

ROBIN

Rightaway I'd like to separate this Robin from all Robins you or I have ever known. This Robin I am about to tell you about is not someone that any of us know. She is somebody I found and I would like to tell her secret.

I call her Robin because she is red and black and angular and resembles a bird in her speed and in her cruelty. I fell in love with her briefly, last year. I'm just not in love with her anymore but there's this residue.

She was sort of a famous junkie, which I thought was pretty exotic, never having been particularly involved with heroin, having had a taste here and there—I was at an art event a couple of years ago and a friend dragged me to the dinner afterwards and Robin entertained our end of the table with a story about how she had been busted for dealing dope, but instead of going to jail she informed on somebody else. She knew that she would die in jail, she knew she couldn't take it. I was appalled and thrilled by her coldness. She spoke carefully, slowly, halting, choosing her words . . . how is it that junkies talk, very ornate, piercing and hollow and obviously this girl was a prince. A dead one. She smelled of flowers, she smiled

at me when she got up to leave. I'm so glad you're here she said intensely like I was the only soul in the room, or a soul who had a soul like hers.

I knew Robin had a girlfriend. Historically, they were kind of merged. My friends who used to do heroin said Robin 'n Babe as if it were one word. Babe played in a band, played till all the band members were so strung out that they were no band. By then Robin 'n Babe were an item so they teamed up and Robin sold drugs and Babe did them and they held sort of an elite junkie salon for a few years. Robin knew everyone in New York. Everyone on that trendy glamour junkie circuit. She wanted to write, had been doing so for years. In notebooks, in between experiences I guess. I think I had what Robin wanted and vice versa.

One day I was in her apartment and I found myself touching her leg. Her apartment was nice. Actually it was Babe's. It was hard to unravel where one stopped and the other began—It was Babe's bombed-out junkie rock star haven and Robin moved in when Babe kicked Lulu, the old girlfriend, out. Lulu died of AIDS. She wound up hooking on 3rd Avenue after they kicked her out of the band because she was so bad. The lives of drunks and druggies is such a treacherous moral landscape with avalanches and peaks and nasty pitfalls. Robin moved in and cleaned house, eventually at some point of successful drug dealing had extensive carpentry work done, the apartment had modernesque divides, shelves for aeons of rock star clothes and shoes, millions of records and Robin's little dealing room lined with scales and books. There she sat with her extraordinary stark white-face,

a weirdly shaped skull, kind of cubist and long, with ravenish black hair. I adored her because she was a masque. This, combined with her sensibility, literary and scrupulous, made her essentially Aquarian to me, an endless revolving door.

Just before I put my hand on her leg I had asked about her and Babe. I was making an honest woman of myself. We're roommates she said in her voice that was of the air, tentative yet treacherous. Actually, she leaned forward stretching her arms down to her pointed toes. "I don't really know. We don't really talk about it. Babe is not disposed to discuss anything so abstract as our relationship. She is not . . ." She sighed, thinking the better of continuing. "I don't know what she's doing." "Honesty," her face telegraphed. Robin had a deep morality of which she never spoke, but she communicated its breadth and its depth, by her protective pauses. You knew she was a good person because she held back at moments of deepest revelation. She did not spill, and I always felt that to push her a bit would be sloppy and expose my own lack of a system of conduct.

So I put my hand on this woman who smelled so good. Her fragrance was coming my way. When we smell a person's perfume we think that we're smelling their essence, their identity somehow. The body has to be there for the perfume to stick to, but when they're gone it's the perfume that we know. I've forgotten its name. I asked her once.

Some kind of sexy thirties jazz was on the stereo. I knew I was in her house now, not Babe's. The design was hers, but the ornaments were Babe's. Babe's paintings and the guitars and record collection. She had made a home for Babe, kind of

a mother or a wife. I found that so hot to discover an ex-heroin dealer in the middle of the art world who was really a good woman, once I told her that—I couldn't believe how hokey it sounded and by her silence I knew she was horrified. I bet she wanted to break the silence of our affair just to tell Babe some of the stupid things I said.

Okay well if this is all right I put my hand on her leg. It seemed seductive enough. I'm really attracted to you I said. The feeling is mutual she replied. Soon we were half-dancing half making out in the middle of the room and it was really hot, I mean she had a hard desperate mouth, her hands were up my shirt and I was feeling her ass. All my instincts were on target in the particular way I felt like a bow and arrow nocked, then release.

Soon we were on the bed, ripping our pants off and this was when I began to feel in the middle of their relationship because you knew you were going wild in the precise same place where a couple woke each morning and looked at that painting, Babe's.

I think this is going to be a problem she said. She got up and sat on the chair, lit up a cigarette. A move I regard as "womanning" me—I've felt it before. It's the gesture of a torn, or badly married, man.

Well, are you going to tell Babe. Yes, I'm quite certain we are due to have a conversation about this, among other things. She bit each syllable as she spoke. Robin had to go to work, she was a cook, a neat transformation for a dealer, though actually she was a cook first, that's how she started dealing drugs. Cooking in all of Ricky Mountain's restaurants. Even sold him

the drugs he'd OD'd on legend says, though Robin says it's not true. And she was the one who told me the legend. Someone else got him those. It was weird she said to have your boss coming in the kitchen to buy from you. They always came to me, she said of her connections. It was never something I decided to do. They knew I could help them, she said.

So she went to work, pretty wonderful, all vulnerable and pink. The pretty Robin. One of many. I guess I went home. I went running down in the park by the East River. I needed to stretch out my feelings that were really making me crazy and all furled & unfurled.

We had a date the next day at 4. I don't know how I tolerated my home, I think I was working or something, some piece of writing, but I stopped at three to let feeling build, and then it was 4:15, 4:30 I was out of my mind. Quarter of 5 she called. Where are you! Well I'm out doing a few errands. It took a little longer than I thought. Are you coming over? *Well I had thought I would still do that*, but it is pretty late. She was almost needling me off the phone. Yeah, c'mon I said. Up the stairs came this angry woman who I sometimes thought resembled Elizabeth Taylor or Keith Richards and sometimes when she was really nice, Donovan. Frozen and mean in a white jacket coming up my steps. Hello, I said, holding the door. I was no longer in fun-affair with vulnerable married woman. In one day that was already over. She sat in her white jacket on the small orange couch. Do you want a drink? I had automatically stored exactly what she had served me from her refrigerator the day before. I was glad she said no because I would have been ashamed to reveal what a copy-cat I was.

Raspberry Soho Cola. Your furniture is not very comfortable she said.

I feel nervous I confided nervously teetering over the counter that faced the itchy couch. "Why do you feel nervous, would it make you feel better to tell me?" These quiet utterances thundered like the I Ching. What a jerk I am. I never wanted to go to hell, but I thought I could date the devil. "I feel funny." Do you want to go up on the roof I asked. No I don't. Why would I want to go up on the roof? This is awful. I have invited a wolf into my home. I went over and started knocking into, touching, kissing the wolf. It was the only thing I could think of doing. C'mere get up I huskily growled. Where are we going she whispered. Tamed. Over there. I pointed at the bed. My goal from the day before was to get our clothes completely off, that kind of sex. I was trying to get her shoes off, to be sort of sexy/servile but I was so awkward she pulled her weird green 70s rock star boot back to herself and started untying. Behold the skinny body I loved. I was revolted but addicted.

Momentarily, she acted as if she intended to really ravage me, but it was a phoney growl. She didn't know how. I must fuck Robin. That was my job. She had the largest . . . cunt, vagina I have ever stuck my finger in. It was big red and needy. I stuck two three fingers in and fucked her and fucked her. I've always received complaints that I was rough but I felt like I could have been shoving a stick up this woman, a branch. Her ass was up in the air, it was April and the trees were still pretty bare and I looked through the black rusty cross-hatched window gates of my East Village apartment and I felt detached

and I fucked and fucked her with my hand, and twisting her nipples. She moaned and growled with pleasure. Such a woman, I have never met such a horny animal nor have I ever so distinctly serviced a woman before. Do you want my fist inside you. Anything she shrieked, anything.

So this is my late winter stolen landscape. Robin's hungry butt bobbing in front of my window next to my desk where I write. I felt my home, myself, violated by this animal. I couldn't stop. This must be what faggots do. The inside of her pussy was hot and warm, it did, it did feel like a live animal. I put my fingertip to her butt-hole but there didn't seem to be any magic there. I was getting bored. Wanna come up on me. I wanted to be underneath—her pussy on my mouth. Sure, anything. I had no way of framing her true repertoire with these kind of replies. I suspected she had done everything in the past, or on the other hand maybe she was a liar.

Here it comes, the salty hairy organ, the slippery wet thing with a hard pearly center, jammed in my face. I started licking and sucking like crazy. I am wild for the sensation of having my face covered and dominated, almost smothered by a cunt. She was happy. It all seemed one to her, then a great groan and buckets of wet acrid fluid flooded into my mouth, splashing down my cheeks and onto my pillow. Initially I surmised she had come in some new way, but it was pee and now I had drank it for the first time. I swallowed some, but then no I don't really want to drink piss. I wiped the edges of my mouth and then kissed her. I think she said I'm sorry but grinned at me wiping my face. Do you have any music she said. Take a look—the tapes are on the refrigerator. I lay on the bed, fasci-

nated by the acrid taste of piss, yet horrified at the inadequacies of my tape collection. Da, *duh-duh*, Da, *duh-duh* came the opening notes of "Kimberly" and Robin walked naked across the length of my apartment like she was the real Patti Smith.

I think we tried to cram more into her pussy for a while after that and she gave my lips a quick swipe with her mouth, but I really suspected that was not her cup of tea. Because she was not a lesbian, nothing like that.

Do you have a towel? Actually I didn't. Or I didn't have a clean towel and I didn't want to give her mine, out of a desire not to insult one of us. Finally I gave her a facecloth. I guess a towel's a towel. I didn't know what was going on. I've got to meet my girlfriend she explained. Today she had a girlfriend. A blow to the stomach, received in silence of course. I'm going out too I said. Well then come on, come with me to meet her. I did something in the kitchen sink, brushed my teeth, but I was feeling demolished.

Outside I unlocked my bike—"No, you know . . . I'm just going to ride off." She gave me a giant devil grin. Thanks she jeered. What am I going to do I thought as I rode off. There were millions of other ways to get laid but I chose this one. She called me a couple of days later. I explained how rotten I felt. I would never want to cause you pain she assured me. I felt mildly cauterized but Ouch. Actually what kept running through my mind was that an alley cat had run in and pissed all over my apartment. I went to see her at work on Saturday. She wore a mustard colored shirt. She was beautiful. She resembled Donovan. She was sulking in the sunlight. She had to start cooking. Come back later she said as she went

in. I bumped into her that night at a party. I ignored her. She looked angry and flipped out. Babe was there. I feel like committing suicide a friend of mine confided to Babe. I feel like committing homicide Babe replied. I left town, stayed with Mary, David's sister at the beach.

Robin started calling me a few weeks later. I didn't return the calls and then I did. I felt strong. I was over her. She called me from work. Come see me she begged. I'm going to a memorial service I told her. But I haven't eaten yet. Come here she said. She made me the most delicious burritos. Fabulous. I could taste them all through the service, a room full of old friends of a man I hardly knew. I knew his lover. I liked him a lot. I hugged Roberto and left. Outside the church I unlocked my bike thinking about Robin. I got home and the phone rang. I must be crazy she said but I'm working a double shift but I can't stop thinking about you. Can I come over. She walked into my arms as she closed the door. It was the most delicious sex, her fingers jabbing inside of me so far up, I just felt I had grown so much larger inside just to accommodate her touch, just to take that woman inside of my stomach. I can't believe I'm going back to work now. I went to an opening and just smirked and felt so well fucked and aching.

It went like that, rattle-trap like a bad machine for many months. I told her I didn't want to see her anymore. I told her I just wanted to see her for coffee. We fucked, and I regretted it. The sex seemed to get wilder and wilder and in the midst of it she'd say: I hope you've gotten over your desire to call this a relationship. I hope you've gotten over your desire to publicize this.

About a year later I'm watching leaves drop off the branches of some different trees and the leaves landing among the branches themselves. I can't really remember exactly what she said or anything quite like it. I only know in the midst of passion she would always betray me like pleasure was a hook she used to throw me. I was just a poor fish. She didn't want me, she didn't want anyone to know about us, least of all Babe. She would invite me over to sleep in her home when Babe spent weekends on Fire Island and she'd call Babe and ask her if she was warm enough, and take her time and chuckle and have her relationship in front of me.

Once I woke up in the middle of the morning, maybe five, after dawn, it was blue and Robin was asleep and I lay there looking at Babe's painting. It got truer and truer to me, I thought it was pretty good. Two little fiery creatures, little crayons of color, one connected to something below the frame of the painting—really anchored and attached and the other, brighter, was floating in space. The anchored one, obviously Robin, was giving the other, Babe, a tongue lashing. Babe danced, immune, and yet it was a child's painting, a defiant work. A slap against her Mom. The reality of lying in their bed in the middle of their life looking at their relationship was more than I could bear. I had to move on—there may have been a little more but not much.

They lived in Soho. The first time I met Robin for sex we went to Rizzoli's. Then we saw some art. Big dark paintings that looked like designer sheets. We picked up sandwiches—mine was tuna, and we carried them home. I guess I don't regret not stopping at the sandwich. Once we did just have

lunch and she told me about going all the way to Thailand to cop. And she snorted all the profits, her and Babe. Then someone passed the window of the restaurant that we both knew and she practically ducked. Later when I accused her of ducking she denied it. She carried drugs on the airplane up that massive pussy.

Once after we stopped fucking we had a small honeymoon. I went to visit her and it was late afternoon and it started to rain. It got darker, naturally, and she showed me in great detail her room. She had an extensive postcard collection, mostly from Italy and the Far East. My therapist said she was probably a classic narcissist and she couldn't love, not me anyhow but she collected people too. She was not an artist. This is one way I have of hurting her. She showed me an odd fan that looked like a globe. She knew where you could get hundreds of these at one time, they were intended for bankers—some place where you couldn't rustle the papers too much. I guess it kept her room cool when she dealt. All the rest of these fans were destroyed and now there were only a few and she had one of them here in her room. The titles of her books in her shelves didn't impress me. You could tell she still had her college books. I'm always shocked at what people haven't lost. There were pictures on her bulletin board of her and Babe going to one of Babe's gigs. Babe had weird makeup on and a cape, Robin just looked cool. She was. If I've ever met a cool woman in my life Robin was her.

Later she led me out to a round table in her front room and she told me about her early religious training and she went to Hebrew school. She was showing me her favorite spiritual

book in the world something by Martin Buber. She read it very slowly, the smallest bite at a time, sometimes just a sentence. She had her head bent over that book and she looked like the sweetest Jewish boy, head bent in prayer. I fell in love with her again. I like the smell and taste of women's bodies. Sometimes I'm sure that's what I'm living for. But as for Robin I would like to make her drink piss. I know a boy who did it in high school. Somebody offered him twenty bucks to drink it the story goes. Did he drink it? Yes. I was about fifteen when I heard that story. His name was Frosty, he was from Lexington, and was the lead singer from a band that played all the local dances doing covers of the Rolling Stones. His big song was "I'm Alright." He would stoop down at the foot of the stage and his lip would curl up and it was heavenly. He was our Rolling Stone. I was amazed when I heard he drank piss. It was a new kind of spirituality I had begun to hear about. Humiliation. But this anger it has brought me makes me think I've done it wrong. She went to California for a week, rented a red car and discovered it was me she loved now. Not Babe. Too late. Now I sit in this incredible silence. I don't know why.