

blue woman

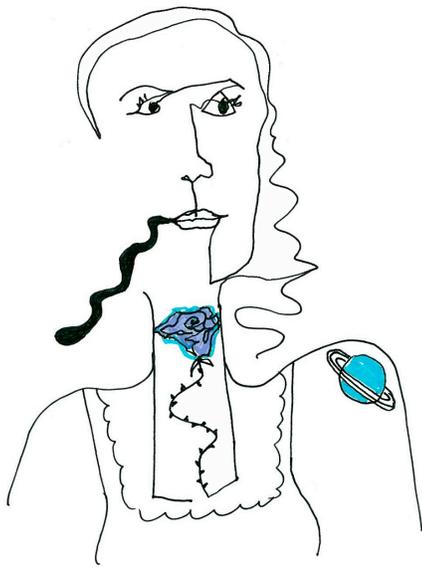
Poems and Drawings

by

Elizabeth Gill

To my patient husband, Jon,
and to my daughters,
Eden and Phoebe,
who forgave my tropical blue hair,
and to my mother, Charlotte, whose
midlife crazies I now not only
understand but appreciate.

consider



Consider one of those girls
with Saturn tattooed
on her winsome shoulder
and a sudden flash of
metal in her tongue.
You've seen her before
making foam for your cappuccino
sulking at the bus stop
like a bored wannabe whore.
Consider her, Goddess, for
Your nocturnal planting.
Her ripped eyes barely focus
on the tenuous stalk glowing
in your hands.
All she can do is let out
a thick chuckle of blood
too black to be pregnant.
But Goddess, I pray you,
inseminate second life
with quiet love push
out
petal on petal
one perfect rose
or what would be called
a rose.
In the air it turns
electric blue, for You
to wear in your starry hair,
the tattooed girl to hide,
pulsing, in her thorny throat.

how she got blue

To make a long story short
though there are many theories
she simply couldn't hide it anymore.

See, there was this security guard
at the market. Day after day
she rolled her cart
brimming with groceries
past him
squeezing her butt
sucking in her tummy
looking straight ahead, unsmiling
like she was a new recruit
in some suburban army.
He stood silent sentinel --
dark, mustached, impervious.
But he knew, he sensed, he smelled
her blueness like a ripe Roquefort
stinking things up.

Like I said, she couldn't hide it
anymore.

One day he caught her
leafletting cars
with bad erotic poems.
But instead of reprimand
he invited her home.
Who knows what made her push
the cart full of everyone's dinner,
and all that went with it,
into the gridlock?

Once they were alone
he dropped his disguise.
His uniform atomized,
head, body, arms, legs
flooding deep blue.



She let him take her
beyond good or bad
infuse her with indigo
all night long.
In the morning her eyes opened,
her blue fingers clutching
a lock of his blueblack hair.

And that's how she became Blue
Woman,
a different race altogether.
Her husband, kids, friends
pretended not to notice.
They sat down for dinner as usual.
But now, no matter where she went
or what she did,
she was who she was.

blue woman's apologia

Blue Woman has trouble finishing
her sentences, she speaks
before thinking
gets caught
with her pants half-down
even though she's already
naked

some wonder if

she simply forgets
what she's going
to say, like
an animal in a fairy
tale given
speech, then
made dumb
by some witch out for
a purple laugh

many have accused

her of leading them
on (some
times for
years) to the brink
of some
brilliant view.
Blue
Woman admits
she gets
frustrated trying
to pluck stars
which tend to melt on the tongue

so no one believes you

know what you're
talking about.

blue woman is visited by the virgin mary

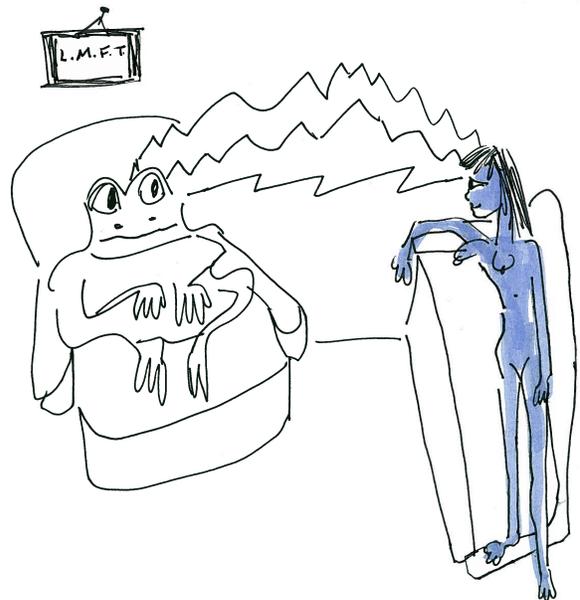
Blue Woman walks out
her front door and steps into
Space. Such a falling
out! It goes on so long
she's sure she's fainted.
Then she thinks,
"I'm Alice, no I'm Dorothy, no I'm –"
(she can't remember),
when a Beautiful Being draped in
undulations of blue
comes floating towards her
like a bad special effect.
Really
she looks
with her curiously cocked little head
like a cheap hologram, a trick.
Blue Woman figures she must be
dreaming and blurts: "Hey,
I know who you are!
You're Jesus in drag!
That's why you're a virgin!
You're the Transvestite Mother
of God, and your womb
is fruity. Like cheap wine
or long-lasting gum."

The Being's veil surges with snakes.
Blue Woman looks away
so she won't turn to stone,
chanting with eyes shut
There's no place like home.
There's no place like home.



blue woman sees her therapist

She always sits right in the middle
of the brown couch
to keep the seesaw straight.
Across from her the toad-
crone reclines in her Barcalounger
chest heaving
a pound of ethnic debris.
Toad thinks Blue Woman's blue as
in depressed.
Blue Woman thinks she's blue as
in different
not better or worse.
The webby hour spins by
not quite an hour.
Another week's complaints have
bored the Toad to sleep,
snores and all.
Blue Woman's eyes
psychoignite
ultra-violet rays that fail
to stir the beast.
On tiptoe, she leaves
a swish of midnight hue.



blue woman gets the flu

As the night wears on
Blue Woman finds she can't
breathe or swallow
without
a thousand razorblades
nicking her throat.
The next day she sleeps
through old movies and the phone
sweats on her sheets
which twist up so much
they get tie-dyed.
She stumbles to the cabinet
and pops whatever pills
haven't expired.
Then dreams she can't sleep.

blue woman stares out at her backyard

Sitting at her kitchen table
a round well-worn oak
Blue Woman stares out
at her backyard, familiar,
fomenting Spring
in its barely budding branches,
Summer's apricot, Winter's
persimmon,
still sticks against stark sky,
the citrus family
hiding
glimpses of orange and yellow
like shy phoenixes
in green garrets.
Over purple
drugstore glasses, she peers,
having been reading news
of wrecks, rapes, retro-
revolutions,
and cuddles her sub-
urban orchard
from a distance
her heart ripening
with its prolific turns.

blue woman in cleats

Calluses Vaselined
broken toes taped
long thick socks pulled up
over hardknock shinguards
velcroed
around ankles and calves
black kangaroo-leather cleats
double-tied, ready to kick
ball and butt
Orange jersey number 28
after her Daddy's
(Left end, U.C. Berkeley '33):
this is
Blue Woman in Cleats!

Blue Woman starts her
warmup jog
around the soccer field
like an old colt,
each step and stride
unstiffening
the past, releasing
the potential of decades.
She rounds the corner flag,
passes by
the fishnet goal, another flag,
and off
down the sideline, Kentucky
Derby legs
chomping the turf
in middle age.

Here come the refs, like
Tweedle Dee and Dum.
The coin is tossed.
Coach gives the line-up.
The team huddles for a cheer
and jogs onto the field.
The whistle shrills.

Blue Woman plays center mid
chasing the ball
like a golden retriever on
caffeine,
toeing it through the grass
flicking it right, cutting it left
shearing it through future
space
for the forward to collect.
Supporting, defending,
shooting,
she is
the action figure of her
dreams.

Sometimes she even scores!



After ninety minutes she drips,
she thirsts, she beats, she breathes.
She is complete unto herself.
Tomorrow she will count her bruises
like money in the bank.

blue woman takes a bath

She leans back wrapped
in a full-length bubble
coat, tries to read
some women's magazine's
idea of vaginal verve.
But the water's too hot.
It scalds the nerves.
Blue skin, boiled,
doesn't turn pink.
Electric cobalt,
she waits
till the temperature drops
and pictures
the news of the day:
some brown-skinned woman
swept to sea
by a hurricane
the cold black deep forever
carrying her fifty miles out
till she was rescued
by a British freighter.
A real miracle.
Blue Woman believes in
miracles.
When you change
into a different race
you have to.
Her bubble coat dissolved,
she lingers lukewarm
and watches her body
lighten to sky.

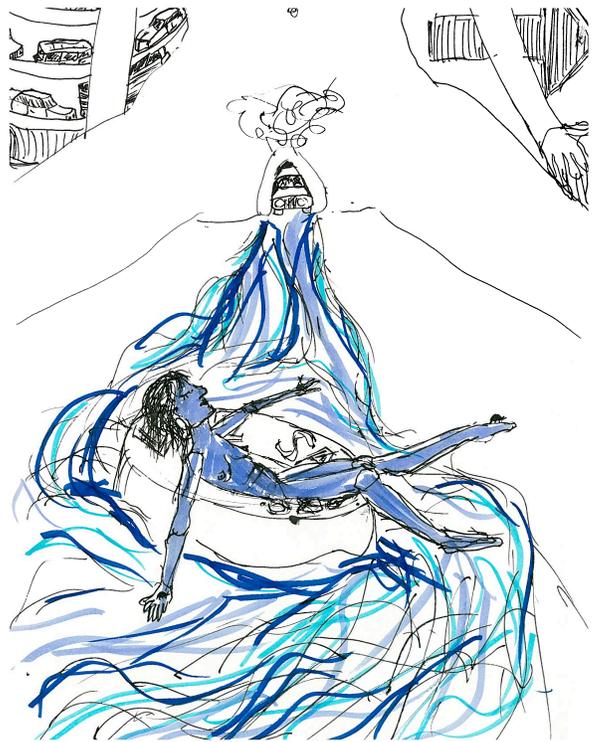


blue woman stops traffic on the 405

Trapped in the hot red lava of
brakelights
punching the radio buttons
like a monkey on meth
Where's Beethoven? The
Beatles?
Blue Woman can't get out
of herself, her death rushing
up ahead at the over
pass, crushing of breath,
no meaning, sense.
She acts like the rest:
brake, gas, brake, finds
a grimy Lifesaver on the floor
Butter Rum
prays sugar will align
time in present tense,
her anus pulsing with
the right turn signal.

She must cross three lanes
before the next exit
but no one
will let her
in.

Abandoning her old Toyota
on the shoulder
under the overpass
Blue Woman makes her way
naked
in the headlights of a thousand
cars
and no one even honks.



blue woman at urban outfitters

While her daughter wanders
the racks of overpriced hipster
couture
and the technorock beats on
her brain
Blue Woman's eyes lock on
Krishna
smiling from a silkscreened
purse,
Krishna,
blue-skinned
God of Love
diddling the lotus-labia
of several black-eyed babes
worshipping the melodies of
his flagrant flute.

Blue Woman appears
hypnotized. Set apart.
His blue biceps,
embrace her
self-loathing, clothing
her in tunes which tendrill her
and she hears
the full range of his music.
Virtuoso of vaginal vibrato,
he hums until,
in the midst of crass
commerce,
she comes.

Her daughter waves a black
skirt embroidered with
meadow flowers --
"Mom, can I get this?"
--did she say?
Blue Woman smiles inside
jeans and a sweatshirt,
Sapphires sparkle on her
forehead.
"Mom, are you okay?"



blue woman recalls her promiscuous past

On anxious days of dubious
intent
Blue Woman goes to the
movies,
in her mind.
Mini-movies on countless
screens,
she wanders in and out
catching glimpses of herself
cineplexed.

Five...four...three...two...

With Red Man she wrote
purple
prose on his muscles, beat
him
at arm-wrestling, knocked over
the carafe of sangria which
stained
his white dog. Then one
morning

Green Man carried her off on
his
mossy back, an old rock ready
to
leave his wife for this wisp of a
girl.
But his big overgrown
cucumber prick
filled her with burps, when

Yellow Man appeared
on the horizon, stick over
his sunny shoulder. Blue
Woman
flushed deep as he ambled by,
eating her with his smile,
spitting her out with his
whistle.
He was gone before night.

After that, it was one bad
scene
after another, nothing adding
up
to a story, moral, catharsis.
She tried to keep a list –
bathroom at a Valley party,
front seat of a VW,
Hollywood Hills sauna,
broom closet at The Brasserie
–
but all she remembered were
(not the color or size of
penises) places.

Still, there was meaning to it,
having many men,
freely giving herself up
as if ready to be born.
She could almost smell
the gin and vodka it took.

Her popcorn gone stale
through the credits
she sits in the dark waiting
for the lights to come on
waiting
for Blue Man to find her.

blue woman bears witness

Blue Woman walks into
memories
like some people walk into
doors.
Whether the door is opening
out by who knows who
or she thinks she's a ghost
immune to knobs and locks,
she's always hit, stunned,
taken
somewhere to see it through.
This time, after breakfast,
staring out the window
at some brash bouganvilla
she is back
in Laguna.

Blue Woman's blue feet slush
through magenta leaves
pushing the crumbling stairs
clogging the eaves
of the hardluck motel at the
end of town.
In the back, in the last room,
a light is on.
Through a crack
in some crooked curtains:
Denny's to-go cup
college dictionary
blue portable typewriter,
paper in carriage.
On the floor:
jeans and panties (flowered),
pried off together.
and a bra (white, A-cup)
looks like it's trying
to crawl
to the bathroom.
On the bed, a man on top
of a woman
holds his hand over her
mouth.

Now the man rises up
and spreads her legs
apart
like wings,
like he's about to
break a bird.

But this is no Zeus.

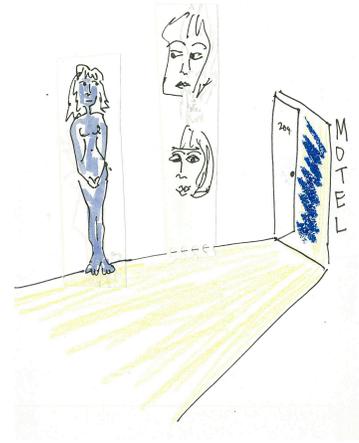
Blue Woman wants to
wake up
the young woman.
Wake up the motel.
Wake up the neighborhood.
"Wake up! Wake up!"
But no sound comes out
of her frozen throat.
She bangs on the door
till her fists turn black.
But no one hears
and no one wakes up.

The door splits open.
A broad plane of light
falls just short
of her gentian toes
as the Trucker lurches
into the night,

The door slams shut
The curtain clams up
the scene
hanging

somewhere

between terror
and salvation,
between memory
and death.



blue woman at starbucks

Double tall nonfat semidry
cap.
That's what she always gets
on the edge of the afternoon
nap.
She stands in line and fakes
interest in the muffins &
scones
lined up like childhood
promises.
Nobody notices she's cobalt
naked
front & ass.
The barista intones:
"Double tall nonfat semidry
cap."
Blue Woman gazes, rapt,
at the doubletailed sea lass
on the logo of her cup
cocoas her milkcloud
finds a chair
and crosses her legs loud.
Out the window she sees
her reflection caress
a bus going by, an old man,
a red dress.
She's such a tease
to the general jive
public beehive, buzzing
with caffeine lust.
Today she's left
her journal at home
fuzzing with must,
her cleft tail alive,
one curled up under her tense,
the other a tentacle
roaming for sense.



blue woman meets lady anxiety

Blue Woman tosses in her
overmade bed.
Late night TV rays shoot
at her won't go
dead head.
Numbers yes, no words.
(Wily words of wily worry.)
She starts counting backwards
from a thousand.

Nine-hundred ninety-nine.
Nine-hundred ninety eight.

Nonetheless
her heart bangs harder in her
chest, about to splat
against some speeding glass.

There she is, in the corner,
blowing smoke
which twirls and twines across
the TV beam, the room,
a hologram of doom.

Nine-hundred ninety-one.
Nine-hundred ninety.

Caught like an animal
in her trap of sheets,
Blue Woman asks,
"Who are you?"

Whereupon the phantom
shapeshifts
in the tubelight's glow
images over late-night
laughtrack sitcoms:
a daughter's rape
a daughter's accident
a daughter's murder.

Nine-hundred. Nine-hundred.

Blue Woman turns the TV off.
Fear tests her nerves.
She waits. In her ear,
the Lady's breath baits.
By her half-shut eye,
a sharp mouth curves.

As fingers slip around her
throat,
she grabs some coarse grey
hair.
Two women wrestle on the
bed,
one blue, one deathly white,
who gloats,
"I love it when you're scared."

blue woman takes zoloft

Originally she took it
for anxiety, for being unable to
sleep or eat or
even watch T.V. She found
herself in one room and
another, upstairs
and down, not even forgetting
what she was looking for.
She knew. Standing in the
doorway
she saw the object of her
need:

Dappled Daughter putting on
make-up in the bathroom
mirror.

Blue Woman watched in
silence,
sure she was invisible,
until her daughter's image
stared back screaming
go away!

Who wouldn't gaze at
Dappled Daughter, stalked
by the gods for her emerald
eyes?

Lotus petals inscribed with
songs
float from her lips
with each breath
and drift out the window
like flying saucers or burning
bubbles.

Dappled Daughter was
destined
for greatness in Blue Woman's
eyes. The maternal thrall
would keep her safe till then.

But this drove Dappled Daughter
nuts,
this grip of adulation,
theft of self.
One night she swallowed
poison
as a warning to Blue Woman
that they were not the same!

In her grief, Blue Woman
walked
miles and miles in steady rain
till she came to the shrink's
door.
Knock, knock. Who's there?
Sad white woman.
Sad white woman who?
She had no answer.

The next day amidst more
downpour, Blue Woman found
a sack of samples left
"For Sad White Woman"
on the shrink's doorstep.

She looked at the tiny oblong
pill
in her pastel palm.
Pale blue seed,
it went down easy
at the drinking fountain.
It almost felt like a surrender.
After a week
she phoned in a real
prescription.

Blue people need blue pills
to keep pretending
they're white and happy.
And what of
Dappled Daughter?
She threw up the poison
and moved out.

blue woman goes to scotland

Draped in grey
to conceal her blueness
(a tourist spy)
she marvels at
the spot on the map
blinking
where her tired ass sits:
the Kaffe Politik
on a chill August Sunday
in old Edinburgh.

Last night in the B & B
her daughters declared
independence.
Dappled Daughter
wanted her own hotel
room, phone, T.V., and key.
Fairy Daughter,
wanted nothing to do
with anything blue.
They'd both prefer if she
got fat, went grey, and
STOPPED FLIRTING WITH
YOUNGER MEN!

Of course, this is only
a poem. Life is much less
amusing when they call her a
FUCKING MORON!
What has she done, said?
A fog pervades her head,
rendering her amnesic.
Inside her self she says,
I am not a fucking moron.
But what she is she
doesn't know, except
she will always be
a mother.



Blue Woman is in Scotland
braving the storm.
She will weave her own
tartan to dance in
before she will be driven
off the craggy cliff.

blue woman visits her parents

Blue Woman's bare butt sticks
to the seat
of her old Toyota as it chugs
through Versailles
gates. It's a hot day in
Glendale.
Four ducks and a swan glide
beneath
an artificial geyser just like you
see
on the billboards.
In that faux
Tudor mansion she signed the
"Order to Cremate"
her mother's body just one
month ago.

The Toyota putt-putts up
English country greensward
past
memorials flattened to
stepping stones,
discreet laylow markers of
death.

The parking brake. The
silence.
The cold rock breath
of the mausoleum face.

She pushes the bell, waits to
be buzzed
in by some invisible host,
cerulean
fingers clutching a bunch of
white daisies
that soon look lost in the brass
bullet vase
stuck in the brass ring
screwed in the marble
of her parents niche.

Thirty years ago she brought
her father
a single rose
and went off to college.
She wasn't blue then.
She was a freckled apricot.

She sits there on an icy bench
chilled to the tailbone, tears
wrenching
their names and dates
on the tiny brass plate,
the ashes of their passion
presumably
behind that thick wall
while Ave Maria
plays on concealed speakers.

(Momma? Daddy?
Where the hell are you?
Your genes are fading and
I've turned blue!)

blue woman's compulsion

It's taken three shots
of caffeine and a view
of Sunset and Holloway
(where Tower Records red
letters on ochre
vie with Spago's cursive pink
neon,
and a giant pair of
Scheherazade eyes
stare from a wall, like the
billboard
spectacles in Gatsby)
to get her to write.

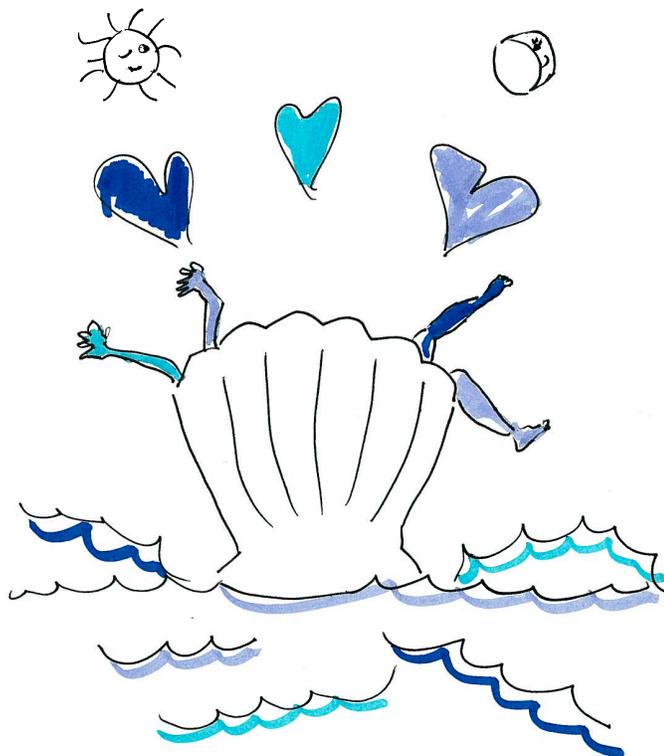
Last night Blue Woman's
mother's
post-mortem sallow face kept
her up
wondering
why the nurse had been so
careless
not to close her right eye
all the way.
The fact that she lay on her
back
which she never did
not even for an x-ray
disturbed Blue Woman less
than
that little peek of possibility
gone dead. Her mother's eye
neither opened nor closed
confirmed the terrible turn of
her
to a thing.

So Blue Woman ran
from cafe to cafe
her pen of grief
dwelling in continual gerund.



blue woman's sonnet

Blue Woman's Valentines are blue not red
Big hearts cut out of sky and sea and
lake.
Glittering waters, sparkling stars awake
Love's luscious liquidity in bed!
A creature of such epidermis blue
Invites a non-traditional approach
To Cupid's cozy pink-upholstered coach:
Rather Aphrodite's shell-for-two
Bobbing on the wobbly waves of time,
Sun and moon flirting, near and yon,
While the aquamarine lovers sail on
To lands where Valentines don't have to
rhyme,
Be red, or pink, flower or sweet or lace...
But blue as eternity's embrace.



blue woman waits for her period

She wasn't pregnant, was she?

No. She was just waning that way. Life had nibbled her to nothing and now she had to forge a new cycle to ride her through time, the rest of her time.

Would it be measured by the funerals she went to? PAP smears, mammograms? Refills of Zoloft prescriptions or those less frequent moments

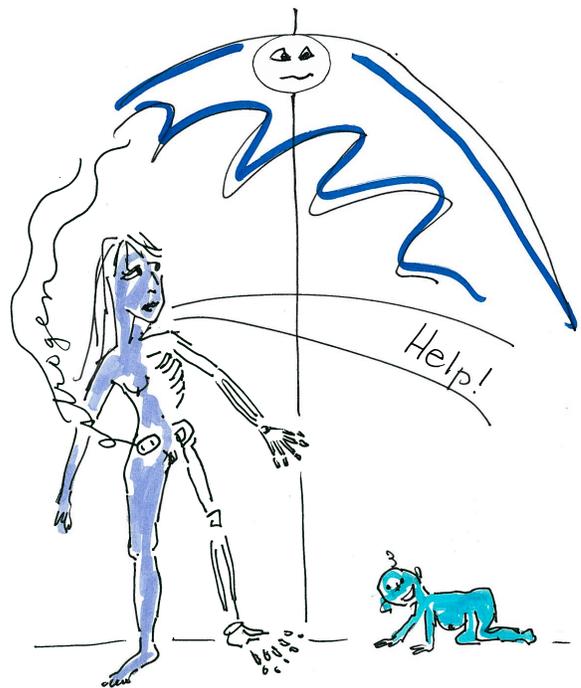
of non-mating? She hung over the bed to get the blood to her head.

Waiting.



blue woman wears a patch

She sticks it on
what had once been
the hollow of her hip:
this clear oval bandaid
of time-release estrogen.
She wonders what
will happen next.
Will she turn pink as
the tiny roses on her
childhood wallpaper?
Throw
her voice uncontrollably
if she didn't get her way?
Bleed
for her sins
or hemorrhage with guilt?
Will she gather up
stray babies,
human and other, or
kick them out of her way?
Her way
rises daily out of
the concept of peace
and swells by noon to
a towering tidal mass
crashing down on her.
The patch is no life jacket.
It is mere hope
of keeping the bones
in one piece
until the end.



blue woman's tummy is upset

Sitting at a wobbly table
three fans oscillating
blades caged
spinning sharp,
pen hovering over the blank
page,
Blue Woman fears diarrhea
in her future, or the death
of some blood-root dream.
Over the edge she'll
somersault, hard-grunting
to sprout wings, and stink
up the landscape instead.
She sees herself some flying
blue bride of Chagall's
letting loose
the smelly sludgebath
without meaning
to.
Wanting to's another story.
Blue Woman knows
anarchy's no substitute
for freedom. Still
she sits and doesn't get off
the pot. Is she
meditating,
vegetating,
or are those
lilies tickling her butt?



blue woman's husband turns 51

She cruised the mall
an aging
blue-tanned mannikin
haunting the men's shops
"Just looking"
for something he wouldn't
return.
Says he needs
socks, a belt, a shirt.

Blue Woman remembers
carrying the big red-framed
vintage
map of Hollywood
all the way down Sunset
to his office
to make up for
the first birthday gift he hated:
darts and a dartboard.

Then there was the treasure
hunt she made for him
that he refused to go on.
All their friends
scolded him, while she cried
in the bathroom.
Soon after that he proposed.

Blue Woman's husband
doesn't like
his birthday.
Confetti sticks to his curly hair.
The cake is never good
enough.
Damn hard to please
he is.
He will probably hate
the socks, the shirt, the belt.
Together they'll revisit the
stores
one by one; together
they'll get their money back.
The only thing he can never
take back – like trick candles
that can't be blown out – is
Blue Woman's love.

blue woman buys a christmas tree

Most people in the waspy
suburb where she lived
bought their trees at the Y lot
from neat, polite Boy Scouts.
Blue Woman won't pay those
Christian prices.
So she heads for Home Depot.
Open all night,
do it yourself mangers
plenty of pointsettias,
and the cheapest Xmas trees
this side of the Sierras.
By the time she gets there
the pointy pines are pretty picked
over,
stacks of six-to-seven footers,
all that are left, going fast.

Netting up the one she chose
like a big long prickly fish,
Blue Woman inquires about
possibly slipping herself
through the auto-sleeve
so she can get caught too.
But the black men working there just laugh.
They think she's a nutcase
not because she's naked or blue
but because she says her thoughts.

"It's the old Volvo wagon."
They help her load it up.
It fits flat in the back,
unlike bigger ones of yore
that had to be tied to the roof.
"You have yourself a good one,
m'am."
"You too. Merry Christmas! Happy
Kwanza!"

Driving home, the whole car
a forest,
Blue Woman feels in the grip
of some pleasant nostalgic
task
of bringing home the green,
the real green.
For two weeks or so
this tree-who-gave-its-life
will get all gussied up
and sanctify the living room.
Under its smiling lights
gifts will collect
seemingly from nowhere
like pennies in a wishing well,
and after all the wrapping's
trash,
long past the consumer
hangover,
it will still be standing.



No wonder the house seems
so empty, so lonely
after the tree is gone,
like after they are gone,
those imps who shook Blue
Woman
and her husband awake
on Christmas morning,
jingling their stuffed stockings
as they jumped on the bed.

Blue Woman misses those
times
when she wore aprons
burned cookies
and drank Santa's milk.

With each pine-tingling breath
she draws another memory,
as she drives this year's
haggard tree home.

blue woman's seasonal anxiety

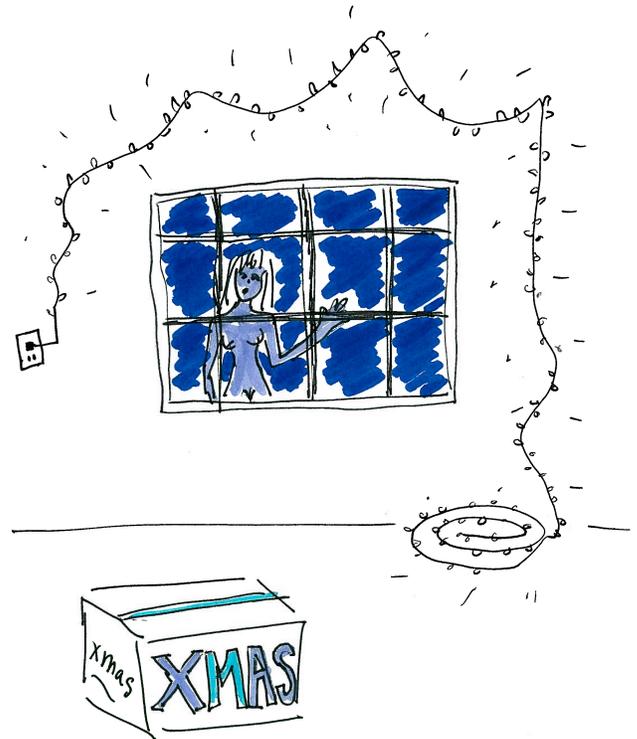
That particular December
darkness
flooding her windows –
is that what is twisting Blue
Woman's gut
counterclockwise?
What throws her head
against the kitchen table
face down to cry?
Suddenly she is up
turning on the lamps,
cupping her hand around a
match,
lighting any candle she can
find.

A wind yowls, circles
her house, mad wolf
of godless options.
Her fear drips into the coffee
pot,
the warm mug
something to hold onto
against the horror of the ages
anno dominus.

*String the house with mini-
lights!*

*Deck the dark with jolly!
Hark the hapless angels sing
O come all mortal folly!*

Blue Woman sings to herself
as she drags out all the boxes
marked Xmas.



blue woman post-millennium

It's one week later.
No bugs have devoured
the Earth, everything
is pretty much the same.
The Acropolis burned,
the Eiffel Tower sizzled
the Thames caught fire
sort of.
New York dropped its crystal
ball,
unbreakably unclairvoyant,
while L.A. lit large letters
on a crumbling hill.
All on T.V.
No Apocalypse, no God,
thank God. So it really is
up to us.

On New Years' Day
Blue Woman clipped her nails,
hands and toes,
cleaned her ears, her belly
button,
set out cups for tea and truth.
She wanted to get rid of all the
bullshit.
She wanted to see if she could
go a day without lying.
She wanted to accept the
world
and know herself at last.



She waited all day but no one
came.
Taking the dregs, she dried
them
for tomorrow, and bowed
her head in simple gratitude:
to a thousand years of black
a thousand of white,
to the deadliest dark, the
lovingest light,
to the power of blue,
clear sky, calm sea.
No Apocalypse, thank God.
Only us, only me.

blue woman finds fame

There she is
from the neck up
on the cover of *People*:
“NUDE BLUE WOMAN
SAVES THE DAY!”
She singlehandedly
stopped several wars
reformed countless criminals
fed the multitudes
and found a cure for cancer
all in a day.

And this is only the beginning.

She had known something
was up
after that night with the god.
It wasn't pregnancy,
no messiah in the offing, but
a single individual infinitesimal
difference, the last drop
of water at the top
of the metaphysical glass
breaking
the tension releasing
this world into
another.

Just like that.

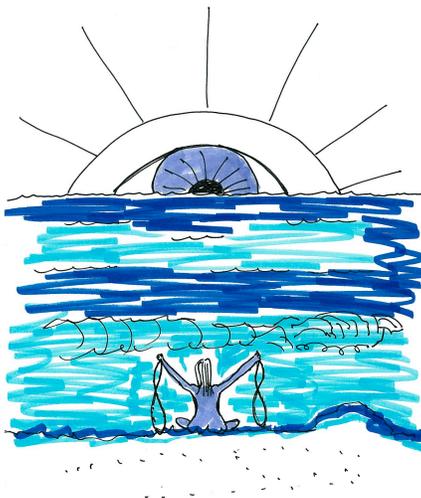
Blue Woman felt the shift
In the very air, stars, sun.
What had she done?
What had she done?



blue woman, post 9/11

Blue woman stood watching
TV, hoping this was another
lie,
that the plane puncturing the
tower
was a promo-clip for a movie
that the fear ricocheting off
fleeing faces
was what the extras were told
to do,
that the collapse of glass and
steel
was not swallowing human
beings with every floor,
was not the end of reason.

Blue Woman clutched her
husband's hand
when the phone rang.
The daughter in D.C. said she
could see
the Pentagon on fire from her
dorm window.
The daughter in New York
reported smoke amassing
over lower Manhattan, stench
of burned flesh
blowing uptown to Columbia.
But they were safe. For now.



In the days to come, Blue
Woman went numb.
CNN never went off.
She found herself vacuuming
the slats in the wall heater
with attachments she'd never
used before.
She cried when women in
Afghanistan
put on make-up in secret
defiance of the Taliban
followed by commercials for
the GAP, Carl's Junior,
Walmart.
Her heart stopped.
Nothing made sense anymore.
There was only one place to
go.

Pulled by the tide,
Blue Woman slogged thru
desert
and sat at the edge of the
earth
the sea sloshing her butt
crashing on the jetty rocks.
She plunged her hands deep
and pulled up gobs of liquid
sand
over and over
over and over
until she found the timeless,
the deathless, the infinite.
It dripped through her fingers
like cold dark honey,
like love which can't die
like truth which can't lie.
The horizon flashed for the
first time
in her opened eyes
and she was thankful
for the end of illusion.

blue woman's shock and awe

Another birthday, March 20,
2003.
Blue Woman has a cold. She
lies
in her Kleenex-feathered bed,
CNN streaming
green images of nighttime
Baghdad.
The whole country's tuned in
like a rowdy crowd on the
Fourth of July
waiting for the fireworks to
begin.

As arrogant explosions pulse
brightly
along the foreign skyline,
Blue Woman's heart breaks.
She tries to pray something
good will
come, something will
come out of –
they say a cold means
you're mourning the loss of --
something. If only
she could blow out the
birthday bombs.
But really right now
she can't think of anything
positive, no wish that
could come true.
The idiots rule. The bombs
burst louder than her prayers.

blue woman lets go of her baggage

Blue Woman's wrists ached --
tendonitis, arthritis, carpal
tunnel --
she looked it up on the
internet
to no relief.
The doctor shot her in the
thumb,
gave her special black gloves
to wear at night,
and put her on Celebrex.
Did it help? Not really.

She was a bellhop
little round hat with a chin
strap
cocked to one side
hopping to the
brring! brring!
It was her duty to carry the
royal baggage,
a suitcase in each hand
one for the Countess
one for the Princess
plus Daddy's Girl's backpack
digging grooves in her
shoulders.
She lugged them
everywhere--
across the lobby up the
elevator to their rooms,
then down the elevator across
the lobby to their cars,
following in their footsteps
along avenues and boulevards
in and out of stores and
buildings
on appointments, lunch dates,
rendez-vous.



In the Countess' suitcase,
specially re Fridgerated:
a solid block of frozen tears.
In the Princess' valise:
several torture devices.
In Daddy's Girl's backpack:
rocks to throw.

No wonder Blue Woman's wrists
and shoulders ached.
What they felt she felt
until
their baggage was her baggage,
until it all became invisible.
The more it disappeared, the
heavier it became
till she got blue in the face.

The Good Little Valet
The Monkey Valet
The Martyr Valet
waiting for her tip.

What would happen if she just let
go?
Uncurled her fingers and let it all
drop?

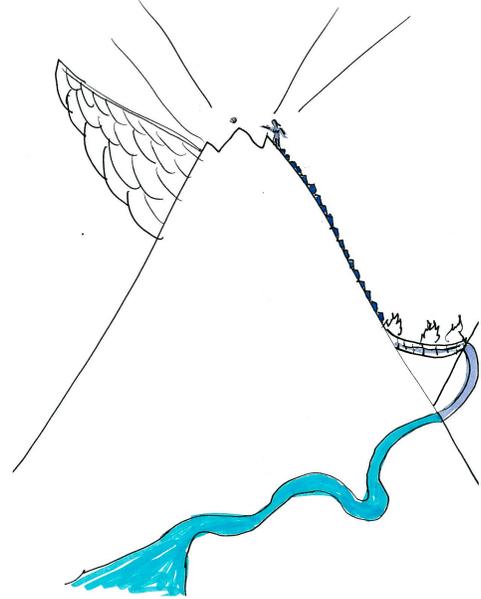
blue woman finds an empty nest

Hiking along the western ridge
step by breath by step by
breath
keeping her own time,
Blue Woman crosses the
bridge of letting go
and finds an empty nest.

She picks it up; it fits in her
palm.
Soft with hair, dead grasses,
cotton bits,
deftly constructed, perfectly
round
a small weedy bowl
bereft of egg and chick:
a psalm of emptiness.

In the distance a volcano
plumes
dire featherage,
the great eagle's head
emerging
fire flaming into wings.
Blue Woman's face in the red
light
purples with fear.

Where are they? Are they
safe?
Are they happy? Are they
sad?
Did I lose them? Did I forget
to write?
Was it something I did or said?



She fights the mother panic,
talking to herself,
tempted to trade faith for fear:
to live their lives so she won't
have to
live her own.

Blue Woman has reached the
top.
Behind her the bridge is
burning.
Leaning over, she looks in the
mountain's mouth,
perfectly round, hotly aswirl
with fibrous fires of copper and
gold,
and tosses the nest.
It flies up, heat-borne,
spinning bright embers out of
itself,
vanishing before her eyes.