

from:

Sweet Dark Places

by Lesléa Newman
Herbooks, Santa Cruz, 1991

Rage

(for Linda, 1960-1988)

I

I saw the best women of my generation destroyed
by incest:

the woman who eats a pound of M&M's, a gallon of
ice cream and a dozen donuts every night,

bloating her body into a ship to carry her away
the woman who eats nothing at all, a true shrinking
violet living on thin air until the day she
disappears

the woman who slits her skin with a razor cut cut cut
her beautiful arms blooming red pain

the woman who sits alone with the TV on and the burglar
alarm on for eight long years

the woman who won't let her lover touch her and
the woman who demands to be touched right now

the woman who has fourteen lovers and the woman
who has no friends

the woman who walks up 42nd street in a fake leather
skirt and real high heels strutting her stuff
through New York City slush

the woman who poses naked for playboy penthouse forum
her tits airbrushed and frozen forever

the woman who works as a therapist specializing in
child sexual abuse holding workshops 7 days a week
4 weeks a month 12 months a year and still
it isn't enough

the woman who breaks into a cold sweat every night
before she goes to sleep afraid to have that
nightmare again

the woman who hasn't remembered yet and the woman
who isn't sure

the woman who walks up and down the hall of the state
 hospital in a baggy green dress trying to recall
 her own name
 the woman who drinks to forget and the woman who
 shoots drugs to forget and the woman who shoots
 herself to forget
 the woman who died of uterine cancer holding her
 father's hand
 the woman who thinks her lousy job is good enough
 the woman who thinks her lousy husband is good enough
 the woman who can't say no and the woman who can't
 say yes
 the woman whose therapist says she made it up
 the woman whose mother says she made it up
 the woman whose mother says you're right your father
 is a sick man but what can I do
 the woman whose mother says if you go to court I'll
 testify against you
 the woman who cried screamed yelled vomited shook
 whimpered punched pillows cursed and let herself
 be held in workshops all around the country trying
 to feel just a little bit better
 Anne Amy Arachne Becky Betty Beth Barbara Carol Cathy
 Deb Debbie Debra Deborah Diane Donna Ellen Emma
 Elizabeth Faith Gail Gloria Heather Hilary Ilene Irene Jane
 Jan Jean Joan June Joanne Julie Joleen Kathy Kelly Leslie
 Lisa Lizzie Lilly Linda Laurie Margaret Marilyn Mary
 Marianne Mary Jane Mary Beth Maya Marla Nancy Naomi
 Norma Oprah Peggy Paula Pam Patty Prudy Quesida
 Roberta Rita Rachel Robin Rebecca Sue Susan Suzanne
 Sally Sara Sheryl Sheila Tara Toni Ula Vicky Viv Valerie
 Wendy Wanda Yvette Yvonne Yolanda Zelda and me

II

He told me I was pretty
 He told me I was special
 He told me I was his best girl
 He told me he would bring me presents
 He told me he would give me money
 He told me I made him feel good
 He told me it was fun
 He told me it was a game
 He told me it wouldn't hurt
 He told me nothing
 He told me I would get to heaven faster
 He told me there was something wrong with me
 because I didn't like it
 He told me there was something wrong with me
 because I did like it
 He told me to touch him
 He told me to kiss him
 He told me to get undressed
 He told me to lie still
 He told me to be quiet
 He told me to shut up
 He told me to stop crying
 He told me to hurry up
 He told me to open my mouth
 He told me to open my legs
 He told me to turn over
 He told me not to tell
 He told me not to tell anyone
 He told me never to tell anyone
 He said it was our secret
 He said if I told I could get hurt
 He said if I told Mama could get hurt
 He said if I told the police would come
 He said if I told they would take me away

He said if I told they wouldn't believe me anyway
He called me pussy cat
He called me little lady
He called me sweetheart
He called me angel
He called me good girl
He called me tramp
He called me whore
He called me cunt
He said now you're used goods
He said now no one will want you
He said if I didn't let him he would tell
He said if I didn't let him he would tell Mommy
He said if I didn't let him he would tell teacher
He said if I didn't let him he would tell my friends
He said everyone would laugh at me
He said everyone would think I was dirty
He said everyone would think I was filthy
He said someday you'll thank me for this
He said you're lucky not everyone gets treated
this way
He said stand up
He said get dressed
He said go outside and play

III

"If my father abused me, I'd never speak to him again."

But he was my Daddy
He rode me high on his shoulders on top of the world
He carried me up to bed and tucked me in when I
fell asleep on the way home from Grandma's
He made me a birthday cake shaped like a clown
He took the training wheels off my bike and
ran behind me so I wouldn't fall
He helped me with my homework
He taught me how to fish
He took a splinter out of my hand with a needle
He played catch with me so I wouldn't throw like a girl
He fed me chocolate ice cream when they took my
tonsils out
He pushed me on the swings so high I kicked a cloud
He read me The Cat In The Hat every night after supper
He clapped the very loudest at my clarinet recital
He let me put the star on top of the Christmas tree
He let me pick out all the Chanukah candles
He told my brother to stop calling me a baby
He told my mother I didn't have to finish my peas
He told me I was pretty when the other kids
called me carrot top
He bought me a car when I finished high school
He sent me chocolate chip cookies every month
my first year of college
He walked me down the aisle in a rented tuxedo and
gave me away with tears in his eyes
He raped me when I was two
He raped me when I was five
He raped me when I was three weeks old
He raped me when I was seventeen
He raped me when I was nine

He raped me when I was four
He raped me when I was twelve
He raped me when I was one and a half
But he was my Daddy

IV

When our daddies come
into our room at night
we leave our bodies
and fly out the window
up to the stars
past the houses and the trees
and all the parked cars
past the sun and the moon
and Mercury and Mars
to the Planet of the Angels
which is very, very far
There's an Angel there for everyone
there's even one for me
She has long black hair
and a shiny gold dress
she's pretty as can be
She sits me in her lap
She rocks me in her arms
She sings a little song for me
to keep me safe from harm

I sit on her lap
until my father my daddy my step-father
my grandfather my godfather my papa my pop
my uncle my brother my brother's friend
my sister's friend my sister's boyfriend
my mother's boyfriend my fourth grade teacher
my sixth grade teacher my piano teacher
my babysitter my doctor my dentist
my neighbor my priest my mailman
is finished
then it's time to go home
My Angel cries
and I cry

but she has to send me back
My Angel cries
and I cry
but she has to send me back

V

Dr. Morgan
Dr. Elizabeth Morgan
Dr. Elizabeth Morgan sat in jail
Dr. Elizabeth Morgan sat in jail
for days and days and days and days and days
Dr. Elizabeth Morgan sat in jail
for 759 days to be exact
Dr. Elizabeth Morgan sat in jail for 759 days
because she wouldn't tell
Dr. Elizabeth Morgan sat in jail
in an orange jumpsuit
with her arms folded
for 759 days
because she wouldn't tell
where Hilary was
her daughter Hilary
her five year old daughter Hilary
Because if Dr. Morgan told
If Dr. Elizabeth Morgan told
where Hilary was
her daughter Hilary
her five year old daughter Hilary
If Dr. Elizabeth Morgan told where her five year
old daughter Hilary was
Her five year old daughter Hilary would have to go
back to Daddy

Daddy says he didn't do it
Daddy says he didn't do anything
Daddy says he loves Hilary
Daddy says Dr. Elizabeth Morgan is crazy
Daddy says Dr. Elizabeth Morgan is a very sick woman
Daddy is suing Dr. Elizabeth Morgan for a lot of money
Daddy is suing his first wife for a lot of money too

Daddy says his first wife is crazy just like Dr. Elizabeth Morgan

Daddy's first wife says Daddy did it to Heather
Heather is Hilary's half-sister
Heather is older than Hilary

Dr. Morgan

Dr. Elizabeth Morgan

Dr. Elizabeth Morgan divorced Daddy

Dr. Elizabeth Morgan says Hilary was getting depressed

Dr. Elizabeth Morgan says her daughter Hilary was getting suicidal

Dr. Elizabeth Morgan says her five year old daughter Hilary stuck a spoon inside herself to show Dr. Elizabeth Morgan what Daddy did

Dr. Elizabeth Morgan took a picture of her five year old daughter Hilary sticking a spoon inside herself to show the world what Daddy did

Daddy says this shows just how very sick Dr. Elizabeth Morgan is

The judge listens to Dr. Elizabeth Morgan

The judge listens to Daddy

The judge nods his head

The judge bangs his gavel

The judge says Hilary can spend the night with Daddy

Dr. Elizabeth Morgan says over my dead body

Dr. Elizabeth Morgan sends Hilary into hiding

The judge sends Dr. Elizabeth Morgan to jail

Daddy goes home

The judge goes home

I want my mommy

VI

In a survey taken from a random sample of 930 women, 38% said they had experienced sexual abuse before the age of eighteen.

Thirty-eight percent.

What does that mean?

It means more than a third.

More than a third.

It means when you're drinking root beer and eating french fries at Friendly's with Marlene and Patricia one of you is a survivor

It means when your daughter's sixth grade gym class is out on the volleyball courts 11 of those 30 little girls are survivors

It means when 50 women arrive at the Y on Saturday morning in hot pink tights and sweatbands all ready for aerobics 19 of them are survivors

It means when 5,000 women show up at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival to eat rice and beans, admire each other and listen to music under the stars 1900 of them are survivors

Survivors hitting the snooze button on their alarm clocks

Survivors playing hooky from school

Survivors who were up all night with the baby

Survivors who were up all night with themselves

Survivors yelling at their brothers to hurry up so they can use the bathroom

Survivors gulping coffee

Survivors eating jelly donuts
Survivors on a health food kick eating brown rice for
breakfast
Survivors stuck in traffic
Survivors stuck in the subway
Survivors stuck in the house
Survivors working at home stuffing envelopes
Survivors driving their kids to school
Survivors taking their kids to the park
Survivors getting their hair done
Survivors at the doctor's office
Survivors at the dentist's office
Survivors at the therapist's office
Survivors watching the soaps
Survivors on the soaps
Survivors working in clothing stores jewelry stores
hardware stores bookstores music stores
antique stores furniture stores liquor stores
drugstores department stores and toy stores
Survivors working in factories
Survivors dealing drugs
Survivors dealing with their feelings
Survivors teaching nursery school
Survivors playing at nursery school
Survivors working at nursing homes
taking care of other Survivors
Survivors working in hospitals
taking care of other Survivors
Survivors cooking food in restaurants
Survivors serving food in restaurants
Survivors eating food in restaurants
Survivors delivering the mail
Survivors reading the mail
Survivors typing letters
Survivors typing poems
Survivors going to court

Survivors performing operations
Survivors performing at Carnegie Hall
Survivors cooking supper for their husbands
Survivors cooking supper for their lovers
Survivors cooking supper for themselves
Survivors watching the evening news
Survivors on the evening news
Survivors going to the movies
Survivors going to the women's bar
Survivors doing their homework
Survivors talking on the phone
Survivors washing their hair
Survivors taking an adult education class
Survivors wondering if it's gonna rain tomorrow
Survivors wondering if they're gonna get through
tomorrow
Survivors ironing their clothes
Survivors having a midnight snack
Survivors making love
Survivors going to bed alone
Survivors who don't survive

VII

What do I want after all these years?
I want to cut it off
I want to cut it off
 with a long sharp knife
I want to cut it off
 with a long sharp knife
 very slowly
I want to cut it off
 with a long sharp knife
 very slowly
 with you wide awake and screaming
I want you to be afraid
I want you to be afraid all the time
I want you to be depressed
I want you to lose your job
I want you to lose your job
 because you call in sick too often
I want you to call in sick
 because you're crying too hard
 to get out of bed many mornings
I want your wife to leave you
I want your wife to say
 I'm sick of dealing with this
I want you to feel lousy
I want you to feel like shit
I want you to hate your body
I want you to drop out of school
I want you to spend all your money on therapy
I want you to get electroshock treatment
I want you to take Thorazine
I want you to spend a long time in the state hospital
I want you to be homeless
I want you to have nightmares
I want you to lose your appetite

I want you to bite off all your fingernails
I want you to have insomnia
I want you to have headaches
I want you to have stomach aches
I want your whole body to shake uncontrollably
 at odd intervals
I want you to commit suicide
I want you to not live up to your potential
I want you to embroider a scarlet R across your chest
I want you to say you did it
I want you to say you did it
 in front of five million people
I want your picture on the cover of Time Life Newsweek
I want you to say you're sorry
I want you to know I will never forgive you
I want you to feel all this rage
 and not know what to do with it

VIII

Healing Song

I believe you
I believe you
I believe you
I believe you

It wasn't your fault
You were a child
You were innocent
You were pure beauty and light

I will protect you
I will comfort you
I will hold you
I will heal you

He will never look at you again
He will never talk to you again
He will never touch you again
He will never hurt you again

I will protect you
I will comfort you
I will hold you
I will heal you

It wasn't your fault
You were a child
You were innocent
You were pure beauty and light

I believe you
I believe you

I believe you
I believe you

I believe you
I believe you
I believe you
I believe you

I believe you

Notes

Part I

The first line of the poem is modeled after Allen Ginsberg's poem, "Howl."

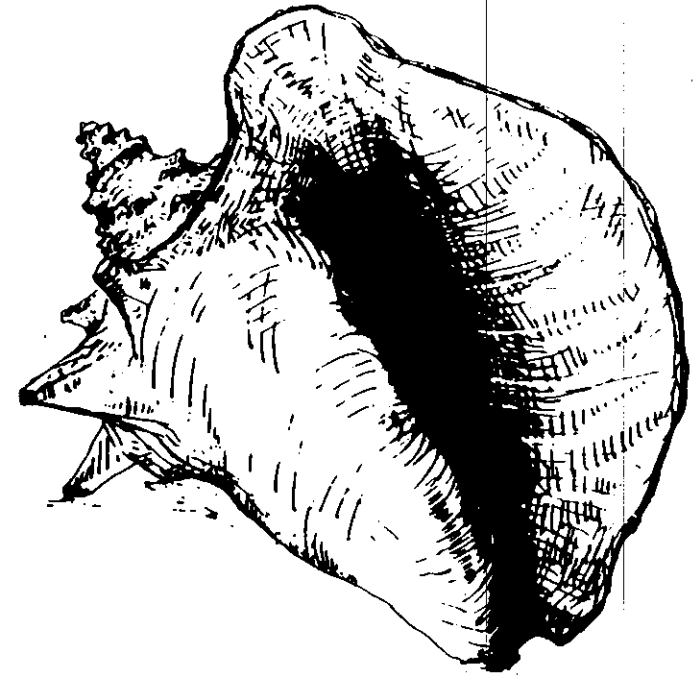
Part V

Dr. Elizabeth Morgan alleges that her former husband, Dr. Eric Foretich sexually abused their daughter Hilary, a charge that Dr. Foretich denies. In 1987, a judge ordered Dr. Morgan to allow five year old Hilary unsupervised overnight visits with her father. Rather than place her daughter in what she considered to be a dangerous situation, Dr. Morgan sent Hilary into hiding and was jailed on contempt charges. She was freed after twenty-five months. At the time of this writing, Hilary's whereabouts remain unknown to protect her safety.

Part VI

Statistic courtesy of *The Secret Trauma*, Diana Russell, Basic Books, 1986.

Part II:



Separate Griefs