

## Fragments from a myth-carriage.

HAYLEY SINGER

### **Setting**

*Terra incantare. Briar as far as the eye can see, as the mind can envisage, as the heart can soar.*

Clattering onto the scene, here he comes. The briar confronts him with what he knows, that suffering and passion are two sides of the same sword. Already run his bayonet through countless roses in his time, spent a century or more in thorny incarcerations, though in his dreaming innocence this is his first. Thrust on, thrust on! Spurs prick, galloping horse brain kicks on. This great adventure opens up to receive him, but one can remain enchanted for only so long. Just look at it, roses *ad nauseum*, roses *ad infinitum*. He has a clear view of the pretty infestation barbed over his love's cupola. That'll take an eternity to prune.

Rose heads roar around her bed, deep blush pink sprays and a little climbing yellow. Trapped inside this system of repetitious dreams she sleeps, locked out of life and into her body, nosedives through a riot of red, endless cycle of deferrals and disappointments: He will come! Will he come? Her dreaming cannot push past that carefully constructed perspective, sleep. Set out upon her bed in a well-laid spread, pinned down by time immemorial. And sighs to

think of it, a plague of heroism dominates my time.

He dreams of cutting away the claws that lacerate his skin. This is a blood-lotto and for the love of love I might very well meet my ending. He, it has been noted, has a real talent for rescuing old instruments and making them sing again. She, it has been noted, is beautiful: simple petal mouth, wheat blonde hair, ripe for the harvest. He, pushed to pursue a plot, is driven by nothing more (and nothing less) than love. He is hungry, hungry for love. Chances are she is too, laid up on her bed. But to be so hedged, such is the plight of a rose, surrounded by pricks. That is a cynicism she knows cannot survive the day-to-day — anyway, it's only a line from one of her poems. Quietly, she puts it away.

In the spring, this whole scene pullulates with brambles. Caught in their midst, a landscape of sensuous folds enfolds his gaze. For the moment, it is the winter of their incarceration. Inside, she is pale and scentless. Outside, eyes trained to focus on his target ahead — — already, it appears within reach. It must be the spring that he comes. He dreams of a fireplace: bouquet of licking tongues. This type of hearth-warming eroticism always fuels him through winter. He knows she is inside, set out upon her bed in a well-laid spread, cannot chase a dream alone — that would amount to tragedy and this is not a tragedy, it is a romance, which is altogether different from love, love being much too close to tragedy.

Actually, romance is only one posture in the practice of love, which is dynamic and exhaustive, involving all the muscles, bones, joints, and organs of the body. She has written this down somewhere because she's had so much time to reflect on the central themes. Is this proof enough she is not inanimate, despite all appearances? Am I really only the object of his activity? Yes, mirror to his soul, she will be honest in her dreaming, receptive in her love. He must plough on, plough through; through her he will redefine his form, gain a precision of edges, become the beauty of his own ideal. The spurs of this thought kick him on. In appearance, the castle is as old as the hills. Such is the plain truth of the eternal vista of love: nothing remains pure forever. Cast this thought

aside. He does not need to be pricked by chagrin so early in the piece. Eyes trained to focus on his target. Imagine his prize, inside, thighs falling wide as the petals of a giant, white, bridal rose.

She is so good at what she does: lying in wait, moving through her dreams as if in a dance of veils, lifting one to reveal the next in an ever-sustained play of power and passion, revelation and deferral. In truth she is lonely, wandering the halls of her castle, free as a sleeping maiden can be. Inside, it is an eternal night. Each candle-lit room services her dreamy vision: the scullery, the attic, the guest boudoir. Empty, empty, all empty. Well! She knows that suffering and passion are two sides of the same bed.

He too is good at his job: pursuit. Heroism has no backwards trajectory. And so from winter to spring as if overnight. I will bend this thrush of briar to my victorious will: that is his attitude to life in general. Drawn together, day-by-day, bound by a singular trajectory. Her action is inaction, scripted to denote her desire. Her inaction inspires his: that much has been scripted into his desire. To touch, to prick, to claim as my own: this is the hero's travelling mantra.

She is mistress of her own captivity, which is not a condition of liberation though it gives her a sense of freedom through control. Above all, he desires the quest, to which she is synonymous. That is to say, he desires her above all. She desires something, but she cannot put her finger on it. Her inaction sends a signal far beyond her knowledge. He evaluates the signal and decides upon its message: she desires his desiring.

Conquering the briar, kicks the door in (he'll fix it later), climbs the stair. Relax honey (smile) I'm not gonna hurt you. They have each other now. A new happiness takes them in its grip so this enfabling device can be scrunched up and thrown away. What remains is the fact of a happy young couple: Dave and Em.

**Setting**

*The Briars, best of all surrounding estates with a focus on zoned living and room to move. Trees, hedges, brambles neatly folded away. Silence. No mowing and no birds willing to post their call for fear of receiving no response.*

Luckily, Dave and Em have similar interests and ideas around the maintenance of a certain lifestyle. They are very nearly egalitarian. One cannot argue that they are not different enough, all the better to unify just as they now bring flesh to flesh, hammer and tongs. For the moment, there is sex. It is very good because it is new. Feels eternally renewable because (for the moment) it is very good. They do everything at least once, and in every room. Or else they have talked about it, at least once, imperceptibly slipping into a pattern that denotes their ideals; she, pinned down upon the bed in a well-laid spread while he ploughs, as through the briar once more. They fit together perfectly. He says this to her when he has her in his arms.

On a good day the sun beats down on them, and with the serenity of synthetic turf solutions to welcome you home you can relax into the simplicity of artificial surfaces. Pure definition in form is Dave's definition of beauty. One finds only serenity in the perfection of a cul-de-sac, and there is obvious aesthetic value in a permanently green lawn. Clearly, here, one finds beauty victorious.

And so they live, but briefly.

Em's tummy, bane of her life, starts up. Swirling like someone's pulled the plug and she's going to drop out her anus, it contracts horribly, her anus, strangely, only thing that's keeping her intact, knot in a balloon. She dashes to the toilet, which is sparkling and new. Stab-stab, her anus contracts, on the toilet, her peach peplum mini scrunched up around her waist. Pinned to the toilet in an ugly spread, in there for time immemorial (or so it seems).

Dave is off to work.

Unjust. What other kind of world would upholster her such a tremendous gut? She eyes it critically. It heaves voluptuously, but things are coming out so she's feeling lighter by the minute. Day three of her detox, she might finally be entering the weight loss phase.

Now, the peplum mini — if you're unaware — is a good choice when going out, accentuates the body's curves in all the right places: a flared peplum over a pencil skirt, or a peplum mini one piece with black mesh at the shoulders — de-emphasises the hips too. Looks like a different woman when she's all dressed up. Naked, what is she? Crude shapelessness and a lack of structure. She drives this thought right into her gut. What had he pictured? This is one of her most critical questions of the morning: What had Dave pictured? At the pub, women float around him, heavy as dreams. This constitutes her primary fear of the morning and competes with the more immediate experience of what is happening in her guts, which inspires an anger bred of confusion. Though she knows, in her heart of hearts, basically, she is what Dave wants and Dave is what she she needs.

Since a hero's income is paid in glory, turfing would offer greater security. Fake grass. Cutting-edge solutions easy on the eye, no more mowing or fertilising, allergy friendly, kid friendly.

Dave has a job in logistics. It's the future. His sights are set on the future. His destination is upper-middle management. For now there are long hours on site. Em works in a big clothing store; must keep abreast of the new spring line, it is about to descend.

Dave goes out with the boys (heroes and the like, like he). They call him Carpet Muncher on account of his trade. Used to be a compliment, but the way they laugh, shutting him out, something's changed. He will rise above it. For him, the transcendental is extremely desirable since logistics is starting to drive him into the ground. He'd much rather be driving a BMW. One thing is for certain: he is driven. For Em, this is a good thing (he'll explain this to her when he gets

home). Right now, he's busy elaborating the logic one beer at a time. She has drive too, embodies her drives just as he wishes to embody a BMW. This is only part of his logic. What is beyond one's reach is what matters. Dave and Em agree, they are ambitious; it feels so good to want and to strive. Driven as they are, he keeps count of his money. She keeps count of her calories. Later,

You are very beautiful  
princess who awaits liberation (Dave).

Fuck off (Em).

All edges elbows knees. Where is her softness, her underbelly? It's late. No time for peekaboo. He smells of beer. Happiness frothed up inside him at the pub. Now he wants to give her some of it. Eager young pup needs to bury big juicy sausage in the garden, see? No. She makes him suffer profoundly, gives him the shoulder, does not know his future (which is expansive) includes a BMW. He will have to show her.

You don't know when to stop (Em).

A hero knows only that boundaries are there  
for the crossing (Dave).

Jerks up in bed, leans over the edge. Bile-laced foam charges out his mouth. She won't let this get her down; it is a minor episode on the significant stage called Life. On her side of the bed, human happiness is being fought out. There is a sensation in her body that she cannot turn away, though she tries. After all, she is in pursuit of higher things, like a new spring wardrobe, the discovery of true inner beauty. Plenty of water helps skin glow purges body of excess salts who wants to be a puffer fish to be beautiful is to be unique sculpted definition from unexplainable mass transform yourself from *something* into *someone* bright lips can jazz up a plain outfit.

Beaten brightly by the sun, hair backlit by ethereal glow. This is what she wants. But no, filled with filth, something is going terribly wrong on the inside. The sun would only accelerate her internal flesh rot. Since the category of ugliness cannot be abolished it must be maintained. This is what Em knows. In the right dose ugliness has the power to turn beauty into something terribly complex.

Ugliness is the cause that inspires beauty as effect. One leads to another and beauty is her destination. Having put on a few kilos these past months she's relied on tactical dressing, calculating depth perception. How to wear a shirt to minimise the appearance of a stomach. Radiance that shines from within translates to natural-looking, glowing skin, a lip-focused look or metallic eye. Beauty is irresistible. One must resist the non-beautiful in the right amount. The new spring line is all about peach, a very difficult colour for her. Wear a blazer that hits below the stomach, tight jeans and a good pair of heels. Work smarter not harder: it's about cuts that camouflage.

In clear control of his thoughts. He knows in life, as in his job, there is a chain of command. Any man who does not think this is obviously snagged on a lower link. She is to be servant to the house of love because he is servant to the domain of logistics. On and on it goes (he will have to show her). The room is swinging though his path is clear. His destination is a BMW. But for now Em is his target. She slips away. This suggests the BMW might, one day, slip away too, which fills him with rage because it fills him with fear. Rage tells him to knock fear into oblivion. If he were another man her body might be minced meat by now. But, collapsed on the floor, he knows if he tries to move he will vomit. You see he's still capable of forming a clear geometry of thought.

Beauty will be her art. Since she is putrid on the inside she will focus on shaping her external form. It is undeniable now, that her body is the place where human happiness is being fought out. Already, there are casualties. Feeling drained since she's been bleeding so heavily, on and off for a week now.

Wakes up on the floor. After last night Dave is filled with what he believes

is a useful aggression. Over toast, angles the edge of it towards Em in the following critique: Is she beautiful? First, he takes pleasure in posing this critical question. Second, he takes pleasure in critically eyeing the object in question. Helps him move beyond the confines of his hangover, to hold her within his keen eye moves him beyond that fear of loss. For the moment, he decides beauty is a harmonious movement within the law of forms – it must be achieved then adhered to, imperceptibly. She's got some work to do. Step one: lay off the butter, babe.

Em is troubled, but there are limited words with which she can define her troubles. At work, staring into space. Air pumping. Peach is such a difficult colour to wear when one has blood on the run. But the law of the new spring line dictates peach and a range of other shades in the spectrum of nude. What was once the target of taboo becomes the vehicle for enforcing taboos. If you're not dressing nude this spring you might as well curl up under a rock and fade away.

Clump peels away, warm curl between her thighs. Is there a hieroglyph of blood stamped on the back of her dress? To the toilet, holds everyone up in a line. Scared little voice at her inner ear: no, no, no, no, no, not my jellybean. This is only one of her ugly thought-poems. It leaps up and takes her by the throat as she's standing at the counter. She knows what to do, stuffs it into a pair of high-waisted Twiggys, watches it limp away tormented, just as she is, by the higher things in life like the impossibility of beauty. First and foremost, ugliness is hurting her. Then there is the thing in her guts, which is immediately present, unlike beauty. Her face, which must be carefully painted, (made-up to appear un-made-up) is otherwise only a violent poem. Always, it is her first composition of the day. Simplicity requires rigour. Yes, she will achieve beauty through the negation of her ugliness. What does this mean? For the moment, only that beauty gnaws away at her soul.

At the pub, again. He too considers his soul in poetic terms.

He is not a bucket of water thrown into a pool; he is unique, defined; finitude will be determined by him and him alone; his destination is beyond the skin of his boundaries; he is going places. But for now he has been relegated to the rung of Carpet Muncher, which manifestly relates to the lower orders of life and correspondingly diminishes his capacity for happiness. On the immediate horizon, beer detaches him from the lower links in the great chain of being, bottoms-up the very order of things so he can crawl home to be king of his castle.

The attainment of goals applies to women too, of course. If Em works hard enough she'll achieve her desired purity of form. No more glass ceilings in this joint. If you can believe it, Em looks just as pure as she feels these days. The new spring line undoubtedly sings the hymn of unadulterated beauty (which takes quite a long time to perfect).

In the morning Dave feels a fluttering in his heart and in his guts; it might be love; it is very distinct, though not unrelated to his need for the toilet. Things are really starting to come up. High quality yet affordable ensuite with room to move, shadow lines, crystal clear safety glass, marble veneers. That is his immediate need. Banging on the door. Em is on the bloody throne again.

Undoubtedly, a baby raises questions of form: What would a baby be? A little bit of ugliness created in my own image, or, worse, something beautiful? Does she really have the potential to bring forth her opposite, a beautiful little creature? A jellybean? Now that the blood is really on the run and the pain, the stabbing pain, has blossomed to a new intensity she considers an ambulance, or a taxi. Sitting and thinking in that drawn out way one can in a state of panic. And since time really does dilate she steps inside, finds room to think. Out the tiny loo window flow taxis in a silver streak, headlights are stars rushing head on. Just reach out, pluck one by the tail-light.

On the other side of the door, nausea has him in a long slow squeeze.

A BMW is singular. Simply does not belong to that mass term: automobile. (Banging on the door, again). It is an object of beauty and is therefore unique. He is not yet, but will one day be, the very form of his own ideals, which is to say he will be unique. That is what a BMW achieves. Undoubtedly, it would help him on his way to transcendence: a two-car garage, backyard with Beefmaster. Which in turn would raise him up the ranks in life's many other domains – most importantly, human happiness.

Aware, intrinsically, of her great ability to cope she thinks she could take a taxi. All of this blood might be nothing, after all. If she called an ambulance, what would she say? I am giving birth to a sort of baked potato: overcooked and falling apart or undercooked, either way it's sliding away from my dinner plate. The right words are impossible to imagine. She has a pain in her head and in her heart that she cannot shove into a word. Though now the pain threatens to slice its way out of her which is a much more dangerous operation. "Pain" says nothing of it. How can a word fail and fail and fail its object so completely?

In fact, pain takes language by the hair and smacks it into silence. She bears down. In a taxi she could apply mascara and her ready-to-blossom lip chubby because that is a sign of the ordinary and the sign would define the reality. She'd have to stuff some towels discreetly down her panties so as not to damage the seat. Signs can be used to lie. In a taxi she might be off to the airport: sex and sun in Majorca, darling. Thoughts come dribbling out. (Banging on the door). He wants to know what she's up to in there all the time. She, too, wants to know what her body is up to in there all the time. A new dull ache drives into her guts, looking for a space to park. She lurches forward but it is the world that drops off.

A BMW would be the conversion of his time and money into an object, which would, in turn, convert his evenings and weekends into joy. Leaving the here and now in a trail of dust, this is the outcome to be gained from his drive. He will find joy in the car, and this joy, which is expansive, will enter Em too: this is what he wants to tell her. BANGING ON THE DOOR AGAIN. He wants to

show her joy but she is, once again, out of reach, and he must stand around in the hallway trying not to let his logic spurt out his mouth and stain the carpet.

### **Setting**

*Luxurious two-person ensuite.*

Locked the door I step inside or the red steps out bringing my body down in seconds which only slice away on the other side, just as something comes on a rush, getting up

Trying to get up

I need you set loose into the room while I stare at the moment – torn fresh – bang, banging on the other side of the door, like some swollen heart, banging on the door banging on the door like some swollen head pushing its way out. Between my legs is only an image of the end, which is, essentially, ugly since beauty cannot be borne like this.

Having calculated the weeks: If a woman loses a foetus the size of a lentil, a blueberry, a kidney bean, a grape, a blackberry, a peanut shell, a kiwi fruit, a baked potato: What has she lost? Her shopping list? Strapped inside my head torn in two legs ride like time either side like time knows nothing of me, clears the air, whole new space green and risen comes slicing over sharp cries cutting through serenity of glass and tile, bin bags go a long way in the clean-up while the placenta grows to roughly the size of a dinner plate. In a lot of ways, the logic of this dream dictates that the dream of living will be over when death wakes up, now how can this be formulated?

If T is the foetal age in days ... if the fifth lunar month makes you long as a carrot...

Meanwhile, the most perfect spring morning is ringing shades of nude at the window. Need to be at work by mid-day if all this ugliness doesn't drive through

to land a kill first, at this stage, and when you don't know what's happened to the foetus...

When you don't know what's happening to you.

Legs out wide in this uncomfortable way. Beginnings are beautiful but they hold their own endings in their arms and when she comes out I think I should catch her, hold her in my arms. A colander might be practical at this time.

Blast inside the abdomen  
of a push thrown up against  
up-coming fall line all about mustards and navy with a focus on layering. Gold,  
as ever, will champion the season

A few loose knits are essential for any inter-seasonal wardrobe.

Am I supposed to know what to do now, screaming into this ending?

Banging on the door – all going on for such a long time ... and I'm so scared I might flush her away. On the surface it's all very, almost very, normal and if I just smooth out these fine lines, once I've mopped up all the blood. Extra-strength Chux are recommended and Gatorade to help with dehydration.

Trying not to pass out. Focus on maintaining the structure of purity, which is essential and therefore must be achieved. Finding there really is so much room to move in here. With any luck Dave's called an ambulance by now, realising that the taxi just wouldn't have been useful, under the circumstances, even with a few extra towels, driving through, screaming onto the front lawn.

Should call mum, let her know how hard I've been working. So focused on trying not to pass out. Because the effort is all I've got now very nice, matronly nurse rolling in, huge as limbo. There's plenty of time, plenty of time for you she says, spitting red.

Thinking how I want to call mum, only there's no arms to reach for my phone, in the bedroom anyway.

Where am I?

Arms erased at the shoulder joint it seems only the legs and the mess between have been carried through. Could be that all this muck has only been thrown about for a photo shoot: *Death of a Nude*.

This intangible thing bit by bit coming on coming down and out. When will I be able to absorb the impact of these moments? Because I have to get to work by mid-day. Ask the medics when they have a moment, dealing with all this blood.

Pure horror of indefinable form between my legs, she might have been a little girl then a woman, one day.

Or else being bundled into Dave's ute. Up-up and away from here, winking her way out into the world dare I think it. Dare I think it? This mess looks so alive.

How can one remain private about such an event? Wanting to just pull the curtains on all this, as the vulva, vagina and cervix are cleaned with antiseptic. Though when there's nothing to show, with the speculum placed inside to visualise the cervix, the cervix which is slowly widened using dilators of different widths gently-gently, gradually as the muscle is tight... Soon I'll have nothing to show for all this heaving and pushing, no body but my own, for all this there'll be time enough to really think about all the invisible things in life, which are, after all, very hard to conceive.

Meanwhile, the matron of limbo is booming over me: there are common properties to this experience, one in four women apparently, which seems high, self-curing, normal in fact.

But with so much blood and all this?

Important not to tear.

How could it be normal?  
Does she mean common? Frequent?  
Under-represented but often experienced? Experienced when? Daily? Hourly? A  
baby had been in the picture for me, but not till I lost some weight.

Some women might have a strong preference.

Not now, not now. Their routine questions. Isn't it hard to talk openly about  
life-and-death issues? And to think, only to take on all that fluid during a  
pregnancy, when one works so hard to shave off the excess. What on earth is  
the point in trying to so hard? Ankles thick as knees never wear well. Anything  
can happen at any time to anyone. Killing myself at the gym, when the tonic  
is supposed to suppress my appetite, to live a life with confidence thanks to  
nature's ancient wonders.

Bet I'll see you back here in another twelve months, with good news. News  
comes screaming through.

That is only to say, hanging over this fresh lump of flesh, there's still so much  
time in the world for you. Limbo rolls her white weight away.

The body reveals such insensitive organisation at times, and there's no real  
answer as to why, as in this case. Mum would only say don't cry, don't cry.

Roar from my throat, sound I've never known before though there is nothing  
nothing but the roar to hold onto. This uncertainty of form must be resolved.  
And Dave, heavy as a dream now pressing on my mind. They'll have to tell  
him all about it, and then he'll have to tell me all about it, or else we won't  
mention it

to have it all gently scraped away

Divided in time and I'm riding through, thinking clinically now, that I can reach

through the air if it keeps on its path like this, tearing in two, between time  
bursting open just on the other side of what a mirror dictates and if I reach  
through...

new lips at my throat roar hitting impossible notes  
roar  
coming over and out a little light spills between the lips sinking through like a  
pin in skin

Now this is what remains of that time. Cut down against the tiles the red's  
coming out wide, takes me in the home of its mouth. Though I've counted  
up all the time in the world, it spills back out like nothing, content bereft of  
content, effort hits me on a push that I think will kill, but if it doesn't? Riding  
me out of time like someone says she don't want to cooperate. Lifting me  
up and away. You, who are you to take all of this and stuff it in a box? Got  
no right no right to box me in peel me away lift me through the air like I am  
nothing, dream work.