling?

(cheek kisses)

Nancy

Veronica. This? This is my latest obsession. Look at this fantastic picaninny I got today at a thrift store in Brooklyn.

Nora

That's terrible.

Nancy

It is gorgeous.

Nora

Racist.

Nancy

Excuse me, doll. You know that the last thing I am is a racist.

Veronica

Hah. Nancy a racist? Love it.

Nora

That is terribly offensive.

Nancy

I think it is beautiful. I find the ideas of the time horrific.

Nora

What a horrible caricature. The town jester. The comic-relief. Little more than pet.

Veronica

Just like Nancy.

Nancy

Oh, please. If only I could provide comic relief for the masses.

Veronica

Usually you're just a neurotic mess. I find that comical.

Nancy

Eccentric. Not neurotic.

Veronica

A neurotic eccentric. (Veronica touches Nancy's arm.)

Nora

I still find it somewhat disturbing.

Veronica

You would.

Nora

I would what?

Veronica

You can't cleanse the world of the past.

Nancy

Never could -- never would.

Nora

I would. I would change so much.

Veronica

Nora, tell us about your evening.

Nora

Previous?

Nancy

What is on the agenda for a girl of eighteen? Sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll?

Nora

I'm going out to see a film. Meet up some friends. Get some food.

Nancy

In that order? Are you going to the movies by yourself. I can never do that. Could you do that?

Veronica

I did do that for a week. A week when I was sore from life. I attended the movies all by myself.

Nancy

How was that? I just imagine it being terrible.

Nora

Can you eat alone?

Nancy

Not a problem. It's the dark. It's the large screen. Eating is necessary. Entertainment is an event.

Veronica

It made my muscles hurt more by the end.

Nancy

No one to nudge. No one to share a laugh with.

Veronica

No one to walk into the world with.

Nancy

That seems as though it would be the worst.

Nora

Not once? Not ONE movie alone?

Nancy

Well. If you must press. I went to one. Alone. Not my choice by the way. I was suppose to meet a friend (she shoots a glance at Veronica).

Veronica

I don't know what you are talking about.

Nancy

It was Rock Hudson.

Veronica

I remember this story of yours and I would prefer not to.

Nancy

Oh, remembering is good -- for all of us. Not my idea mind you. It was for a friend. She was having *a* week.

Veronica

Really?

Nancy

Truly *A* week. It was something petty I believe. Well, petty in the greater run of life.

Nora

No? Petty? A petty friend having *a* week.

Nancy

A week. She was. A week that consumed two months. I do like your argyle sweater dear.

Nora

I adore this sweater.

Veronica

It's too big. You'll never find a boy that way.

Nancy

Or a girl?

Veronica

She'll never find anyone willing to grapple with a heavy sweater.

Nora

Grapple?

Veronica

Deal with. Negotiate. No one wants to fight with a cumbersome sweater as he or she attempts to get a handle on the tit.

Nora

(Cringes) So this petty week that lasted two months?

Nancy

Perhaps not *a* week. Perhaps a minor event.

Veronica

I think Nancy's cut-off.

Nancy

Oh, shoo you. It's silly and trite and means next to nothing if nothing at all. Speaking of ceasing I haven't even begun.

Nancy pours herself a glass of sherry and gives Veronica another peck on the cheek. Veronica glides away.

Nancy

Someone never learned the lesson of how to take life a little less seriously. Move away from embracing the tragedy and move towards celebrating the day.

Veronica

Some lessons are are not "learned" because one does not believe that they should be learned.

Nancy

Oh, poo. Do you believe in that Nora?

Nora

That some lessons should not be learned out of spite.

Nancy

Hah! That life is full of hairy crap that should be chuckled away as soon as it drops steaming into the pot -- "hah, hah -- HAH."

Nora

I suppose it depends on the turd and the porcelain bowl.

Nancy

I suppose as well. But there are some turds that require a flip of the hair. A toss of the head. A grin. A cackle. A cry.

Nora

Can you think of a situation?

Veronica

Don't.

Nancy

It's fine. Grin away. (She pours some more sherry) There was a day amidst a week that was a month that I received a phone call that prompted me to the cinema.

Veronica

Often in retellings the facts become works of fiction imbued with the theories of those telling the tales.

Nancy

Nothing in life is fully objective but I believe that might help Nora. This is a story about a friend I used to have.

Nora

Used to have?

Nancy

As in this girl is no longer. Anyhoodle, that's neither here nor there. This female friend of mine, she and I were both coeds in a time of revolution where expectations of structure still weighed heavily on the mind. You know the cliches -- but cliches do exist for a reason. As it went you can picture well in your mind. The Better Homes and Gardens, the Frigidaires, the Tupperware. Believe me the sexual revolution took some time. Takes some time. Even in the height of the flaming brassiere the sprawling suburban landscape, ranch houses and geraniums, beckoned with the smell of spaghetti and sliced hot dogs from the recessed kitchen of the heart.

Veronica

Youth can be a very bewildering time.

Nancy

We'll we knew plenty -- shook our heads at the plastics and rooted for JFK. But sometimes this energy is blind and fierce yet easily detoured. We even loved Jackie O who, among the tupperware, convinced the French to export the Mona Lisa stateside. As ladies go, my friend and I were not. One blustery day my friend and I met a group of beautiful people campaigning for the equality of all. This group was a pack of idealists of the now. Attached to this group was a man of above average stature, hazel eyes, brown hair that curled just so perfectly on top. Although he always complained that his locks were simply an unruly mop. And he did, to a degree, look like Rock Hudson. My friend, doe-eyed and eager had late night coffee with this man that evening after a rally. As I mentioned the weather was blustery and brisk provoking sex and desire. The coffee steamed up her glasses and calmed their radical agendas. After such political fanfare the two found a breath in conversation that had nothing to do with changing the world. They launched into a colorful discussion about the stars of the screen. They spoke of worlds that Hollywood created to cure the monotony of the masses and their vapid lives. They spoke of beautiful people whose lives reeked of booze and pills and ungrateful offspring.

Veronica

How very trite.

Nancy

But necessary in the heat of change. Comfortable and warm and -- nice.

Nora

This story is obvious.

Veronica

Really -- and what do you know of it?

Nora

I know that the idea of casting away principles for Rock Hudson is a ridiculous one. I don't need Mr. Hudson around to teach me that.

Veronica

I'm sure Mr. Hudson would have had nothing to do with you darling.

Nora

You get off being cold to your daughter.

Veronica

Believe me dear -- you could never get me off.

Nancy

Maybe you are right my darling Nora. Obvious but still of import. You see the two did have an extraordinary evening. He procured her number and wandered off into the night -- after picking up the check. This she would never allow a man to do before. The next day she woke up and had the want to do something she never did cheerfully.

Nora

Live?

Nancy

Oh, no. She bought a new garment. She bought a yellow dress from Montgomery Ward's that came with a matching pill-box hat. As the days progressed and still no call she bought more dresses. She filled her closet with bouffant silk, seersuckers, shirtwaist dresses in a multitude of prints and colors. Her closets filled to capacity. Each one had a specific evening affair attached. Or a day-time outing and she would extrapolate that she was still in need. I would listen to these stories with one ear open for quite some time. But then I became disheartened as I realized his call would never

come. As I turned my attire to ash, she accumulated the whole of Montgomery Ward's catalogue in vain. It was on an extremely cold evening that she went back to the diner and thought about how one conversation had emptied her bank-accounts as well as her soul. It was here that her week of mourning began.

Nora

I'm becoming hungry and to be perfectly frank somewhat bored.

Veronica has been listening closely. Eyeing Nancy with a knowing look that is not of vehement resentment but of cold curiosity.

Veronica

Go then. Run. Rush. Flee. Discover this all on your own.

Nora

I would be the last person to fill my closets with overpriced garbage.

Veronica

Yet you'll fill your closets with *oversized* garbage.

Nora

You wouldn't know garbage. Just look at your crap art.

Veronica

How eloquent! How very lovely. And I'm sure this eye of eighteen is highly refined. I'm sure this heart of eighteen knows how to erupt and orgasm at the sight of a work of passion.

Nora

And I'm sure that chiseled heart of yours only knows how to weep of lost youth and faded glory.

Nancy

Nora. I'm surprised that a young woman capable of such depth would make such a surface accusation.

Veronica

As I have stated she is a girl of surface depth.

Nora

I know you resent me.

Veronica

I know you loathe me.

Nancy

Have you mourned Nora?

Nora

Every, every day.

Nancy

When my friend mourned in that, perhaps petty week she was full of depth. She put on the clothes she had purchased and rolled herself into a ball. She told the story of the evening to herself over and over ping-ponging between soft tears and violent cries. It was as though the retelling of the story would keep it with her forever. The evening. The steaming coffee and the comfortable feeling. The feeling that you could say anything and you would not be quietly, silently judged. She wrapped herself in pastels and spoke until her throat was black and blue. After a week she called me to tell me the world is as cold as the Frigidaire she will never have and as empty as a whore's heart.

Nora

All because of a man. (sarcastically) How tragic. How sad. Did you laugh at her?

Veronica is drinking sherry quietly.

Nancy

As a matter of fact I did. She took great offense. I told her it was not due to her loss but due to fact that I thought a whore's heart to be incredibly full. She still took great offense to my laughter and would not speak to me for a month. I, in turn, became empty. She was my rock. She was the one I told every minute detail of my life to. She was gone. A warm day did come and the air smelled salty and I remembered crawling into bed with her to laugh about various misadventures we would have. I remembered her touch, her laugh, her cry. I found a cinema playing Rock Hudson films and although I knew it would spurn tears I realized I wanted her to cry on me. I

went to her place and dug her out of a pile of moist fabric and told her I would bring her to Rock Hudson. She could not fight me too hard as her throat was still bruised. I left her to dress and told her I would get the tickets. I waited.

Nora

She never showed did she? She found a reason not to even though you had gone out of your way to be kind? That seems par for the course.

Nancy

For who?

Nora

Humanity.

Veronica

Such unnecessary hate and such vulgar dramatics.

Nancy

She flaked on me? Both no and yes. After I left he showed up. He had been called out east because his mother was dying. He had left the number behind. So he couldn't call. He told her he thought of her. She was glad she had cleaned herself for the movies. She had even put on the yellow dress with the pillbox hat. Which is exactly what she had intended to wear on their first date.

Nora

Ugh. This is all too contrived.

Veronica is near tears. She holds them back well and bites the inside of her cheek. She bleeds for a moment. Wiping her hand across her lips to catch a splattering of the blood.

Nancy

That is when I learned to laugh. That is when I learned just how much should be invested in any one person. Even if he did look good in his argyle sweater.

Nora

I suppose he swept her off her feet.

Nancy

As stories sometimes go, the middle and the end are not filled with the same romance.

Nora

I find that story puerile.

Veronica

Of course you do. You have nothing to reference in your lonesome life.

Nora

Lonesome? *My* lonesome life. I think there is someone in the room who would benefit from turning the mirror on herself.

Nancy

I didn't tell that story out of spite.

Veronica

Didn't you? You tell us you have learned to laugh yet you wallow in the past.

Nancy

I recognize the past and have learned that one can only be blamed to a certain degree in love. There are other factors at play. But it is good to remember where we have been. It is important to remember there are times to laugh.

Veronica

And youth.

Nancy

Love breeds youth. No matter what age.

Nora

If the two of you have decided to simply drink your dinner I'll be on my way. It's just too bleak.

Veronica

For all your quips, I doubt you would hold your own in a similar situation. I know you.

Nora

No you don't.

Veronica

Do you think that just because you hold fast to your ideals -- what you *believe* to be your own ideals -- I cannot relate.

Nora

I do have my own ideals. I have my own views. I know exactly what I want my life not to be. Looking at you I see hate. And I would never want anyone to see hate in me. In that, I suppose I owe you.

Nancy

Nora, please.

Nora

Let me speak.

Veronica

No. Let me speak.

Nora

Excuse me.

Veronica

Excuse me! Nancy may have crossed a line by telling a story that her friend would have preferred not told to strangers but she makes a good point.

Nora

And what is that?

Veronica

That one should not be prideful over situations they know nothing of.

Nora

I don't think that was part of this story. Just because I don't know what it is to be involved in a genocide doesn't mean that I cannot fight to stop it. That I don't know that it is wrong!

Veronica

See this is what you do. This is what you love to do. You make these leaps. From first love to genocide.

Nora

It's the same principle.

Veronica

It's the pride. It's the pride that you are better than us that turns people off!

Nora

Are you sure it's not the cold, crazy, copious consuming in excess of your nature that doesn't drive people away.

Veronica

Maybe it is your ability to suck all life out of room with your constant demands.

Nora

Demands?! What have I demanded of you ever?

Veronica

What haven't you demanded? You know you were a spoiled child.

Nancy

I didn't mean...

Veronica

You may not have meant but I'm glad you did because it did help me remember. It helped me remember the argyle sweater.

Nora

There are people dying in other lands and you -- you send a check.

Veronica

Do you not *want* me to send a check? Not all of us have the means to adopt a dozen children and wander the world in protest. Some of us protest the best we can from home.

Nora

By displaying flat art to those who are already bleeding-heart liberals? Is that progress? Is that aid?

Veronica

You make such a mockery of my life when you have done nothing! By your age I had already protested in the picket lines. You use rhetoric to rile people up. So they hate you more.

Nora

You use pretentious ramblings to convince people that you are more than what you are. A tired, pathetic drunk.

Veronica

I may be tired and even, perhaps, just maybe, a drunk -- but I am far from pathetic.

Nora

Then why has he not returned?

Veronica

You bitch! (Veronica lunges at Nora, Nancy grabs her and breaks them apart).

Nancy

Girls!

Nora

Women.

Nancy

Not acting like this you aren't.

Nora

Barracuda.

Spoiled brat. Veronica

Gold-digger. Nora

As though he had any money to dig up. Veronica

Bitch! Nora

Ungrateful cunt. Veronica

Stop it. Nancy

Ungrateful to you -- yes. By all means I am the last person who would be ingratiating you with thanks. Nora

And that is exactly how he felt. Veronica

Is it? And how would you know. Nora

He left and neither of you know why. Nancy

Oh, I know. I know perfectly well why he left and has been missing for three years. Because the last thing he wants is that wretched woman. Nora

It is because you are an ingrate! Veronica

You want a story. How about I tell stories now. Nora

Veronica

There is nothing for you to say.

Nora

Let me speak.

Veronica

Worthless ramblings that mean nothing. You get no platform here.

Nora

Let me speak.

Veronica

I do not want to hear what you have to say.

Nora

Let me speak.

Veronica

Drivel.

Nora

Let me speak!

Veronica

Speak! Then! Speak!

Nora realizes among the tattered ruins of the brawl she has nothing to say. She attempts speech. Her lips are tense and she feels as though every muscle has suffered atrophy. Her will alone keeps her upright.

Nora

I will..I can..you...you and I... (her incoherent ramblings continue for what seems like an eternity).

Veronica, one moment ready to decapitate her daughter now softens realizing all that has transpired. Nancy stares in wait shaken by the impact of one romantic retelling. Nora strips away the argyle sweater. She takes the garment and lays it in a corner.

Nora

I...have...nothing...to...

She pulls a lighter from her pocket and lights the sweater aflame.

Nancy & Veronica

Nora!

Nancy runs toward Nora. Nora slumps between Nancy and the flames. They grow and begin to crawl up the wall. Nancy doesn't know where to go -- fall to Nora or tend to the growing fire? Veronica stands petrified.

Veronica

Nora. Nora? Nora! Get away from those flames!

Nancy realizes it best to tend to the growing inferno, that Veronica will go to her daughter. Veronica pulls with all her might but Nora does not move. She barely budes an inch.

Veronica

Help me.

Nancy fights the flames. She looks to Veronica for help. Veronica looks at her child. There is a tremble of the earth.

Nora

Did you feel that? Mother? I'm speaking to you.

Nora glances to Veronica. Veronica turns away and goes to help Nancy. The two work on the flames.

Nancy

Call someone.

Veronica

Excuse me?

Nancy

Call someone!

Veronica calls out into the air.

Veronica

911. Fire department! Help it is a fire. Please send the department that puts out such fires.

Nancy manages to contain the flames.

Nora

I felt it. I felt a tremble. Did anyone else?

Black. The faint glow of embers remains.

Nora, Veronica, and Nancy are outside. Nora is wrapped in a grey wool emergency blanket. The fireman enters. He goes to Nora.

Nora

You remind me of someone.

Fireman

How many fingers am I holding up?

Nora

I'm not drunk. I'm hot. Three.

He is in fact holding up 3 fingers.

Fireman

The fire seems to be out.

Nora

Because you are holding up three fingers?

Fireman

Because I'm trained to extinguish flames.

Nora

I'm quite warm. Am I aflame? You remind me of someone.

A fireman? Fireman

That must be it. Nora

She's hallucinating. Nancy

Fireman
On the contrary, she seems to be able to identify me. Was this an accidental burning? A candle? A lit cigarette? Maybe it was the wiring. Is the wiring old?

It isn't young. Veronica

It was accidental. Nancy

I have a manual on fire safety. Fireman

That sounds nice. Nora

Fireman
If you'd like I could take you through the steps to efficiently protect your house from unwanted fires.

Which are the desired fires? Nancy

You remind me of some one as well. Fireman

Do I? Nora

Veronica begins to realize the damage.

Veronica

I wonder how we will rebuild.

Nancy

There wasn't that much lost.

Fireman

Yes. I can't fully place it but you look like someone from the screen.

Nora

Do I look like a hollow movie star?

Fireman

Maybe someone from a commercial. Don't know.

Nancy

We'll get this place fixed up like new.

Veronica

Like new... (trails)

Fireman

Maybe a cracker commercial. Could have been a banking commercial. Oh, maybe one of those infomercials. I usually only turn on the television late into the night.

Nora

I suppose that isn't too bad. I guess I might promote an item. One that I believed in of course.

Fireman

You know what, I would as well. I bought this absolutely amazing thermal underwear that seemed over-priced at the time. But I took the plunge and I would not regret that to save my life. That was a good decision. That is a product I would promote.

Nora

In your skivvies?

Fireman

Well no. Probably not. I do like to retain a little decency.

Veronica

She'll be gone soon. I shouldn't even bother.

Nancy

Come to my house tonight.

Fireman

It's a nice night. Are you still hot? Do you need to go to the hospital?

Nora

No. I think I am well. It *is* a nice night. I wish Pluto was out.

Fireman

I didn't know that one could ever see Pluto with the naked eye.

Nora

I think I could. But after August 24, 2006 he went into hiding.

Fireman

I see.

Nora

You see him?

Fireman

No I get the joke.

Nancy

Come on. Let's collect Nora.

Veronica

Let me look a minute longer. Do you think he would return if he knew his house had burned?

Nancy

I think some garments are better left to ash. And some girls are better left behind.

Nancy puts her arm around Veronica.

Nora

I don't know if it was a joke. Was it a joke? A witticism unintended?

Fireman

I think that Pluto should come out of hiding and kick some ass.

Nora

(chuckling) The scrappy planet that could. I've seen t-shirts. *That* planet was mourned.

Fireman

I mourned that loss. I won 2nd place in the science fair when I was in third grade for a model of the solar system. Styrofoam balls painted on dowels stuck into a piece of foam board painted black. With white specks for stars.

Nora

Must not have been much competition that year.

Fireman

(smiles) But now I think, "Well, that sucks. It isn't even accurate. It's a lie. Maybe I should return my ribbon."

Nora

And give it to kid who got third place?

Fireman

Dyson Spain. He made a mountain out of plaster of paris.

Nora

Oh, one of those volcanos? The baking soda and vinegar?

Fireman

No just a mountain.

Nora

I don't know if that warrants a 2nd place ribbon even if your project was inaccurate. But accurate at the time mind you.

Fireman

Are you still hot?

Nora

What? Oh, a little.

Nancy

There is still time for you.

Veronica

Where is my daughter?

Nancy

She's cooling down.

Veronica

I don't need him. I never needed him.

Nancy

I know.

Veronica

I always had you.

Nancy

Have me.

Veronica

It was the fact that I don't know. The fact that I lost the ability to reason. Nora? Did you feel that?

The earth has not trembled.

Nancy

We're going to my house tonight, love.

Fireman

I'll look for you tonight.

Nora
Make sure I'm selling something of value.

Veronica
Nora? Come on. Now.

Nora ignores her mother.

Fireman
Maybe it's thermal underwear.

Nora
Maybe I'm campaigning for Pluto.

Fireman
You could do that anyway.

Nancy takes Nora's hand.

Nancy
You seemed to be having *a* night.

Nora
A life.

Veronica
Now don't be dramatic. Not tonight.

Fireman
I'm sure this will all look different in the morning.

Nora
Here's hoping.

Part II

Nora

I'm seeing a red/blue line. Is that Los Angeles? It looks more like an animated sunset. I suppose it is one in the same. My stomach hurts. Can you hear me? (searches for the word) Mom? My stomach hurts. Are you here or next door? Across the veranda? Uptown, downtown? Two sheets to the wind? The Santa Anas? Drying out offshore? Wetting your whistle? Mom?! VERONICA? I hear you? It's quiet but I can hear you yell. And your yell is piercing every drum in my body. I hate to yell. I can't yell I can't break my throat. I see colors. I see colors when I yell because my throat is black and blue. NORA! NOOOORRRRAAAA! I've made it to land. I see the metropolis and it is made up of skyline of evergreens, a roadmap of moss, and the pre-fabricated developments -- shrubs with red berries. God I'm starving. Jesus I could use a sip of something preserved. Find me a drive-through poppy-field and I'll be set. Mom? I see that this is a land for you. Will we land? This is not the place to starve. I'm so hungry and the acids in my stomach are burning holes. Or one hole. One large, gaping, seeping, septic hole that may pour out into blood strain and infect all the smaller not so obstreperous organs. (she sniffs) But I do smell something that smells edible of sorts. Or at least I'm ready to gorge. If we ever land I am going to smear my face with sustenance and then promptly vomit it into the sky. God, Jesus if I were food I would heat in ten seconds. No plastic peel a minute in. Do. Do. Done. One. Zero. Power. That's that. But then I would -- I would puke and gag and cry and wish that I had marinated freshly picked organic asparagus in a twist of lemon, a dash of sea salt. And felt fresh. Or even better I would pick the asparagus from the ground and eat. I would still taste the dirt and remember that we are all part of the earth. Soil to soil. Is that it? Dust to dust? Astroturf to astroturf we all go back from where we came.

Is there a phone? Is it getting closer -- that blue/red line or am I seeing the end? I give away. I'm suffocating. I'm suffocating and the only God-damn thing around me is air. Maybe I'm asthmatic. She always told I was asthmatic as a child. But I never believed it true. So I refused to gasp for breath. The only time I had an asthmatic attack was when I was hyperventilating through tears. I want to remember if there is a phone and if the call goes 555 or 911.

It isn't that it means something to me. It's that it has zero value for you. At times I could throw up both hands and say "to hell" about any of this or all of it because really isn't life...

I was this close to a cliché of rainbow sentiments that mean little or nothing said out loud. Or from anyone else. Or from me and -- *GD is there a fire in my stomach?*

If that land is home I will be thrilled. But I know it's too green and located in the sky and floats and seems to not harbor any resentment as a planet. Or piece of space trash. Or whatever it is.

I think it could be home if it needed to be (she starts to hyperventilate). I suppose it could be my home. My home. Empty space with lots of air and green. I suppose it could be my home. Barren and lost and all mine (the hyperventilating gets worse). I suppose it could be my home in an abyss. Vacant. Mine. All mine. All me. All me. All me. To myself to myself. I. Mine and no one else. Mine and me and I and not yours because I will inhabit it all to my self. MY self. Mine. My.

(Nora lands. She is barely capable of breath.)

I smell it. I smell it and God it smell delectable. It smells like pork. Or beef or some kinda honey glazed flesh. If I dig, if I dig under the roots. Maybe here. I see it. It is most definitely not asparagus. Fuck asparagus. My stomach burns and I want meat. And I won't even bother to Do. Do. Done. it cause I am obviously not a kitchen appliance. Thank you God for making me lonely and giving me this empty island that I can call mine. With food buried in the crevices of these berry bushes.

Thank you God for giving me a place to call mine. (She is starving and brings herself to near exhaustion eating.) Thank you for this beautiful rump of roast that tastes just like heaven on bone. Sinew from the snow. Muscles melting down mine. My throat. My land. Mother? (she is tired) It's not that it means something to me...

Part III

Veronica

I see myself in a pond of survival. As I look into this body of water I see an eternal *and* ephemeral shadow of the world. It is cracked and askew. Ripples and breaks.

Fading within the tides are countless images and a legion of memories splintered and blanched by time.

There is a story in the deepest of the folds. There is a story about a man I knew. There is a story.

When I was young I met a man. I met a type of a man that I had never met before. When I was considerably young I met a man who was particularly intriguing. He was both young and old. It was as though the essence of age had collided in on itself and bore a man who was just as light in the moment as he was anchored by age. But in age, in years, he was young. He was no older than I. At least that is what I was told and I took to heart. But in his eyes, beyond the orbs, there was a soul that could speak to a thousand different hearts.

To say this man was beautiful is an understatement. To me at least. Because through my eyes I saw a creature that was born as a gem to be worshipped and praised. I could not praise him though. I did. Do not get me wrong. I would lavish him with accolades. But this did little to nothing. It was as though the more devotion I would bestow upon him the further he would hide.

He *would* emerge when there was little said. He would crack from the shell and sometimes even tell me of my virtues. To this I would counter -- exhilarated by his doting, as limited as it may be, and he would run.

As time elapsed and the world spun I realized I was spinning too and thought that I might be projected off into the void. I tried harder and I tried faster and faster and more and more -- an innumerable amount of tactics to procure this god.

I scrubbed furiously at my tender flesh. I purchased fine garments and braided my hair.

One day I delivered him myself. I was mute. Fearful that he would run. He took of me and left when I had taken just as he.

When I woke, not from sleep but from a coma he had placed on me that night, I looked into the mirror and saw only myself. I tried to scream but my throat was sore and bruised and black and blue.

This god was not seeing me. And I, in turn, was not seeing him. Is it the youthful exuberance that causes this? Or is it age that allows us the ability to break apart?

Even now in these ripples I see the lineage of my own face. A cracked ceiling that draws lines from there to here. I see only what I perceive to be the truth.

If I happen to soak in this flood of baptism, this body of tears, I do not think I will be able to retrieve myself. So far lost, cast to an island of solitary pleasure although there is little pleasure to find when a smile is returned by only your own.