

# WOVEN: Greeks Bearing Gifts

written by Guest Contributor | November 20, 2019



*WOVEN is an Entropy series and dedicated safe space for essays by persons who engage with #MeToo, sexual assault and harassment, and #DomesticViolence, as well as their intersections with mental illness, substance addiction, and legal failures and remedies. We believe you. If selected for the series, we want to provide the editorial and human support such that our conversation continues long after the stories and names have changed. You can view submission guidelines for WOVEN [here](#).*

Reread the [archives](#), always.

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I board the crosstown bus, transfer to the uptown local in heavy traffic, trying to outrace it as it journeys further inside me, taking up residence, seeking custody of my will, my organs to make them its mother.

“You’re not using all this,” it says, “Why can’t I?”

It’s the second thing I want to scrape from my body.

I’d asked him to move out many times. He finally heard me, knew that I meant it. I let him in one last time to pick up his things, resolved not to laugh at this gifted Greek comedian who I’d loved and been loved by so much. He handed me a check to pay for some of his back rent over these last few quarrelsome months. Then he crept into my lap and wept.

When a funny man is sad, it’s the saddest thing of all. I gave him time, gave him an “it’s over” kiss. He kissed an “it’s still on” deep past my lips. I kissed off “no.” He wept, wetting my breasts, my dress, my belly, his intention masked in sorrow. I held him, pangs of pity moistening me, as he named and kissed my parts goodbye one by one and then I was crying, too.

He had seduced me with his unique brand of hilarity. Distracted me from my underfunded, over-talented determination to study the craft of acting so I

could make a living. He had mentored my standup act, taught me great tricks. And then he became my second lover in my life since being deflowered, my two-year teacher of all my body could do, the mysteries it could hardly contain.

He said he would be the only source, that no one would ever love me like him. He pulled the crotch of my underpants aside this one last time to pleasure me, as he so often had, like nobody ever had before. I closed my eyes to receive his tongue's fervent parting gift of his last love words and touches. I knew I would not let myself get this close to a man for a very long time. I now knew how great the risks. I laid in a moment outside of time, in that altered somnambulist state he created, his magic spell. And feeling my vulnerability he pulled a quick bait and switch, entered and his cum came in waves delivered deep before I could pull him out or off or out or even knew it was happening. I yelled—

“No, No! Stop! You can't!”

He did. He had.

Pinned flat by his weight, I felt the ping of life in a place I'd never felt a thing before. Something lit a flame in a room that never saw light before. A guitar chord twanged, echoed off a wall that never heard sound before. Some dormant part of my womanhood was waking up.

I thought, *Fuck! I am fucked!*

He knew damn well I was off the pill for health reasons, and that my heightened fertility had become my chastity belt, a warning, a no trespassing notice, to thwart my craving for him, to keep me from succumbing to his silliness, which was his big seduction for me.

Nothing could be that serious if I could laugh. Laughter was mis-wired as a lifeline to create crazy lust in me, so great my need to shift my fearful point of view. But my entombed womb had its own ideas and had been lying hungrily in wait for life.

“Why did you do that?” I screamed, panicking in his crush of captivity, scrambling, bucking the fucker off. He gripped my hips to keep me still.

“I love you baby. I want to marry you. Nobody will ever love you like I do. I want you for my wife forever. You're gonna have my babies. You know that's what's supposed to happen. You know I'll make you safe.”

Safe? Getting safe from him was my frenzy. Rearing up I snarled—my voice new to me.

“I don't want you! In any way. I told you over and over and over it's over. I've been begging you to leave and you make me laugh or cry or make me tired. Now—leave now—get out!”

Good thing I didn't have a gun. I'd never been this mad, even when teen me was pinned by a stranger with sexual assault in his eyes. I'd never seen it before, but I sure recognized it. My smartass mouth talked my way out of

that, but it couldn't talk my way out of this. This already felt irreversible.

"My *kukla mou*, my little dolly—you know I'm the one, the best man you ever had, you'll ever have."

Now I saw he was not the funny, gifted Greek man I thought for a long while I loved. He was not the talented genius everybody said he was. He was not headed for stardom and success. He was crazy and he had just been proven dangerous.

He collapsed on the couch in a stoned smug sleep. I drank big gulps of water and tried to pee him out. Beating him up now wouldn't make a difference. Beating myself up wouldn't either. I didn't know the word for restraining order in those days. I didn't know about self-defense in those days. Who could I call for help? The only tough guys I knew were his friends, and most of them flirted with me behind his back, and he'd accuse me of provoking them like a little *poutána*.

All the traffic lights are blinking "Stop." Traffic is honking "go." Power outage someone says. I look at my nailbeds— blue like my lips for weeks. I've had a migraine since the first moment, a 60hz hum in my head as I feel this unwanted thing growing, grabbing for its supplies, securing its claim on life. It wants me. Like he wanted me. For its own good, not mine.

*Get me out of here. Get it out of me.*

As the bus creeps uptown, I pull the get off cord, and as it heaves to a stop, I fling out the back door twenty feet from the curb. I'm running in my oldest overcoat, scarf and sneakers, not dressed to impress, dressed to repress, to hide my body's mistake. I'm sweating, people are honking and yelling. Near to fainting, I come to a halt in front of the new Women's Free Clinic—to me a church of salvation. I sprint in.

"I have a 10 a.m. appointment," I pant to the receptionist.

"We're having a power outage," she says. "A brown out. We've got the generator on but I'm not sure it's enough to operate the machinery. There'll be a delay in all procedures today."

"But I have to . . . I am not leaving this building. I need to see someone now. I have to get out of this, get this out of me as fast as possible."

Harried, she takes a call. *Take a number*, her eyes say, just like at the deli. She gestures to chairs containing other worried women, younger and older. I sign in last on the page on the clipboard. I plant a chair and sit in front of her. Squatters' rights. Abortion is finally legal now, here. It is my right. I know I'm lucky, even in the midst of my unluck. She can't stop me. Outages can't stop me. I will not budge until this baby is out of me.

No—not yet baby—this thing. I can't personalize, can't think about its feelings. I must call it "it." We haven't met. It doesn't know me yet. It doesn't know my face or voice. It can't blame me. I did not invite its life.

He did. We were forced together like a blind date, mismatched by an enemy in an arranged rape. Oh, no, I called us "we." Stop it. Tell it—it's got the wrong girl.

Sorry. Maybe another time, another life, another man, another me, baby, maybe.

For a half hour I grip the armrests until my hands tingle, until the Valium kicks in. Then a motor starts running outside the building, and few lights flicker on in the reception area. A nurse comes in in an overcoat. I can see her breath. She confers with the receptionist. She approaches me with the clipboard.

"Hi. We're delayed. Just need to tell you, you might want to come back another day when we have heat."

"No," I grit through chattering teeth. "This has to happen today, please."

"All right, but," she whispers, "there'll be no amenities. Keep your coat on. It's cold in there, and much noisier than usual—equipment's running on a generator." There was care in her eyes.

"That's okay," I sniveled in grateful response. As long as it drowned out the noise in my head, in my belly, his begging and blaming in my ear, I didn't mind. She beckons another woman in for an exam. Then another nurse beckons someone else. The whites of my eyes are showing, I'm sure. Every minute on its way to a heartbeat accelerates my panic.

At last another nurse brings me into a room, lays me on an exam table, helps pull off my bottoms, puts my feet in stirrups, covers me in my coat with a blanket. It's too dim in here to read the plaques and licenses framed on the walls. The doctor comes in in a trench-coat and rubber gloves. Despite now being legal, this all feels very back alley to me but without the wire hangers and surreptitious glances. The shame is only inside me.

The doctor tells me what to expect. He gives the nurse a flashlight, turns on the machine, and the noise is horrendous, wrathful. The light in the room turns eerie amber as the machine sucks all the power out of the generator. He numbs me, sedates me further with gentle words, inserts a canula and, without ceremony, vacuums out the residue of rape as I cramp, spasm, and emit the pulp of what little there was of it and its supply source, my blood, my lifeforce.

I thank the doctor, the nurse, and the new law for another chance at my own life until I'm woman enough, wise enough, loved enough and ready enough to take on another.

And I weep deep in gratitude for myself and in grief for all the millions of women who don't and may never have a choice.

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