

[Approximate date of composition by author: Jan.-Feb. 1998 —Editor]



1

Lilith: Pivot of my life, center of my universe.

Your name will fill my final breath. On the jolt of the initial surge: *Lih-!* Body arched against restraining straps, generator snarling, i will careen down the far side of life: *-Lih-!* Shuddering now, face blackened, lips peeled back, tung (twitching in purple foam) will fall to rest on my teeth: *-Thhhh*.

4

In this tombal twilight, lying on my narrow rack-of-a-bed, the image of Lilith is etched on closed eyelids as if branded there by a high-voltage wand; the mind-movies of mind-sight projected as if the backsides of my eyelids were little moviescreens. I don't so much close my eyes anymore as call up this or that scene from my 1,111-day life with Lilith. Act 1, scene 2, glows into focus as i write.

Before i knew her name, a tapping sound made me look up from my desk. She stood in the doorway. A haze-red afternoon sun stood opposite in the window behind me. Her downy arm glistened as she shielded her eyes with one hand. "Hi" she said. Under languorous lashes two bluegrays smoldered. When her eyes fixed you the jolt was intoxicating. She wore a snowy blouse with short sleeves. A white skirt glissaded over slim hips, almost to the knee, where the skiing eye skidded to a stop, a splash of snow spreading fanlike in the low sunlite. Hamstring tendons, delicately, distally, peeked from behind simpering knees, played tautly when she moved---harp-song incarnate! Then, singing upward behind the blind of her skirt, escaped the pursuing eye!

"I hope I'm not interrupting?"

{O interrupt, please.} Actually i just nodded.

Her flesh, warm to the eye, was wet-silken & fawn-hued. I thought i smelled a burnt-honey aroma as my gaze, advancing with a rake's predatory twinkle, tripped on her beauty, tumbled down a grassy slope, landed in a loam of audacious anticipation. And still i lie at her lemurid feet, lolling in lilies, languishing in a limbo of lilacs. What's with all the L-business anyway? Before Lilith, L was just another letter in the alphabet.

But this is just awful—overwrought prose. My words have eyes. And those eyes are tracking my guards not the reader. If this is going to work i cant be strip-searching every sentence, body-cavity probing every word, to be sure it isnt betraying a friend or indicting a loved-one.

8

. . . If i pointout a few of the thorns beyond your rosewindow, reader, forgive. It's not for sympathy. It's for credibility. When i say i have neither the rights nor the privileges of other deathrow prisoners, i want to be believed. When i say, reprisals---potentially lethal reprisals---are made against those i contact or who contact me, i want to be believed. If i say, what i write or say may be used against not only me but against friends & loved ones, i want to be believed. If i say i am not a murderer terrorist conspirator racketeer kidnaper neonazi or pedophile, i want to be believed. If i say i'm going to be put to death in the electricchair when the law says it's illegal to do so, i want to be believed. When i say i dont know how much time i have left and that, because of this, i must write our story despite oppressive odds & vindictive risk, i want to be believed. Unfortunately the only way to come by such credibility is to describe---well, outline---what's happening around me daybyday and why. And this i will do as needed, tho i loathe both this place and my future within it, and would rather forswear this foul fortress forever. . . .

12

. . . And so it is: The male Universe-to-be, once upon a time before "time", must have groveled & groaned, ardently laved & loved, around & around the egg of the Grand Creatrix. O please! he surely panted into the protoseas of her ear, the protoforests of her hair. Permit me to explode the egg-of-existence into Being! . . .into Becoming! Let us replicate our plurality in a single entity: a Universe! And so it was, the sperm-of-time lay hard upon the egg-of-space, pushing in pushing in pushing in, aching to fertilize it. And so the egg-of-space uttered the Yes! of all yes's! And so there was a gloried flash of lite in the omnipotent darkness, an explosion to end all explosions! . . .or, rather, an explosion to begin them.

30

. . . Still, because of time constraints, i must limit my brush to a sampling of impressionistic strokes, fimbriate pastels recapturing two final encounters between a 15yearold faun-to-satyr and a 13yearold girl-to-nymph, using the wide coarse bristles juanita preferred, setting aside my own bold contrasts of color & shadow.

Lilith

A low stone wall enclosed the hillside chapel, which was pie-shaped---if one pictures the tip of a wide wedge bitten off by the lakeshore. Pews (roughhewn planks on poles, actually) rose in terraces up the hillside; the rearmost ones rose well above the lectern and considerably above the level of the lake. In an attempt to fulfill 2years of daydreaming back at my desk at school & in bed by nite, i led my vestal dryad by the hand to the farthest bench, the one where i'd first brushed her hair.

We held each other, trying to control an infectious shivering which set in almost at once. Not that we were cold. In fact, the nite, tho a little damp, was warm. I can only guess (since this same tic would recur later, during my seaside tryst with Lilith) it was fear of what total unity might bring that wrenched our bodies. This is not so strange: desire is the polar opposite of separation---an index of the hazard of potential loss! Those with secure childhoods, those who had parents family or friends to complain to, will not understand. I would skip this except i know, while the same fears operate in the lives of others, they are masked by an adult paranoia that is widespread: a fear of admitting subliminal

fear, a fear of admitting subliminal anything. For admitting the subliminal is admitting Nature/instinct as an influence in one's life.

We stood close. A wall of crickets choiring along the shoreline could not cover the chattering of my teeth. Rub my spine; down more; right there. Faster. Harder. There. It's stopping. Damn, what was that? Otherwise, the quiet was as transparent as only Nature's sounds can be: laminations of quiet sounds heaped on quieter sounds, and thus, ironically, approaching silence. . .which incidentally can never be "heard" by living ears. The residual heat of three summers burned in her breast, raged in my flanks. All at once our mouths met, like concupiscent cannibals, our broken chains dragging in the dust behind a hunger too long inverted. I enwrapped her, shivering also, til we relaxed in each other's arms.

She wore a white jumper & blouse---the same airy muslin she would wear when we parted. She was barefoot (as we always were when permitted) and almost naked underneath! I kissed her and felt of that nakedness. She grew weak. I sat her down. I knelt, crawled, probed; like a bee on an orchidean drunk, i kissed all i could find of her. A family of grebes, rustling among reeds along the shoreline, burbled deliciously in their moonlite feeding. Juanita throbbed & moaned under the wash of my tastebuds. Like a micro mirror-image of my tung, the pimples of her gooseflesh jostled & bleated like lambs. What hoary celtic bonfires leapt in her loins, what tattoo of druid drums thrummed in her limbs, i dont know; but all at once she gave a violent thrust and melted under my strivings. Our woodland dance was as old as protozoan desire.

A linnnet rustled in the larches; in the dusk a ghostly orchid glimmered. Occasionally the laffter of the lovers on the dock drifted up to us, reassuring our sense of insularity. Oddly hallucinated & fearless (o wild nite, o damsel darc!), my clothes were soon in a heap around my ankles. We kissed again, newly deep. I rolled my nakedness on the silken gift of her body and quickly proved equal to the flood of feeling which at first shook me helpless. The whooit of a whippoorwill carried roundly, transparently, the distance across the lake.

Yet as hard, as deeply, as we kissed, i could not seem to satisfy the height to which she urged me, the tops of her bare thighs pushing at my lean rump. What completion of the flesh did juanita seek? what circuit of liquid systems did she long to complete? Her mouth, wideopen like that of a young bird, sought me; her tung searched back&forth---almost hysterically---in the shadow of my body. And i was the generous feeding parent, my desire dangling over her like a severed entrail, squirming blindly in the moonlite, rising in greased coils, searching for its lost mate-end. Her mouth, like her memory, like her bilingual vocabulary, proved lethal. O my juanita darckiss! *jDoncella del beso oscuro!* On hands & knees now above her, thru a thin line of trees, i saw a breeze shiver a crescent of moon out on the water. Wild & tingling, i soon found myself helplessly melting upon her.

That breeze, when it reached us, stirred the leaves with a sound of rain. I lay down by her side. We felt womb-safe amid the sounding trees. We huddled thus for several minutes. The figures on the dock had long ceased to move (perhaps now asleep). Soon the old anxiety crept back. I kissed her. She murmured into my hair, "What time is it?"

I dont know. . .Eleven?

She sat abruptly and fixed me with a blank look. Then, saying nothing, my woodsy wanton crawled onto her knees and, grabbing the edge of the stone wall behind the bench, looking back at me----a glint of stellar haze in her eyes, a web of wet moonbeam caught in her hair----she bent away from me, hair slipping off her shoulder, dangling above the wall. The cry of a loon penetrated across the breeze-shivered expanse of water. (Harbinger of loss?) All at once i was a panther on the back of a fleeing gazelle. A scrimmage of cupids beat stubby wings on my back. Suddenly, gargantuan with blood, stooped & club-wielding, primal icons were prowling the cavewalls of my id. Fierce, yes. Yet their gaze was fetal-pure. For years after, they would scour the floors of my brain with their clubs, huntingdown arbitrary concepts; while others, outside in the darkness, would beat the bushes of my learned faith. Thus the routing of a horde of patriarchs, rulers & troubled saints was begun that nite. . .all without my direct knowledge.

In Wild moonlite & shadow i wielded myself like i knew what i was doing. I panic yet dont panic at the muted sounds she is making. Pain? ecstasy? or a new-to-me amalgam of both? Yet, unless she actually told me to, i could not stop. Shhh, juanita! Shhh! They'll hear us!

"I cant! . . .I cant."

Thru a tear in the proxy ceiling of leaves memory spots a whole phalanx of red reeling galaxies!

Are you okay?

"Yes. Yes! . . .Nathan? . . .I love you!"

My new icons stared down at us from the stained-glass silences towering between the trees. And there, far below, in our timbered cathedral, amid the forest's dream & danger, rapt, engulfed by moonlite, a scarlet-stained but silken-throated orchid, an oiled anaconda, wrestled strangely among the pews! Those trees, that lake, those hills, for many summers had been juanita's nymphdom, and i (a satyr by this standard) had been permitted to enter. Faun & nymph. Sathan & juanymph. Natyr & nymphita. The World was being made new again for us! Greedily i drank my ablution: whistling bones of prophets, crumbling corpses of saints! And beneath the feet of young desire (unbiased, reborn), crisp as leaves, transparent as glass, we trampled on the avulsed wings of angels!

Out of a clear sky a dark cloud swept over the stars. Like a curtain at scene's end, it drenched us with its shadow, deafened us with its applause of rain--- and was gone again by the time my icon-loaded lunging had peaked, strafed subsided. Tonite my strungback head inverts again that starry roof; the porridge bowl of the great bear is spilled across the graceful bare back of diana; my muted howl makes the moon wince; a skirmish of bleeding angels flails helplessly among the slender wet leaves of memory. I dont know how else to say these things. It seemed thus at the time. A few readers will understand the metamyth behind all the allegory & metaphor.

38

Juanita's note was an instant treasure. Taking to the backseat of the car silent glum invert all the way home from camp i studied it. Undated, it read: [Emil, please use a typescript resembling juanita's handwriting. See "Juanita Darc" in my files.]

"My dearest Nathan, here is the address I promised. P-l-e-a-s-e don't show up without calling. We'll be getting a phone soon. I'll send you the number when you send me your address. And if you write, please don't say anything about love. You know what I mean? P-l-e-a-s-e!

"I wrote some poems about you this summer. I hope you like them.

"Vaya con Dios (the song, Nathan!), mi precioso.

"Your Juanita

[Her address was placed here.]

By the might of mnemosyne i am certain the poesy that follows replicates juanita's originals except that they are written here in my minuscule print and not in her lovely looping script....

[The original note to which NS alludes was written in pencil on both sides of three sheets of white spiral notebook paper with pink lines, in what is apparently the script of JD. Its fold-lines (stained brown where once taped) are now glued together. The note, obviously wet at least once, was found not in said JD file (as NS thought) but between pp 36-37 in a clothbound edition of *Emily Dickinson: The Complete Poems*. NS did however replicate the note and its poems in every detail. And, as he says, it seems the seeds of his writing style are to be found there as well. —Ed.]

. . .The first poem read:

Nathan

Nothing is blue like your eyes. Nothing.
Not one of Nature's bluestblue surprises
gives the giddymarvel that your eyes give,
not the starkest starKissed blue
can match the eyes of you,
nor the fastest lite can catch
the quicksilver of the two.
Mine blue, yours blue—
Now there's a match!

O the meadowgrass is blond today alright
and like you tosses sunlite as it passes.
But not violets nor bluebells,
nor lilacs hanging noble,
can "sing the blues" of blue
like the clever Artist who
put aside his "works in blue"
just to paint the likes of you!
No, nothing is blue like your eyes are blue.
Nothing.

I remember feeling, as i dove into the water after that capsized & nearly lost note, that i was rescuing my very future. Fifty times a day i read her letter at first, til i had memorized---no, assimilated---every comma, every nuance, every possible shade of meaning, every jot of juanita's miraculous pencil!

[from Part 3]

18

I was not tired when i arrived home; i was brutalized with fatigue. Even as i approached my door the feel of cool bedsheets was already winding my body in its cocoon. Lites. But i thought i turnedoff. . . Wait, havent we done this recently? Maybe i'm already in bed, dreaming. From the outer foyer i see someone sitting on the couch. I glance out to the street. On seeing a certain car i say <Aw shit> and stumble inside.

Now a word needs be said about ms nikki mckinney---whose name & actual position with greenEarth has been doctored mostly to protect the ggNs trust fund. Lilith's boss, whom we met in the foyer that delirious rainy afternoon, was for years chief artist for greenEarth news, a quarterly zine sent to members around the world. Her flamboyant "nmk" had long been visible on the artwork of its best features & covers. She could have headedup the graphics dept at any time but, to her credit, argued "I'm an artist not a collator."

A few months into our relationship, on a visit to ggNs, my friend glendon mentioned our engagement. "But she's wearing a ring." <But i didnt give her a ring. Or a promise. Or anything of the sort.> We broke up over this. Nikki

was a classic overachiever---driven; not for money but status; status within the Green community. (Isn't such drive but the child of an adult called aggression?) My mother was a driven woman and the worst thing a woman could do was remind me of my mother. I get biology at a gut level. Don't expect durable heterogamy where the woman chased-down the man. If i'd had daughters--- lovely little twin Liliths, say---if i told them nothing else about twitterpation i would warn: Never marry 'r live with a guy who doesn't want you, how should i say? ...alot! If you want it to last. For this reason the nikki/ns affair was off-center from go. Artistic talented witty lovely as a tall flower: every incentive was there except whatever it is that triggers specific lust (not just generic desire).

Sensing she was pushing, nikki would suspend her manipulation (which i wasn't supposed to notice) somewhere between "merely cloying" & "mammary suffocation". Snipping off her own nose, as they say, she would next go into hiding. More than once i mistook this tactic as passivity not repressed rage. My work on the w.coast done, i would leave for home. When i returned we would inevitably meet, being both headquartered in the same place. Her rage repressed (or so i now understand), she would be civil and so we would agree to date again. As to nikki's looks. That she was a felicity waterman (circa *Titanic*) lookalike with a janefondalike body didn't help me break off what i knew was amiss. The curious side of dating snippy but snazzy nikki was, you were almost sure from the gitgo that, when you got to see it eye-to-eye, she would not have a smilebutton for a clitoris.

Why date nikki? That's the same as asking, why all the intimates in my life save for juanita & Lilith? Leave it to a woman to broach this question perfectly. "In mating, what we see isn't necessarily what we get, much less what we wish we had, though it may be exactly what we need when we see it. For when it comes to love and sex, though we may hate to be caught vulnerable, it is vulnerability alone which holds the keys to both despair and ecstasy"---bekky kydd, revising marianna togovnick. And so we separate sex from love, love from sex, simply because not to do so leaves us frighteningly vulnerable, standing to lose much that is personal & treasured for a single misstep of desire. Enuf of preface. Let us now confront the article herself.

Coming from behind the cover of the latest EarthNow quarterly, nikki, sitting there on my couch, had the hutzpah to smile up at me and say "Hullo". <What're you doing here?> Is that any way ta greet an old friend?" Even in my dazed state i couldnt miss the squirt of venom in the modifier "old".

This is verboten, nik. You know perfectly well i'm seeing someone else.

Bending forward she withdrew some sheets of paper sticking out from under the edge of my scrapbook. "Would this be that someone?"

{Lilith's letter!} which i was so looking forward to reading. That's none of your business.

She bent, scooped up a notebook page i recognized at once. "Now this I know youve seen." The page she rattled at me this time contained a riddle i'd written on my flite to oregon, and a poem, neither of which i'd yet had the candor or courage to show Lilith.

Youve been nosing 'n' poking all around here havent you? Arent you ashamed? And i thought you were merely sitting here brewing one of your old stews. . .which would be bad enuf.

Standing like a stage director, script in both hands, "I wish my own stew was all I sat in! [indicates chalkywhite spot on cushion where my smoothie had spilled & dried] This stuff [shakes Lilith's letter like a gypsy tambourine] is so juicy it, well. . .Lookit that! It made a spot!

You do know this is your worst performance?

An' this here ejaculate of yours. [she proffers my riddle, my verse] It needs an asbestos condom around its neck jus ta keep all the illegal sex from squirting out!"

I see youve had time to go over all your lines. . .say nothing of trespassing with afterthought 'n' malice.

Again indicating the white spot. "Ya know what I think? I think she's one of those squirt queens. . .scuse me, princesses! Tell me. Does your little angel [makes wings with pages] erupt like this every time you touch her?"

Way behind in quizzes & quips and stung by her cheap accusations, it crosses my mind to explain the spot. It's not what you think. I spilled my smoothie there, that's all. [I'll say you did!] But i come to my senses, explain nothing.

"As to afterthought 'n' malice? Now that's funny. I'd say that day in the foyer you two dished a bunch o' that. I got no call, no poem, no letter [shakes papers], no warning lites, no sirens. All at once you lovebirds flutter in out of the rain smack into my face!"

Your icy reception when i got here this summer was a pretty clear smack in the face i'd say. Life doesnt get permission, nik. It just happens. All at once Lilith was there. . .smack in the middle of my life. And, truth be told, so far, i'm damn glad of it.

"According to these [sweeps papers thru air] you werent short on warnings. [paces, turns] Cant you see she was laying for you all along?..pardon the expression. That you cant see that amazes me. It looks ta me [pointing to my verse] like she's swatted you outa the air like a fly. Whaap! Smackdab inta that little witch's gluey ointment."

My head felt numb. {Just get a drink. Then go take a shower. Attend to your life as if she isnt even here. If that doesnt work you can always put her out 'r call the cops.} I head for the kitchen. She follows.

"Youre home earlier than last nite?" Her reflection in the window above the sink is clear: head cocked to one side, painted mouth open in mock dismay, eyelids aflutter.

I go to refrig, pour myself a glass of herbal tea. I'd been wanting a fat cup of tea the whole drive home but now didnt have the patience to warm it. "How many times have you slept with her? A-, let me guess?" In the sink stand 2tumblers filled with milky-colored water. {I suppose one could say we "slept together" 'n' not be lying}, i think to myself, imagining what nikki (still raving-on outside my head) would do with that one. I pass into the livingroom, turn on some music.

She follows, still sporting the papers. "Allow me ta read." (I have taken the liberty to omit her numerous thespian groans gasps grunts & breathy sighs thruout the following.)

My dearest nathan: I will not keep you. It is getting late. You are asleep beside me as i write. Thank you for coming to my rescue last night. I don't know what would have happened without you. Your presence over the last few days has been like (hope this doesn't strike you as corny) armorplate to my life. (I warned you, my writing is cliché and my clichés are dreadful.) § *I couldn't help but see your riddle and the lovely poem. They were inside the cover of the scrapbook when i opened it. So i don't think it would be in terribly poor taste to tell you, i fell for you years ago. And having the opportunity to know you in person has only reinforced this feeling. § I know i've been much trouble, and left you in the dark about a few things. . .and the pity of it is, we've only just met. Beside, i've asked far too much of you. I'm sorry. § I hope you will continue to be my friend. But if not, i understand. I wouldn't blame you for ducking out. I mean that. In fact, what in the world you're doing around someone like me i can't imagine. But, again, thank you so so much for being there. § Your friend, lilith.*

"Cant you see what she's doing, nate? Have you lost your grip? There's a cheap novel in here." Flicks papers with fingersnap, picks up and gulps down a daiquiri. {Must have brought her own mix.} Sets down glass. "But let's not stop there. Let's enjoy the rest of this schoolgirl drama."

On the verge of grabbing bag & jacket and shoving her out the door, i found myself with only the will to stand at the foot of the stairs in a kind of fatigued stupor. I dont think she knew i was hearing the letter for the 1sttime. While i can pity her now, so biting was her attack i failed to see the hurt it hid.

"Here, now let's read this little treasure. You'll love it." She read the riddle.

To Lilith, from nathan

What has two Ls, two i's, and one TH,
two Ns, two A's and then TH (another)?
What melts the heart, ignoring things like age,
and wantonly exclaims: "To love i'druther?"

"Ah- let us try to guess: Two platypuses playing postoffice? No? Well then, a grown man and a- . . .a child---God forgive me if I lie---screwing like alleycats on that couch right there!" She swept a purveying index over its length like a curse. "Am I warm yet? Huh? Huh?"

It suddenly occurs to me to turn up the music and go take that shower. She follows. "Next yooorr gonna tell meeee this affair isnt what it seems; that these [smacks papers] are all part of a novel youre writing, rrrright!" Her voice rising in pitch again. I enter my bedroom, in some disarray from days of being on the run. "Or maybe youre gonna tell me yoooo didnt screw the brains out of that little tramp. . .right there, on that bed!" Points at heap of blanket & rumpled sheets which gawk at us as we enter. ". . .Or whatever else you two humping hyenas did in this house! Maybe yoooo expect thiiiiis jury ta b'lieve you didnt fuck her li'l ass in every room in this house including all the closets!"

I throw my shirt toward the bathroom, turn, grab her chin with one hand, squeeze til a writhing fishmouth appears. She goes on glubglubbing in underwater fishtalk until she has delivered herself of my indictment. Only the mad hatter however could have understood the words that emerged from those pinched everted lips. Meanwhile i led her backwards by her chin to the bed and sat her down. All the way she kept up a barrage of jabbing kicks in my direction. The moment i let go, that mouth, rediscovering its old shape, started up again. "At least I used to make the bed when we were done. But that's a kid fer ya." Sitting beside her, i clap one hand over the flow of garbage, the other behind her head.

Listen, nik. I dont care if you believe this or not. Yes i do. But that doesnt matter. [claims she cant breathe] Let me finish 'n' i'll let you go. Ready? "Uhuh", she tries to nod, yes----but only after another min of angry squirming. That means NO talking. . .Agreed? Slowly i take my hands away. Unless sheer jealousy gives you license to assault the character of anyone you please, your critique of my lovelife is totally without qualification. Aching i could see, to trash my argument, she somehow bit her tung.

"How very rational. Are you done?"

I am not. Now, whereas you 'n' me mayuv screwed our brains out---as you so ladylike put it---on only our second date, Lilith 'n' me have yet to do so. In fact, we havent even kissed yet. [Pffft! she all but spit but otherwise kept silent] Beside that, i dont owe you an explanation or an apology. In fact, most people woulduv called the cops or thrown you out by now. (My rhetoric flared this last time and promptly went out for the nite.)

"Whoa. Arent we the perfect ones t'nite?" She went silent, got up, walked to the hallway, plainly tipsy but still clutching those goddamned papers. I'd hit a sore spot apparently and the blow knocked the wind out of her. Like a fool, i followed her to the kitchen for refills. I cant stand to see a creature in pain, any creature, now that her pain and not her vengeance was showing. I poured myself another tea, stood by as she mixed another daiquiri.

I cant do war, nik. Why dont you just get your things 'n' go.

She took a sip, looked away. "I still remember the stirfry dinner I made you, right here. She glanced around, looked straight into my eyes, at my bare chest, then headed for the livingrm. "It seems like only last weekend that we.... God." She sank into a chair. "Life sucks." She was crying now.

"Everyone at the shop worships you, nate. Out in the world you have mosta the ecofreaks in the palm o' your hand. Even the old sep'ratist stiffs are coming around, talking about your n-e-f. . .[her voice trailed off] But this, this 'my dearest nathan' crap has got to go. [throws papers onto centertable] Youre old enuf to be her father." [leans out, picks up snapshot of Lilith, wipes eyes with forearm] "Where is her father, anyway? Does he know some big ape more than twice her age is seducing his daughter?"

Here we go again. Shoeshit'n'shinola. A few minutes ago you called her a tramp, nik. Now she needs her daddy? Youre talking nonsense. And, yes. He does know. An' you keep harping on this age thing like it makes any diff'rence. Why? Youre not exactly whistler's mother yourself. Tho meant as a compliment, only a fool mentions age during an argument.

"I beg your pardon. Just turned twennysix myself. I've had my drivers' license for ten years, not one, like your little soulmate here. [waves snapshot] And I've been outa college for as long as little lolitha here's been getting her period." Did she say lolitha? Flicks foto, which wedges under scrapbook as tho some pixie is helping me live up to my promise to take care of it.

Lilith is in college, nik. She's not only a scholarship student but is more mature than alot of other adults i know. If your behavior, for example, is mature, i'll take Lilith's any day, thanx. I turn away, take the stairs two-at-a-time for that shower. As i turn the upper landing i see her starting up. Sweetgeezus. I duck into the bath for privacy. The door does not close all the way due to my shirt being wedged there.

Her voice arrives first. "So what am I supposed to do while you go off and practice free sex with strangers. [pushes door open] If you think I'm gonna wait around while you fuck every schoolgirl who takes a fancy t' you, youve got shitferbrains, charley."

Shit screw tramp fuck. [slam my things into already jammed hamper] What a total trashmouth youve got, nik.

Jousting from the doorway, she judges me with a javelin index & imperious hubris. "I'd rather have trashmouth than trash behavior like you, mister chester molester. You need ta shower with heavy chemicals."

An' what about you 'n' mutt last year. Should i come your kinda clean too?

"O? Are you saying I was supposed to wait around darnin socks like penelope while you exchanged body fluids with that doe-eyed novelist? You think I didnt hear about that?"

I turned on the water: I see what youre doing, nik. You're trying to make our last time alone together as memorable as possible! Now my voice is rising. What, short of throwing her bodily out the door, can bring this stupidity to an end? I had lived enuf theater, seen enuf female tears in the last week to enthral the most sadistic drama coach. As i stepped in the shower, closed the door, i saw her enter, still carrying that frigging snapshot. Kryyst! Now she's in here!

"Who's this other girl? Her sister? [i say nothing] Have ya screwed her too? Or maybe theyre siamese twins. [she's yelling now] Two for the prize of one. [i swear she said prize but the water is running hard now] That could be fun...! Think about it. Using hookedup cripples you could throw yourself on the mercy o' the court, tell the judge you figured their combined ages made fucking them legal. If he has a sense o' humor, who knows, you may only get five years. . .apiece!. . .pardon my french again." She's found her stride and seems loving it.

I was so tired the rush of water made me dizzy. It was my first hot shower in months (my usual is lukewarm & superlow-usage) and i planned on staying in there til she was gone. Are you planning to hangaround 'n' talk filthy til i throw you out?

She did. "I'm not even warmed up yet!" The thought that this might be true scared me. I could see the wavy blur of her standing in the middle of the bathroom. It looked like she was just staring toward the shower. O great. I turned up the hot, hoping to steam her away. "I've had it with you 'n' your size-one girlfriends, nathan schock! I shouldnuv known all along what you always wanted was to fuck someone who still plays with dollies 'n' who cant tell a hymen from a hymnal!"

All at once it occurred to me {The windows are open!} I pictured my neighbors, outfront in the morning with their little daughters, pointing at my house, shaking fingers no-no-no, turning their tricycles around, heading them back home. Unable to believe what was happening, i came out of the shower soaked & dripping {Fergot that damn bathmat again!}, pulled on a towel, went around slamming windows like a wildman. Slam. Slam. Other bedroom, slam. Came out, slam: hall window. Return to bedroom. Ya know, i wish i had all this venom of yours on video. I know you well enuf to know, a replay in six months would make you puke for a week. An' ta think, Lilith likes you, says nice things about you all the time. . .admires you even! You are a very cruel person, nikki mckinney.

"At least I'm not bedding little boys in the sunny countryside of america. I should have known you had this dark side."

Nathan the minotaurus? That did it. <That's quite enuf of the real you, thank you. Could ya go back t' faking it?> I threw her on the bed.

"What're ya gonna do now, fuck me too?"

That would fit in neatly with your little plan, wouldnt it?

"I know! Wait! Lemme go put on my first communion dress!"

Shutup, nik. How did i ever miss your being a cunt with teeth? [now maybe i shouldnuv said that but there it is. And maybe i shouldnuv recounted most of this b-grade drama but there it is too. I've always been too honest for my own good----my own *civil* good] Now yer gonna listen, then youre outa here. I remind you, again: Lilith is in college. Most females her age around the world are married 'n' pregnant with their second kid. [she goes to sit up. I push her down] I'm not done. An' most women her age mentally are at least in their

forties. Finally, to answer your rude question (which is really none of your goddamned business): I havnt been t' bed with (or screwed, as you put it so rudely), either Lilith or any of her relatives 'r friends.

Out of a corner of my eye i catch sight of us in a dresser mirror, suddenly feel ridiculous. There i am, wet, nearly naked & emotionally involved in a type of behavior that repulses me. The mere sight of us jams my gymnologizing at its source. I grab the foto out of her hand, walk to the dresser, pop open a drawer to tuck it under my. . . {Great! Now i'm fresh outa underwear too!} I hear her marching now from room to room, mumbling, sniffing. {Looking for more red herrings?} Whimpering, she thumps slowly downstairs.

I sit on the bed, head in hands, staring at the rug, tears threatening but not coming. Thank you, logos of lacryma! Here, in one fell swoop, 'simply' for having lunch with a brilliant & beautiful young woman, then having her over to my apt for a couple hours one afternoon, nikki had demoted me from friend & lover to a state of resident-alien anonymous sperm donor. A moment later she appears in the doorway with jacket & handbag. Saying nothing she reaches in her bag, takes out a small pistol and---sobbing shaking---aims it at my groin and pulls the trigger. . .as the credits begin to roll upward on the screen. I mean, what ending, reader (short of fire & brimstone) would not be anticlimactic after the week i've had?

Trying to get back into harpie mode, she slips into her jacket, slings her bag over her shoulder. Instead of grabbing a gun (a basically moral woman), she throws her copy of the house key at me. "I dont even have a fucking ring to throw at you after all this time!" She grabs the doorhandle, as if to steady herself, and bawls, "I'll send the first pimp I screw to get my things. . .or maybe I'll just run into the street 'n' get hit by a truck." With that, she bolts from the room, down the stairs and out the door, slamming it after her with a vengeance. My stomach lurches.

Mins later, down in the greatroom, i am dragging cushions off the couch, wrestling with them in dumb silence on the floor. Lying there, wrapped in a towel, face buried, too exhausted even to cry, i wished for a switch i could flip that would make me sleep for a week. Mins after that, sure she was long gone, i heard what i soon realized were the tires of her little machine. They screamed a last epithet at my startled frontdoor and carried her off.