

Wild Refuge

By

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(Rosalyn, eighteen, sits in a chair. There is a tattered brown book sitting on the floor next to the chair. There is a light blue glow. She is wearing a hospital gown.)

Rosalyn:

What do you see when you look at a tree? I see leaves. Beautiful green leaves. Different sizes and shapes, each one unique and dyed the perfect shade. The leaves cover, hiding what lies beneath. The hard dark bark and stretching fragile branches. When the leaves fall, all that is left is a skeleton, nakedness. And when the winter comes, snow sits heavy on the branches and ice clings until they become weak, bitter and finally break. *(Pause.)*

I feel naked, a lot. *(She rises and walks slowing around the chair looking at the imaginary cell in which she a prisoner.)* They put padding on the walls so you sleep better, so you feel secure. Well, I don't sleep and I certainly don't feel secure. These circles under my eyes are the circles of defeat, remnants of hope, lost. This is the third time I've been in here. It's been three weeks and no one, no one has come to visit. How can a child survive? *(She sits in the chair.)*

When I was little, I didn't have many friends. But, I remember sitting under the huge oak tree in our front yard playing with Rena—my imaginary friend. She was my best friend. *(Pause.)*

You know, I've read that children that have imaginary friends are creative and have strong healthy imaginations. *(Pause.)* My parents thought it was abnormal. They told me that I could never play with Rena again. They said the neighbors noticed me in the front yard bowing and talking and playing to no one. I loved dancing with Rena. But, after that, I only danced with her when I knew no one could see.

(Picks up book from floor.) Then, I started writing in this journal. I wrote to Rena everyday. *(Turns to a page and reads.)* Dear Rena: My brother tormented me again today. I don't understand why he hates me so. I'm so glad, though, I have you, to talk to.

(Looking up and closing the book.) They let me keep it, finally. When I'm lonely in here, I read it, over and over.

Two summers ago, though, my brother found it; I was devastated. It contains my deepest thoughts and ideas. I've never much liked reality. I find it, depressing. It makes you wonder how a God could exist. *(Thinking.)* Funny, now, I'm so hoping one does. Anyway, I was relieved that he didn't burn the pages. They are so precious to me. But when my parents read it, fire danced behind their eyes. That was the first time they brought me here. I never wrote to Rena again. *(Rises and walks behind chair.)* When I finally came home, I could feel a part of me was missing.

(Reaches up to her faces and caresses her cheek, longing for touch.) Like that beautiful tree hiding the delicate branches, I wanted to embellish myself with accessories. I love jewelry and makeup and clothes. I remember sneaking into my mother's room and putting on all the jewelry I could find. I'd paint my face like a silent movie star—pearly white, with blood lips and black widening eyes. My wrists would hurt from the weight of the golden bangle bracelets.

(Crossing DC in front of chair.) When I was sixteen, I was allowed to go to the school dance. *(Remembering.)* I took a skirt and cut it so short and made myself up with extravagant makeup. My parents weren't pleased—they called me a streetwalker and whore. I remember my mother slapping me. I wasn't wearing any underwear. I was hot, down there. I didn't mean nothing by it. I didn't even know what a vagina was for, really. I just wanted to dress up and look as beautiful as my mother—to be covered with shades so brilliant—to feel like something special. *(Pause.)* The next day, they brought me *here* for the second time.

Do you ever wonder why we're here anyway? It haunts me. I don't even know if anyone loves me. *(Sits in chair.)* Parents want you to be what they want you to be, whatever that is. It's like you're suppose read their minds. You can't. You can't change your heart. *(Pause.)* I guess I'm just not what they expected.

Roots are there for support, no matter what the tree, or plant, or shrub above looks like, whether the leaves are beautiful, or whether they are gone, exposing all. The foundation is there for as long as it can be. It is the captain that stays as the ship goes down. The roots help to nurture growth. But, if it becomes infected or consumed with disease, it dies and eventually rots away. *(Runs her hands through her hair and stares, eyes piercing.)*

Six weeks ago, I walked in on my brother. He had gotten high and passed out. I looked around his room and out the corner of his bed, I saw some magazines. I pulled them out - Playboy and Hustler. Beautiful girls. I looked. I looked at the pictures. I was intrigued, captivated. Not necessarily sexually, but I wondered how it must feel to look flawless, to be perfect. I'm not a pretty girl, just plain. So for a few minutes, I fantasized that I was one of those women, with amazing figures and silky skin. Finally, my brother stirred. I hid the magazines, and leaned over him to see if he was okay. He started to move; I asked him how he was and before I knew it, he was kissing me. He didn't know it was me. He was high and probably had just jacked off to those beautiful girls. But, my mother walked in right at that moment. *(Slowly.)* Funny, my brother wasn't punished. But, I was sent here, again. *(Pause. Rising and walking with a hint of anxiety.)*

I remember watching an episode of 20/20 when I was little. They showed this assembly line of ladies inspecting baby chickens. All the babies rode a gray conveyor belt and these mean ladies would pull off certain chicks. I remember a little black chick that none of the ladies pulled off. They let it go on. But, the little baby kept waddling back toward the ladies, against the current of the belt. But eventually the little chick became tired and finally dropped. He dropped into a garbage pit, where the remnants of those unwanted were crushed. I cried. I cried so hard, I thought my heart would never heal. I thought, I would have taken him. I would have taken care of him. What was wrong with him? *(Slightly breaking down.)* What is wrong with me? Who is going to take care of me? *(Stares blankly around the room searching for someone's help.)*

The nurses are nice. I think they know I don't belong here. I don't know where I belong.
(Pause. Picks up the journal and turns to audience.) Soon, the spring will come, when new buds of life emerge and the sun's heat warms hearts. I can't see the sun, now. But some day, some day, I will. *(Pauses. Looks strangely around,)*

Rena, yes, I know. You love me. You love the sun too, don't you? *(Speaking to an imaginary being on the stage.)* Do you want to dance? I would love to dance. *(Dances with Rena as the lights fade.)*