

# my Sick mommy

**M**ost men spend their lives fearing their mothers. I've spent my life plotting ways to kill her.

You don't understand, do you? Let me guess—you had a nice mommy. She shoved that warm rosebud of a nipple into your bawling pink mouth. She wiped your heinie and harnessed you in a dry plastic diaper. She tickled your bellybutton. She dressed you in fluffy pajamas, the kind with footies attached. She wrapped you in a cozy, clown-patterned blanket. She was the mommy duck and you were the little baby duck. When you screamed out in the full darkness of night, she rushed to your bedside and buried your tear-streaked face between her droopy milk-balloons. She gave you cherry syrup for your cough. Band-Aids for your skinned knee. A cinnamon stick in your hot apple cider. You were a houseplant in mommy's care. She watered you daily and pointed you toward the sun. She loved you, and you felt that love down to your curled-up toes. You believed her when she cooed that you're beautiful. When she promised you that everything would be alright, you believed that, too. She was a big fat honeycomb who drowned you in her sticky affection. Maybe you're such a broken-down pussy that you can't admit your mother was a worthless cunt who farted out a useless child. You somehow sense it, but you just can't face it. Mommy couldn't have been wrong, could she? It's easy to see why I hate you—you're such a common, boring sap, but you've had a good life. You were loved.

I wasn't. And I want to smash my mother's teeth in. So don't appeal to my finer instincts. I've heard, "She's your mother—you only get one" from countless well-meaning drones. What exactly are you saying? Should I value rectal cancer if I only get it once? My mother gave me life? She spread her legs. And if she hits me or tries to keep me down, she's an enemy before she's my mother. Feminists like to justify their anti-penis blather with claims that men abused them, and it's not a bad excuse. But remember this basic law when you start sniffing around for misogyny's roots—behind every Sick White Male lies a Sick White Mommy.

Mommy. Mrs. Goad. Née Margaret Mary Parker in Philadelphia on Valentine's Day, 1925. When I picture her, I see

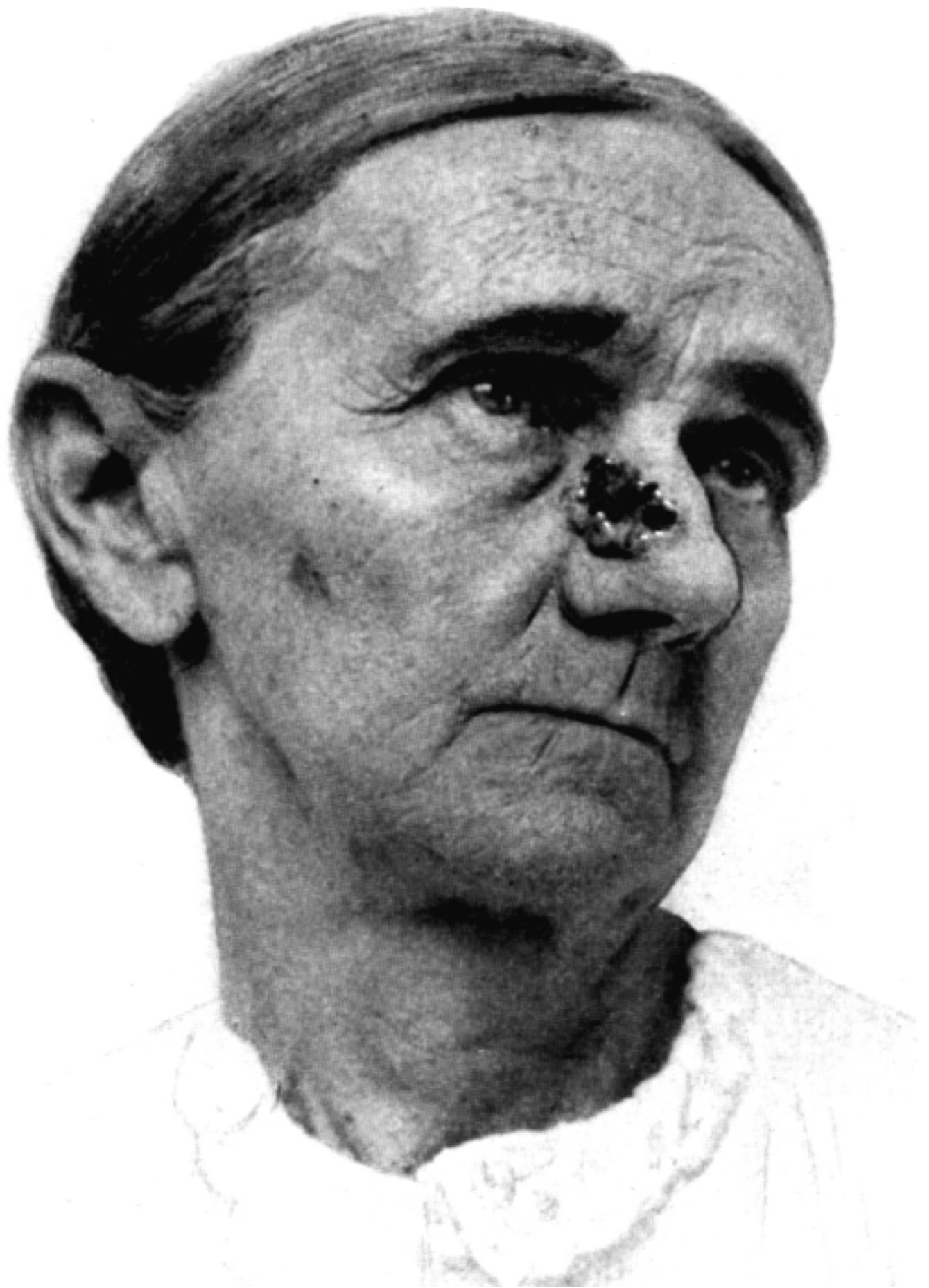
a big falsehood with a vagina attached to it. It wasn't her tit I sucked on, it was factory rubber and canned milk. One thought of her, and my stomach muscles form into a fist. My dick withers and my balls roll back up into my groin. Steam geysers blast out of my ears. Everything I hate about humanity—the stupidity, the lies, the conformist cowardice—I first hated in my mommy.

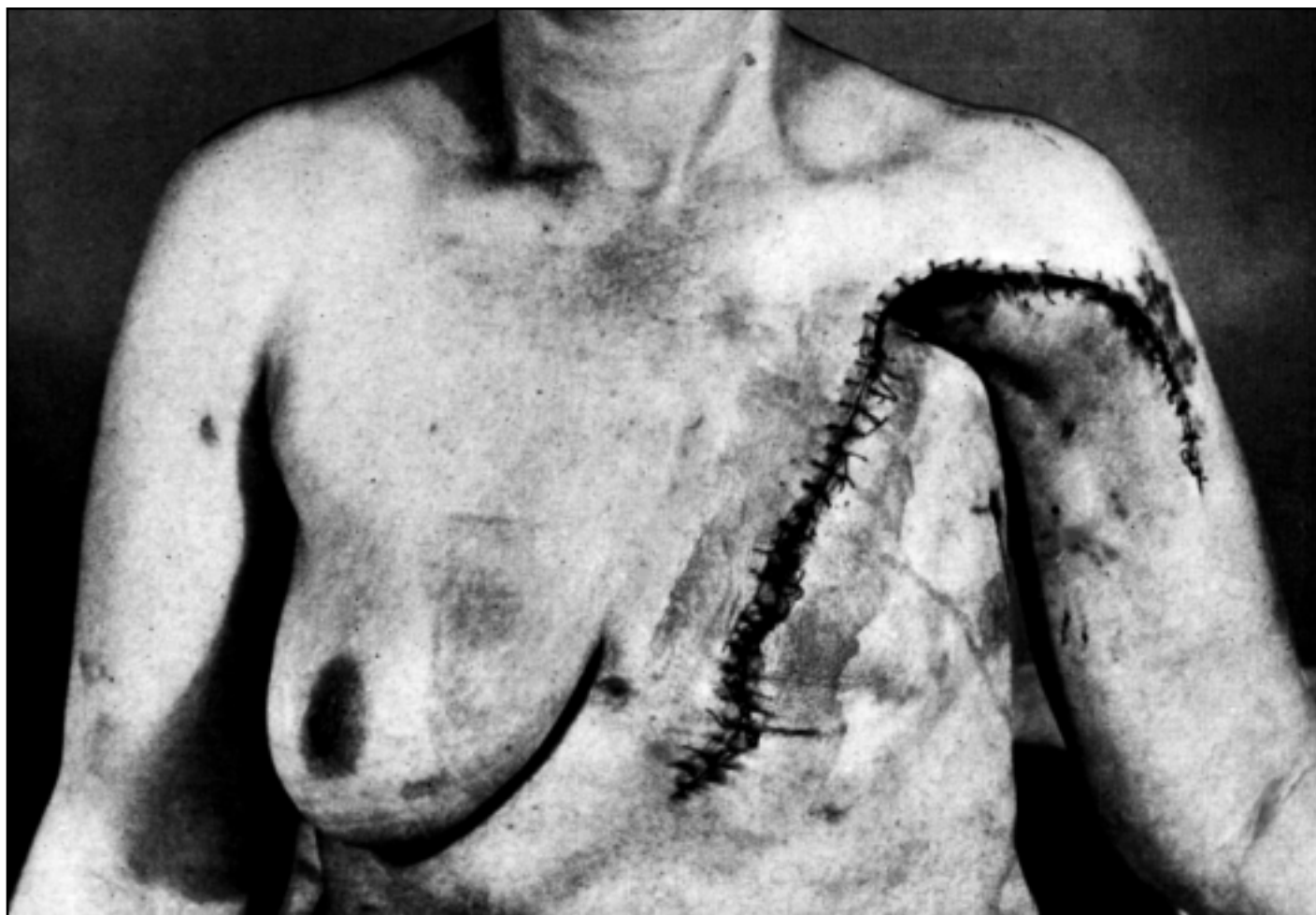
I hate the way she looks. A chicken with a wig. Her pinhole eyes cowering behind thick glasses. Those cloudy, magnified eyeballs used to look straight into mine and lie. Those glazed eyes lied every time they told me I wasn't an accident. Those eyes lied when they said that daddy never beat me until I bled. Her eyes lied when they said she didn't smack me around. I hated her weak Stan Laurel chin. The unshaven hair on her flabby armpits. Her super-astro-plastic, hundred-percent-artificial leisure suits. Her taste for pastels and scented soaps. Her gnarled, blue-veined hands. The way she neurotically counted imaginary numbers on her fingers. Her cow tits and overgrown bush. Her crooked face which masked prehistoric beliefs. Her pale mouth like a little pink leech. Her coiled tongue, which piled up falsehoods like rat droppings. Her lazy, bell-shaped, shopping-mall figure. In public, she walked slowly and carefully, as if she were hiding a Bible up her ass.

At home, she'd scream with so much intensity you could imagine blood spraying out of her mouth. It was a loud, sharp, factory-whistle scream. Saliva flew from that tight mouth as she howled at me not to use curse words. It seemed as if she might accidentally spit out her soul with those screams. Ferocious. The effect was compounded by her slave-class Philly accent, which sounded as if she'd been chewing on green potato chips and rusty bottle caps her whole life.

But despite such periodic eruptions, she was for the most part a cool metal suppository, as clammy as a nurse who kills her patients. She acted as if our emotional connection was severed the second the umbilical cord was snipped. Words came out of her yap like gray confetti from a cardboard shredder. She would pat me on the back while hugging me, as if she wanted to get it over as quickly as possible.

Little Jimmy. All alone at four or five years old. Shivering on my parents' numb bed on a Sunday morning when the old man was out drinking and mommy was off to church. I felt a chilly Novocain





pit inside my ribs, the sense that I was unloved. It felt pretty embarrassing. I got that cold-gelatin feeling more than once. Still get it every so often. That quiet ice-block of nonemotion, that monochrome color void, that near-autistic distance, makes me want to shove mommy's nasal bones back into her brain.

Passive slit. Gullible cunt. To say that she had no personality might imply that she *could* have one, which would be going too far. Mommy took the shape of whomever was around her. She was a spread-eagled recipient of societal programming. Her flimsy sense of self was bludgeoned into submission by a smirking world. It was easy to brainwash her, because her brain was never dirtied with too many thoughts in the first place. She was a spindly doe caught in the world's headlights. She waited until the other three cars went first at a four-way intersection. She believed all cops, politicians, priests, doctors, lawyers, and tollbooth clerks. If you wore a badge or had some sort of title, you could tell her anything and she'd swallow it like a fat glob of jif.

But if I told her that my father drew big glops of blood from my little-boy mouth or that he whipped me until my legs were blanketed with bruises the color of grape

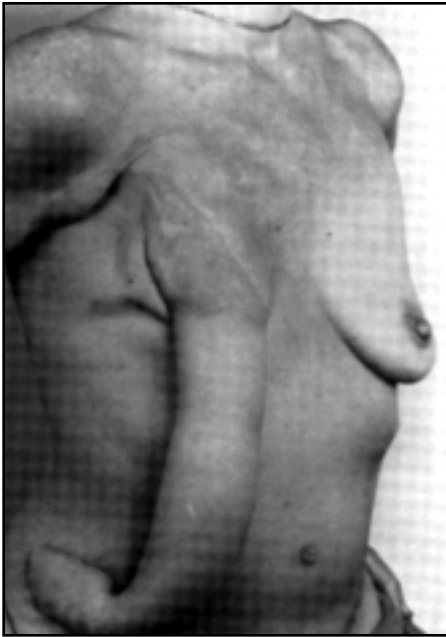
juice, she didn't believe it. "We must live in two different houses," she told me.

All my siblings had grown up and moved out by the time I was six, leaving me alone to face the full-on sucker punch of a fucked-up marriage. It was obvious that mommy and daddy hated each other. I was living proof of that. You told me many times how evil I am, didn't you, mommy? Daddy, too, leaned in my face all pie-eyed and informed me that I have no heart. I was a symptom who grew up being mistaken for the problem. I was an emblem of their doomed union, a living, breathing, eating, shitting divorce certificate. I was blamed for each new health problem they had, every fried nerve. It was my fault that daddy hadn't fucked her in years, that he drank a fifth of Scotch every day, that the old lady sat on the sofa with her hair in curlers and a cigarette in her mouth, watching *The Mike Douglas Show*. The resentment billowed from her half-smoked Kent and filled the room.

She'd laugh in my face when I spilled my heart out to her, her shoulders heaving, her peppery head thrown back, guffawing like a mechanized fun-house puppet. At five years old, when I found a five-dollar bill on the ground outside our tract home, I ran

over to mommy and said it was important to find the man who lost it and give it back to him. She looked at her housewife friend and laughed. She looked back at me and laughed. The lipstick cracked on their skinny mouths as they both laughed and laughed and laughed—not an "isn't that cute?" laugh—it was a "you're a ridiculous little idiot" laugh. I ran a few blocks to the neighborhood football field, sat under a tree, and cried five-dollar tears.

I weighed nearly ten pounds and measured twenty-one inches at birth. Bet I stretched you out more than daddy's DICK, huh, mommy? I was the biggest cunt-fart mommy ever had. That boiling cunt. That sucking eel's mouth. That blood-leaking cardboard womb. That laceration. That suffocating hole. That trash can with mucus lining. That scum-dripping garbage disposal. To think that I lived inside her hot little cave of slime for nine months. To think that I shared veins and arteries with her. To think I was connected to that cunt for life-support. Nearly a year inside those sticky walls, penned-in by her fat, reeking bowels. Her cold heart pumping its swill into mine, infecting me with her genes. As I curled up inside her yeasty, smelly, cheesy bacteria pit, she took shits and wiped her hairy ass.



Bloody Kotex pads. Her balled-up pantyhose and wrinkled old bras. Skid marks and piss stains on dad's faded boxer shorts. I saw mommy's cunt once. Well, not the lips or anything, but the bush. I was so young and small, it hovered above my eye level. And what a rain forest it was! A big, black fist of hair. Sasquatch country. Like those guys on the cough-drop boxes.

I doubt that my mommy's ever had an orgasm, but what do I know—I never tried to make her cum. Wasn't interested. Not my type. To be fair, she never offered, either. For all I know, she could have been a Super Freak. Who's to say that while I was popping my load in the bathroom to visions of Cheryl Tiegs in a fishnet bathing suit, mommy wasn't splayed out on her vibra-matic bed, wacking off to a *Barnaby Jones* rerun?

Maybe she fingers herself. I wonder what sorts of objects she uses, what nauseating fantasies she spins, what ruddy Claude Akins/Porter Wagoner trucker superstud she imagines fucking her blind. Or does she secretly like women? My father once wondered that aloud.

I think mommy liked to shove things up my ass. *It's time for your enema!* She'd throw a towel on the bathroom floor. My legs would stick in the air, my nude, Vaseline'd rectum poised to receive a hard plastic enema tube. That lavender enema rig was as integral a part of my bathroom experience as my box of Mr. Bubble. Shove that thing up my asshole and S-Q-U-E-E-Z-E, Mrs. Goad! Pure power. Dominant mommy. Proud of all the turd fossils you've loosened. After my rectal high-tide had ebbed, I'd get a Bit O'

Honey candy bar as a reward for my anal endurance. To this day, I can't look at a Bit O' Honey bar without thinking of excavated fecal crust. Enema after enema. Did I need them? Only mommy knows for sure. But my bowels are now schizophrenic—the shit either mummifies in my intestines or I'm spraying week-long turd monsoons. I don't know if this condition was helped by the enemas or caused by them. Who knows *what* mommy was squirting up my ass?

My sister says mommy gave her a lot of enemas, too. She says mommy made enemas (*enemies*) for (*of*) all four of her kids. Sis recalls an almost unbearable warm feeling in her stomach after mommy injected the magical potion up her poop chute. My sister says that mommy, not satisfied with mere liquid anal intrusions, also used to concoct laxative-laced chocolate drinks for her and the older kids. I would have preferred that to the shit-colored prune juice she poured down my gullet. According to my sister, mommy became fixated on kid-poop through a friend named Betty, a bloated old gash who resembled Burl Ives in drag. As mommy stood silently, Betty once loudly scolded me for pissing on the toilet seat, stating that my urinary infraction rendered me unworthy of attending Boy Scout camp. The old fish-bucket had a lot of nerve—she took the foulest dumps I've ever smelled, an odor which to this day reminds me of old age. Betty ran some creepy kids' foster home where she "cared" for about twelve orphaned dumplings at a time. In order to keep her brood's intestinal trains running on time, she shoved daily morning suppositories up each foster-child asshole. This is the type of person my mother respected.

When I was very young, mommy touched my cock a lot. Tiny bits of lint from pure-cotton underwear used to gather in the rim between my prick's tip and the shaft. As I sat nude on the toilet with my cottony briefs pulled down to my dangling ankles, mommy would kneel on the cold tile floor and pluck at the cotton balls. She had a workmanlike expression on her face as if she were a slave girl and my dick a cotton plantation.

At the time, I thought she was simply making me presentable.

No wonder I had my first paranormal experience in that Pine-Sol-and-talcum-powder-smelling bathroom, that antiseptic torture chamber. It's one of the first home movies way back in my memory's mildewed archives, something that happened only three or four years after I had slid out from between mommy's legs. I had just taken a bath. All the water had already been sucked down the drain, and my wet preschool body shivered in the shiny white tub. I was hit with a waking nightmare, the powerful sense that I was being forced to relive every action of a life which had already ended in a violent death. I cried that I was powerless to stop fate's locomotive thrust—I was going to die again, and it was going to be grindingly painful. My face was red and wet with tears, my waterlogged fingers shriveled up like pink prunes. Mommy didn't know what to say.

She rarely had answers. Mommy was a dumb woman. Still is, I'm sure. A complete smacked ass. She fumed over the fact that I was smarter than her, that I could see through her social varnish. I think she would have preferred a Down's syndrome baby, a drooling ape she could yank around on a leash, somebody in a bib and highchair with mashed yams all over his face. A baby like that would *believe* your lies. She wanted her baby to be identical to her, not better.





She sabotaged every chance I had, scoffed at every naive dream, shoved a knife in every plan. In the eighth grade, I took an entrance exam for an exclusive high school in Delaware. About five hundred others took the test along with me. Three people, including me, scored high enough to win scholarships, but my parents wouldn't let me accept it. Years later, mommy told me—and I have this on tape—"You were just, in our way of seeing it, not worthy of it." If I beat out four hundred and ninety-seven others, how the fuck was I unworthy?

I was also undeserving four years later, when NYU accepted me to study theater with Stella Adler, one of world's best acting teachers. Mommy drove me up to the Pennsylvania alcoholics' detox farm to ask daddy if he could foot some of the tuition. Fucking detox farm. Daddy had his liver up on a clothesline, drying it out in the last months before cancer ate him alive. Mommy and daddy stood fifteen feet from me, deciding my future. Daddy shook his oily Richard Nixon head no. They had enough money to pay the tuition ten times over—they just didn't want to bet on me. I had to take out student loans and go into something safer, like journalism.

I graduated *summa cum laude*, top of my class, but over six grand in debt. The clanging phone knocked me out of bed every

morning, some hostile yuppie jock hassling me about my delinquent student-loan payments. I swallowed my pride and called up mommy. *Did the old man leave me any money? I need it now.* She sounded as if she were choking on her tears. "If there was any money, John—I mean, *Jim* (she always called me by my older brother's name)—I'd give it to you. I swear I would." She said my father left behind about fifty grand. But it was gone now. Mommy said she had given all of it to my brother-in-law to help his business, and he blew it. My (now former) brother-in-law, whose name is George, looks vaguely like talk-

show host Gary Collins and sports a boisterously obvious almond-colored toupee. For many years, as I played the role of Satan Baby, he was like the substitute "good" son adopted by Alex's parents in *A Clockwork Orange*. He was my parents' enforcer. He always glared at me, threatening to beat my ass when I popped shit at mommy, once bloodying my nose when I was twelve and he was twenty-nine. Frustrated guy. A few days before I graduated from high school, as I was peaking on three hits of blotter acid and my old man was drunk out of his mind, dad told me about George's chronic impotence. I think the exact phrase was, "He's not a man in the bedroom." And this bald, limp, overgrown tadpole, no blood relation to mommy, received my inheritance. And he blew it.

Yeah, mommy punished me for being too smart. And I want to kill her because she's so stupid. Because she did what she was told. Because she believed in Jesus instead of me. Because she feared that my friend's Black Sabbath album would fill the house with demons. Because she thought that the voice in her head was God's.

One summer night in our dining room, my mother "received" the gift of tongues. I remember precisely what came out of her mouth: Phonetically, I'd render it,

"Omminy, oominy, eeminy, shenockalah." She thought that the Holy Ghost was speaking through her in Aramaic or something. "Slain in the spirit," she fell to the floor. Wriggling like a post-menopausal fetus, she kept babbling those same asinine words. It didn't sound like a fucking foreign language. It sounded like my mother saying, "Omminy, oominy, eeminy, shenockalah." Baby talk. As far as I know, she still tithes a tenth of her money to some small church house of shrieking, canyon-cunted matrons. Jesus pimps my mommy for ten percent. Jesus can have her.

Mommy stuck food in my mouth. That's about it. Whatever I learned, I learned myself. Not one teaspoon of wisdom from mommy. Not a crumb of career advice. No encouragement. She didn't raise me. She ate Valiums and tried to squash me.

She divulged few scraps of beef about her own childhood, but it seemed to be the *Grand Guignol* scene you'd suspect. Her mother shit out eleven unwashed Irish brats into the Great Depression, forcing them to share oatmeal and shoes, to piss, scream, and sleep together. Her father split the scene with some fresher, finer ass, leaving his teeming litter to fend for itself. One time when mommy came down with chickenpox and had to be quarantined in a medical clinic, she stood tippy-toed on her bed after her mother left, wailing out the window for her to come back. But her mother shrunk into a small dot in the distance. On another occasion, her older brothers and sisters locked her in a closet and told her that the spaghetti she had just eaten was actually a bowl of bloody worms. Shoved



into the darkness, tucked amid the mothballs and tweed jackets. Abandoned.

Each fresh trauma shot a chunk out of mommy's brain. She became pretty much lobotomized that Saturday in September, 1969, when she got a phone call informing her that my brother had been murdered in Paris. I was running outside to play and had just swung the front door behind me when I froze to the sound of a rolling, unhinged moan, a throaty wail I only heard one other time, when my female cat discovered she had accidentally crushed her newborn kitten to death.

My brother was a deaf-mute photographer and unpublished cartoonist. Although he loved to travel, the delayed-flash pictures he took of himself alone in hotel rooms are the saddest photos I've ever seen. His given name was Alton Howard Goad, Jr., but since Alton, Sr., detested his firstborn son and his birth defects, we called him Bucky. It was an appropriate nickname, because Bucky was a four-eyed polyester nerd, a lost Brylcreem boy floating against the hippie era's heavy undertow. Deaf, dumb, and awkward, Bucky found himself despised by my father. He also once found himself pinned up against a wall by my father, who was trying to break Bucky's arm. Bucky used his free hand to smash a vase over daddy's skull, necessitating sixty-eight stitches. The pair clashed bitterly the night before Bucky left for Paris. While model son-in-law George stuffed meat and gravy in his mouth with the rest of us, Bucky was forced to sup in another room like the family dog.

Two days later, Bucky was dead in a Paris ditch. Lethally friendly, he had apparently picked up at least one hitchhiker in his rent-a-car. A French trucker spotted his blood-covered corpse in a roadside gully early on the morning of September 12. At first, the trucker didn't stop because it was a bad neighborhood and he thought it might be a setup. Returning on his route three hours later, he saw that my brother's body was still there. He notified police. Bucky's rental car was parked a hundred yards away. His blood had dripped all over the car's interior. He had been stabbed and beaten all over his face and torso. A knife wound in the back was identified as the fatal injury. He had also been strangled with his own belt. There were injuries on the back of his head which indicated he had been hammered with a blunt object. A diamond ring had been removed from his finger. His expensive cameras had been stolen and were found along the banks of the Seine, with the film missing. He had apparently photographed his killers. Police traced his rent-a-car to his hotel, where his fingerprints



were matched to his passport. They needed those prints to identify him, because his face had been stabbed and clobbered beyond recognition.

The story hit UPI and the national evening TV news. While we waited two weeks to receive Bucky's body, we got a postcard he had mailed the day before he was killed. "I'll see you on the twenty-seventh," it read in part. His body was shipped into Philly on the twenty-sixth. There was a closed-casket wake on the twenty-seventh, so we never really did get to see him. I remember sitting in one of many psychiatrist's offices a little while later, playing a game the nice man had designed for me. He gave me shiny vinyl Colorforms-style figurines—a mommy, daddy, and kids—and told me to arrange them on a picture which reminded me of our house's parlor. He wanted me to make up a story. I showed the doctor a mommy and her son walking in the front door. The pair were surprised to see that someone had been shot down with a machine gun and was sprawled out dead on our carpet. My sister remembers another shrink-test drawing where I sketched some fascistic historical power junkie—could've been Napoleon—harnessed in a straitjacket.

I was apparently catching up with mommy in the mental-illness department. But as sick as she had been before, Bucky's murder seemed to shove her into an emotional coffin. My sister says she thinks mommy felt more than a pinch of guilt because she had allowed the old man to prey on her handicapped son.

But here's the creepiest part, and it illustrates how affectively cold my mommy could be: When my parents asked the family lawyer to fill in the details regarding my brother's murder, the lawyer allegedly said, "Imagine the worst, because it's far worse than that." And mommy's response—unless she's lying and covering up some grisly psychosexual rape scenario—was to drop the matter. She didn't push for any more information. She was too meek or too disinterested—or both—to press the big attorney man for information on how her own boy was slaughtered. She took the lawyer's word that it was in her best interest not to know exactly what had happened.

If mommy saw truth approaching her, she'd cross the street to get away from it. By the time of Bucky's murder, my surviving brother and sister had already "grown up" and moved elsewhere. Snooping around in a chest of drawers in our newly vacant guest room, I remember finding color snapshots of my nude brother and some other unclad male—could have been my cousin—wrestling around on a bed, blowing each other. They looked like naked hedgehogs entangled in some ancient pubertal sperm rite. I remember them smiling, as if they were having a simply grand time. My brother seemed happier in these pictures than when he posed fully dressed. I slipped the photos back under the sweaters where someone had originally hid them. When I returned a few days later, the photos were gone. Who took them? No explanations, mommy. We were Catholics. Those photos didn't exist.



As I dipped my fingers into a cruddy, slime-coated, holy-water font at church, I wiped my forehead clean of those pictures. It was a weird reality shift—a plaster Jesus is bleeding up on that cross, and my brother is off somewhere licking some grinning guy's cock.

I was getting bigger and wiser. When I started hitting mommy back, no one besides me could understand why. *How could a little boy hit his own mother?* Easy—with the back of my little-boy hand. I was born the day I hit her back. I *liked* doing it, OK? I felt happy when I smacked my mother. We were on summer vacation down the Jersey shore. I was twelve, just tall enough to get an eye-level peep at every pair of tube-top-encased tits which bobbed past me on the boardwalk. Paul Simon's "Love Me Like a Rock" was an unavoidable AM hit. The real world, with all its pizza grease, rusty bumper cars, and zit-addled Philly debris, seemed fine. The family world was another matter. When mommy grabbed me and shook me in the hallway to our seedy beach rental, I shoved the old cow back, knocking her glasses loose. I smiled inside when I saw those foggy goggles hanging cockeyed off her nose—she looked helpless for a change. A few years later, when I was big enough to hit my father back, I nearly broke his jaw. Cocksucker never hit me again, boy. A thick dose of power, properly applied, can solve all your problems.

Hitting my parents was the only time that family life seemed worthwhile, the only time I could let loose and have a little fun around my folks. All other happy memories occurred outside the house, far away from my parents. But they always found a way to bum my high. I remember one yellow spring day a month or two before I graduated from high school. My friend Steve and I are sitting up in a cemetery tree, our heads two bright balloons from some high-torqued acid. My problems seem so small, I feel like I could scoop them up in my hand and send them floating into the

breeze. Still tripping, still mellow, we start hitchhiking home around midnight. A car peels up. I sit between the driver and a prominent-foreheaded, thick-eye-browed spud who calls himself "Cosmo." Everyone seems drunk off their asses. Steve squeezes between two guys in the back. A fat ribbon of bad vibes throbs through the car. As the driver pulls into a deserted dumping ground and hits the brakes, I feel Cosmo's flatiron fist crush into my nose. It startled the fuck out of me, allowing Cosmo to get five or six clean punches straight on my beak. I start spraying blood all over the upholstery, and he screams at me for bleeding in his car. The douchebags in back start kicking in Steve's nuts. I finally wrestle free and pop out of the auto, running down a dark, humid road toward home. Blood rains from my nose with each desperate stride. By the time I dart in through my front door, the thigh areas on my blue jeans are literally more red than blue, the sticky crimson sap seeping through my pants and adhering to my leg hairs. I can't

believe what I see in our dining-room mirror—my nose is twice its normal size, a pulverized mushroom shoved up toward my left eye. Piss-faced and stubbly, dad ambles into the room. "Take me to the hospital!" I gasp. "Why should I?" he shrugs. "You didn't clean your room. You didn't do the dishes. You didn't vacuum the floor." And he was *serious*. To his besotted cerebrum, bleeding to death seemed an apt punishment for not cleaning your room. After a protracted screaming match, he finally threw on his stale-smelling work clothes and drove me in his plumbing van to the hospital. As I sat under brain-cleaving hospital lights, crashing like Wall Street from the acid, my dad explained to the hospital attendants how his son had been a disappointment to him.

And where was mommy? She had run away from home. "Fed up" with us, she had moved a few months earlier into a studio apartment somewhere in town. I say "somewhere" because she didn't give me her forwarding address and phone number. So there I was at four a.m., bandages sopping up the blood from my face, lying down among the smell of copper pipes and dirty steel wool in my old man's van. He had parked in some diner's lot and went in to have breakfast without me. Mommy had run away. Daddy was trying to starve me out of the house, a fact he later admitted. My parents were my blood enemies. While my face pulsed like one big toothache, daddy was dispassionately shoveling eggs and scrapple into his mouth. As dew condensed on the van windows, I remember chanting, "I reject his flesh" with post-acid-trauma urgency. Muscle-by-muscle, cell-by-cell, I divorced my parents that night.

Cancer desiccated the old man into a hollow carcass within a year. Mommy, so nauseated by the old man's sodden howling that she had separated from him while he was alive, was suddenly denying that daddy had ever done so much as pop a pimple on



any of his kids. Her liver-spotted claws didn't touch another dick for eleven-and-a-half years, and when they did, damn it if that dick wasn't another Goad dick! At sixty-six years old, she started fucking my old man's brother Carlton. I was informed of mommy's new fuck-boy by my sister, whom mommy had recently sued over a disputed debt. Seeking to resurrect—and perhaps cosmetically repair—her decrepit marriage, mommy chose the most genetically adjacent specimen possible and married for a second time. From one account, she also seduced him into drinking again after at least a decade of sobriety, apparently so he'd be identical to my father. The only thing more demented would have been to exhume my old man's bones, prop him up in a rocking chair, and pour whisky down his dead throat. When I told friends that my mother was straddling my uncle's wrinkled old bone, their unanimous response was, "Ugh!"

Only one person didn't think it was spooky—mommy. More than two years earlier, I had told her never to call again unless she could cop to the fact that daddy used to beat my face in. She finally called again, strung out in the desert near Phoenix with my uncle. In some odd, elephant's-graveyard-style ritual, they had driven West in order to reconcile with estranged children before they got too fucking feeble to step on a gas pedal. They had been very good parents. My uncle was looking for a son he hadn't seen in years. Mommy was looking for me.

"John—I mean, Jim—I'm sorry," she squeaked, her voice a trampled puppy's whimper. She sounded as if she was shivering in a dark basement's damp corner. She sounded ready to apologize. She sounded a mess. I was powerfully tempted to laugh into her shriveled old ear. But I decided that for my own peace of mind, I should give the ancient hag one last chance. We agreed to meet in L.A. when she arrived two days later.

I hung up. As a savage God would have it, I was scheduled for a barium enema at a Beverly Hills radiology clinic the next day. I had been nagged with intestinal pains, so my doctor scheduled a colonic probe to search for festering tumors and impacted shit chunks. Wielding a plastic white pipeline twice the size of mommy's enema tube, the uncomfortably German-looking radiologist squirted isotopic love juice up my hole. Then, with the stated intent of stretching out my colon so they could examine every potentially cancerous crater, they pumped air up my ass until I was sure I would explode. As I squirmed on the cold steel table, my intestines blown up like an eighteen-wheeler's tire, Dr. Mengele told me to keep still while he ogled my guts on a computer screen. After the examination, they pulled the periscope from my anus as if it was a cork and I was a champagne bottle. I scurried in my hospital gown to a nearby bathroom, where my rectum belched a fart which I swear lasted at least thirty seconds.

The enema, naturally, would be the easy part. As mommy started yammering over dinner the next night, those tiny poison missiles started flying out of her mouth. I was a problem child. An underachiever. A liar. Mommy looked older, shorter, weaker than I remembered, like a little girl with some mysterious aging disease. Pouring curdled cream into muddy coffee, I said I was merely a kid reacting to an insane situation. Mommy intimated that some psychologist must have put those ideas in my head.

If all she wanted was my blessing, I said, she could go the fuck back where she came from. I was recording it all on a concealed microcassette. "You want to hear that everything was OK," is what I say on the tape. "You really want to hear that, because if you started admitting what went on, you would realize that a lot of it was just wasted time." There's a thirty-five-second pause on the tape, nothing but crashing silverware and spoons clinking in coffee cups, before I speak again. "I mean, I was always portrayed like I was the evil one, so of course I'm gonna act like the evil one."

"You were always portrayed like *what?*" mommy said, squinting and leaning toward me in her crumpled blue windbreaker.

"I was the evil one, the problem child, the bad seed."

She met my stare. "You were, Jim. You were. You were—what I'm saying is, you were a *problem*....You were a hard one to handle, Jim...."

"Where do you think the anger comes from?" I asked.

Mommy shot me that blank, faux-innocent stare. "I wonder."

"Well, if you have to wonder," I countered, "you're dumber than I think you are."

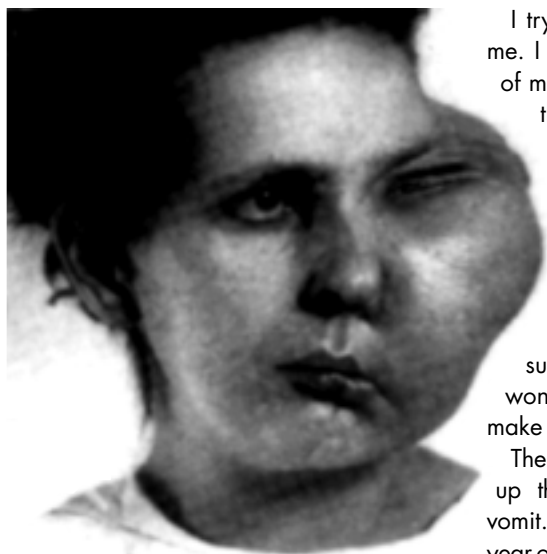
No emotion from mommy. "Possibly," she nodded. "Possibly." More blaring silence. Grinding my teeth, I paid the check. I told mommy that the two years since I had spoken to her were the happiest years of my life. Commanding her never to call me again, I slammed a cab door shut on the bitch and stomped away in my leather boots. Debbie looked at me like she finally understood why I carry a ton of rage around in a suitcase. She called my mommy at her hotel the following day. "If you can't see how charming, talented, smart, and beautiful Jimmy is, then you're the one with the problem," Debbie said.

"You could be right, Deb," mommy said, and hung up. Almost three years ago. The last contact either of us had with her. I hear she eventually married my uncle. According to my sister, Uncle Carty suffered a stroke two days after the wedding. What did it? Rough sex? He realized exactly whom he had married? Cyanide in his TV dinner? He died shortly afterwards. Mommy's second dead Goad husband. More dead Goad-dick for the rats to eat.

Mommy spins around from the kitchen sink just in time to catch me rushing up behind her. My eye meets hers. That muddled gray orb and its studied gloss of false innocence sits behind a thick glass lens. Suddenly, the lens blows up to the size of a TV screen. I can see every ragged red vein in her eye. Her wet, whitish tear ducts.







Tarantula-sized eyelashes. Sweaty wrinkle flaps. Her eye's message is clear: "I'm IN you. You can't kill me, because I'm IN you." Suddenly, I can't hit her. I wag my finger and shake my head. "I'll always hate you," I spit in defeat. I walk away. Just a dream.

I can't pry her the fuck out of me. I could bury my fingernails in my cheeks and split my face wide open, but she'd still be there. She owns me like a demon, a phantom virus in my genetic code. I'm infected with mommy. My sperm leaks poison in each gleaming pearl drop.

The aging cunt is now living somewhere near Denver with a woman my brother divorced nearly twenty years ago, my brother's first wife of three. Mommy's there with my brother's two kids, the younger of whom allegedly murmured to a relative that my brother molested her: "Daddy sure acts funny when he's taking his medication." Mommy helps pay the rent. They must need that rent money desperately.



I try to put every thought of her behind me. I want to bleed every drop of her out of me. When I shut my mouth, holes burn through my stomach. Every day I strain to stop myself from smacking the fuck out of something. I clench my fist so tightly, the skin nearly peels off my knuckles. Leave the bitch alone. Let the old shrew dry up and croak somewhere. She's broken contact with all three of her surviving kids. Even her own sister won't speak to her now. Jesus Christ, just make her die.

Then comes another phone call, bringing up the bad feelings like blood-streaked vomit. The call is from Jenny, my twenty-one-year-old niece. Like mommy, Jenny has a bell-shaped body and a generic bunny-rabbit honky face. At last count, she had covered her body with twenty-one tattoos, little inky billboards which never fully articulate her subcutaneous pain. She told me she wants to get a light bulb tattooed on her skull. An IQ test yielded results in the mid-seventies. She has been diagnosed as mildly autistic. She spent much of her teens in institutions and on medication. She spends a lot of time with Philly bikers and skinheads, partaking freely of crack, acid, weed, and beer. Over the last year or so, she hooked as a call girl in Center City Philadelphia. Last July, she tested HIV-positive. She realizes she's in the shadow days of a short, punishing existence. In many ways, she's a mascot for the family's collapse.

And when you pick up the phone, she doesn't say, "Hi," she just goes straight into her story. And since she's barely above the cutoff line for mental retardation, I doubt that she's savvy enough to fabricate anything. She says my mommy was the person who drove her to the escort agency in order to apply for the call-girl job. She also says that my mommy, who was in her mid-sixties at the time, requested a male hustler but was turned away because the agency only dealt in females. Jenny recalled an incident two or three years ago when she and my mommy snorted Jenny's coke off the kitchen table in mommy's apartment: "She didn't even do it right," Jenny sneers. "She got it all over her face." She says mommy recently wrote her a check for five grand and that she's also willed her new car to Jenny. I suppose mommy considers Jenny a safe investment. Remember a few years back, when mommy was crying little plastic tears to me that she'd help me with my student loan if only she had the money?

Jenny says that mommy was joking to relatives, "I can't give it to him and spend it at the same time, can I?"

Ho, ho, ho. You're a pip, mommy. And how humorous it will be when I kick down your front door. I want you to feel as helpless as I did when I was being whipped by daddy and you were barking out encouragement to him. I want you to grovel and plead with me not to boot in your skull. I want you to apologize and say I was right. I want you to promise to do better. And then I'm going to kill you.

Like the joker I am, I knock you flat on your old, brittle ass. You comically beg at my feet. No, I didn't find it funny when you were dominant. I was smaller and weaker than you. But now that the magic wand is in my hand, I find it deliciously amusing. Your horrible old yellow flesh is split wide open. Your old bones snap like pigeon wings. What a riot. It's hilarious when your head caves in like a wedding cake. So kooky when your brains drip like cement from the walls. Hot, poison blood pumps through my cheeks. Spasms in my lower lip. Greasy sweat spews from my pores. Your bony, ashen kneecaps. Your cunt all dried-up like a shrunken voodoo head. It all makes me giggle. I titter when the blood flows in little creeks from your forehead to your nose, where it falls one fat drop at a time. My cock is oak-hard. The weight is lifted. The debt is paid. And here's the punch line—I jerk off into my hand and smack your dead face around with my cum-lathered palm. Smack and smack and smack and smack and smack, like I was smacked. Get it? Isn't it *funny*?

You used to say I'm not smart anymore. Smart enough to find you, wasn't I? How much you sicken me. How very stupid you are. How much you embody everything that I hate. These memories have been eating me alive, mommy. It's me or you. If I don't wipe you out, I'll die inside. It feels better to abuse than to be abused. It's a simple, universal law. I posit myself as more important than you. That's the essence of all history, all power, all struggle, all rape.

You gave me life. I'm taking yours. You set the ball rolling when you spread your legs all those years ago. You set it in motion. This is only a reprisal of the short act of blood and rage in which I was conceived. When all the salty, sticky red juice comes burbling down around your hair, you'll finally realize that I was only a missed period. A lost menstrual cycle. A tragic accident. You should have carried protection. ■

