

1985

Arrangement

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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"As I changed my clothes, I felt as if I shouldn't be in her bedroom when she wasn't home, but I looked around, feeling slightly guilty as I stepped into my jeans. The room was neat, almost barren compared to my rooms, at home and at school, that were filled with overflowing bookcases and chairs covered with new pairs of jeans I had never hemmed and stuffed animals given to me by my mother and my first lover. Her room was so uncluttered it seemed almost pristine, despite the copy of *The Joy of Cooking* and the black wool wrap that lay on the bed. Her other books stood in a small bookcase opposite the bed - a set of Time-Life volumes on various geographic areas of the United States, a book on tropical fish, Betty Friedan . I told myself it was none of my business and returned my attention to dressing, but before I pulled my sweatshirt over my head, I noticed the two shelves of small clown and harlequin figurines hanging on the wall over the bed. It looked like a child's collection, but sitting in the corner next to the bookcase was the clown's big brother: a Pierrot doll about two feet tall, with a smooth, white, half-smiling porcelain face, dressed in a black-and-white satin costume."

Cover Page Footnote

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As I sat on her bed to put on my socks, I noticed the framed photograph on the bedside table. I had seen it several times, but I leaned forward to look at it again. It had been taken a few years ago, she had told me, when she and her best friend Patrick were visiting Cape Cod. It is a sunny day, and she and Patrick are sitting in the crotch of a huge tree, holding hands and looking out between the enormous split trunk. Neither of them is truly smiling, but her mouth is open and her teeth look white against her tanned skin. What has always struck me about the photograph, though, is how young she looks.

She turned the light off and we moved clumsily into each other's arms, almost bumping noses in the darkness.

She muttered something about it being "warmer when you're together." She's always hated cold.

In the morning she rises quickly from the bed, as always, as if afraid I'll remind her of what transpired beneath her new comforter the night before. I *would* remind her; if she gave me the chance, I would kiss her repeatedly and try to keep her in bed ten minutes more. But I let her go, remembering the time I hugged her from behind as she sat on the edge of the bed, dressing, and she moaned, only half-jokingly, "Oh, don't; I just got motivated!"

I lie alone in the warm bed for a few minutes, then get up and follow her into the living room where Peter is sprawled on the couch under a crocheted afghan. We drink our morning coffee in the cold little kitchen, sitting at the oak-veneer table and listening to Peter describe his exploits with the man he picked up at the bar last night. She makes me a cheese omelette, and I eat it slowly, half-listening to their conversation and periodically glancing at her. I am feeling that odd combination of joyful, boundless energy and mellow lethargy that always follows a night spent with her, and as I study her face, I imagine it is as white and flawless as that of the Pierrot sitting in the corner of her room.

Michele Moore