

CHAPTER ONE

LUCY

I made mistakes. I took many wrong paths. But I was lucky. At least I thought it was luck. Now I realize it was something else. My mother would say a guardian angel sat on my shoulder. Friends we will meet as we create this story together might speak of psychotherapy. A classicist would reference Fortuna. I had a friend in high school, Wyn Schultz, who was busted for marijuana at the end of our first semester at the University of Texas. The arrest occurred the first time he smoked pot in 1971, when possessing the weed canibus was still a felony. His dad cut a deal with the District Attorney for Wyn to spend two weeks in the County Jail at Christmas break in exchange for a clean record. He spent the two weeks in jail and caught crabs, but went on to become a psychologist. I, on the other hand, smoked every day of my undergraduate career. I experienced no legal consequences, graduated Phi Beta Kappa, and went on to become... well... becoming is what this story is all about.

Before you read our story, we need to get a few things straight. The setting is primarily Texas, although not entirely. But if you are expecting a thigh-slapping, cowboy-booted, down-home folksy thing all about the land and western ethic then go read Larry McMurtry or watch reruns of *Dallas*. If you are more inclined to the mythological--the Pauline Kael or the *Candy-Colored, Tangerine-Flake Streamlined Baby* or the Hunter S. Thompson kind of thing—you will be disappointed. Why waste your time or mine? As I said in the beginning, we are creating this together. I have written the words. You bring the music. What happens page-to-page is between you and me. One on one. Personally.

II.

“Mistakes” can start before we are born. Only the perception of time is linear—not Time, not the Universal Time. We calibrate time into a linear progression to keep life from becoming too frightening. I do not remember my father. He left when I was three. I have a few mental images of a big brownish-red man with a mole on one thigh. I remember the mole because it was eye level as he sat on a table, screaming into a phone to an attorney that his children were being taken from him. My mother was in the hospital undergoing a hysterectomy. My Uncle Jay and Aunt Carol Sue were staying with us to take care of my brother and me. I do not remember how my mother and relatives came to the decision that we would simply leave the house. We checked in to the Castle Motel. I never saw my biological father again. The non-experience of my father taught me about abandonment—meaning if and when you finish our story, if we trust each other, then when you wane, drift and want to put the story away my love for you will increase and showing that love will appear to decrease. But we have some time—the blush of new possibilities, new friendship, new love. To what are you most looking forward? Bring the song of yourself, your experience, to blend with the language on the page. I will stay as long as you will.

III.

I was a ball of fire as a kid. Smart, sassy, strawberry-blonde, blue-eyed, naive, gullible. After my parents divorced, my older brother by eight years and two of his friends sexually molested me when I was three years old. When I was nine my mother remarried—an alcoholic named Howe. I saw my mother as a fictional character. My mother was Melanie from *Gone With the*

Wind—always a lady, rarely a woman, determined to see strength and goodness in others even if it meant ignoring reality. My mother was St. Joan—or perhaps Dilsey from *The Sound and the Fury*. She was a martyr and controlled everyone with her self-sacrifice. My mother endured. She also loved me. I never doubted that underneath it all, she genuinely loved me.

Pathetically, I was there for the taking. I had no boundaries, no defenses, no trust, no self. If I had been a very old personage in an ashram or Tibetan holy man, it would have been an exalted state. But unfortunately, I was a child with the whole drama of a human experience still before me. I did the sensible thing—I fled. I fled in terror from these ravening creatures that were in and around and through me. I fled from my family to recesses of being where they could not follow—worlds of imagination and ideas where I was safely alone. I fled down deep inside, curled myself around the essence of life, and waited.

IV.

Do you know anything about Austin, Texas? In the early seventies, it was a town in transition. The sixties were over. The days of the great riots, violence in the streets, and student political activist groups were over, not that anyone knew that yet. We kept the faith through drugs, dedicated alienation, and discourse. In those days, Austin was about conversation. Groups of people met to talk about Big Issues over pitchers of beer. It was a town too big to be little and too little to be big. It was a town about to grow and burst its seams, but then only had vague itching of new people arriving. Austin is the capitol of Texas, which means it was and is about politics. At that time, the movers and shakers had to drive Volkswagen Beetles and wear stained leather that was expensive, but the expense could be excused because it was old. It was a town that had lost its footing. The nostalgia of the gas station ambience of Janis Joplin, the crooning

of a yet unknown Willie Nelson, was saying good-bye to itself through down-home tourist attractions. Slick imitations of Armadillo World Headquarters proliferated through the spanking new suburbs. The original temple was left to a decaying hope—bereft, abandoned, and finally torn down to make way for a Hyatt.

I arrived in much the same condition. Bereft. Abandoned. Unconscious. I tried to write, visualize and think through to synthesis the enormous change of moving from Beaumont to Austin. What I experience now is a distant collage of events, people, and feelings much like witnessing my own birth. At times, I fondly recall escapades of youth. I can see funny characters sketched in gentle caricature. At times, I recall emotions more like a river full of whirlpools and rocks that can rip through a hull.