

THE UNEASY DANCE OF INTIMACY

BY DEENA METZGER

His fear is being smothered, s(mothered). Even as he looks like he is going toward her, he retreats. She feels his resistance in the moment he courts her. But he knows his resistance has a magnetism to it. She panics, moves toward him, but he moves back. She is humiliated by moving toward him. She can't help it and she resents it.

Is he only afraid of being smothered? I think that under this fear is a worse, unacknowledged fear: he is afraid she will abandon him. He is not so afraid that she will possess him, but that he will not be able to possess her. (All property, adultery laws, all practices to 'protect' and subordinate the woman result from his fear of her flight.)

When he commits himself to her, he feels his fear, he is humiliated by moving toward her. He would rather appear to be resisting her. Still, he needs her so he moves to her. Then he holds her so tightly, overwhelms her completely out of his fear of being without her; now she must bolt.

She usually does not flee publicly. She is no more able to admit her desire for selfhood than he is to admit his fear of being abandoned. She abandons covertly. She disappears from him, slips out of his grasp — goes into her inner life, has clandestine affairs, burrows into children, undermines. Or when she learns she would also like to have a self, she doesn't know how to get it. She uses him to kick off from, she establishes her self in defiance. When he reaches for her, she kicks him. He feels her phantomness and her rage.

He tries to hold on to her, but now what he uses to bind her to him also smothers him, and he is in a rage with her for harnessing him and it is his harness.

On the surface, even as he tries to possess her, he wants to look as if he's in retreat. Even as she tries covertly to establish a self, she remembers



she is supposed to be in a relationship. He retreats, she panics, is attracted by his resistance, moves toward him, tries to bind him on the surface even as underneath she moves away. She has forgotten altogether that she wants for her own sake to connect with him. He has forgotten this as well. He is smothering now; she has sacrificed herself. He is abandoned; she is moving away. They are

both humiliated; they both feel rejected. There is one bad drama going in one direction, and one bad drama going in another.

But each wants to be independent and allied. Each feels unsafe and undeveloped alone. Each is not sufficient unto him/herself. Each would like to be a sovereign country making a binding treaty to establish a united nations, to acknowledge interdependence, maintain common open borders, trade, provide mutual defense, exchange, share history, culture, future. They would like this treaty, without shame, to be binding on them and on their future generations. She really wants to know that he won't imperialize, colonize her if she shows him her treasures and opens her borders. He really wants to know she won't join another federation after he reveals himself, that he can trust her to be loyal without having to invade her. He wants to know that she will develop her own culture and resources without attacking him and his history and culture in her press.

And if they carefully acknowledge their unacknowledged needs, if each tries not to humiliate the other for the need and desire to connect with, to love, to be loved by, if he can say, I'm really afraid you'll abandon me, if she can admit, I'm really afraid you'll possess me, if he can say, I make it easy for someone to abandon me, if she can admit, I make it easy for someone to possess me, if he can stand it when she says, I won't abandon you, if she can trust him when he says, I won't possess you.

If they can try to move in this direction we have a chance.

Deena Metzger is a writer and poet and lives in Topanga, California. She developed "Healing Stories" as a therapeutic way to address issues of personal transition, creativity and illness. This story was originally published in the L.A. Weekly (April 16, 1984) where it won first prize in a writing contest on relationships.



Bikes & Beyond

1335 MARINE DR.
ASTORIA, OREGON



ANTIQUES * COLLECTIBLES * GIFTS
1052 COMMERCIAL, ASTORIA



CONTEMPORARY WORKS OF ART

Rebecca Meloy
Dreaming Cascadia

May 12 to June 20

503 / 325-1270 • 1160 COMMERCIAL • ASTORIA
MON-SAT 10:30AM-5:30PM • SUN 12-4PM

LOVE POEM

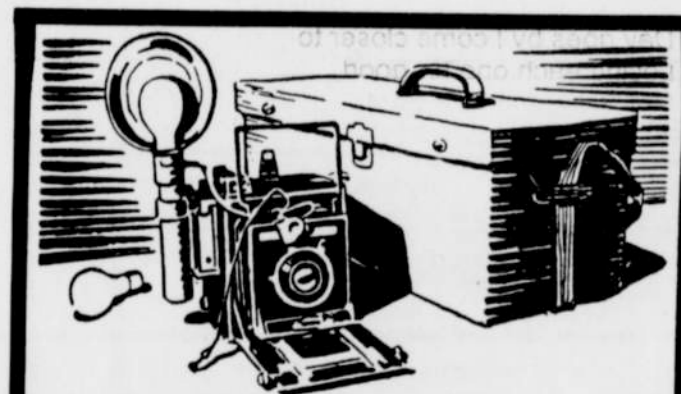
Veiled behind your shimmering
cat's-eye cover, ah! Why, tender
inspired one, have you selected
the lowly fibers of my heart?
Have you never surprised the
instinctive, itinerant blinking of
my soul's central corporation?
Do you really believe that faithful
morality is a secret one suffers
in particular?

Shall my healthy glances no
longer perish under the arid influence
of your dark pupils?

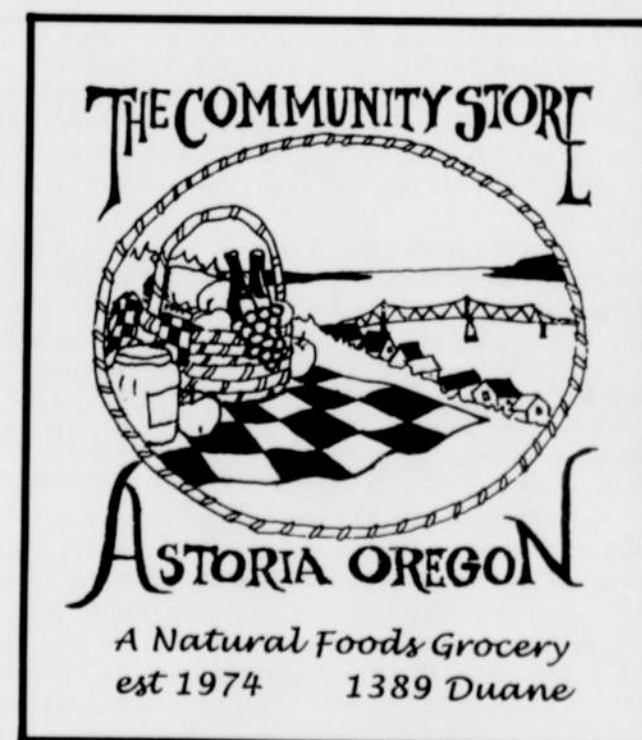
No, it is not so, it shall never
be, for I keep watch in society
over the unanimous captivity of
the original organs and I know
that in accepting the general
superiority of the prophetic
organization, your heart will never
dare to take hold of mine.

Therefore, fixing upon you
my reverences and surveillances,
I smokescreeningly tell you these
groaning words: "Let us fear the
senses."

~GISSELE PRASSINOS
(who was 14 years old when
she wrote this poem)



THE COMPLEAT PHOTOGRAPHER
475 14TH ST., ASTORIA & 303 S. HOLLADAY, SEASIDE
325-0759 736-3686



A Natural Foods Grocery
est 1974 1389 Duane

TONY'S TAVERN

1313 MARINE DR., ASTORIA
(503) 325-5069



GODFATHER'S BOOKS AND ESPRESSO BAR

Audio Book Sales & Rentals * Cards * Pastries
Incense * Occult & Metaphysical * Lattes & Literature

1108 Commercial • Astoria, OR 97103
Phone: (503) 325-8143

Terry Hahn

THE AUTO PARTS CO.

Where Your Satisfaction
is Our Biggest Concern!

325-1612



BRAND NEW LOCATION AT 730 BOND STREET, ASTORIA, OREGON