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Liberal Arts (fiction)

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Liberal Arts

by Dawn Vinson
PURPOSE
(original proposal)

I believe that the purpose of the senior project is to reflect on the undergraduate career in order to digest and merge everything learned during these years. Education serves no purpose if it is not properly examined and applied to the student's life personally. I have absorbed a number of facts, ideas, and philosophies at the University of Tennessee - some of them outside of the classroom. The College Scholars program has allowed me to take challenging and unusual classes that have nurtured my creativity. I have sampled just about everything the Liberal Arts college has to offer. As my senior project, I will put four years of education on display in a collection of creative short stories entitled Liberal Arts. There will be a total of 3 stories, each one drawn upon different aspects of my experience at U. T. For example, one work will use material gathered in France during my two semesters abroad this past summer and fall. The second will be an adaptation of a work by a Francophone female author. I want to show the validity of studying this type of fiction by taking out the major themes and applying them to African-Americans in 20th century America. The third work, which is also the title story, will contain a
potpourri of ideas and themes. I will draw on every experience, event, and class that I have lived through during my four years of college. I intend to bring to life the business, English, French, and Women's Studies concentrations on my transcript, and to creatively display the validity and effectiveness of the courses I chose through the College Scholars program. My collection will be presented in book or binder form which will also display my artistic talents with its cover art.
ABSTRACT

STORY #1

character's name: Faye (fairy. elf. faith. elflike)
setting: Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris: late summer
(end of trip): baggage check/customs
storyline: There is a long line of people in front of the TWA check-in area. Faye engages in conversation with the woman next to her. who also happens to be American. Through this conversation. Faye reflects on different aspects of her trip.
- French family (isolation/alienation)
- apartment search (first independence)
- riverwalks/day excursions (taking responsibility)
- Metro stations (ugliness of life)
- discovery of Latin Quarter (taking art seriously)

STORY #2

setting: home (city much like Memphis) after trip
storyline: Months of solitude in a foreign country gave Faye a chance to work out her own ideas about the kind of life she wants to live. Now at home. she struggles to defend her new philosophies among people who ridicule them and call her crazy. Faye begins to lose her nerve. and the price of not being herself is depression.
- Christmas controversy
- Faye gets a haircut (radical concept)

This story is told through lists and journal entries.

STORY #3

setting: university (much like U.T.)

storyline: Faye pursues a liberal arts degree. Most of her friends are in business or engineering. Many people feel that she is wasting her time, and Faye herself begins to wonder, until one class changes her entire life. There she hears the sentence that gives her the final motivation that she needs: on peut croire ce qu’on veut.

- returns boyfriend’s shirt (ends relationship)
- throws away graduation applications
liberal (1) 'lib(r)" adj. 1. of or befitting a man of free birth 2. marked by generosity and openhandedness 3. lacking moral restraint 4. not literal: loose 5. broad-minded. tolerant: not bound by authoritarianism. orthodoxy. or traditional forms 6. of or constituting a political party advocating or associated with the principles of political liberalism

liberal (2) n. one who is liberal: one who is open-minded or not strict in the observance of orthodox. traditional or established forms or ways: a member or supporter of a liberal political party: an advocate or adherent of liberalism esp. in individual rights

art (2) n. 1. skill acquired by experience. study or observation 2. a branch of learning: one of the humanities 3. an occupation requiring knowledge or skill 4. the conscious use of skill and creative imagination esp. in the production of aesthetic objects: works so produced 5. the quality or state of being artful 6. decorative or illustrative elements in printed matter

liberal arts n. pl. 1. the medieval studies comprising the trivium and quadrivium 2. the studies (as language. philosophy. history. literature. abstract science) in a college or university intended to provide chiefly general knowledge and to develop the general intellectual capacities (as reason and judgement) as opposed to professional or vocational skills

wing n. a means of flight or progress: to enable to fly or move swiftly: v. to let fly

interlude (3) n. an intervening of interruptive period. space. or event: interval
Wings
Faye slowed down as she rounded the corner and finally saw the airline counter where she needed to be. There was absolutely no hurry. In front of her was a line of at least a million people, all trying to get on flight 1089 for Detroit. She took her place in line, grateful for the chance to put her luggage down. She only had three bags for seven months, a masterpiece of packing that she'd congratulated herself on the entire time.

She took the ticket out of her pocket to look at it one more time. Several months ago, she had stood in another airport fingering a ticket that looked very much like this one. Then, she was fleeing toward freedom. Now, she is racing toward home. She put the paper back in her pocket in order to inch her bags a little bit forward. She put them down again and looked around at the other people waiting in line. After all this time, she thought she could pick out the Americans easily. They wore bright colors, smiled a lot, and were almost always talking. In seven months, Faye has almost never been wrong. The practice had begun in Lille two weeks after she'd arrived. She would take the trolley and the Metro to Place Charles de Gaulle and search for someone who would remind her of home. Her French family had been nice enough, but Faye was already beginning to feel desperately alone.

There were butterflies in her stomach as the van
pulled onto the street that was to be hers for an entire month. It was a nice little suburb, with children laughing and running, and dogs playing in the street. The townhouses had a pale pink finish, and there were plants and flowers hanging from every window. At 149, the door opened, and the shaggiest brown dog she had ever seen in her life escaped and began to join the others on the sidewalk. After him appeared a slender girl with hair like wheat in blue jeans, a white T-shirt, and a black sweater who chased him down the street. The van edged closer and closer toward the scene, and all of its occupants amused themselves by watching it.

Soon it was apparent that 149 was where she would be let off. As the vehicle slowed to a stop, the shaggy dog relinquished his freedom. The girl bent down and contained the dog in both arms. By the time she made it back to her door, Faye was already standing there with her bags on the step.

"Maman! Elle est ici!!"

The door opened, and a woman with smiles in her eyes looked out expectantly. The guide stepped forward and began to talk to this woman, introducing Faye, and giving instructions. Faye watched the girl deposit the dog in an inner room and close the door. He immediately began to scratch on it and bark. The girl kept a firm hand on the
doorknob. and turned around to listen to the guide's instructions.

Faye began to scrutinize the woman. She had chocolate brown hair cut short and close to her head. She was of medium height with a medium build. Even though today was not a working day, she had on what Faye called "real clothes" - a patterned blouse and a tan colored A-line skirt. She did not look at all like Faye's real mother, who was short and round and generally stayed in her pajamas when she was not at work. They were the Lebleus. Myriam (the mother) and Anne (the daughter).

The guide finished his speech, handed Faye a map and other information about the city and the school, and left. Anne and Madame Lebleu each took one of Faye's bags, and started up the stairs to her new room. There were three levels to the house. On the ground floor was the living room, dining room, kitchen, "toilette", and storage room. Faye's room was on the second floor with the other children's rooms (there was another daughter) and the bathroom. It was big and spacious with an attic-like window. She had a big bed and a little bed, and an entire wall of closets. There was also a sink in the room with a little medicine chest over it, and some storage space under it. Everything was covered with a delicate floral fabric, and overall, Faye was very pleased. The entire third floor
was one big room which served as the parent's bedroom. Everything looked normal and quaint. It was a very nice house.

Faye put her carry-on bag down near the sink, and turned around expectantly. Anne and Madame were already backing out of the room. Madame with her hand on the doorknob, smiling.

"You've had a long trip. You need time to yourself. Come down when you are ready."

Faye opened her mouth to say she was ready now, to ask about the other daughter, to find out the dog's name, to look for the cat she had seen out of the corner of her eye sitting near the sliding door and looking very fat, to get on with this adventure so her stomach could calm down. But, with a slam, the door was already closed.

"Aren't you glad to be going back?"

Faye focused on the voice of the woman next to her. Deep and friendly, it had none of the slow motion drawl to which she had become accustomed. No one spoke French to her here. Because her French was not good, and was peppered with a heavy American accent, everyone assumed that she preferred communicating in her own language instead of theirs. In fact they were almost too happy to oblige. English had them all under a spell, and they snatched at every opportunity to practice on a real
American. Faye would smile and nod and try hard not to show that their English was even more incomprehensible than their French. So whenever she met a real American. or even an Englishman. Faye breathed a grateful sigh of relief. She responded to the woman's question with a knowing nod.

"I come here every year on business. and it doesn't get any better. I'm always ready to get back to the good ol' U. S. of A. The people here are incredible. They don't even like each other!"

Faye thought about the numerous arguments she had witnessed at the bus and Metro stations and had to agree.

"How long have you been here?"

"Seven months." Faye braced herself for the usual response.

"Seven months! Did you go to school or something?"

"No."

"You had a job?"

"No."

"Well, what on earth did you do for all that time?"

Faye had never been able to come up with a suitable answer to that inquiry. Everyone from her family to her friends to her professors had been asking her that since it was first decided that she would take this trip. She would take a couple of classes from a French tutor for a while with some other students. but for the most part. she'd had
no purpose, no plan.

That first day, she hadn't done much of anything. Left to her own devices, she'd moped around the room, playing at organizing her things in the countless drawers and closets. She had not brought much, so that didn't take long. A light tap on the window caught her attention, and she looked up in time to see a fawn-colored bird take off from the windowsill. She went over to it and looked out at the world. From this height, she could see everything all the way down on both ends of the street. Straight ahead, beyond the next row of houses, stretched an open field, and beyond that, who knew? Maybe one of the Lebleu girls would show her around the neighborhood. Faye paused for a moment to collect her French, then made her way back down the stairs.

In the kitchen, the two girls were sitting head to head at the table cutting fake tattoos out of a magazine. They looked up when Faye walked in, smiled, and continued their task. They cut out the intricate shapes, swabbed them with water, and applied them to free spaces on their arms, shoulders and chest. So far, Anne wore a happy face, a cartoon character, and a thorny rose. Meanwhile, the other daughter, whose name was Sophie, seemed bent on covering herself with a technicolor zoo. Madame Lebleu was at the sink peeling potatoes.
"Tu veux boire quelques-chose? Quelques-chose a manger?"

Faye shook her head no.

"In our house, everyone makes what they want to eat anytime. You are welcome to use anything in the kitchen."

She began to show Faye where to find the various utensils, and where different food items were stored. There were only four family members and Faye, but the pantry was stocked for forty. Bread, cheese, fruit, vegetables, rice. Pasta, meat, juice. Chips, cookies, candy, ice cream. everything! As Madame opened and closed the cabinets, pointing out packages here and there, the shaggy dog and the fat cat came to investigate.

"This is Chookie and Milo."

Faye bent down to pet the animals. As she did so, Myriam Lebleu turned back to her potatoes. The two girls had not looked up again. Madame put the potatoes in a pot, covered them with some kind of white liquid, and placed them in the oven. After adjusting the temperature and giving the counter a cursory swipe with a towel, she left the room. Not knowing what to say or do, Faye continue to play with the dog and cat. Chookie tried to give her a kiss. Milo weaved in and out around her legs. So far, they were the only two members of the family that seemed even remotely interested in her. Anne and Sophie were in a
world of their own. They talked excitedly and way too fast for Faye to understand what they were saying. Moments passed and still no one spoke to her. Faye felt awkward but couldn't think of anything else to do. This was not turning out how she had expected. Finally, the girls closed the magazine and Anne began to clean up the table. Sophie walked over to the fridge, rummaged around for a minute, and reemerged with two carrots. The sight of the carrots made Chookie's ears stand up and he sat at attention. Anne took one of the carrots from Sophie's hand and dangled it in front of him. His eyes followed the carrot back and forth, back and forth, like he was being hypnotized. All of a sudden, the motion stopped. Chookie jumped up, took the carrot in his mouth and pranced over to a spot under the kitchen table to eat in peace.

"Il aime des carottes," said Anne.

After giving the cat a quick hug and smiling fondly at the dog one last time, Anne and Sophie left the room. Faye heard footsteps going toward the direction of the door and in a flash, they were gone. Wherever they were going, they hadn't asked her along.

Faye climbed the stairs again and went back to her room. It was getting dark, so she figured she might as well go to bed early. She changed into a T-shirt, draping
her lavender knit top and matching skirt across the desk chair. She walked over to her suitcase (the only one she hadn't unpacked) and dug out her Walkman. Luckily, she'd remembered to bring it along. She knew there would probably be a radio around somewhere, but she didn't want to take any chances with her music. She pressed the play button, laid back on the pillow, and prepared to drift off to sleep, with Mary J. Blige's soulful voice echoing in her ears.

"I mostly just saw things. I think I've been to every museum in this city, and that's saying a lot."

" Surely you didn't stay in a hotel for all that time!"

"Oh no. I rented a studio apartment in the fifteenth."

The line was inching up a little further. People were getting antsy and more frustrated. Children began to break out of line and wander around the area, exploring garbage cans and sleeping people in chairs. It seemed like no matter where you go in Paris, you could always find somebody sleeping in a chair. Especially in the Metro stations.

Her first ride had been the day she went to look for an apartment. She did not feel comfortable trying to take the bus, and anyway, the Metro was more direct and
therefore quicker. As soon as she descended into the terminal. Faye felt like she was in another world. As usual, there were people everywhere, crowding pushing, bumping, and jostling. The dark interior, the dark clothes on the people, and the unsmiling faces combined to make the atmosphere very depressing. Faye put her ticket into the little slot, walked through the gateway, removed her ticket from the other side, and emerged into the heart of the underground. She read the signs on the wall, looking for directions to ligne 8, direction Boucicaut. To the right. Luckily, she would not have to change stations. She began to walk down the long corridor, trying to keep up with the crowd. There was a steady stream of people going her way, and in the same narrow space of the corridor, another stream was headed in the opposite direction. Hardly anybody talked. They all just pressed forward, faces grim, teeth set. Every now and then, Faye would hear a high pitched wail sounding off up ahead. Actually, the sound was coming from more than one source, creating a discordant clamour that bounced off the ceiling and echoed in her ear. When she got closer, she saw that the sound was coming from several clusters of human beings sitting along the wall. They were yellowish looking women wrapped in layers and layers of dirty looking fabric. Each of them had at least three children positioned around her, either laying in her
lap sucking its thumb or sitting beside her looking forlorn. They all had their hands out. As Faye passed by them, they stretched their hands a little further, and looked at her expectantly in the eye. Faye felt her face burn as she walked by. The sound of their voices sounded like a million chastisements, imploring her to feel guilty about their lives and situations. It worked. Faye turned around abruptly, barely missing the man in a suit who has nearly walking on her heels. She ran back to the nearest woman and gave her the money in her pockets, not stopping to see how much it was. The woman did not say thank you. She looked at Faye, then looked away, and continued her siren call.

Faye reentered the crowd, and finally made her way to the correct platform. Luckily, the train was pulling up right at that moment. She looked at the placard at the top of the car, and found that there were ten stops before hers. The train lurched to a start, speeding away from the platform. Faye wasn't prepared for the movement, and for a second, her head felt like she was floating on air. The sensation passed. She settled back in her seat, and pulled out a magazine to read. Three or four stops later, she became aware of voices getting louder in the heat of an argument. Faye turned in her seat, and saw two men, one wearing a jacket and tie and some nerdy looking glasses:
the other in a T-shirt and jeans. It seemed that the T-shirt man had been reading the other man's newspaper over his shoulder - quite an irritating habit. Even so, the jacket man was taking it way out of proportion. Faye went back to her magazine, half-listening. Then, the sound of movement made her look again. The jeans man was standing up, yelling insults at the jacket man! The jacket man stood up, too, and the couple that had been sitting near them, discreetly moved to the other side of the car. All of a sudden, the jeans man snatched the jacket man's newspaper and tore it into little pieces. The jacket man turned a peculiar shade of red, but just then the Metro came to a stop, the doors opened, and the jeans man jumped off. The jacket man had to be content with shouting at the other's retreating back. Everybody in the car settled down, until just as the last-call siren rang. the jeans man jumped back on! Faye and the others held their breath.

The two men got nose to nose. The jacket man muttered something under his breath, then, suddenly... everybody began to applaud! It wasn't until they began to weave in among the people with hats in their hands when Faye understood. The two men were actors. By the time they got to where Faye was sitting (everybody was giving them money), her stop was coming up. She gave the jacket man a ten franc coin, then stepped up to the door. The train
came to a complete halt, and she opened the door and stepped out onto the platform for the stop named Boucicaut.

"Ooo. Everybody dreams of one day having an apartment in Paris. They're so expensive though. Everything here is expensive! How did you find it?"

"I saw the flyer on the bulletin board in the laundromat. It sounded like a nice place, so I went to see."

It was a very nice place. The neighborhood was fairly clean, and it had not taken long to get there from the Metro stop. The studio was on the fifth floor of a clean new-looking building. Faye had to go through two sets of doors to get to the main part of the building. Madame Castille led her up the stairs (the management was renovating the elevator, so it was out of order). The apartment was a burst of light, the entire back wall being a glass balcony door. There was one room, and it wasn't very big, but everything in it was compact. Actually, there were only three pieces of furniture - a bed that doubled as a couch, a white-finished table with a matching chair, and a white armoire. The closet had been converted into a tiny kitchen, complete with pans, pans, and dishes, all in a coordinating green print. Madame Castille stood in the middle of the room, rattling off pertinent information. Faye walked back over to the window and went
out onto the balcony. The view left much to be desired. It consisted of three other apartment buildings, none of which looked as nice as the one she was in. Yet and still, she had never had her own room before, let alone a whole apartment, let alone one with a balcony (with two lounge chairs). So, even though Madame asked for a price that made Faye's toes curl, she decided to take it.

By the end of the week, she was able to move in. She took her time unpacking, picking out just the right spot for all her belongings. She hung her clothes on the brightly colored hangers in the armoire. She carefully placed her shoes in a tidy row underneath. Socks and underwear were regulated to a sliding shelf on the other side of the compartment. She took her toiletries to the bathroom and arranged them artistically under the sink. Toothbrush and toothpaste went into a blue porcelain cup on the countertop. Next to this, she arranged four hand made soaps she'd bought from a little shop around the corner to christen her new home. Two of the cubes were blue, two were green, and they each held a letter of her name. By the time Faye was finished, the sun had gone down. The moonlight coming in from the window was enough to see by. She went around the room, touching everything and smiling to herself. Tomorrow, she would have to write to somebody and tell them about this. As for right now, she was tired.
She changed into her nightclothes and prepared for bed, lingering over her hair and teeth in her very own bathroom. She climbed into bed, but after a while it was evident that she would not be sleeping anytime soon. There was something stirring inside her, a restlessness. Faye decided to sit on the balcony.

The night air was cool and fresh, gently caressing her face as she reclined in the lounge chair. She could hear a jingle from a television show from somewhere off in the distance. All around her, families were having their evening meal (this late?), talking over the events of the day. Interior lights made everything open to exposure. Faye watched the goings-on of the people in the apartment straight ahead of her until her eyes seemed to close on their own. She lay there, feeling herself floating, floating, floating to another place and time. That night she dreamed of birds with golden wings taking her to a place that felt like home.

"I bet that was wonderful."

They both paused to move their luggage up a little bit further. Faye would be next in her line, the other woman still had two people before her. Faye occupied herself with making sure that everything she needed on the plane was in her tote bag. Glasses, magazines, notebook, pen. And of course, her trusty Walkman. She was
rearranging everything to make it fit neater. When a pink laminated square fell out, hitting the floor with a clink.

Reaching for it, she saw that it was her membership pass to the Louvre. She had known she would be visiting this particular museum several times throughout her stay, so she'd bought a yearly ticket. It made things a lot easier because she didn't have to wait in any lines to go in. For the past few months, this had been her only form of entertainment, besides reading (she had managed to secure a library card from the neighborhood bibliotheque).

However, no matter how many times she went, nothing compared to her feelings the first time she entered the palace.

She went on a Wednesday morning as soon as it opened. She had guessed correctly that there would then be fewer people (tourists) to hinder her enjoyment. She came in from the Metro entrance, which let her out onto the mall under the pyramid. It took her forever to get to the museum entrance, because she was fascinated by all of the window displays. Besides that, she had not expected to see stores that she knew. There was a Body Shop, a Nature and Discovery, an Esprit, and a Virgin Megastore. Everything glittered and gleamed and bounced off the polished glass. Faye made up her mind to explore the stores after she had seen the exhibits. She made it to the ticket counter.
bought her pass. and was on her way up the escalator. She didn't bother trying to look in the guidebook and make an itinerary to see specific things. She just wanted to take her time and walk around, taking in anything that appealed to her.

After three and a half hours, Faye still could not get enough. Surely, there was no place like this on Earth. All of her academic career, she had read about famous artists and their creations, and now, to be able to see them all under one roof was truly amazing. She had found the Venus de Milo by pure accident. She had been admiring the Greek and Roman mythological statues and had lost her sense of direction. So far, these were her favorite pieces of art. She loved mythology, and she walked around the various chambers, comparing the different renditions of Venus or Athena. Some of these rooms were circular, and others were square, but they all had one thing in common—there were too many ways to get in and out. It was a challenge for Faye to remember the direction in which she was going. Therefore, when she backtracked to get another look at the Roman busts of important families, she completely confused herself. Oh well, it was no big deal. She would just follow the other tourists.

It seemed as if everybody were going to the same place. As she walked a little further, Faye realized that
she was not imagining things. Straight ahead, there was a crowd flocking around one particular exhibit. Knowing this meant it was something famous (tourist don't waste their time on unknown art), she decided to go and see what it was. It took awhile to get close enough to see, but it was definitely worth it. The was the real, genuine Venus de Milo in all her glory! Faye stood there for what seemed like hours admiring the graceful shoulders and delicate, rippling fabric immortalized in stone.

The jostles and bumps of the other tourists brought her back to reality. With a stretch and a yawn, she stepped away from the statue, and stood for a moment, pondering the best way to get out. She had had enough for one day. Besides, by now, her stomach was growling loud enough to wake the dead. Faye began to carefully retrace her footsteps, congratulating herself when it became evident that she was going the right way. She moved down the corridor, through the salles, taking one last look at everything she had seen that day. Finally, the stairs leading to the next level came into view. That meant that the escalators were not far. Faye strode resolutely ahead, her mind full of thoughts about what she would eat and what she would do (besides sleep) for the remainder of the day. That's why she almost missed it. She was looking straight in front of her and would not have turned her head if it
had not been for the scream. A little girl delighted at being detached from her mother's grasp had not been paying attention to where she was going, and had promptly fallen down the stairs. It took her a second to realize her injury, and then she had let loose with a yell that made Faye's blood freeze. But, when she turned around intending to offer assistance, she didn't get the chance because she had looked up and fallen in love.

There, at the top of the flight of stairs, stood the most magnificent piece of art that Faye had ever seen. She had completely forgotten that this sculpture even existed, let alone that it could be found in the Louvre. It was much, much larger than she had imagined, and she climbed the stairs in awe. She reached the top and stood at the base of the sculpture, feeling about two feet tall. Victoire de Samthrace. Winged Victory. Faye could almost feel the breeze that made the fabric dance, outlining the healthy figure of a goddess poised in flight. With wings outspread and knees slightly bent, she looked ready to take off at any moment. Chisel in hand, a long time ago, somebody had known what it felt like to fly, and tried to give this gift to the entire world. This was the result. Yes, the plaque over on the wall gave another explanation for this masterpiece, but Faye knew better. All fatigue and hunger had disappeared, leaving room for a longing
emptiness that filled her body from head to toe. She was earthbound forever, and the thought broke her mind into little pieces. She felt ridiculously silly, and would not have told anyone about this feeling for anything in the world. Yet, she could not stop staring, and it was a long time before she could make herself turn around and go home. But her mind was still soaring, and she could not get it back.

"Well, good luck to you, and have a safe trip."

"You too."

Faye smiled at the woman, then turned to face the customs official. The questions seemed ludicrous (if I did have a bomb, would I tell anybody?), but they didn't take long, and she was quickly ushered to the ticket counter. There were more lines there, so it was no time at all before she was watching her luggage disappear on the conveyor belt. She looked at her watch. There was only twenty minutes left. By the time she found her way around the maze of an airport and found the correct terminal, her fight was ready to board. The butterflies in her stomach were active again. She had not seen U. S. soil for seven months, and in a matter of hours, she would see her friends and family again. They would be waiting at the gate, waving American flags and cheering. Her mother would have her favorite dinner at home waiting. There would be plenty
of hugs and kisses, and then the questions would start. Faye would tell them all about how dogs were allowed in the mall. and how she had once gone into the men's room by mistake. How the old men kept following her around when she was walking alone and how you could buy clothes, shoes, and underwear at the grocery store. Then she would tell them how she discovered the bus all by herself, and how you had to keep an eye out for the street signs or you would miss your stop. But she would never be able to explain how it felt to enter a hundred-year-old building, or see a painting so beautiful it made you cry. These things she would leave unsaid, and it didn't matter anymore if anyone understood what she had done. Beyond everything else, she had lived, and that had made all the difference in the world.
Interlude
I never have been one for making a big hoopla over Christmas. Everybody knows that. So why is it a big deal this year? I guess it's 'cause I've been away so long. but to be honest, that doesn't matter to me. I didn't really miss them that much. Does that make me a monster? Anyway, they don't even listen to what I say. or they think I will change my mind. I said, "no presents". and they still kept asking me what I wanted. "You'll take it if we buy it. won't you?" I haven't decided yet. I don't even know if I am going. I'm tired of faking it. Mother tries to "make merry". but after a while, she usually gives up. I don't care. I don't think I should have to be all nice and friendly when I don't feel like it. and Christmas time is the worst for me. As far as I'm concerned, it will take a lot more than a few presents and "goodwill toward men" to get rid of this funky mood.

I can't forget. I can't remember exactly how old I was. but we lived in the townhouse. so I was still in junior high school. I think we had Samson back then. but he must have been on the back patio. It was over the dishes. but there must have been something happening before then for it all to have come to a head like that. I do know that I was standing at the sink. and she was beside me. yelling in my ear. She said that the water was too cold and that the dishes wouldn't get clean. She kept
pouring the water in. hotter and hotter. 'til my hands jumped out on their own. She tried to slap me. but I stuck out my elbow into her arm so the blow went to the side of my head instead. She pushed me. and I pushed her back. If you've ever slammed your finger in the car door and remember the instant before the blood spurts and the pain kicks in. that's how she looked. Nobody remembers that but me. so they call me early on Saturday mornings and ask me why I've changed.

But what's wrong with change? I don't want this life anymore.

I want to keep my hair wild. I've gotten used to it. It has overrun my head in a mass of complex twists and turns. "When are you making an appointment? I have to let Leonard know so he can let you use his car." When I told her my plans. she laughed. "Girl. where do you get these crazy ideas from? But, you're grown an' it's your head. You can do whatever you want." Now. what kind of a statement was that? Not very encouraging. but I'm not supposed to mind that. The truth is. I mind everything these days.
I kept my hair in its natural state, but I got it cut. The way my family carried on, you'd have thought I'd held up a bank. What is the big deal? Now I have assorted aunts, uncles, and cousins calling me to ask me why I'm acting so strange. They don't say it like it's a good thing. They make it sound like I need to be on America's Most Wanted. Anyway, I like my hair the way it is. It is my first act of independence. From now on, I'm going to live my life exactly as I please. I will only do things that I want to do, and anything that does not serve my purposes is going to get dropped. That includes Christmas. I am definitely not going, so they're just going to have to get over it. I will not suppress my feelings any more. But, I will make an effort to be nicer, though. There's no sense in being unpleasant.

**GOALS:**

1. Find an alternative to celebrating Christmas at Grandma's.
2. Clean out my closet and drawers and take out everything I no longer need or want.
3. Have a garage sale to get some $$$!
4. Make a conscious effort to be nice to everybody and only have nice things to say.
5. Be my own person, no matter what!
6. Get on with my new life!
I'm starting to feel like my old self again. I am sooo glad to be back in America! I get to eat real food that tastes like it is supposed to. Everybody around me speaks English. English. English! I am in my own room surrounded by my own things, and everything is clean! especially since I went through and took out all of my excess junk. I got tired of having so many things. So far, I'm keeping right on track with my list of goals. I'm going to have my garage sale this Saturday. I am headed for a new life. I'm going to be free, natural, and simple. I'm not going to let my society (or my family) tell me how to be. Grandma Paine called me today 'cause she "heard I had other plans for christmas day". I told her I didn't have other plans, that I had just decided not to celebrate it this year.

"Well, why not? Are you getting into some new religion or something?"

"No. I just don't want to anymore. It hasn't meant anything to me for a long time, so I'm just not going to do it anymore".

"Are you mad at us or something? Did somebody do something to you?"

"No."

"Well, we sure would like to see you here. You go back to school soon, don't you?"
"In a few weeks".

"This might be the last time we'll all be together before you leave."

I hate guilt trips, maybe because they almost never make me feel guilty. I couldn't think of anything to say, though, so I just held the phone. After a few minutes she said, "Well, I hope you think about it". I said okay and hung up. If they're all going to worry me to death, this is going to be harder than I thought. Too bad. They'll just have to get over it.
It's getting closer and closer to the big day, and things are getting tight. Mother is all wrapped up in her shopping and decorating, and she wants me to get involved, too. Actually, it's kind of fun. We get up early and go to the mall. We like to get there at least a little before everybody else. Then we go in every single store, trying to find something for all the people on our list. Her list. Anyway, we laugh and talk like best buddies. Today she asked me if I'd filled out applications for graduate school yet. I'm glad she reminded me, because I hadn't. Then she asked me what I wanted to do after I was finished with school. I said I didn't know, so she asked me what I liked to do. I said read and write, and she said that I probably would not be able to find a job doing just that. What else? So then I told her about my secret mission to change the world. I will teach everybody to love everybody else, and there would be no more hardship or pain. She looked at me like I'd just said aliens had invaded my body. But then when we were walking to the car, she told me her secret dream — to be a mud wrestler. The thought of my very own mother slinging mud in a two piece bikini made me almost choke on the ice cream I was eating. I looked at her to see if she were serious. We laughed all the way home.
Why can't people take no for an answer? Why can't they leave me alone? What difference does it make if I don't go to one lousy holiday celebration? I can see each one of them some other time. Everybody's talking about obligation and "doing right" and "not gettin' involved in no foolishness". It's like if I have my own opinion or do something differently than they do, they take personal offense. Well, too bad. They're just going to have to start respecting my wishes as a free adult.
I went. I couldn't take it anymore. I even started to feel like I was doing something wrong. What's wrong with me? Why don't I have enough will power to stand up for my own beliefs? I did it with the hair (which they criticized the whole time anyway), so why couldn't I do it this time? It's not fair! Why couldn't they just leave me alone? I'm such a wimp. I'm always doing things to please other people, sucking up. I'm fake, too. I went to Grandma's house and acted like I had planned on going all the time. I opened presents and ate and sang like I was ten years old again. I completely forgot that I didn't like this day and the reason why. I might as well not even set any goals. I am obviously not ready for it.
In a week, I'll be back at school. I had originally intended to make a lot of changes there, too, but now I'm not so sure. Actually, my life is not as bad as I make it sound. It's just that sometimes I don't know where I end and other people began. There's really nothing wrong with catering to other's people's wishes either, especially when it's family. They've all done a lot for me, so why should I be ungrateful and selfish and not do anything for them? I haven't been thinking about anybody but myself, and that's wrong. I wish there was a way to work it all out, but if there is, I haven't found it yet. Oh well, it's not the end of the world.

So why do I feel so blue?
Liberal Arts
Faye entered the classroom just as the professor began getting into the day's lecture. It was the middle of the semester, but she still could not get the hang of things. She was almost always late to her first class, and she never seemed to realize assignments were due until the night before. If she kept up at this rate, she would never graduate, and that would defeat the purpose entirely. The professor eyed her pointedly, but continued on with his lecture. He was a short, fat, pink man with a bald spot and an accent. His ideas about education were controversial to say the least, and his classes were far from boring. In fact, this class had shaped up to be Faye's favorite. There were no homework assignments, and only one test. For the most part, they all just talked, which suited her just fine. For the past two class periods, they had discussed Camus' *L'étranger*. As usual, they had gotten way off the topic of the book (extended the topic, as Dr. Barrette liked to say), and were into a discussion of philosophy. Today, he was talking about the inevitability of war.

"Do you believe war is inevitable?"

The little man looked around the room at each of the students in turn, with a mischievous half-smile on his face. Faye looked around, too. Just about everybody nodded yes. The two or three who didn't were half asleep
anyway, so their comments didn't count. Faye thought about the question and decided to play devil's advocate. She did that a lot in here. The other students seemed so smug and set in her ways that it made her sick to her stomach. She liked to say outrageous things whether she believed them or not, just to knock them off their moral high horses. They all called her a troublemaker, the standard name for someone who takes other people beyond their comfort zones.

"I don't think so. War only happens because people make it happen. If different countries would mind their own business or cooperate when necessary, war wouldn't occur. Even if there is conflict, nations could talk it out and negotiate instead of killing each other — if they wanted to."

Timothy Wallace, the usual class spokesman, and Faye's regular argument buddy turned green with disbelief.

"That's the stupidest thing I ever heard. War has been going on since the beginning of time. It's great and rosy to think that we could stop it all just by being nice to each other, but let's be realistic here. The only way to end war and strife will happen when Jesus Christ makes his Second Coming on Judgement Day and establishes a new world order."
Faye rolled her eyes to the ceiling. Timothy could not discuss anything without bringing up religion. Someone told her once that his father was a minister or something like that.

Dr. Barrette intervened at this point.

"So, to clarify, with one exception, everybody in here believes that war is inevitable? Do you realize the implications of that statement? Do you realize that if you believe that, that you are dooming yourself to unhappiness?"

A girl in the back of the classroom spoke up.

"I don't agree with that. I make my own happiness. There are some things in the world that I can't change, so I have to deal with those. But, for the things that I can change, I can do what's best for myself and be happy."

"Yes, but... do you not see that if you believe in war you can never be happy? It all goes back to what we've said before in this class - the mind is all. Anything buried in the subconscious eventually winds up coloring all of our thoughts and actions on a day-to-day basis."

"Okay, maybe so, but what does personal happiness have to do with war?"

"What is war but a collective action taken by individuals. War is not necessarily about killing people. That is merely the end result. War is about power, pride.
and ego, the same things that govern our personal passions."

Timothy spoke again.

"Maybe all this is true, but we don't go around fighting each other all day."

"What do you think you're doing right now?"

"That's stretching things a bit far, isn't it?"

"I don't think so. As a matter of fact, you are proving my point right now. On peut croire ce qu'on veut. You can believe what you want to. This is the most powerful statement one can make. You will resist it at first, but one day you will remember what I've said."

"That's all fine and dandy, but still unrealistic. There are people who say, 'I don't believe in God', but that doesn't mean He doesn't exist."

Faye could not resist speaking up now. The words fairly flew out of her mouth on their own.

"Hold on a second. That works both ways you know. You have no real proof that there is a God beyond your own personal belief. That's why they call it faith."

"Oh, I can give you proof that God is very real."

The dark-haired girl jumped in again.

"Anyway, what's the purpose of believing what you want to believe if it doesn't change anything. There are some things you just can't think away."
Dr. Barrette answered. "Really? Like what?"

Timothy spoke again.

"Like death. You can believe all you want to that you will never die, but that doesn't mean that someday it won't happen. You can say the sky is not blue, but it still is, so what's the purpose?"

"I'll tell you what. We're running out of time for today, so why don't you all go home and think about it for awhile? We'll continue this discussion next time."

Just then, the bell sounded. The students stood up, gathered their books together, and went their separate ways.

Faye stepped out of the building into the bright sunshine. As she walked along the sidewalk headed for her next class, she thought about the things she'd just heard. The funny thing was, she was beginning to think like the old man. Not only could she see the logic in just about everything he said; she was starting to agree, too. But even still, some of his ideas were getting a little too outrageous. Now he was talking about defying death among other things. Well, she would see what he had to say next time. As for now, she was just trying to get through two more classes. She climbed the stairs leading to the building where she would spend the next two hours. She walked across the concrete plaza to the glass doors. She
pushed them open and stood still for a second in the cool lobby. It was going to be a long day.

As soon as Faye set foot in her room later that afternoon, the phone rang. She sighed. threw her books on the floor and dove across the bed to answer it before the machine picked up.

"Hello?"

"I didn't think you would be in yet."

"If you really thought that, why are you calling me?"

"Don't be difficult. I was just calling to see how you were doing. You didn't call me back last night."

"Come on, David. don't give me a hard time. okay. I told you I would be busy for the next couple of days. I have a major paper due tomorrow."

These days Faye was beginning to think that having a boyfriend was more trouble than it was worth. David was better than most guys. He was not obsessed with being macho. and he could hold a decent conversation. He called when he said he would. and as far as she could see. he genuinely cared about her. So what was the problem? Why was she getting so irritated all of the time?

"I know, but I just want to see you. I miss you."
Alright?"

"Okay, here's the deal. You can come over tonight, but don't expect to be entertained. You can keep me company while I type. If you have some work to do or something, you can bring those too."

"Is that all? You're just using me for my companionship? Is that all you ever think about? What about my body? I'm a total person you know."

Faye could not help smiling. Ever since she'd started having sex with David, that seemed to be all he ever talked about. He always managed to slip in a raunchy innuendo here and there. He was really excited about this new development in their relationship. and Faye wondered how he would act if he knew that he was the first one.

All throughout her college career, everyone had assumed that she was sexually active, and she'd never corrected anyone, not even her closest friends. For some reason, she felt that if she told anyone, it would make her feel even more ridiculous. The years went by, and miraculously, there was no change in status. It wasn't as if there were no opportunities, it was just that she had not found anyone special to make her change her mind. She didn't want to be like all the other girls she knew. She believed that sex was a sacred act, the most intimate thing a couple could share. She was waiting for Prince Charming.
After all, isn't that what nice girls did?

Faye could not remember exactly when it was that she realized that she did not want to be a nice girl. As a matter fact, she couldn't care less. Something had happened between her last semester of school before her trip, and the one she was completing now. Something as simple as one day deciding that from now on, she would live her life by her own rules, and to hell with everyone else. Oh, she'd had those same thoughts before, and had backed down in the face of opposition. But, for some reason, this time things were different. She had a new feeling about life that had crept up on her sometime after she had cut her hair this past Christmas. Shedding the hair was like shedding a mask on her personality. There was nothing left to hide behind, so she was free to be herself. A new person had emerged.

To this day, she didn't feel like she had "lost her virginity". She had executed a well thought out plan that had gone off perfectly. For once in her life, she'd decided every aspect of the event - who, when, and where. She had gone to the drugstore completely on her own, and did not even flinch when it turned out that she had picked up the only box of condoms in the entire store with no price code on them. She had just smiled pleasantly at the salesgirl, and read a magazine until the manager came back
with the price. The best part about it all, though was that this was something she had done simply because she wanted to. No one else was involved — no hormonal boyfriend or prodding friends. This was her own thing, and she'd told no one. And, since David did not know, there was none of the burden of being somebody's first time. She was free to care about him or not care about him at her own convenience. Her love was her own, and she could be just as selfish with it as she pleased. However, David was starting to get more and more involved, and it suffocated her. Monogamous romantic love was a dangerous concept. It maked things way too intense.

"You are thing silliest adult human being I have ever met. I would love to stay on the phone and chitchat with you all day, but I have things to do. Just come over around ten or so, and don't forget what I said."

"Yes, ma'am."

Faye hung up the phone. She went over to the pile of books and papers she'd left in the middle of the floor, and began to sort through them, putting things away. Once upon a time, she would have left it all right there, but now she admitted that her mind worked a lot better when everything had its place. After she had all her books lined up on the shelf, and all her notebooks stashed away, she took the stack of mail she'd gotten out of the box on
her way in. and went back over to the bed. There was a yellow envelope addressed with her mother's flowery hand which she opened first. A crisp fifty dollar bill fell out when she opened the card. She put the bill and the card on the table beside her bed. The other two packages were enclosed in fat manilla envelopes with return addresses that said University of Memphis and Vanderbelt University. Finally, they had sent the graduate school applications she'd sent off for. She really should have started doing this earlier, but she'd never felt like it. As a matter of fact, if her mother hadn't reminded her, she probably would have forgotten to send off for them at all. That would have been disastrous. Not that she was just itching to go to grad school (really, the thought of even one more semester of school made her stomach hurt). Mostly, she just needed more time before she had to get out in the real world. She still had no idea of what she wanted to do with her life, and it didn't look like she would be getting ideas any time soon. So, it was grad school or bust.

Faye opened the envelopes one at a time, and leafed through both catalogs. But after a few minutes, she had to admit that her heart wasn't in it. And anyway, she was getting sleepy. She put the catalogs in the drawer of her bed table, closed the blinds, and settled down for a nap.
"Who told you to take my shirt, young lady?"

"You saw me take it. you're just jealous because it looks better on me than it does on you."

"Is that right?"

"Yes, it is."

"You'd better be glad I'm such a gentleman. Otherwise, I'd have to take that shirt right off you. Actually, I might just take it off anyway. what do you say about that?"

"Well. I say. don't start something you can't finish. I'd hate for you to be embarrassed."

"Embarrassed for what?"

"Embarrassed 'cause you can't handle all this!"

"Is that right?"

"As a matter of fact, it is."

"Hmm. we'll just have to see about that."

Before she could say anything else, David lunged at her, knocking her to the floor. They laughed and wrestled like two puppies in a field on a warm summer day. For a few minutes, everything was perfect - light and carefree. Then, the laughing stopped, and it was just like the serious moment right before the romance scene in a movie. David's eyes took on a deep, hooded look, like a lovestruck tarantula. It was all Faye could do to keep from laughing her head off. But then, amusement gave way to another
feeling. If he was a tarantula, then she was the bait. For some strange reason, she didn't like being a catch.

Friday morning rolled around, and Faye prepared for another day of classes. For once she was not running late, and she was able to take her time getting dressed. She flipped the radio on as she fluttered about. By the time she took a final look in the mirror, and slung her book bag over her arm, Faye was in an excellent mood.

She strolled to her first class feeling light as a feather. She entered the classroom and sat down in her usual seat. A few minutes later, Dr. Barrette entered looking as mischievous as ever. As soon as the bell rang, he plunged right into discussion just like they had never left.

"Okay. The last time we met, you all decided that war was inevitable, and that death was just as inevitable as war. Correct?"

Faye decided to speak up first.

"Well, I said that war is preventable, but I don't know about death, although I can see the logic. If we can believe anything we want, and if the mind is all, then it follows that we can overcome death if we think about it hard enough. Maybe it's not even thinking hard that does
it. but more the absence of doubt. But anyway, even though I can sit here and talk about it, that doesn't mean I'm ready to believe it."

Of course, Timothy was the one to answer her.

"I really don't see the purpose for even entertaining this idea. Things are the way they are, you just can't get around it. There are certain truths in the world, whether you like it or not."

"Like what? Name one thing I can't do if I really wanted to. Even the Bible talks about the miracles you can perform when you have even a little bit of faith. Are you trying to tell me now that those mountains were fictitious?"

"There are a lot of things in the Bible that are not to be taken literally. They are analogies used symbolically. But people don't go around moving mountains for real, or flying, or raising the dead or anything else."

"How do you know people can't do those things?"

"Come now, let's be realistic."

"I am being realistic. Just because you haven't seen any of these things personally doesn't mean they can't be done. I myself don't know anybody with perfect faith. It's the doubt that keeps us earth bound. Of course you can't do anything as fantastic as flying if you're sitting there the whole time thinking. 'I can't fly'. "
"I just believe in being practical."

"Just because flying isn't practical for you, that doesn't mean it is for everybody else. Anyway, we're really missing the point. The point is belief. If I believe in a thing clearly enough, I can make it come true."

They argued back and forth for the better part of an hour, with other people from the class interjecting here and there. At first, Faye was just arguing for argument's sake, but as she kept talking, she realized that she actually believed what she was saying. Anyway, it went on and on until Dr. Barrette decided to wrap up the discussion.

"So you all see, my point has been demonstrated beautifully. On peut croire ce qu'on veut. No matter what topic one is discussing, there is always room for everybody's opinion. Next week, we will be starting in on..."

The dark-haired girl cut in quickly.

"Wait. Aren't you going to give us your opinion? What do you think about living forever and flying?"

Dr. Barrette scratched his nose like a jolly old elf. He waited two full minutes before he opened his mouth.

"I am not opposed to the idea of people flying or
living forever, or just about anything else. I'm old. and I have seen a lot. I just think that it is not important whether or not I see person x flying. I will say, however, that we do not always see the manifestation of belief. What I mean is, if I believe that I can fly, my mind will create the configurations of flying, and I will get that experience whether or not I actually leave the ground. I can actually fly if I want to, but that is not the most important thing. Am I making myself clear?"

Faye glanced at the other students in the room and thought that he was doing anything but. From the looks on their faces, her classmates thought Dr. Barrette was a candidate for the local loony bin. But, somehow or other, she didn't, and that was the scariest thought of all.

In her room. Fay tried again to fill out grad school applications. Pretty soon, she would miss the deadline to qualify for grants and scholarships. If she didn't get any money, she knew she wouldn't be going to school at all. So, she sat at her desk full of good intentions. On both applications, she had gotten past the basics like name and address, but after that, her mind drew a blank. She could not bring herself to put down her academic history, let alone even begin to write an essay. Faye put her pen down and sat back in the chair. It was
time for some soul searching. Over the last few months, she had learned that her body never did anything by accident, and that it is a great signaler of conflict. Even if there were things going on in her mind that she was not dealing with yet of that she was even aware of, body began early to let her know that something was wrong. Now, her hand's refusal to write made her seriously stop and consider the idea of graduate school.

Faye was the first one to admit that she was less than enthusiastic about the idea. She loved the thought of extended her education, but she was not excited about the idea of doing that in school. The classroom was rapidly becoming too small to contain her. Perhaps if she'd majored in something like business or engineering, she'd feel differently. The world and its needs were changing, and the university right along with it. Its focus had shifted subtly from individual enlightenment to individual job search. A college degree was turning out to be merely a sheet of paper signalling competence in a specific area instead of an indicator of an understanding of a wide range of subjects. The abilities to think, communicate, and create were downplayed in favor of technological prowess.

Faye had not realized before the extent to which she internalized these feelings. But even beyond that, she had to admit to herself that she just plain old didn't
want to go to grad school anyway. It was a way of appeasing her mother, and the other adults in her life. It was an easy answer to the what-are-you-going-to-do-now questions that keep plaguing her now that she was approaching graduation. Now that she had acknowledged all of this, what was she going to do about it? Well, she was not going to think about that right now either. She would put the question to her mind, then forget about it, and trust that an answer would soon be forthcoming.

She got up from her desk and stretched. That was all the cue her stomach needed to make its hunger known. She glanced at the clock. There was only an hour before she was supposed to meet David for dinner. Nothing fancy, just one of the happy hour type places that were within walking distance of the campus. She searched through her closet looking for something to wear besides jeans and a T-shirt. In her mind, she was trying to figure out the best way to break up with him and still remain friends. She didn't like the thought of never seeing him again, but the idea of belonging to one person was tiring. Though there had not been a major shift in their relationship, more and more she felt like she was being boxed in. Exclusivity was a cage that did not allow enough room for her to spread her wings. They were pressed against the edges of the bars. But, she knew if she tried to explain
it that way to him. he would think that she was dumping him for someone else. There was no one else. The only other person involved was herself. In a way. it all went back to what they'd talked about in class earlier. only in a negative statement. If she was free to believe anything. then she was also free not to believe anything (wouldn't Dr. Barrette be thrilled to know she thought about things he said outside of the classroom?). She no longer believed in the responsibility of coupling. She wanted to be with people whenever she felt like it. loving everybody a little bit instead of one person a whole lot. That way. there was no need for jealousy. possessiveness. or any of the other green-eyed monsters that were the root cause of all human dramas.

Faye finally decided on a pair of nice shorts with a matching shirt. She gave herself one last look in the mirror. and grabbed her purse. At the last minute. she remembered the shirt. She went back to her closet to retrieve the red flannel button-down that she'd made her own. She didn't want to keep anything of his. That would make her speech ineffective. From now on. if there was still to be any kind of relationship. there would be no strings attached at all.
"So who is it? Look. maybe if you would be honest with me. we could work something out."

"I told you - there isn't anybody else. I just don't want to be in a relationship anymore."

"What's the problem? If I've done anything to upset you. you should tell me about it instead of up and saying you don't want to be with me anymore."

"It has nothing to do with you. and I'm not saying I don't ever want to see you again. You haven't done anything wrong. and I have absolutely no complaints. I just want things to be a little looser. that's all."

"Well. if you wanted more space. why didn't you just say that? I'm willing to give you more time to yourself. just tell me how much you need."

"Don't you see. that's the point. The time is not yours to give. It's not a present. it's my right. something I claim for myself. This is about me."

They looked at each other across the table for what seemed like an eternity. Faye had explained herself badly. Or. maybe it was just that she hadn't considered what it would feel like to be cast off for no reason at all. It didn't help that she was not really trying to cast him off. To someone who did not understand. it sounded like she was contradicting herself. Yet. she had tried to explain as best she could once she saw the hurt in his eyes.
"You are the most selfish little bitch I've ever met in my life."

She had totally missed the anger, and the venom in his words took her completely by surprise.

"I'm sorry."

That was all she could think of to say as she rose to her feet and started to go. There was nothing else to say, since it was true. He had hit the nail on the head. She was being selfish. For once in her life, she wanted things on her own terms, and was willing to do without anybody who could not accommodate them. Faye walked down the street towards campus thinking about it all. David was a nice guy, and she was truly sorry that things didn't work out between them. But, there were other men in the world, and other experiences to have. If her attitude was considered selfish, then that was alright with her. There were worse things in life to be.

After liberating herself in this regard, there was only one other thing she had to do. As soon as she walked through the door to her room, Faye went straight to her desk, where she'd left her graduate school applications. Without second thought, she took them outside to the dorm garbage dumpster and threw them in. There are too many opportunities in life to have to be stuck doing something she didn't want to do, no matter what it was. All it took
was the ability to believe in herself and her life no matter what. She skipped back to her room smiling to herself. She felt like singing; like throwing open the window and shouting to the whole world how good it feels to be free. In that second, her mind flashed back to another place in another land. She was in the Louvre again, on the second floor, looking up at the goddess of Samthrace. In her mind's eye, she could see once again the outspread wings and the majestic fold of the robes. Only this time, she felt no sorrow. Her mind was intact, and her spirit was free. Faye gave no more thought to parental pressure, societal molds, or any other concept that interfered with the way she wanted to live. Her life was hers now. She finally knew how to fly.