

# INSIDE SECRETS

Stories I've Never Told Anyone



Angela Treat Lyon

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**Angela Treat Lyon**

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## INSIDE SECRETS

# Table of Contents

1	Shylee
9	Beary Bear's Dad
14	Martha
16	Fido
18	Harold
24	Otto
29	Sylvester
32	Buddy
35	Bella
39	Oliver
47	Selby
50	Jesse
52	Gus
54	Carlos
57	Petey
59	Elightabeth
63	Sam
69	Felix
76	Hubert

## INSIDE SECRETS

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**And...**

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**Thanks!**

# **INSIDE SECRETS**

**Stories I've Never Told Anyone**

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# FOREWORD

Well, maybe it might be better to call it 'Backword' - I've been looking over the stories here and shaking my head in wonder. How did I get through all the terrible, shocking events that have happened to me, without crashing from multiple heart attacks? My first thought upon asking myself that was that I must be so thick that the Universe has had to clobber me with emotional 2x4s in order for its lessons to get through.

And then I thought ... hey wait - what lessons? Hah! As if I didn't know. Be kind. Be honest. Be careful. Be heartfelt. Speak your truth even if it's scary. Support others when and where you can. Be selfless. And so on.

But I knew all that ... didn't I? Apparently not - especially the Be Careful one. I grew up out in the unwild burbs of Long Island, and had not even a shred of street smarts upon entering the Real World.

But somehow I was able to live in, navigate in, and not get lost or find myself pregnant or diseased or murdered in my time living in NYC. Close, but not.

Somehow, I have survived traveling the world, and getting intimate with enough technology that I now have dear friends all over the globe.

Somehow, I managed to beget two marvelous children who have grown into marvelous adults with their own marvelous offspring.

## INSIDE SECRETS

Somehow, I even have been able to produce a fairly decent body of pretty diversified artwork, and a bevy of books I'm even proud of.

I'm OK with all that, and even grateful to have lasted long enough to be a rickety old crone, looking back and being amazed at it all.

I hope you enjoy these tales - they are all true.

# THE ART

This series of black, white, and blue drawings came to me as a complete surprise. I had been learning how to draw on a couple of new art apps on my ipad, and found myself getting flustered and frustrated at how complex they seemed. So I took a break, and went back to an app I've been using for a couple of years. It's about the simplest one I've ever found, and yet allows me to produce exactly what I want.

People ask me how I get the ideas and images I come up with. I guarantee you, they are nothing I'd come up with on my own. They all come from That Someplace Else. Sometimes I get flashes of complete sculptures or paintings when I walk down the street or while I'm driving. They explode into my head like flash bombs.

Thankfully, they sear themselves into my brain and disappear again so fast that I've never had a car wreck or walked into anything. Yet. And they won't go away until I have created them. They bug me if I take too long.

They come in dreams, long and short. They come in that in-between phase right when I start to fall asleep as I take an afternoon nap. And they come as I hear people talking - on radio shows, ads, conversation, emails, in social media posts - you name it. POP! There it is, right in my head, done. All I have to do is make it live in mundane materials in the manifest world. Hah! Easier visualized than done, most times.

## INSIDE SECRETS

So I'm sitting here opening my little app, when I get this idea to just make simple, crude, dynamic parts-of-critters and people drawings. In blue. Kind of portraity things.

"Hmmm. In blue. OK!"

I 'saw' the whole process - blue first, on black. I can't erase in this app, so if I draw in blue, it will underlie the lines I do in white later, and no one can see the goofs and mistakes.

So after the blue goes in, I pretend that a brilliant light is streaming into the frame from the left. No, I have no clue why the left ... So then I proceed to do the light areas, and leave the dark ones.

To my astonishment, many of these drawings, once complete, showed two distinct beings. One in whites, the other in blues. You'll see.

I start to draw what I hear outside - everyone knows I love birdies, right? So I'm attuned to hearing them. As soon as I opened to the first image, more and more ideas came. Until they stopped. Press the Thatness as much as I can, no more images of that style emerge. OK, fine.

Then I get that I'm supposed to tell some of the stories of my life that I've never told anyone before, and combine them with these drawings. Drawings that, to me, have exactly nothing to do with my life. How odd.

## INSIDE SECRETS

Then I ask, which segment of my life do you want me to write about first?  
And I get the rape story - blam! - as if I'd tuned my inner radio dial to it.

So I write it and combine it with the chosen image.

And do the same for the other images. And the cover.

Some of the images don't really go with the stories. I questioned that, and got no reply. OK - well, so be it. Be that way.

I think they are really odd drawings. So - I called them the Odd Portraits.  
Clever, eh? I hope you like and enjoy them, and their appointed stories.

## INSIDE SECRETS



# SHYLEE: Searching

I was 13 years old the first time I was raped. Not to worry, this will not be a rant or a self-pity party. Just a story about overcoming evil who took the form of a 'nice' man everyone liked and respected. Maybe more of a cautionary tale. I guess.

The summer before my sophomore year, my mother thought it would be a good thing to get my teeth taken care of before I was sent away to school in the fall. Well-thought-of in the community, not overly expensive, doing good work, Dr. Rosen (close, but not his real name) was her choice.

**Week One** was all about x-rays and all that.

**Week Two** was “Nurse, would you please go get (some medical supply) for me?” as he then cheerfully placed his hand on my thigh, reassuring me that this was going to be a safe and easy procedure. Surely, with how gentle he was, he meant well. Right?

My family lived way out of town. Our nearest neighbors were half a mile away. I had zero street smarts. I had no clue what was going on.

Molestation is a sneaky, complex thing. No one talks about how thrilling it is for a young girl, just budding into her sexuality, to get the attention of an older, more mature man who seems like he likes her and wants to please her. So his hand on my thigh was exciting, quite literally breath-taking.

## INSIDE SECRETS

I went home that day all stirred up inside. I had no idea it was wrong of him to touch me. I had no idea it was what we'd call grooming, now. I just knew it had felt nice.

**Week Three**, I made sure to wear my nice summer dress. It was easy for him to slide up closer to the Treasure. A longer stroke, a caress this time.

I look back and am astounded that Nursie didn't catch on why this man kept forgetting important items she had to keep going out of the room to get. Then again, maybe she was part of his scheme.

**Week Four**, he invaded the Outer Limits of the Treasure Cave, his short stubby fingers pulling away my little-girl cotton undies to just barely graze the goods. My back arched involuntarily with surprise and pleasure.

Nurse came back in earlier than expected ... he yanked his hand away *fast*.

It was so exciting! I'd wanted him to touch me! And by then, I intuitively knew it was wrong, so it was a double-edge thrill. I knew my mother would shit bricks if she knew. But, guilty as I felt, I liked having such attention.

**Week Five** had Nurse away for a conference. "Mrs. B., would you wait out in the waiting room, please? I'm sure you don't want to sit and watch a bunch of boring drilling and filling!" Ma went out to wait for me.

This time, there was no soft, gentle touch.

## INSIDE SECRETS

The classic if you tell anyone message. The tearing down of innocent cotton panties, the pushing of a big thing where it certainly had no business being.

This time, it didn't feel good. It wasn't exciting. It was terrifying. And it hurt! This formerly mild, handsome man became a fiendish brute whose big hand jammed my mouth shut, ripped my bottom lip open as his other tugged down my pants. He clambered on top of me and desecrated the Treasure with his rapid, erratic, jolting, flailing, squirming, pushing hulk.

You can put a long, empty-feeling pause here.

The word shock will never suffice.

**My mother was** a woman who believed the best of everyone. I guess that's where I got it, because I did, too. I actually still do, tending to assume a person's innocence until it's glaringly obvious I was so wrong. And to forgive, probably too quickly.

I can't stand the idea of hate, having been its brunt in school for many years. I can't stand the idea of bullying, either, having borne it at home my entire childhood.

Not the mean, nasty, intentional outright bullying we think of, getting into dire fights, but 'cute' bullying, 'funny' bullying - "don't you think you're too fat for that dress? Better go change...ha ha ha," like that. "Oh you don't like being tickled till you pee? Too bad, ha ha ha.'

## INSIDE SECRETS

I had already expressed a desire to focus on art, but the message from the family was, “We’ll put you through art school, but it’s too bad you’re just a girl, because (loud sighing) of course you’ll never be a successful artist. You’ll just end up getting married and making babies and giving it all up.”

The underlying attitude that I was not enough, or good enough, was so sneaky, so invisible, so normal I just accepted it as How Things Are. It was a constant erosion of self-worth by abrasive, well-hidden, supposedly funny, jokey-but-not-at-all comments and sharply barbed ‘fun.’

**But my mother was** no dummy. She knew right away that something was Wrong with me. I was suddenly too quiet, letting my hair fall forward to hide, my face strained, pallid with fear of people finding out.

Mind you, this was 1958, when you were called ‘slut’ and ‘hussy’ if anyone found out you’d even kissed anyone, much less being Done Wrong. “You should be ashamed of yourself, leading him on like that. What were you wearing...” “Who is he? You’ll marry him tomorrow!”

**Week Six**, I dug my heels in and utterly refused to go my next appointment. My Treasure Cave itched like mad. I asked my mother to take me to the other kind of doctor. Who discovered I now had a kind of thrush only gotten through doing the dirty with someone infected.

I bless that fact, because otherwise, I’d have never told her what happened. I was too shocked, betrayed, embarrassed and humiliated. Devastated. I didn’t

## INSIDE SECRETS

have those words to describe how I felt at the time. I just knew there must be something fundamentally Wrong with me that this had happened.

But as much as I thought about it, I couldn't figure it out, thinking it must have been all my fault. I must have deserved to be hurt. I wasn't a good person. I ought not to have let him. I shouldn't have felt good being touched by him. I should have known he was a liar, a predator, a beast. On and on like that.

My mother started asking other mothers in the community. Is your daughter being shy all of a sudden? Angry? Withdrawn? Not as out-going, fun, or enthusiastic?

She found six other girls. Not just in our state, but in two other states ours bordered. The mothers got together and got the guy arrested and thrown in jail. It was never reported by the news, or in the papers. Because it was such a shocking thing, we never told my father, who'd have killed him, for sure, and most likely with his bare hands.

**Just one man's arrogance** caused decades of pain for so many people. Two of the girls went off the rails and suicided by age 19. One died of an overdose.

What makes men think it's OK to shove hands, fingers, tongues and man-things where they don't belong?

What makes them so desperate for self-gratification that they run rough-shod

## INSIDE SECRETS

all over a girl or woman - or a boy, for that matter - with not one whit of regard for the well-being of their hapless victim, on any level?

I was lucky. If not for that itch, I'd never have had any support from my mother. I'd have stressed over telling anyone about that incident forever all by myself. I did carry guilt, shame and devastating self-blame around for 35 more years.

I've never told a single soul about that dentist until now. Not even my well-meaning friends, and certainly not school counselors or the therapists I saw later on. I didn't trust a single one of them. I just wanted to die, so the pain would go away. I thought it would, anyway. Turns out that isn't the case.

**Isn't it amazing** that someone can endure such deep depression and the constant onslaught of consistent, destructive thinking, every single day, for so long, and not actually give in and do the ending deed? I think it is.

I bless the steady pull to make art as my first salvation. I know I wouldn't have survived a single year without it.

I bless the people who kept me out of that black hole of hell, every single day not allowing me to slip back in. Because I never told anyone my secret, they had no idea they were being such stalwart allies, saving my life with almost every conversation. They didn't know I sucked in the sound of their upbeat, inspiring or consoling voices like a hungry sponge.

Most of all, I bless and am so grateful for the existence of a strong sense of

## INSIDE SECRETS

Being within myself that refused to cave in. I don't know how I have it, but I'm sure glad it's there.

**If you see someone who** wears their hair like Shylee, know that they're struggling more within their being than you could ever imagine.

That they believe they are no good, and can't even express how awful they feel. That they don't think anyone gives a rat's rear end about them, despite hearing "I love you" from family and friends. It doesn't sink in.

**And. Please - I'm OK.** I ask you to refrain from thinking that you're so sorry this happened. I'm not. That 35-year struggle resulted in a steel-strong sense of Right and Wrong and a Self that just won't quit.

I believe we are all here to love, be loved, and have experiences both joyous and not. That one and its long effects, and a couple of others like it, were not so joyous ... until I finally was able to accept that, no matter what, I'm OK. I'm absolutely OK, just as I am. So I'm at peace.

**Afterthought:** I'm sure her heart wasn't cold or stony - just hurt. I think of all the hard times she went through - both world wars, the Korean War, the Depression, her husband losing EVERYthing in the crash of '29 - stinking rich to losing it all overnight - and yet she somehow kept going . . . .

## INSIDE SECRETS



# BEARY BEAR'S DAD, BURT: Mellow

Burt is the kind of dad everyone should have. He holds little babies as if they were the gods' own precious lights; plays with the toddlers; treats little girls and boys to merry-go-rounds, lots of colorfully illustrated books, pencils, and art supplies; Tonka trucks, small-hand size tools and paints, encyclopedias, roller skates and skis; and young men and women as if they were worlds better than royalty.

Burt was given to me when I was little. Everyone else thought he was Pooh, but I didn't like that it sounded like he was being pooh-poohed, so I secretly called him Burt. We snuck ginger snaps from the cupboard together.

When I had the run-in with the dentist, Burt became my very, very, very best friend. He held me tight as I laid there splayed on my bed, unmoving, staring at a blurred ceiling, numb, like human ice, unbelieving, wishing for someone who could tell me who I really was and that I might be lovable and that I'd never be betrayed by any person or my own body ever again.

Alas, Burt didn't come to boarding school with me. Yes, I went to boarding school. There's a lot of hooaha about how awful it is to send your kid away, and overall I'd agree, especially if the kid is younger than thirteen.

But I loved being away, even without Burt. I got to start anew. I got to be someone other than The Horrible Dentist's Victim that I saw reflected in my mother's eyes. Remember, she and I decided never to tell anyone. It was a

## INSIDE SECRETS

gruesome bond between us, but it stuck, and I'm glad, because she was a distant mom, and it was a deep bond I could feel even if I was all the way across the planet from her. But it was still great to be away.

**I got to be someone other** than the Awful Disobeying Daughter to my dad and the Utterly Tease-able Little Sister to my brothers.

I got to laugh and tell awful teenager jokes and be silly-funny even when I was desperately hurting inside.

I got to be The Artist in a group of non-artists. Well, until I roomed with Holly, who was worlds beyond me. Still, it was fun to be Known for Something other than my fragile emotional or physical state.

Isn't it funny that, looking back on the whole ordeal that dentist put me through, Beary Bear's dad, Burt, is the first 'person' who comes to mind. He was so chock full of love, genuine caring, and steadfast patience when I was still too young to have words to describe the terror of contemplating a future populated with lying, violating men it it.

He held me even when I laid there wondering how could I tell if anyone was telling the truth. I still can't tell, sometimes.

It was so precious to be held (sort of), loved, consoled, encouraged by such a sweet, non-judgmental being. Yes, I made it up that he held me, and isn't it amazing that, having been so violated, I even *could* make it up?!?

## INSIDE SECRETS

Some people are like Burt, but why can't more be like that? Why couldn't my family be like that? Why don't we train our kids and each other to be more like that? Why do we so casually put up with less?

Why did my dad and brothers have to do their smug, mocking hush-hush, 'oh baby's upset, let's tease her to try and find out what it's about' campaign, relentlessly needling me, even when I said I'd never tell a soul.

And I didn't, until just now.  
As if it was anyone's business but mine.

**I'm telling now because** it is Time to tell one of my own stories, personal evidence of crimes committed upon women, revealing another small person's experience of the horror women face, bringing it to the light, to the forefront of consciousness.

One small person's story and the awareness engendered from that, added to another and another, and soon we have a tsunami of NO MORE that will forever change the tides of human behavior.

It's Time to rip apart the calm, accepted, complacency we have towards the actions of men who perpetrate violation of space and being, to put an end to their arrogant disrespect and disregard.

It's bloody well Time to stop people from treating anyone, male or female, as if they are lower than dogs or rats.

## INSIDE SECRETS

Yes, Angela can keep secrets until eternity if she has to. And will. There are more to expose, but not right now.

How I bless my dear, dear Burt - he kept me from absolutely losing it to the spiraling-down, giddy despair of destructive emotional turmoil.

If only all the others who experience such pain had Burt to hold them, too.

## INSIDE SECRETS



## BACKING UP A BIT... to MARTHA, SUNFACED

Well, so now I've started this new series of drawings. I'd been working on a whole nother story, and suddenly, these popped into my brain and demanded release. I can't help it. I just keep seeing all these new beings, and have to draw them, before the inner clamor drives me batty.

This is *the Odd Portraits Series*. Critters and humans.

I start them out by doing the underdrawing all in blue against the black. Then I go over it with white, and include areas to radiate the light, leaving out the dark shadows. To make, erm, the shadows. I like how the blue looks against the black, and the white over all.

And how silly Martha is. I hope this series isn't all serious and hang-dog - I'd rather laugh a lot. I guess I'll see - I really have no idea going in what any series will be like. Sometimes I will do 3 drawings and that's that - not much of a series, really.

Other times, like this one, I'll get 12 to 20 images in a flash and it's all I can do to keep up with them. If Martha sets the tone, I have a feeling this series will be more fun than pain. I sure hope so.

## INSIDE SECRETS



# FIDO: In Shadow

And of course there is Fido - he wouldn't allow me to leave him out!

I love Fido. He is faithful, calm, loyal and very wise. He knows just when I'm hurting inside, because he comes up to my side and rests his head on my lap, and looks up at me with those big crystalline brown eyes that tell me, "No worries, My-Human, I've got this! You just relax!"

Too bad he isn't on this physical plane of being! I miss being the human for my other dog who lived with me for ten blessed years in the 90s.

Who are you human for?

Who is your dog or cat or other critter friend?

Do you suppose you and your critter would like to ride to the Moon with me on my Moon Broom? What will you do once you get to the Moon with us?

What other adventures would you like to have?

These are important questions! How often so you give conscious thought to these things? I think we all need to lighten up and drink in the love and fun all around us, especially in the form of our 4-legged companions.

## INSIDE SECRETS



## INSIDE SECRETS



# HAROLD: Triple!

I didn't realize, as I was drawing this, that I had drawn 3 horses.

Can you see what I mean?

Each of these blue/black/white drawings has ended up being mysteriously way more than what I had thought I'd created! I love that!

When I was in my twenties, I lived with my then-hubby and 2 small kids way out in the country northern California. One day as we were driving home from a trip to Eureka, I spotted a really sad looking horse in a pasture by the side of the road.

We pulled over and took a closer look. There were two horses - a big bay and a small, almost pony-size Palomino. The bay was a bossy wench who comandeered all the sunny dry spots, and wouldn't allow the Palomino to stand for a minute in any of them. We watched as the bay pushed her out of the sun and into the wet, soggy shadows, and away from any attempt to get to the feed trough.

The Palomino hung her head, trudging away from the sunny spots, looking with longing to the feed. Her ribs stuck out so far you could have played on them like a xylophone, and her entire back was a raw red sore, oozing with infected mange.

## INSIDE SECRETS

A surge of rage and indignation erupted from my belly. I was furious and outraged that anyone would let their horse get into this terrible condition. We drove up to the house. I pounded on the door, probably sounding like an invasion of the FBI to the owners - I didn't care, I was livid.

After a terse, five minute-flat exchange of no pleasantries at all, we drove away the new owners of Rosie-Pearl, the little Palomino who used to be a ride for kiddies at parties and events. They told me that horses with history like hers can be sweet deep down, but jaded and hard from years of being thrashed on by little kids. I didn't care.

They brought her up into the hills to us the very next day, with a wonderful surprise addition of a beautiful western-style saddle and halter in amazingly good shape. I somehow kept myself from spewing, "you could keep the tack in good condition but not the horse?"

We had her teeth floated and her hooves trimmed and shod, made sure she had her shots and any other health stuff she needed. Built her a corral with a homey shed with easily accessible feed and water troughs; bought some top-notch feed and hay. Within what seemed like a very short time, her back healed smooth, shiny and soft. She began to pick her head up, and even developed a little spring in her step. We loved her.

Of course, once she'd healed and gotten used to being treated well, I got it in my head that I'd ride her down the hill to visit some friends. I knew zip about riding. I was a TV cowgirl - I knew you mounted from the left, that was about

## INSIDE SECRETS

it. It took me half an hour to figure out how to put the halter on over her ears, and the bit into her mouth. Yeah, I only need nine fingers, Rosie, thanks for letting me know with your teeth that you hate that bit . . .

Reins. Where were the reins? Those people neglected to bring them! I looked everywhere for something to substitute. We were sadly short on rope or even string (I know, I know . . .). I did find an old inner tube. I cut it into strips and fashioned some very wobbly, stretchy reins, tying them to her halter with big bulky knots. They stank of old car. Rosie hated them.

I led her out to the flat spot by the shed, threw the saddle up on her back, tightened the cinch around her belly as tight as I could. I'd read that horses did the tricky, puffing up their bellies so when you get on, the saddle slides down and under. I knew that! You were supposed to give her a little jolt in her belly, making her puff the air out. I did that. She turned to look at me, rolling her eyes like, "really, Human? You're poking me?" "Yeah, Rosie, really."

Now for the Big Test. I got up on a sawed off stump and climbed on. So far so good! I picked up the make-shift reins. Another eye-rolling, as she once again turned to look at me over her shoulder. I gave the 'reins' a little 'let's-go' flick. Nothing. Harder. Nothing. Harder again! Next thing I knew, I was lying on the ground, wondering, what the heck?

You know how they say if you fall off your bike, horse/motorcycle/whatever, you're supposed to get right back in the saddle and go again? Man, did I really NOT want to do that! But I did, and tried again.

## INSIDE SECRETS

Rosie shook her head and shivered her neck. She would have nothing to do with those stinky strips of old inner tube rubber. So I clambered down off her back, led her to her shed, removed all her tack and hung it up, and went inside to put 'reins' on the shopping list.

## INSIDE SECRETS



# CHOPPY DAY

When I was a kid, I spent my summers sailing and swimming. On weekends, we'd race our boats in little weekend regattas. Either I'd crew for one of my family, or one of them would crew for me.

One weekend when I was 13 - that same Fateful Summer - my older brother Tom was supposed to crew for me. We got the boat ready, stashed our stuff under the deck, and made sure all the lines were free of tangles.

Tom stepped out of the boat onto the pier, and pushed the boat to the end of the slip - and let go! And stood there waving and smiling ... as I nearly had a heart attack, thinking OMG what's he doing? He yells at me that it's time for me to solo, get going!

I'm freaking - I'm going all alone? He wants me to solo? I'm only 13! I can't do this!

But there was just enough of a breeze behind me that before I could pull over to the end of the pier to grab on so I could get him to get back in the boat, I was halfway out of the slip area. Guess you're doing a solo, sucker!

Somehow, I got through the race OK. I know I could barely focus during the race I was still so jarred. I probably came in dead last.

As I sailed back to the slips, the wind picked up. And picked up some more.

## INSIDE SECRETS

And more ... until I was hard put to keep from capsizing. I was sitting with my butt all the way over the rail, my sail trimmed in just enough to pick up the wind but let out just enough so it was luffing a little to slow it down.

I got past the starting line area OK, and headed through the fleet of the Atlantics (31') and Lightnings (18'), bigger boats moored out in the harbor to get back to the protected slips.

As I was maybe 30 yards from the edge of the fleet, suddenly the wind picked up sharply, and I found myself hanging on for dear life, stretched out as far as I could get my butt over the rail, zooming into one of the Atlantics in a direct broadside.

I tried heading to the left of the bigger boat, but knew I'd crash before I could make it by. It was too late to go around the other side.

I could see clearly in my mind: my bow puncturing a gaping hole in the fiberglass hull in front of me, rigging bursting apart, splinters of decking and sharp fragments of fiberglass everywhere, sail shredded and entangled in twisted rigging, my body slammed and plummeted overboard.

I threw my hands up over my face in despair. I was utterly helpless to avoid this apocalyptic disaster ...

And the boat just stopped.

## INSIDE SECRETS

Dead in the water. Sails luffing, hull bobbing up and down as if saying to me, 'I'm ready for a fun picnic, can we go now, please?'

My little 13' boat, my sweet little humble boat, was OK. As was I.

I just sat there and exploded into torrents of tears. I had known - KNOWN - I was finished. I'd never be allowed to sail our boat again - what was left of it, anyway. No one would ever want me on board as crew or skipper ever again, I'd be thrown out of the sailing circles, I'd owe ninety gazillion dollars to the Atlantic owner...

And yet, I was OK.

The Atlantic was OK.

My boat was OK.

I sobbed deeply for a few minutes, until I saw the sailing launch coming out to me - it was my buddy Ralph, the boss of the slips and the fleet. Frowning, worried. I rubbed my eyes dry. Who wanted to be a crybaby in front of the sailing boss? Not I!

By then, I had drifted past the Atlantic. I had free water for a bit until the next one, so I pulled the sail in and caught enough air in it to gain headway, waved to Ralph that 'I'm OK!' and scooted to the slips.

## INSIDE SECRETS

Tom told me later that everyone on the beach was riveted by my wee drama. They had dashed to the water's edge to see what would happen. I was so emotionally wrought that I hadn't heard their shouts and cheers as my boat stopped dead in the water. My heartbeat was too loud to hear a thing!

As I coiled and tucked all the lines in place, put the sail away and doused the boat clean with buckets of water, I remembered my earlier training - let go of the sail, and the boat stops.

No taut sail = no wind fill = no movement.

How could I have forgotten such a basic thing? I was so grateful that my body remembered! Although the gods had mercy on me that day, I pray that I never experience such terror ever again!

INSIDE SECRETS



### SYLVESTER: Hiss

Lately I've been really struggling with sleep imbalance.

It's so strange - I can sleep 2 or 3 hours, but then my legs get all jumpy and I have to get up. Then within an hour or three, my eyes slump shut and I'm sleepy all over again and have to get horizontal before I fall over. And it starts all over again.

Some days, I can be up as much as 8 or 10 hours.

Others, like yesterday, at updownupdownupdown all day and all night. With some wicked bad dreams to boot. That I fall right back into after a being-up spell. As if I'd never left the dream at all.

Yep, I have tapped, meditated, prayed, cussed, ranted, seen docs. To no avail.

So Sylvester here is saying what I think of the whole thing: "...impatient, angry, bored, disgusted, what a frkn waste of time and energy - oh yeh, we don't have any energy, do we? We don't have anything creative in our heads now, do we, as if it's all been blown up in smoke. So much for creating!..." and so on.

Good ole Sylvester. Thanks, buddy.

## INSIDE SECRETS

I'm asking for your love and prayers. This has never happened to me before and scares the living daylights out of me.

And no, I don't have the dreaded C.

I just want my razor-sharp thinking back, the ability to dredge up designs and images out of the blue. Neither one has ever deserted me before.

## INSIDE SECRETS



## BUDDY: in the Light, Shadowed

When I drew this, I was focusing on the white part so much that it wasn't until later that I saw the funny blue face.

I particularly like this one because it's so silly (Silly really ought to be my middle name), and so obvious ... but not. It's a great metaphor for my life - I go forward with stuff, and a lot of tangential events and other things happen, and it isn't until later that I realize/see it.

And I like it, of course, because I love birdies.

I've always loved birdies. When I was a kid, we had an osprey nest on our land down by the pond, and I'd watch them for hours as they reinforced the nest, had their brood, flew off again.

In winter, my little brother and I would sit outside in the cold, sometimes as it was snowing, holding our sunflower seed-filled hands out, still as a frightened mouse, waiting for the chickadees to come down and feed off our frozen hands.

There's just something about having the trust of a little creature that, although it looks substantial enough when it's covered with fluffed-out feathers, weighs just about nothing and flits in and out, here and there, landing, hopping, chick-a-dee-dee-dee-ing right ON your body.

## INSIDE SECRETS

My brother got so good at it that he'd go out, sit down, and they'd just flock right around him. Me - not so much - I hated being cold, so I wiggled too much. He finally told me to go inside!

I had a birdie-feeder right outside my window at my last place in Hawaii. There were several species of birdies, each taking polite turns at various times of day, drinking, splashing, playing and bathing themselves. The last year I was there, I was devastated, watching as a neighbor cat demolished almost every bird. Finches and doves were his favorites.

Looking back, I think maybe it was a sign to get the hell outta there. Sometimes I'm just too thick to read the signs, though. One horrible event after another, each worse than the last, built up to the last straw, and I finally left in a blaze of energy.

The day I left was the first day of a huge hurricane. I departed out of Honolulu, and as we flew down to to the Big Island to catch the plane to the mainland, I could see the storm climbing up over the eastern ridge of the mountains, while on the airport side, it was clear and sunny!

When the plane took off for California, we juuuusssst barely skimmed the top of the clouds and escaped the storm. I heard later it was the last flight out.

You know how I know that, although I like my new place a lot, I'll never stay for long? No birdies. In the 3 years I've been here, I've only seen one squirrel, and one jay. That's all! I need my wild critters!

## INSIDE SECRETS



### BELLA: Early

My dad used to burst into my bedroom, at dawn:30 a.m., throwing the door back with a bang, roughly yank all the covers completely off me and my bed, and cheerily spout, “Time to get uuuuuuuppp!!”

He thought he was being SO funny. N O T . But could I ever convince him of that? Or the way I felt terrified of him? Nope. He was a very big man. My space was totally violated, my privacy absolutely irrelevant to him. Nope.

Especially after I started filling in all the places little girls do when they get past a certain stage in their lives. I made my mother get me long flannel night gowns that looked like ones Granny would wear. In summer, cotton. Down to my ankles.

In this day and age when clothing seems to ride as far up near the crotch and down as far to the nips as possible, bare bellies sporting belly-button rings and all, you might think it strange that I grew up freaked out by body exposure. I still don't like it. I'm OK with most people running around nearly nekked, but don't ask me to do it.

Yes, I've done a bunch of inner work on that, but you know what? There are a lot of things way more important to think about. Like how people seem to think it's OK to cuss or yell at or even physically attack someone else for the most absurd reason.

## INSIDE SECRETS

Like how some feel so entitled they think the rest of the world should think like they do, or call cops on people of color for nothing. It's so hard to deal with. When someone's in your face, it's so easy to take the same road and yell back. All that does is make things worse.

I run away if I can. If I can't, I stay quiet. If I can't do that, I make a comment like, "Wow, you must be having a really bad day," or something like that. That can de-escalate a situation fast, helping the person to feel seen and heard. But it doesn't always work.

I'm no miracle worker, but I keep the peace as much as I can, because I know it has to start with me. If I go off, I only join in to lower the vibes. If I can keep my equanimity, I can be a reference point for calm, and the subsequent lifting of frequencies.

I can't change the whole world, but I *can* change me, or at least attempt to stay calm in the face of mayhem. I had to learn how to do that to finally get it across to my father how I felt, because no amount of yelling, whining, or bitching at him worked.

You know what did it? I asked him how he'd feel if some man came into his and my ma's bedroom and did the whole grab-the-covers thing to her. You should have seen him turn beet red with rage at the very idea ... and then ... suddenly ... stop, look at me, and get really, really quiet.

Long silence. His head down.

## INSIDE SECRETS

“I’m so sorry, honey,” he said, looking back up at me, actual tears in his eyes.  
“I’m so sorry.” He never did it again.

Peace, calm, and if not joy, at least gratitude. Those things work.

## INSIDE SECRETS



### OLIVER: Sees You

September of 1999 was a hot one. I had just returned to Santa Fe a short month ago from a stint back east, house-sitting for my dear friend, Cynthia, out on Long Island. I hadn't been able to find a place I could afford yet.

I did find a little secluded glade down by an arroyo, hemmed in by cottonwoods and brambly brush, on the edge of town. It was just big enough to park my little Kia and have room to turn around in.

Fortunately, I found work doing ad design at the main local newspaper, so at least my dog, lo (EE-oh), and I weren't starving.

One evening as the sky wheeled through its usual brilliant show of cerulean blues, purples, and fuschias, lo and I came out of our little hidey-hole to go for an evening walk. It was earlier than usual, so I was cautious about anyone seeing where we came out of the weeds.

The very second we emerged, lo took off like a rocket, the leash snapping right out of my hand. She usually pulled on it eagerly, but never had she burst away like that!

I ran down the narrow dirt path, around the bushes, onto the sidewalk in front of the old folks home, totally freaked out, thinking she'd be dashing into traffic and squashed flat as a pancake if I didn't catch her...

## INSIDE SECRETS

There, upon an old wooden bench in front of the home, sat an old, squatty, crumpled up man with giant, meaty hands ... with lo landed squarely in his lap. He was doing his best to hold her off as she wildly licked his face and neck, top to bottom, expressions surprise, startlement and joy all over his now-slobbery face.

lo wasn't one of those wee lap dogs people carry around. She was a hefty mid-size dog, looking a lot like the average British sheep dog - black and white, dainty white paws and crest on her chest. But she had the classic Husky face markings, a thick, curly tail, and the cutest button nose you ever did see. You can imagine what having her spring out of the blue onto your lap must have been like!

I ran over and tried to get her off, exclaiming a mortified, "I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry! lo, come ON!..." - but she was set upon her task as if the gods themselves had set her this job. I'd never, ever seen her do such a thing.

"It's OK, Girlie," the man was trying to say to me, ducking her frantic lick-lick-lick, "let her be. It's OK!" He truly wasn't bothered at all!

I didn't know what else to do, so I just sat down next to him. When it seemed she was slowing down a bit, I reached over and grabbed her harness and pulled her off of him and onto the ground. I was too embarrassed for words.

He was kind enough to open, saying, "Hi, my name is Oliver. Although most people call me That Old Guy." Waving at the home behind him, he said, "I

## INSIDE SECRETS

live there.” I nodded, not quite out of being stunned by Io’s leap and licking. We shook hands. Sat there, silent, for what seemed like ten years. And both started talking again at the same time.

We both laughed. “You go,” he said, his voice deep, gravelly. For some odd reason, I felt like I could totally trust him, so I told him I was just back in town, confounded that here I was, 54 and had no place to live, sleeping in my car, yadda yadda. Him nodding, listening, focused, kind.

He asked, “You warm enough at night?”

I said, “Yeah, kinda - I have that licking machine there to keep me warm.” We both laughed again.

“Listen, if you ever need anything, you just let me know,” he offered. As I started to protest, he held up his hand and said, “Not everyone in old folks homes are busted broke, you know. Some of us jest wanna be around other old fogies like ourselves.” He put his finger to his lips, signaling a secret. I just nodded.

Our conversation got cut off at the swoosh of the home’s front doors opening. We turned to see a stocky, militant, head-nurse-type woman right out of the comics bustling over to our bench, declaring in a voice like a fog horn that it was “high time you come in, Mr. Oliver, it’s getting too cold out here for the likes of you!”

## INSIDE SECRETS

“Whatever ‘type’ that is,’ I could hear him mutter. He slanted his head and winked, and got up.

And up - and up - and up - his slumpy posture and the squooshy clothes he was wearing had completely camouflaged his enormous stature - he had to be at least 6’4”, towering over me, lo and Nursey.

“You’ll come visit me, won’t you, Girlie?” he called over his shoulder as he shuffled away. I was struck by how lonely he seemed, all of a sudden. I knew that feeling.

“Of course I will!” I yelled, as they passed through the glass doors. And I did, as often as I could, becoming solid besties.

What I didn’t realize that first day - or until a few visits later - was that he was completely blind. Couldn’t see shadows or any forms or anything.

You really couldn’t tell - he held his normal looking eyes open, never ran into a thing ever, looked right at you as you conversed with him. There were no ‘tells’ at all.

Until one day when I walked into the front lobby, and he was there talking to someone. I walked right by him and he didn’t say a word. Surprised, I walked back, and by him again.

Nursey - by now I knew her name was Mrs. Caldwell, but everyone called her

## INSIDE SECRETS

Nurse - whispered, “He’s blind as a bat, dear, he can’t see you!”

That December, it got really, really cold. Sleeping in my car just wasn’t cutting it. Santa Fe is at 7000 feet, after all. Chilly bananas.

I hadn’t called any of my former friends for help yet, thinking I could save up for a place before I needed to. But - nope. So I called a couple I knew who lived out in Tesuque (tess-OO-kee), a tiny little not-town just north of Santa Fe, asking if they knew of anyone with a spare bedroom. Turned out that they did!

So I went up there to stay with them. Which meant our daily walks past Ollie ended. I still went to visit him after work at the home a couple times a week, but it wasn’t the same as sitting out on the bench with him.

On a bright day in January, Nursey called me, saying, “Get down here like yesterday, dear - Mr. Oliver took a bad fall, and won’t get out of bed.”

I dashed down there, and slid into the chair by his bed. He reached out his big old hand and grabbed mine. “I knew ya’d come, Girlie,” he mumbled. “I wanted to wait until you got here....”

He wheezed a bit, and slowly gave me directions.

“Go get x from the dresser - that’s yours. Go get x from my pocket, that’s for lo. Go get x papers from the drawer, that’s for you, too. I don’t got no family,

## INSIDE SECRETS

so you just take good care of this stuff.”

“And,” he leaned over to me and whispered, “give this to Nurse after I’m gone,” handing me a fat envelope he snuck out from under his pillow. “She’s been good to me.”

I was too blown away to say a word - he was DOing his last will and testament. Nursey stood there as astonished as I was. Ollie was so big, so strong, so...always THERE - so solid - how could it take a bit of a fall to lay him out?

He relaxed back against all his pillows, turned his head and looked over at me with those normal-appearing eyes, giving me one of the most delightful little boy’s mischievous grins ever. I grinned back, even though I knew he couldn’t see my face.

With that blind gaze upon me, somehow his eyes suddenly lit up as if someone had put a 100-watt bulb inside his skull - just for a nano-second.

My first inclination was to throw my hands up in the air and cry out WTF???? But I didn’t. I kept holding his big old hand, and felt him just ... stop. There’s no other way to describe it. Nursey felt it, too, I could tell. He just stopped.

The world stopped. There was no one and nothing in my entire existence at that moment except him, me, lo and Nursey. The air was thick with delight, sadness, friendship, love.

## INSIDE SECRETS

I felt my body collapse onto his. I couldn't cry - what had happened was too much of a miraculous gift to weep over. I think I must have passed out.

I have no idea how long it was until Nursey shook me awake. I stumbled out to go back to my friends' house.

I'd never seen or felt anyone leave the body before, much less in such a dynamic, spectacular way. I felt avalanched with grief. Honored to have been there. Way over my head.

I'd only known Ollie for a few short months, but he made my life a thousand times richer than it had been before.

## INSIDE SECRETS



# SELBY'S Favorite Game (Not Really)

Recently I watched one of those 'cute' animal videos where a seal was bouncing a ball around and playing catch with its trainer in one of those sea life shows.

I wanted to relf. Seals belong OUTside.

Yes, they are cute, sure, until you come up close and dirty - if one decided to attack you for some reason, you'd be shit outta luck.

They weigh nine million pounds more than you do, can bowl you over faster than jets, and in case you didn't know, those cute little flappy things at the end of their arms? They have claws on them. Sharp. That could rip you apart in seconds. Not to mention a mean set of very sharp, very efficient chompers.

Not cute at all. Powerful, beautiful, natural, belonging in the wild - not in a sterile, empty pool, swimming laps and jumping through hoops and playing endless rounds of ball with a human, no matter how 'well-meaning' that human might be.

Many years ago, I was at a flea market a friend had a booth at. She had this little stuffed seal, maybe 10" long, fluffy and white and a cute smile. I named it my Seal of Approval (I know, groan - ). Now THAT is what is OK to play with, not real, live, sentient beings.

## INSIDE SECRETS

Whenever I see petitions about getting animals out of jail, I sign each and every one of them. I donate a few bucks if I can. The idea of captivity makes my belly hurt.

## INSIDE SECRETS



## SCREEN PARALYSIS

### JESSE: Caught

I've been writing up a storm lately, and last night as I got up to take a little break, I caught my reflection in the bathroom mirror as I left - I looked kinda like this! I realized I'd be practically glued to the screen for days!

So today I'm focusing on remembering fun, funny, silly, laughterish things, jotting down notes as I sip my drink - in the kitchen - far away from the screen.

May your own day be funny, silly and outlandishly outrageously lovely.

## INSIDE SECRETS



## GUS: I AIN'T DONE NUTHIN'

Some days I feel just like this. Like there's not a single thing I can get right, and if I do do something right, it isn't enough, or good enough.

Who the hell sets up those rules???

We are so conditioned! So programmed to think we are less-than, not good enough, not productive enough, not doing enough, not worthy of praise, mock-able, shameful, undesirable...

Well. I reject all of those assumptions.

I lived my life ruled by them for way too many years, and suffered too many years of deepest depression, before I finally broke free. (How? Using EFT-tapping and concrete determination.)

Poor Gus looks exactly how I felt on the inside, every day, day after day.

Now I choose what to do, how to do it, to whom to show it - or not - and whether or not it's good, bad, or just meh.

Be free. Get out of the I'm-not-good-enough BS. **Do whatever it takes.**

INSIDE SECRETS



## CARLOS, ALWAYS HAPPY

I have a friend who, no matter what befalls her, is always happy.

For a long time, it would piss me off that she never lost her equilibrium. I think I was jealous that I didn't know how to do that, too.

But then she told me why.

She grew up in horrifying circumstances. You can probably imagine it - no need for gory details. Imagine the very worst. And at 17, after just too much to take, she contemplated finally ending it all.

As she prepared to do the thing, she was suddenly struck by the idea that she could take all of her anguish, despair and angst and use it productively.

She had no idea how that would happen or how she could do it, but she loved the idea so much that she stopped thinking about ending her life and started looking around for things she could do that would serve life, instead.

She told me it wasn't about 'helping' people or 'saving' anyone, because that makes them victims in their own minds.

That identity is hard to overcome.

Instead, she said, if she serves life, she adds to the flow of things that

## INSIDE SECRETS

increase, expand and enhance beauty, joy, creativity, curiosity and surprise.

She told me that she asks questions now, instead of lecturing people.

She asks, what is a dream you never got to fulfill?

What did you love about it?

If you could right now, what is one teeny tiny step you could take to make movement in that direction?

What is stopping you?

Are you sure that's true?

What if it isn't?

And so on.

So I asked her, "but don't you ever feel down?"

She said, "yes, but then I start thinking about the fun I have re-directing myself and others, and then the down turns up."

How can that be a bad thing????

I think she's brilliant. Carlos feels the same, and takes her as a close model.

## INSIDE SECRETS



### PETHEY is PICKY!

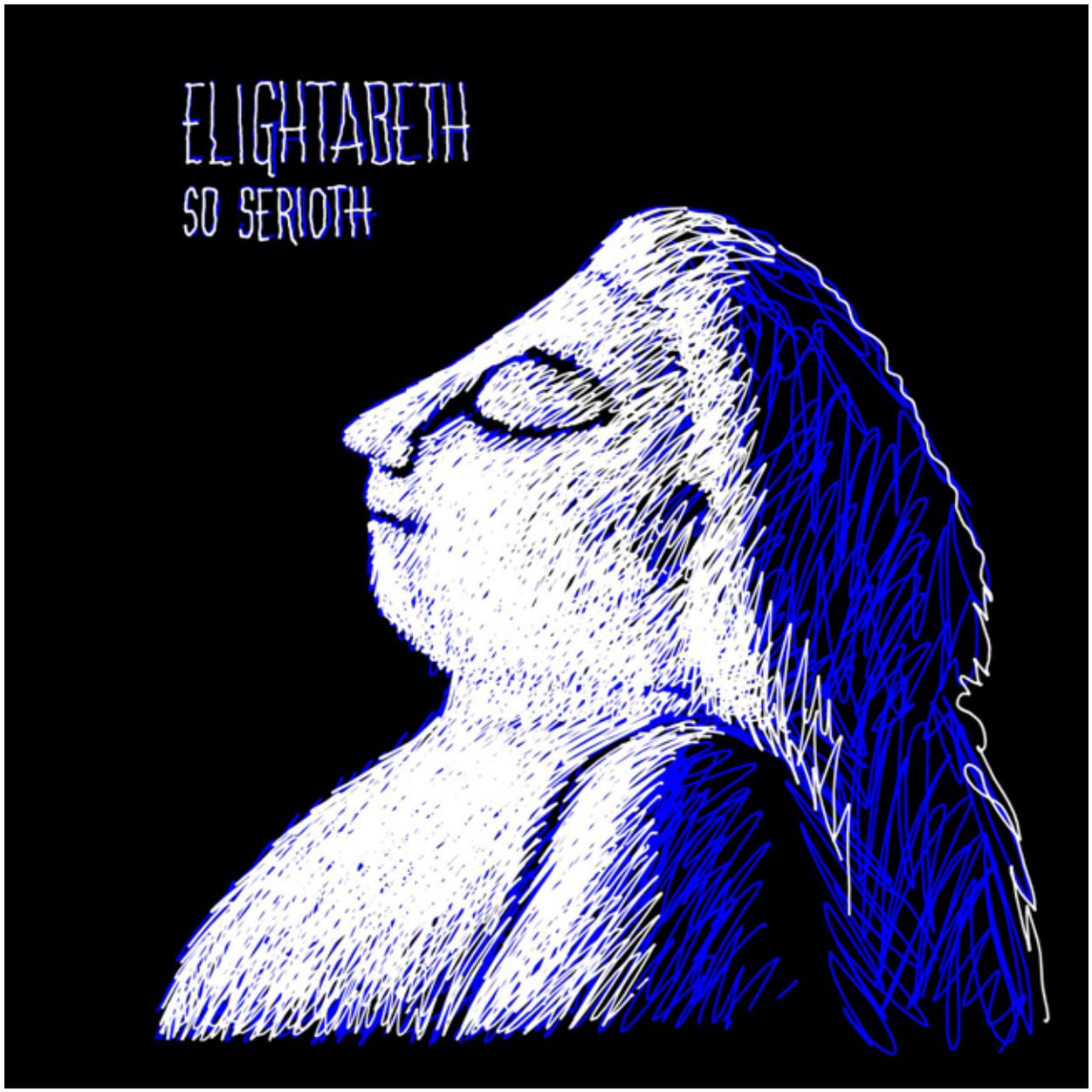
Have you ever watched as birdies peck at seeds on the ground? It doesn't look like they pick and choose at all - more like they do a snatch and grab, no matter what it is.

But they actually have sharply discerning senses that allow them to choose 'seed' rather than 'non-edible,' saving them from glomping down tons of stuff that isn't food.

They do take in small sharp pebbles that help them shred the food in their throats, since they have no teeth!

Petey is smart that way. He likes his good ies Just the Right Size - the small ones aren't ripe enough, and squooshy ones are too ripe, and the greenish ones? Perf.

INSIDE SECRETS



# ELIGHTABETH, So Serioth

When I was a little kid, my dad's mother would come stay with us. Granny. The one whose middle name, Treat, I carry.

I couldn't stand her. She smelled like Eau d'Oldde People. And she made this weird little sucking-in whistle sound whenever there was something she disapproved of, but wouldn't speak about.

This image is how she appeared to me then. Looking back now, from the perspective of someone who is the same age she was then, I understand more.

She wouldn't speak up about things she didn't like because my dad would shut her down. Never in front of us - always in another room. I heard him one time - it wasn't pretty. So she communicated by sucky-whistle, or one of those high, wobbly hoity-toity voices as she asked us to do something we didn't want to do. Her voice sounded like she was in one of those old-timey movies.

She was obese. I never realized how uncomfortable it is to be so overweight. You feel tired all the time, your knees hurt, you can't bend properly in all the places that are supposed to bend. You're short of breath all the time from the effort carrying around all that extra poundage.

And she wore layer upon layer of old fashioned clothes - straight out of the

## INSIDE SECRETS

40s - with white gloves and hats with veils - the whole (literal) 9 yards. She must have felt suffocatingly hot all the time.

As if that wasn't enough, *we, too* had to wear white gloves, when we went to visit her - eating at the dinner table - set with finger bowls, and watching her use the little tinkly silver bell to call for for the maid - who was right there around the corner - oh gag.

The worst thing, though - well, to me, as a possessive little child - was that she slept in MY bed. In MY room. And I had to listen to her snore from the other, less comfy bed. Sawing boards makes less noise. I couldn't wait for her to leave.

When I was 21, I rode across the US with a boyfriend on his enormous BMW motorcycle. By the time we got to New York, ten days later, Granny made it very clear that she was disowning me, because she thought I was a 'sex maniac.' Those were her exact words, conveyed with horror by my father.

And yet, I was told that after she died, out of all the things sent to her by all her grandchildren, mine were the only drawings and cards she kept. I don't know if that was true, or some sad story my ma made up to make me feel bad - she knew I hated the woman.

She left me an art book in her will. One that was so outdated and spoiled with age I had to throw it out. Weird, no?

## INSIDE SECRETS

I also didn't understand that she always seemed grumpy because she was the only one left out of her circle of friends by the time she was in her early 70s. She died at 86.

That made me feel bad - for about a second and a half. Then I thought, well, why didn't she go out and make more friends? Sixteen years of being lonely when all she had to do was walk out the door and make an effort to meet new people?

The look of disbelief upon my mother's face when I said it out loud said it all. Surprise, shock, disbelief, incredulity, inability to imagine the idea, laughter ... we're talking side-splitting laughter...

Poor Granny. How sad to live such a lonely life. She was elegantly, proudly, Bostonianly, uprightly lonely.

## INSIDE SECRETS



# SAM: Likes Shiny Things

The second time I was raped was a far cry from the first. Looking back, I count what happened to me that day as a stroke of incredible good fortune for myself, and out-of-the-blue evidence of amazing community solidarity in its intolerance for violence and cruelty, and its endeavor to maintain peace.

I was 17. My first year at Parsons School of Design. My father had loudly lamented sending me there, telling me, “You’ll probably just get married and spend your life making babies and washing dishes, and give up making art anyway, so why should I go to the trouble of paying for this expensive school?”

If he meant that as a joke, it didn’t ride. Our family’s forté was the say-the-reverse-of-what-you-really-mean thing, so I never really learned how to tell if someone was speaking the truth or not. I still struggle with that.

As an example, instead of telling me I looked nice in a new dress, he’d say, “Too bad your ears stick out - kind of detracts from how nice that dress should look.” Gee thanks for the kind, supportive words, Dad. Not.

So I was wearing one of those dresses on my way to my apartment from school late one afternoon. I was carrying my purse jammed full of the jars of paint and brushes I wanted to use over the weekend, and my big, clumsy flat black portfolio. The thing was huge - imagine a flat faux-leather briefcase about 30” x 40”. It held all the drawings I’d done all week.

## INSIDE SECRETS

It was getting dark - I'd stayed after class for some personal instruction. There was a shortcut through a nasty alley that ended right at the steps to the subway. I knew I ought not go that route, but it looked clear, so I started walking fast.

I got through it, and down into the subway entrance. I was about to take a breath in relief, when I felt something tugging on my purse, and then on the portfolio. I was fiercely protective of my body - and especially of my work - so I yanked back hard against the tugging, surprising my attacker.

He gave up trying for the goodies, and instead pushed me up flat against the disgusting wall, my face glomped sideways painfully. I felt blood start to drip down my chin from my tooth grazing my lip.

I was furious. I stomped on his foot, right at the instep, and he backed off slightly, but continued to shove me right up into the wall, pressing himself against my back.

I heard him unzip his pants. At that sound, I suddenly went into a kind of blind, white fugue state. It was as if I was suspended in time, watching what was going on as if it was another person, helpless to do a thing for her.

He lifted my pretty yellow sun dress up, wrenched my pants down around my knees, and inserted himself where he damn well didn't belong. In about three and a half seconds, he emptied his load.

## INSIDE SECRETS

Internally, I just snorted and laughed, because he'd only succeeded in getting between my thighs, but not even close to the Precious Cavern. And three and a half seconds was a joke. An ugly one, but nonetheless...

As he slumped back, spent, I regained my senses. Using my elbow, I forced him away from me so hard he almost fell into the train tracks. Ask me if I cared. Nope.

As I bent to pick up my bags so I could run away, I kicked him in the kidneys. Hard. He squealed like a stuck pig. And then I felt another person's hand on my fighting elbow, stopping me.

I was about to use that same elbow to continue to defend myself, but heard, "It's OK, Sister, it's OK, I won't hurt you. I'm just here for my bad little brother."

I stepped back, and my red rage turned to curiosity. I shouted, "Where the hell were you when I needed help?!?"

He held his hands up in 'I yield' pose. "I'm so sorry, I was chasing him and he disappeared and I lost him until I heard you screaming bloody murder, so I guessed he was down here!" he said.

I was astonished - I didn't remember 'screaming bloody murder'! I said so, and he laughed and said, "Yep, you sure was, and boy it was loud, yeah man!" Huh.

## INSIDE SECRETS

Right then, four hulking-big guys came down the steps. They crowded around the older brother, asking what had happened. What's going on?

And I'm to the side, trying to gather all my things, thinking I'm wanting to somehow get rid of the sticky wet garbage that had run down into my pants. I wasn't too sure how that was going to happen in front of all these guys.

Big brother asked me what had happened. I told him. He was livid. "I knew he'd go too far one day, that asshole! Now he's gonna pay!"

As one, all of them stepped over to the little brother, who was writhing around, whining about where I kicked him, probably thinking he'd get these behemoths to feel sorry for him.

Wasn't happening. They started in on him and pummeled him up down and once again, until I suddenly felt like, hey, nuff already, and I shouted "STOP!" And they did.

I told them, "Just take him home to mama, and have him tell her what he did. Tell her that he pushed me against the wall and raped me. That'll get him more punishment than you can do with your fists any day."

They laughed and said, "You are so right about that!" And proceeded to start lifting him up to drag home.

## INSIDE SECRETS

When another four guys came down the steps, rushing over to them. What happened, what's going on?

I tried walking away so I could finally deal with the Sticky Pants, but they called me back.

“What? The train's here, I have to get on!” I exclaimed.

Said train stopped, opening its few doors. I was way up town, near Harlem. The guys motioned to the old man who was at the front of the train, driving it. He got out, came over, complaining, “What?!? You'll make me late!”

They gave him the rundown. If I never see fury on a man's face like his ever again, it will be way too soon. Turned out it was the kid's own grandfather. Boy was that kid in red hot peepee trouble.

By now, the people on the train were coming out the doors. What happened, what's going on? I lost count at 20 people.

My pants were still suspended right above my knees. My dress covered them, but this was really getting old. I hobbled over by the turn stiles and at last was able to turn my back to everyone and quickly reach down to nudge a tissue into my pants, and pull them up from around my knees.

Since I had to get on the train anyway, I walked back over. Four of the guys had the little brother in armlocks, and were again starting to drag him up the

## INSIDE SECRETS

stairs. “Gonna go see Momma, ain’t we, bro’...” I heard them taunting the kid, as he protested, whining all the way that he “ain’t done nothin’, it was just a little bit of fun, didn’t do no harm...” and he was gone.

No harm, huh? I was bloody, bruised and aching. My dress and body were dirty and defiled.

And I said so, loud. The old man came back over to me and asked where I was going.

I told him. Nodding, he motioned for the rest of the dudes hanging around to go help the brothers. Two of the guys refused to go, and stayed with me, asking me if it was OK for them to escort me onto the train and ride with me until my stop.

As we sat there, I told them I thought it was odd that anyone had rushed forth to help a little white girl in trouble, and especially so many people.

They smiled, and said anybody in trouble in their neighborhood would get help, whether they were white, black, purple or green. “It’s how Grandma brung us up,” they said. “Help people, not hurt them.”

At my stop, they offered to walk me home. I hesitated, but allowed them to take me to the block next to mine before I said good bye and thanks. We exchanged phone numbers, and I was able to meet up with them a couple times before I left school for good.

## INSIDE SECRETS

It was horrible for that few minutes, but their determination to help me - and punish that kid - well, it was amazing. They, at least, were good guys. I was so grateful.

## INSIDE SECRETS



# FELIX: Overexposed

Right after George W. Bush the very junior got elected, I left the country. His idiocy after 911 made it very clear that he was Not My President. You may disagree with my views, but that's neither here nor there - the end result of his getting into office was that I left what I considered to be the not-anymore-good ole USA.

I'd 'met' a guy online who lived in New Zealand. A fellow sculptor, artist, and, a labyrinth maker. I left near the end of the year 2000, stopping to see my younger son and his family in Hawaii, and from there, jumping to NZ to meet M. Sorry, not going to share his name. He likes his privacy.

So I land in ChristChurch on a lovely afternoon, and we jam on over to a local motel to rest up before we start our adventure.

We traveled in his van up to visit his siblings in Nelson, and then down the (spectacular) west coast, over chilly Arthur's Pass to Dunedin (dun-EE-din) on the beautiful east coast. Then down to Gore, Invercargill and the island's most southerly point, and eventually back to Gore, where his good friend, Freda, was waiting for us to come visit.

If you've never been to New Zealand, go. It's a beautiful country. The people are nicer than you can imagine.

I wish M and I had been able to stand each other long enough to have been

## INSIDE SECRETS

able to do more sight-seeing. Alas. He snored. Pet peeve. I get pretty irritable if I can't sleep well. And by day 5, he declared that I was an 'American bitch.' Well. That didn't bode well.

We did continue down to the most southern point. There was a handy, well-worn path taking us from the road to the little wooden rail fence, where you could look out over the vast reaches of the ocean ending in the frozen lands. I climbed and sat atop the top railing, enjoying seeing the water. I had been living in New Mexico, and missed the ocean terribly. This was a nice fix.

He took a picture of me under one of those signs that point everywhere, with miles indicated. 3000+ miles to Antarctica. Cute. I was still trying to put on a happy face.

We had been arguing about some stupid thing in the van. You could probably have lit a light bulb from the tension between us. I was so sad. I'd come all this way, hoping to find at least a fellow artist, friend, maybe even boyfriend. Not gonna happen. I was 55, but felt 105. Too late for me, I supposed.

There was one point where I felt funny, and I looked over to see his face flash this weird face-video of emotions. I couldn't read it, it went so fast. But I felt alarmed, and jumped down from the fence and started walking back to the van. Race-walking. I didn't know what was going on, but something sure was, and I didn't want to be at the top of a 300-foot cliff as it was happening.

M must have cleared his head by the time he got back to the van, because

## INSIDE SECRETS

that feeling of urgent alert had disappeared. We got fish and chips nearby and headed for Gore.

As we pulled into Freda's driveway, M told me he'd had to talk himself out of pushing me over the cliff. Talk about a mood-killer. I ended up staying with Freda, the dear, and he left.

This revelation of how I'd just barely missed being a bloody flat broken body on the rocks overlooking the route to the Antarctic paralyzed me. Was I really so much of a bitch? What was he so angry about? How was I to know what I did wrong - or maybe it was *him* who was fkd up, not me?

There was nothing specific I could pin - other than my complaints about The Snoring - which, poor guy, he couldn't help. M was not forthcoming in his brief phone conversations with Freda saying goodbye, he was going back to Nelson.

I was so devastated. How did I keep attracting these so-terribly-wrong-for-me men? (Oh, I haven't even told you but a fraction of the others....) How did I keep being so incredibly unacceptable?

A couple of years before I left Santa Fe, I went through an IQ test, given to me by a psychiatrist. I'll tell you why in another book, but for now it was what that test revealed that matters.

See, I had always thought I was stupid. Convinced, in fact. Otherwise, why

## INSIDE SECRETS

did I have such a hard time in the world? How come I just couldn't make my life work?

I went in for the test results. She said, "Sit down, Angela."

I shuddered. I just knew I was a dunce, and there was no way out for me. I hoped she was going to be kind. Might as well go back home and dig out that bottle of pills I'd stashed just in case.

She must have seen where my mind was headed, because she very sharply ordered me to "Stop it! Right now!" Made my head jerk up and fall back on my shoulders, it did.

Do you know what '99th percentile' means? I didn't. After I left her place, I went to the library and looked it up. I discovered that If you say 'it's in the 99th percentile of something,' it means 'the top 1 percent.' If that something is in the 99th percentile, then it means it is higher than 99% of other things.

She told me I was in the top 99th percentile of those who'd been tested. In all of the country. When she said that, even not knowing what percentile meant, I still knew it meant that my assessment of my own intelligence was way out of whack. She had to sit there and drive it into my now-exploding brain that I was not only not dumb, nor stupid, nor useless - and I was not even close to being a failure.

She said failure means giving up, and I had certainly not done that - instead,

## INSIDE SECRETS

I kept trying to make things work in ‘new and odd, innovative and intriguing ways.’ That, she said, ‘smacked of genius.’

Genius, she said. I snorted to myself, “like being that has helped me any.”

I couldn’t handle the news. I shot out of the chair. No way could I sit still. “You mean to tell me all these years I’ve been smart?” I demanded.

She hemmed a bit, and said, “Well, maybe not the smartEST, but yes, you’ve been smart, and your intelligence is off the charts. So quit it right now if you’re still thinking you’re stupid.”

I was dumbfounded. Speechless. Stupefied. Look up as many synonyms to stunned/shocked/amazed/astonished as you want. I was frozen in my tracks, standing in the middle of her office with my mouth hanging all the way down to the floor.

She came over and gently guided me to sit back down. Over the next hour, she gave me some simple pointers to how to get along in the world. Pointers that I still fall back on. Because apparently, I don’t see or respond to many of the social cues people give. And I don’t much care about most of the things most people hold dear. I’ve had to train my brain to be relatable. Nice. Say kind things - and mean them. Reveal my heart without fear.

It didn’t mean I wasn’t kind or loving, I just didn’t do it the way most people did, or the way people expected, and it went unseen.

## INSIDE SECRETS

So my genius, no matter how cool it was, didn't save my relationship with poor M. I felt terrible that he had taken all this time and energy and put it into our ill-fated trip all over New Zealand, only to escape as fast as he could from Freda's.

And I still had no idea what I'd done wrong, or how I'd been wrong, in order to fix whatever it was.

To say the incident of the South Point caused me to do a whole hell of a lot of deep introspection might be a bit of an understatement. That was 21 years ago. Lots of water under the bridge since then.

INSIDE SECRETS



## INSIDE SECRETS

### HUBERT: Lit Up

Well there you go. That's it for the odd portraits/life stories. No one has ever seen or heard these stories before I started leaking them out on my FB group about a month ago, in July, 2021.

Yep, they're odd and scary and some are fun and some not. Such is my life. There's more to come - I wonder what the Somethingness will have me draw next time, and which episodes of my life it will have me revealing to you.

### See you then!

In the kind-time - because who likes mean-times, right? - I'd love to have you join me at my [Facebook Art Group](#), or at any of these websites:

[AngelaTreatLyon.com](#)

[AngelaTreatLyonART.com](#)

[AngelaTreatLyonBOOKS.com](#)

[LyonPaintings.com](#)

[EFTinEveryHome.com](#)

and of course on [amazon.com](#), where you can find the majority of my books.

My best aloha,  
Angela