



SITUATION COMEDIES: FOXY MORON

BARBARA COLE

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Barbara Cole

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For William F. Van Wert
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FOXY MORON

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If you'd like to make a call, please hang up.

A game of exchange,
a charade of give and take

Could you grab the door?

Get a little closer with Arrid Extra Dry

Are you tired? irritable? feeling
anxious, fearful, or on edge?

“for three years she strove to maintain”

Please stand for the pledge of allegiance.

At 5 she is the picture of contentment
with a new box of Crayolas, flat-tipped
perfection. Belly-down, beginning the
endless process of making a selection,
narrowing down the choices, flipping
through one of countless coloring books.
In this way, why the mechanism of
memory makes her think of dripping wax.

snapshots, labeled and stored

All at once there was a rip, a tear, a burn
on her finger. When pressed, a thin line of
red. Shocked at the unexpectedness of this
injury, alarmed by the absence of an
identifiable cause, she took to her feet,
running in seek of comfort and explanation.

I've got a fever for the flavor

“ t h e e v e r y n e s s o f
e v e r y t h i n g ”

Her father, clearly missing the severity of this occurrence, chuckled at her alarm, assuring her this flesh wound was merely a “paper cut” and certainly nothing to be concerned about. Frantic by the inadequacy of this reassurance, she demanded to know the reason. *Why* had the paper cut her? Whatever had she done wrong?

There were eyes in the window

Girls in white dresses with pink satin sashes

You are required to attend four hours of study hall per week.

Still bemused, the father explained that there was no reason, no clear cause, as if chaos could ever prove a comfort.

This program has committed a fatal error and will shut down.

But you know there was like no story to it right.
Like there's no reason to keep going right cause
like you know it's like just words.

It's a good time for the great taste of

Pussy cat, pussy cat,
where have you been?

This, her inconsolable
grief, vowing never
to touch paper again.

If you don't have time to freshen your make-up, go
“natural” by pinching your cheeks for a pure blush.

I'm not the kind of girl
who wants to wear the veil

You say “that house knows
death” but I hear “the mouth

grows depth” and ponder
infinite vocabularies.

Pussy cat, pussy cat,
what did you there?

There was that particular 4th of July,
planting flags in flowers, she learned the word, “independence.”

At seven, poking my nose
somewhere it did not belong,
I happened upon an adult novel
or ‘erotica’ as some might say.

You’re not fully clean unless you’re zestfully clean

Still impressed by my ability
to read books of considerable
length and devoid of
illustrations, I was particularly
proud of my easy mastery
of this book, clearly written for
grown-ups but surprisingly
accessible regardless of age.

P l e a s e s t a y t u n e d

This medication should not be taken on an empty stomach.

Hot Buy! Check it out!

Abandoned estuaries—the egrets arrived unannounced
and with as little warning simply never returned.

Raise your hand if you’re sure

Dress for success!
Look your prettiest
the day of the “big test”
and you’ll feel more
confident to tackle
those extra tough questions.

There was little I could not
understand.

Wet to Set in 1 minute flat!

For the most part, the plot
revolved around twin sisters
and a vast array of boyfriends.
They went camping, took lots
of showers, seemed to eat
a tremendous amount of fruit.

Would you do it in a car?

Would you let him go that far?

Nothing which struck me as
too sophisticated for children.

Could you speak up?

But, of course, I somehow
understood the need to keep
this book secret.

All eyes on your own papers.

Perhaps it was the cover.
Or maybe the way it made me feel
while reading it: like when the sled
gets going too fast. The fear one
won't be able to stop in time.

Behind the 'frigerator
there was a piece of glass

Close the door would you?

There was the November of her deferred unfolding.

For example, Jane is required to do four hours of study
hall per week. She has five tests this week and does eight
hours of studying. Jane is free next week but must resume
the required four hours the following week.

I'm not here—
leave a message.

Dollar Day savings in every aisle

Most of the words were pretty easy to grasp—

Express: 12 items or less

after all, I rode the schoolbus everyday.
So specialized jargon such as ‘jugs’ or ‘jewels’
came as no surprise.

Did you feed the dog?

‘Shaft’ proved a bit more challenging but,
relying on basic reading comprehension skills
reviewed in Language Arts class, I could
deduce its meaning based on “context.”

Polish should be applied in three narrow, even strokes.

This meant paying attention to what comes
before and after.

How many licks does it take to
get to the tootsie roll center
of a Tootsie Pop?

I searched you out in every room without knowing—
you were lost in the seaweed

What is the writer trying to say?

“somewhere someone was paying for something”

Cover me with kisses, baby

Cover me with love

Roll me in designer sheets

I’ll never get enough

One chapter which
posed a significant
challenge involved the
male character using
his ‘digits’ to ‘probe’
one of the twins.

Sometimes you feel like a nut

‘Digits’ was a word I
already knew with
considerable familiarity
from math class. ‘You

carry the digit from the
ones column over to
the tens column and
add.'

Sometimes you don't

You have five new messages.

There was that particular 4th
of July, sweaty forehead,
foregone conclusions.

But I could not quite picture
placing one's 'numerals' into
someone else's 'hot hole.'

So big and thick, no room for a stick

I thought perhaps this reference
had something to do with paying
bills or checkbooks—what I
understood as grown-up
interactions with mathematics.

It's everywhere you want to be.

Maybe, I speculated, the man
character was angry at the lady
character for spending too much
money and consequently rams the
bills, or 'digits,' down her angry
mouth, in this case, her 'hot hole.'

Employees must
wash hands before
returning to work

Thank you for holding—our customer service representative will be with you momentarily.

Careful,
the beverage you're about to
enjoy is extremely hot

Somehow I had overlooked (or should I say denied?) the degree of my intrusion.

Get thinner thighs in four weeks flat!

If you're there, pick up.

The writer is not a medium.

Your desire to uphold the ideals and standards you set for yourself
will play a large part in determining the future woman you will become.

On the top shelf in the very back
of one particular kitchen cabinet,
hidden behind the water goblets
we almost never used, were my
father's "gimmick glasses."

That summer proved unseasonably cold.

Would you should you scream his name?

Would you could you keep it tame?

We won the pennant. Marigolds wouldn't grow.

But none of this proved reason enough for you to come back.

That is, these particular glasses
depicted Playmate bunnies clad in
bikinis of varying pastel shades.
When the glasses were filled with an
icy beverage, because of some sort
of scientific reaction based on
freezing point temperature or frost
being a gas as opposed to a liquid,
the bikinis would disappear.

Just for the fun of it—Diet Coke

It was from this early experience
that I understood implicitly the term
"titillation." I saw 'tits' and felt
what could only be called 'elation.'

Keep profanity to a minimum, particularly in mixed company—
every gentleman prefers a lady who speaks like a lady.

Why don't you come to your senses?
Come down from your fences

Please pardon our appearance
as we renovate to better serve you

feeling emotionally fragile or vulnerable?

I was fully baffled though by
words which seemed crucial in
their repetition and yet, no
matter how much of the story
I devoured, remained elusive.

Mad for miniskirts? Check out our 15 faves!

A good-girl at vocabulary
I turned to the dictionary
though, admittedly, with only
a half-hearted hope of finding
'mons.'

What's for dinner?

Imagine my surprise! Not only
was 'mons' in the dictionary
but, even better, I could
understand the definition.
Sometimes, you had to go
look up one or two additional
words in order to decipher the
initial definition which only
proved more frustrating.

For customer service, press 'three'.

Do you use your inhaler more than twice a week?

But, in this case, I had no problem
grasping that 'mons' referred to
"a rounded eminence of fatty tissue."
Combining my superior reading

comprehension skills with this definition, I deduced that when the man “pulled down her soaked panties and parted her hot mons,” this suggested that he separated her butt cheeks.

Dawn takes grease out of the way.

And it was true. After swimming, for instance, when one’s butt cheeks were wet, they *did* feel warm, say, against the toilet seat or, in this case, I presumed, on someone’s hand.

You have seven new messages.

If you suspect that more than the prescribed dose of this medicine has been taken, drink a full glass of milk and contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

Two all-beef patties

There was the November of her impossible sleep, the appeal of small spaces

Who is the writer addressing ?

All I ever wanted was one less glance at the clock.

I don’t know. Do you like get what I’m saying cause like I don’t know it’s kind of like hard to explain.

Traffic tie-up on Main Street

If Jane does fifteen hours this week, she has earned only one week’s extra hours and must resume studying four hours per week after her one earned free week.

The desire to throw it all into doubt,
to throw it out.

Starbucks equals unsurpassed freshness.

My baloney has a first name; it's O-S-C-A-R

The heavy blue curtains pulled as if winter.
It was explained: "to let the neighbors know we were sad."

No, no, I meant obstruction.

To market, to market, to buy a fat pig.

Alas, I was ultimately stumped by the particularly frequent use of the word 'c-u-m.' The dictionary proved typically unhelpful in providing merely "1: with; combined with" or "2: including dividend."

When memorizing lists of items, it is helpful to write them over approximately seven times.

There was that particular 4th of July, so many tiny remembrances.

Did you get the phone?

Though I was quite sure this elusive new word was not a curse word because I had neither heard it at school nor on the bus,

Tired of the same old recipes?

I decided it might be best not to reveal my newest reading obsession by pestering my parents with questions about potentially questionable words.

Do not accept items from unknown persons.

Would you should you make him stop?

Would you should you climb on top?

Dress comfortably and do not wear a lot of accessories—

you might be tempted to play with your jewelry instead of
concentrating on the exam questions!

A skilled sleuth, I focused my
attention instead on my
teacher, watching her mood
for days, biding my time, a
hunter waiting for the
perfect moment.

The imprecision of these terms

The touch, the feel

f i r s t c o m e

f i r s t s e r v e

“as if her art were all an innocence
as if her innocence were all an art”

Violators will be prosecuted.

E is for the all-important Enthusiasm that plays a special role in your attitude.

At last, concluding my teacher would be
unsuspecting enough on a rainy Friday afternoon
whilst “her little angels” were busy coloring
pictures of witches in anticipation of Halloween,
I sauntered oh-so-casually up to her desk and,
with my most polite voice, inquired: “Excuse me,
could you please tell me what ‘cum’ means?”

Limited offer.

One per customer.

Seeing as I pronounced the word “kyoom,” my
teacher responded in kind that “cum” was “short
for cumulative, meaning everything all at once.”

We appreciate your patience.

With every year the checklist becomes more improbable
The timetable rendered impossible

Let us pray

What the world needs now is another President’s Day blowout

Number of columns A must be equal to number of rows B.

And a merry old soul was she

More than satisfied with this response,
not to mention my clever Harriet-the-
Spy type detective skills, I gleefully
returned to my secret reading, armed
with this new knowledge, settling in
for an informed and informative reading.

Slippery when wet

Feverishly, I scanned for
a paragraph with the
previously-baffling word I
was forced to skip so
many times before.

With heels together, prepare for pliés.

After minimal skimming,
at last, I zeroed in on the
target term and
recommenced reading
intently about the first
twin, Summer, taking a
bath and “cuming again
and again.”

plastics make it possible

Concluding—from context
of course—that doing
“everything all at once”
in the bathroom referred
quite clearly to peeing and
pooping, I read on.

One nation indivisible

To break test tension, look up from
your test paper and focus on a small
object across the room.

In the next scene, the other twin, Sunshine, joined her sister in the bathtub and together they both participated in “cuming” while screaming lots of curse words.

May I take your order?

What otherwise might have seemed an excessive use of profanity made perfect sense because, quite naturally, they were embarrassed to be pooping and peeing in front of another person and experience showed that when grown-ups were embarrassed, they often would cover-up by cursing.

Two great tastes that taste great together

D is for your Determination to be all that you can be.

Only 2 days left of
Super Savings!

But I remember blue curtains, far off sounds,
the futile attempt to muffle a moaning that would not be stopped.

Who is the speaker?

You might feel like things are moving so fast that they're out of your control, Capricorn. Feelings can rise like a rocket or fall like a stone. But, instead of holding on tightly, stay loose and see what happens.

You can dance, you can jive

Strong enough for a man

pH balanced for a woman

There was that particular 4th of July.

Good to the last drop

What, not married yet? So what are you waiting for already?

pat it and rub it and mark it with a B

Finally, I concluded that perhaps adult books were in fact too challenging for such a young reader.

What's that smell?

Despite my Honors-level language arts aptitude—well above the national average—when it came to the episode in which Summer finds herself “overheating” in the backseat of one boyfriend’s car, even my wildest imagining could not fathom such a spectacle.

Talk to your doctor
about any difficulty swallowing.
without the tangy zip of miracle whip

In this episode, they engaged in the typical sequence of activities I had now come to expect: removing their wet clothes, lots of “baby this” and “hot mama that” before concluding inevitably with “cuming all over.”

The line starts here.

I simply could not imagine that *anyone* would do “everything all at once” in the backseat of their car.

Have you driven a Ford lately?

Seeing as my parents were careful about even eating in the car, it was simply beyond the realm of possibility that

anyone—let alone grown-ups who certainly know better—would do something like *that* to their own backseat.

He put in his thumb
and pulled out a plum.

There was the morning the men came to remove the trees.
Would you with the dog right there?
Would you should you shave it bare?

The implicit guilt of it all

t h e c h o i c e o f a n e w g e n e r a t i o n

And said “what a good boy am I.”

Do not remove shopping carts from the premises.

It would take me an entire year
to reach the point of trying to imagine
my parents “doing it.”

Never sacrifice form for weight

Further complicating this new
development, since my sense of
“doing it” now meant that one had to
do number one *and* number two not
merely in front of someone else but
actually *on* somebody,

special sauce

it did explain why parents usually had
their own bathroom.

lettuce, cheese

It also made much more
sense suddenly why my
mother was so persistently

concerned with keeping
things clean,

If you believe it, you can achieve it.

why she required so many
different types of lotions
and creams and powders,

The writer is not an open wound.

why she was so consumed
with clean underwear or
why she was convinced if we
sat around in wet
bathing suits, we would get
“crotch rot.”

Now with even more stain-resistant power.

There was laughter, a midwinter party.

Seatbelts should be worn
tight and low on the hips.

Assigning the utmost significance to a doodle or a jot.

Worried that he might break up with you?

Read up to figure out how to keep him

Work hard to figure out which aspects of student life you like the best.

It had all become perfectly clear.

If you're there, pick up.

All I ever wanted was to be a little surprised.

Asking for a “smear of peanut butter” for instance
got me reprimanded for “smut talk.” Never quite
sure whether it was “smear” or “peanut butter”

which implied sex, but thinking both equally probable, I became convinced that both were hot.

Slashed prices in every department

Keep in mind, however, that these study hall hours reflect only a minimal portion of your homework habits. Realistically, you should be studying as close to four hours per night as possible.

Is your bedroom giving you the blahs?
Check out our sassy makeovers!

In second grade, in conjunction with First Holy Communion indoctrination, the nuns spoke endlessly of “The Call.” The Call—to the Church, to Christ, to a life in the convent with its quizzical aroma of burnt coffee and peroxide—would be undeniable.

Now with more eye-popping cleavage enhancement.

The Call, we were told, would be unmistakable.

Did you just hear that noise?

The Call, it was insisted, would be a gift from God that none could escape.

There was that particular 4th of July, the others running for the ice cream truck.

Deny The Call and be destined to a life of misery.
Deny The Call and seal your fate to hell. Deny
The Call and turn your back forever on God the
Father and Creator.

Pencils down.

Please pass your papers to the front.

This is me playing the part.

It would come, they promised, and we would
know in our gut, in the depths of our stomach, we
would know.

You just can't resist this one-time offer.

Do not induce vomiting.

Mirror mirror on the wall.

Lips to ear. Her neck availed to his mouth. To
lean in, to listen. Her arms behind and how he
leans in.

So shudder to be so close, to be so bared. Mouth
to ear. Lean in for hushed whispering.

Again, this question of readership.

Hey, could you turn it down?
When you care enough to send the very best

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that her uniform
looks fresh, clean, and always presentable.

Usher in the Spring season with a brand new look.
Try changing your hairstyle, lipstick color or even eyeshadow!

Terrified I was getting The Call at least once a
week, I became intensely attuned to even the
first pangs of nausea. The schoolbus in
particular seemed to be an apt time for the call
to descend. And oftentimes after Sunday dinner.

Shadows and shutters

There's a three-mile back-up approaching the bridge.

French manicure made easy—
no more excuses for ordinary nails!

How she closes the curtains

Please see important information on the following page.

Finally, unable to bear the weight of my certain fate
any longer, I broke the news to my mother.
Understandably distraught but determined to be
brave for her sake, with as much composure as
I could muster, I revealed: "I am getting The Call."

Do you have a stapler?

10 things you should never say to a boy

What is the writer's intention?

Sales tax where applicable

Failing to grasp the gravity of my declaration,
my mother yelped a strange sort of laugh,
dismissing my destiny with an off-handed:
"Protestants don't get The Call."

Hold on—that's my other line.

with silver buttons buttons buttons
all down her back back back

See inside for a big bonus surprise!

Pitying what could only be termed denial, I had no
choice but to persist in attempting to make her
understand, hoping with time she would finally
allow herself to accept my certain fate.

All orders subject to approval

“I am getting The Call—I’m sure of it,” I would say.

to fetch a pail of water

“It’s here again—The Call,” I would tell her, gripping my stomach to emphasize the severity of my condition.

The writer is not speaking in code.

G represents the Goals you set for yourself now as a young Miss.

Each time, I was met with her poor misled laughter, her deluded rolling eyes, her simple inability to accept what was clearly the inevitable.

Remember: accessories complete the look!

Finally, my mother’s response shifted from patient bemusement to sheer annoyance causing her to explode, “Oh, for God’s sake, Barbara, you just need to poop.”

Last exit before toll

Surely this series of exchanges might explain my early insistence that Catholicism was full of shit.

To hear this menu repeated, press the pound sign.

The divvying of his and hers.

There was that particular 4th of July. She had spilled, spoiling her outfit.

Every girl needs at least one super-functional, ultra-flattering cocktail dress hanging in her closet. But finding the perfect dress can be a total drag.

Helter skelter in the summer swelter

Hello? Are you still there?

Mama's not worried.

So he was all like so like there's this dance coming up and I was all no freaking way he's going to ask me but you know like trying to be cool right so I was like uh, mm hmm and he was like well you know well I was wondering if you like wanted to go and I was all like yeah, totally.

The doctor will see you now.

Mama's got the magic of Clorox-2

So much depends
upon

a pink wheel
barrow

In the dream there are doorknobs turning,
ripped wallpaper, a music box, its twisting
ballerina grinding down.

A false equation I cannot stomach:
forgotten equals forbidden.

There was that morning the men removed the trees.
Not all at once but branch by branch.

Action figures sold separately

Experiencing muscle tension?
Suffering headaches or stomachaches?

Neckties must be worn at all times.

Would you like it in a tent?
Would you like it during Lent?

That they refused to believe tampons wouldn't violate their virginity

Batteries not included

"B. daydreams occasionally but, when 'snapped back to attention',
is able to redirect herself efficiently to the task at hand."

Could you do it afterschool?

Could you do it in a pool?

Beware, she is warned. Be wary. The warnings
only work to make her want him more.

Forewarned and moving forward.

She is backed up, back up against a pillar. The crowded room
a reason to lean. The other voices a justification for just this whispering.

Longer with big red

From boobs to boys and everything in between

No parking here to corner

There was the summer she was obsessed with hunting
slugs. Salt not good enough to do a proper job. How
she would spear them with a random stick or twig,
gather their wriggling vestiges together, mount a
newspaper hood over the wormy clump before
igniting each corner, one at a time, methodically, the
newspaper crumpling beneath the flames, melting to
the writhing bodies beneath. All those squirming
clumps. All those tufts of black ash left in the driveway
for her father to retrieve with a shovel the following
morning and discard.

How do you want that cooked?

The very sight of his fingertips removed me of my French.

Sweet dreams are made of this

Do you have a reservation?

One of the greatest challenges proved knowing
when imitation was funny versus when imitation
could get you in trouble. At 6, my mother's
equivalent of an expletive was to pepper her

exasperations with “Jesus, Mary and Joseph.” As in, “Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, that car’s driving like a bat out of hell” or “Jesus, Mary and Joseph, that grape gum stinks to high heaven.” Noting the subtle religious theme and staccato tempo of my mother’s exclamations, one Sunday dinner at my grandparents, I tried my own variation, erupting, “Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I’ve died and gone to heaven with that gravy.”

Have you or your loved one been seriously injured in an accident?

There was that particular 4th of July,
flags in the flowers, so many tiny markers.

Pepsi okay instead of Coke?

Much to my delight, everyone—aunts, uncles, and cousins alike—agreed this was quite funny.

Skirts must be no
shorter than three inches above the knee.

Concluding, therefore, that imitation was the key to comedic genius, I began consciously collecting phrases and sound-bytes from grown-ups, repeating them over and over again in my head while trying to imagine potential scenarios in which I might slip in the occasional “well there’s no gas shortage with you around” or similar mark of wit.

Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear

Would you touch it with your tongue?

Would you touch it just for fun?

Fuzzy Wuzzy had no hair

Intentional brush as if accidental. Fraught

with meaning. In his face with innuendo.

His taut lips, these tautologies. Read and re-read
for nuance. These warnings. These new wontings.
She can only think where.

A minute, a moment, a momentary slipping.

Turn to see his back, his backward glance.
That which is mine, is not mine. Head to head
and tête-a-tête. Look to see him looking.

But I mean, like, I don't really get it.

Now bend over and touch your toes while exhaling in a slow, even breath.

So many sentences starting "so."

The greatest challenge turned out to be catching these quips. So often I found myself surprised when grown-ups would suddenly erupt in laughter that it almost seemed impossible to assign any method to their madness. For sure, asking someone to repeat what was funny rarely yielded any results. The key, then, was not merely remembering funny lines but actually getting the jokes in the first place. Further complicating matters, understanding in what context one might appropriately apply a one-liner proved additionally crucial.

Call me as soon as you get in—promise?

The desire to begin again.

Warming deep-cleansing cream targets pore-clogging dirt

Are you being pressured to have sex?

The morning men came to remove the trees, first branch by branch,

then thick, cruel cuts.

Now tilt your head back and try to relax.

Suddenly she finds herself beneath that particular shade of blue
having the courage not to move.

My father seemed a prime source of material simply
because he was a creature of habit. For instance, anytime
my family went anywhere together, my father was always
the first to get in the car, starting the engine and then
grumbling to himself as the rest of us joined him.

The fast food diet—

keep the fries, lose the pounds

I was usually the second one in, followed by my reluctant
brother.

Should I include my own opinion?

The three of us would sit quietly in the whirring car,
watching my mother cross back and forth in front of the
door. From the driveway, we knew that she was inside
checking and double-checking for her keys, lipstick,
perhaps grabbing an umbrella, adding water to the dog's
dish, or turning lights out—her typical “stall tactics,”
as my father would say. And so this was our portrait of
familial bliss.

Introducing the big, bold flavor of our newest dressing

No way.

No, totally, and she was all like like, I don't even like you and he was all yeah,
right and she was all it's true, I was just like being all into you for like your car.

Smokey says, “only You can prevent forest fires.”

There were French verbs meticulously written on flashcards.

Feeling overlooked?

Read more to find out how to turn your crush's head

Inevitably, my brother, angry that his hair had been plastered to his forehead or resentful that he was forced into good clothes, in his desire simply to get the family outing over with, would bemoan, “what’s she doing in there anyway?” even though we all knew by heart the litany of her last-minute checks and chores.

eight maids a milking

More times than not, as she pulled the door behind her, my father would roll down his window, admittedly after the fact, and boom, “c’mon, enough of your pussyfooting, let’s go already” which always made my brother laugh, particularly if my father boomed it especially loudly.

What’s the score?

There was that particular 4th of July, another name for “independence.”

Have you properly secured your assets
in case of an emergency?

Meanwhile my mother would laugh,
roll her eyes, and say something like
“oh you, I’m coming, I’m coming.”

What you need to know before you go all the way

There was something I wanted to say.

But you don’t like really like him do you I mean I know you’re like going
to the dance and everything but like I mean you don’t really like like him
like him do you?

Collect all fifty official state coins.

The complicity of it all.

He is watching. And she knows it. He is looking. And she knows it. He is blushing. And she sees it. Not mine but hers.

Spine pressed to pillar. How she invites it.

He is thus looking. And she does know it. And she does see it and she does like it.

How she bares herself—to be made available.

Choose from ‘classic,’ ‘flirty’ or ‘glamorous’
to find your perfect prom style and party on.

This study in biting my tongue and biding my time.

Charlie says, “Love my good & plenty.”

Would you sniff it just for fun?
Should you tell him he’s the one?

E is for the Evaluation you must make
of yourself and your goals periodically.

Believing I fully understood the context
in which such a witticism should be
used, I waited patiently for a moment to
try out my latest bit of humor.

You want oil or mayo on that?

Just a few weeks later, my first-grade
class was lined up in the hallway, waiting
to go outside for afternoon recess.
Silently, we stood shoulder-to-shoulder
with our partner, shifting our
anticipation from foot-to-foot.

All I ever wanted was an acknowledgment.

I was anxious to get a swing which required skillful timing and fancy footwork.

Referring to the reader as “she” does not constitute a feminist revolution.

Because we were not allowed to run until we crossed the threshold from pavement to playground, one needed to mentally prepare herself to walk patiently, playing it cool lest one of the other girls might spot the swing-
envy in your eyes and become suddenly inspired out of sheer spite, and yet, simultaneously to ready oneself to snap into a lightening-speed sprint the minute one’s saddle shoe hit the grass, the mad dash around the slide (only for babies), back behind the jungle gym (the stuff of show-offs), all the while dodging the other girls, each of whom were most likely headed for the same destination anyway.

Wait—let me switch phones.

As there were only eight swings for nineteen covetous girls, there was no room for dawdling. One needed a sure-fire strategy and mental clarity.

Number your papers from 1 to 10 with your name in the upper right-hand corner.

But, seemingly oblivious to the determined mental planning consuming the minds of her angelic first-graders, Sister Marita, remained inside the classroom, busily closing window blinds, straightening piles of paper, and turning down lights.

That particular 4th of July, tiny remembrances.
Could you mute that?

When, at long last, Sister finally reached the door, my throat brimming with nervous determination, inspiration struck! Here was the perfect opportunity to break the tension with a touch of humor. And so, without a moment's hesitation, I called over my shoulder, "enough pussyfooting, Sister, let's get going already."

The start of something fresh

Parking restricted—all others keep out

The November of her broken smile,

The humiliation of invisibility

Stick out your tongue and say "ah"

Would you could you like a quickie?

Would you could you like it sticky?

Needless to say, I not only didn't get a swing that day but spent one week of recess sitting quietly on a bench, "thinking about what I had said."

Did you remember to get milk?

Beyond the disappointment of no swing-time for such an eternity, I found myself simply devastated at how dreadfully wrong the plan had gone.

Three convenient locations to serve you Baffled, I wondered if perhaps this quip was only funny to my family and so I tried it again, though somewhat less confidently this time, on my mother while she was in the bathroom.

Don't squeeze the Charmin

Knocking loudly, I called, "quit your pussyfooting and get out here." Through the locked door, I heard my mother's shock as she

sucked in her breath before scolding, “don’t
say that! That’s a curseword!”

Now get on to your knees as we prepare
to work the abs.

Choose mountain spring or lemon fresh scent

Some of them want to use you
Some of them want to be used by you

An insistent preoccupation with the otherwise preoccupied.

He is thus blushing and she is noticing.
He is noting and thus she is noticing. She is
noting how he is blushing and he is thus blushing
even more so.

Pulse point and palm. How his fingers slip in, slip
over, slip away.

Not yours but mine. Even more so.
She is noticing his noting and thus she is liking it.
And she is liking it very much so. He is noting
that she is noticing and they are liking this
noticing of noting.

The impossibility of trying to account for one’s day.

Would you like it from behind?
Would you could you should you mind?

Stunned, because after all my father
said this at least once a week in
the presence of both my brother and
me, I headed straight to the unrivaled
connoisseur of cursewords, Eric

DelVecchio, permanently positioned
in the last seat on the schoolbus.

Consuming raw eggs or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood,
shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of food-borne illness.

Mess with his head by winking at him one day
and then ignoring him the next.

Somewhat doubtful and admittedly intimidated by
his bad-boy reputation, my determination to solve
this mystery forced me from my usual seat to the
back of the bus. There was no room for fear.
So swallowing my nerves, I asked pointedly: “Is
pussyfooting a curse word?” wondering if perhaps
he would laugh or simply dismiss me.

What the world needs now is another Daddy’s little girl
Master DelVecchio’s eyes narrowed to slits, his
Dorito breath leaning in close, as he hissed that
“pussy” was indeed a curse word.

The writer is not veiled.

Before I could even respond to this revelation or
possibly consider a follow-up question about the
specific combination of “pussyfoot,” he quickly
added, “it’s another word for coochie.”

Throw on a cute tee with your favorite jeans.

No fuss can be way fun!

And crown thy good with brotherhood.

How she avails herself. Backed into, racked.
She cannot sleep with racking her brain.

She is liking that he is noticing very much so
and he is very much so noting her liking. Thus

she is looking to note his noticing and he is
noting very much so. They are thus liking
to note their looking. Even more so.

And this is the meaning of mutual.
Noting the noticing and very much so.

And they don't stop. And they won't stop.

How would you describe the writer's tone?

Ready or not, here I come.

Soft on the outside, scented on the inside

My face burning with embarrassment, I fled back
to my seat, left to ponder this latest epiphany.
So if "pussy" was "coochie," I reasoned, whatever
could "*pussyfooting*" mean?

Please stand for the closing hymn.

The mystery continued for years. What could my
father possibly have thought my mother was doing
with her feet?

This dance of averted eyes and loaded words.

Most colleges prefer to see a concentrated and long-term
involvement in two specific extra-curricular activities as opposed to
the buffet approach of a little participation in tons of activities.

There was that particular 4th of July, she was spilled, spilling, spoiled.

So stutter from just this wanting.

For that deep-down body thirst

The weather turned cold prematurely but no matter.

Remember thinking; this is falling in love
and then just as suddenly thinking I'd fallen.

Having grown up hearing his mother,
the daughter of a sea captain, tell tales of
growing up on a ship, my father yearned

to follow this tradition. Thus, during
college, my father spent summers
“working on ships” was how it was told.

Jack Sprat could eat no fat.
His wife could eat no lean.

No one wants an open box—please leave sealed boxes closed.

I grew up imagining my father, not so
much younger as hairier, bellowing
“heave-ho!” and “ahoy” or akin “boat-
speak” as I then imagined it.
physically as opposed to metaphorically

To order, simply indicate the desired birthstone
on the attached order form.

the dailiness of you
residue of intimate details

Don’t wait for the weekend to get your social life into gear. There’s
no reason you can’t find love on a Monday if you’re open to it.

They licked the platter clean.

There was the November of invisible sleep.

And so, growing up, my brother and I
would often ask my father to regale us
with “tales of the sea.” But mainly I
remember being primarily interested in
his inevitable mention of the “poop
deck” at which point we collapsed in fits
of laughter.

The triumph of rising day after day and willing
oneself to forget.

There was a problem
though no one suspected.

At 14, my first official boyfriend offered
the greatest opportunity for pursuing
intensive study of my, at that time, latest
fascination: the dick. Beyond just getting
up close and personal with the eye of the

beast, as they say, which he happily obliged, I spent a considerable amount of time trying to convince him to allow me to try mini-experiments, conducted with sincere scientific motives and the utmost of seriousness.

The queen was in the parlor, eating
bread and honey

Incessant: this problem of audience.

For instance, I was convinced that I could squeeze—gently of course—but nonetheless, by means of massaging his testicles, I was absolutely positive that I could persuade one ball to jump ship as it were into the other sac.

a distance too far to cover

Packed with peanuts, Snickers really satisfies

The Knight
he loves his bright sword

I was quite intrigued by the ways in which I could manipulate the head of the glans

The Lady loves her will.

to make the opening wink, or vascillate between a perfectly round O, an oval egg shape or, when I was lucky, produce a small bubble.

this insistence on specificity

There were eyes in the window.

Construction delays approaching the bypass.

Round or oval shapes create the illusion of length.

If Peter Piper picked a peck
of pickled peppers

Not hers but his. Not his but his.

And so she is saying “the sky is very clear today”
and he is saying, “very much so.”

She is saying “have you noticed the ceiling” and
he is looking to note the ceiling.

He is saying “the ceiling demands to be noticed”
and she is saying “very much so.”

And so this is not a conversation about architecture.

But, alas, my luck ran out when my young
beau remained insistent that I could not
actually stick anything into the hole.

All day strong, all day long.

I proposed that a Q-tip was the perfect size
and shape while also offering a soft
cushioning, and further assured him that it
would not hurt. He remained, nonetheless,
unwilling to yield.

Unable to relax?

Actually, I was much more interested in fitting
my pinky fingernail in the hole—so perfectly
crescent-shaped to accommodate the curve of
the nail. But, I knew if I could not succeed in
convincing him to give the Q-tip idea a go,
there was no chance with anything as sharp
and brittle as a fingernail.

Where’s the pecker,
the pickled pecker Peter Piper picked?

the November of broken humiliation,
so much impossibility

But you know me—knew me the way I was then.

What the world needs now is another Barbie Dream House.

For example, apologizing as if by reflex.

a girl with glass eyes
a too perfect shade of pink

Like, about the hair, it’s just so two years ago,
you know?

No obligation
No risk

contrived purity

How baffling that paper could cause injury.

When the pie was opened,
the birds began to sing

Which is to say, that regret which will not recede.

I did however convince him to allow me to paint two eyes with my eyeliner and proceed to put on a little show of sorts—solely for our own amusement of course—in which I manipulated the hole to move akin to an opera diva’s whilst I sang my false falsetto version of popular musical show tunes.

The soup that eats like a meal.
“I Could Have Danced All Night” seemed to appear most frequently although “It’s a Hard Cock Life” got plenty of airtime. We, or should I say I, called it the Dick Van Dick show.

Such insistence on innocence

Shown smaller than actual size

You, of all people, must know how
this would make me riddled.

Ultra-shine for a perfect pout

Perhaps it was desires such as these
which convinced my high school compatriots that what I had was a case of “penis envy.”

I don’t know why you say “goodbye.” I say “hello.”

Not my but our. How she wets her lips.

Nothing’s tougher on soap scum

Being a posh, snobbishly competitive
college preparatory academy,

Psychology was one of the course offerings in 11th grade.

What's for dinner?

Before our knowledge of Freud, my miscellaneous experiments marked me as somewhat of a questionable gal; but, Freud gave me validation.

All that juicy meat
smothered in cheese,
just 5 for \$5

Do not chew or suck on tablet.

I mean ruined.

'daughter' being one letter away from 'laughter'
Where's the beef?

He is looking to see her liking and she is
looking for something to say.

But I guess I have digressed from the subject at hand.

There was laughter, a party dress just right for the occasion.

Though other days this "triumph" feels more like a "curse."

A better way to wipe

Perhaps at this time I should point out that my fascination with dicks was more of a problem for the female members of my social circle rather than for the male contingent.

Now grapevine for four and kick those heels up to your gluts
Although the fellows admittedly looked a bit green-around-the-gills at reports of my repeated requests to stick things in, for the most part, this factor did not weigh nearly as significantly as the knowledge that I found myself irresistibly titillated in the presence of any penis regardless of race, creed, size, or shape.

Is there a twelve-step program for that?

His sideward glance

And how to tell the slow deliberate process of rebuilding?

The maid was in the garden,
hanging out the clothes

Determine your goals carefully; don't make them impossible to attain, but
be certain that they require as much time, talent, and love as you can give.

still waiting for the time I will not be tempted to pick up the receiver.

Some of my less worldly female companions tried to use this notion of "penis envy" as an accusation or insult. But I was triumphant—as far as I was concerned Freud gave me the opportunity to discuss this "penis envy" in contexts which previously proved inhibiting for introducing my newest intellectual interest into conversation.

When down came a blackbird
and pecked off her nose.

And so this is the architecture of saying and seeing.

e m p h a s i s a d d e d

For example, in history class, I was now permitted the authority to raise my hand proudly and inquire if perhaps the reason Queen Victoria ruled the way she did was because she suffered from penis envy.

She's been living in her uptown world.

Or, in Literature class, I was afforded the opportunity to offer my reading of Ophelia's

breakdown as fueled by
her penis envy and further
catalyzed by Hamlet's
cruel refusal to permit
her near it.

Not yours but mine.

And what images are these that stir my sleep

Oh, and like those bangs are like so totally wrong for her face.

which force me to speak as if in tongues

Their bellies belted to trunks, how they scurried up the trees,
disappearing amidst the leaves. To chop down from within.

My teachers were never quite sure, it seemed, whether
to be more thrown by the questions themselves or by
my utter lack of embarrassment, shame or, more
importantly, the degree of my earnestness, for I was
nothing if not serious.

You can't pick a fresher scent

And so the leaves changed early
as if the trees were anxious to be done with it.

Her sideward glance.

Low on energy? Not involved with friends
and family the way you used to be?

The wheels on the bus go round and round.

Which is to say, the difference between what and why.

Her humming skirt. How she wants it.

In 12th grade, I was one of the
primary organizers of our senior
prank. No juvenile toilet
papering the library or sealing
the campus gates would do.
These all involved breaking and

entering or potentially criminal acts and certainly broke academic demeanor codes which spelled suspensions and possible expulsion.

Some like it hot

To be truly subversive, I decided,

Some like it cold

would be to openly break the rules without actually doing anything that would warrant punishment.

Some like it
in the pot nine days old

Therefore, my cohorts and I decided to cross-dress while still obeying dress code.

You have three new messages.

The priests were understandably baffled and spent the day scurrying into their offices in futile attempts to deny this open acknowledgment of our bodies not to mention the inherent differences between the sexes.

You can tell by the way I use my walk.

Or perhaps they were diligently scouring the small print of the academy's disciplinary codes, trying to find a loop hole which might deem this behavior officially punishable.

One sock on and one sock off.

At which point the greatest cause for concern came to be the realization that the Code of Academic Attire did not in fact stipulate that male students must follow the men's rules while female students respectively should adhere to the women's regulations. Having made this brilliant discovery, much wringing

of hands ensued as to what was to
prevent these young people from
subverting the dress code every day?

I just don't get it.

For instance, playing the game predator and prey with such frequency.

I'll be taking care of business everyday

I don't want to grow up—I'm a Toys-R-Us kid.

Much the proud mother hen, I delighted in
the fact that every senior without exception
(even the ones I never spoke to) participated.
Boys came in full drag with pantyhose,
enviously-sized stuffed bras, wigs and
makeup, even a few boas.

Our exclusive lash-
thickening formula lengthens without clumping

And yet, perfect angels one and all, they
obeyed the otherwise infuriating female dress
code specifications regarding to-the-knee
skirt lengths and non-transparent blouses to
the letter.

Super non-stick surface

So, too, the girls all came in the boy's dress
code of appropriate pant, dress shirt, tie and
blazer. No punishable violation to be found.
This was the face of suburban rebellion.

One, two, buckle my shoe

There was the morning they removed the trees
revealing so much sky.

Heals like a cream, feels like a lotion.

That is, the difference between interruption versus insertion.

Pulse point and palm.

The girls did not have nearly as much room for fun;

five, six, pick up sticks

but, craving something a bit edgier, on the inside of my J. Crew boxer shorts, I affixed a mesh pouch in which I inserted a water weenie—a rubber toy filled with water, used for games like hot potato, which slips out of one’s hands easily and is hard to hold onto.

The writer is not seeking catharsis.

And, of course, throughout the day, I seized the opportunity to thrust my crotch at people, commanding them to “touch it.” My victims expected a sock or equally unrealistic and unimaginative stuffing. But the responses were outstanding—

seven, eight, lay them straight

some recoiled in horror, others exploded with glee and moved in closer, squeezing and stroking and trying to figure out just what it was in there.

It’s everywhere you want to be

He’s got the whole world in his hands.

An inability to get comfortable is not necessarily a comment on the surroundings.

But the greatest joy of my water-weenie-peenie was my own private ecstasy knowing it was there.

Answers must be in the same form as the question.

During an ungodly Physics lecture or interminable Calculus demonstration, I could shift my weight and feel it snug against my thigh, or simply reach my

hand in my pocket and stroke it without anyone knowing.

All I ever wanted was to see the big picture.

It was this experience which confirmed for me that it was indeed a blessing to be born female for if I walked around everyday with such a secret prize between my thighs, I would have been unable to think of anything else beyond the best friend between my legs.

All I ever wanted was to hear you say it.

This, too, proved an invaluable insight into my male companions, preventing me from ever finding them thoughtless or self-centered.

Who is the ideal audience?

Instead, from that point on, I could be counted as one of their sincerest sympathizers.

Don't be such a freaking goober.

To market, to market
to buy a fat hog.

It was shortly after my Freudian discovery that I began espousing my "penis theory" which held, quite reductively, that almost every event throughout world history could be traced back to concerns of the penile persuasion.

I mean like what made her think that that dress would be good with her hips. No, she totally should have like kept looking or I mean just like you know maybe quit it with all the like eating. I've seen her and she doesn't even break it up into pieces. Seriously, she'll just pop it in her mouth.

Napoleon, obviously, had an anxiety not only about his height but more specifically about

his dick. Same for Hitler. Same for pretty
much every other tyrant. And my theory held.

Easy breezy beautiful cover girl

It was always the most violent-prone and
angry boys in school who felt the need to “get
the most pussy.” And usually it was this same
collective who had something odd about their
member—too stubby, too thin, too grey, too
purple, too wrinkled, an unfortunate J-hook
bend or the even sadder case of the
nervous, bobbing head which never could
quite steady itself sufficiently to hit the mark
dead-on.

One flew east, one flew west

Wait. Go back further.

And one flew over the goose’s nest

How he slips away.

On the other hand, it was the quiet boys,
the sad boys, the unassuming boys,
the extra thin, small-hipped boys, the
song-writing boys, the skater-hair boys,
the existentialist boys who were packing
a behemoth to be reckoned with.

and Jill came tumbling after

The all-encompassing: what now?

The warning signs are all there:
the relief in closing a door, the reverie
of repetitions, delay approaching departures.

As 70s retro-feminism as it may seem, I
was not only attributing wars and
violent behavior to penis anxieties. No,
my penis theory was much more
egalitarian, espousing that genius was
directly connected to, not so much dick-

size or dick-girth, but rather dick-love. Like the classic rubric of the hedgehog and the fox, I could similarly view every historical, literary, and pop-culture figure according to this notion of phallophobia or phallophilia.

You have no new messages.

Melville for instance proved a clear case of dick pride and therefore wrote his way into the literary canon for all time. The connection between the pen and the penis being abundantly clear.

Early to bed and early to rise

Did you say concessions or confessions?

so big and thick
no room for a stick

Panic of such sound

This theory, in addition to shaping my worldview, also functioned as an insightful test of women.

The cheese stands alone.

Peers in my age-group tended to blush, stare at the ground, or laugh nervously and walk away when I began to talk dick taxonomy and how to decipher their various influences in the world.

To respect patient privacy, please refrain from discussing cases in public places.

Such “blushing violets,” I could determine instantly, were girls I never needed to hang around with; whereas those who engaged with my idea, listened eagerly, or asked questions, successfully “passed my test.”

You’ve got to admit it’s getting better.

This is not to suggest that I was requiring mindless acceptance. A true

intellectual, I welcomed dissent, and
appreciated a good debate.

Put your foot
down and drive.

This little pig had roast beef.
I couldn't really, like, relate to it.

Of course, I was ascribing so much
significance to dicks at this time that I had
not stopped to fully consider the
misogynistic and self-loathing implications.

Your call will be taken in the order in which it was received

Could you be, like,
more of a dork?

Now! Longer lasting!

It was not until one of my more depressed
and anxious girlfriends asked for advice that
I realized how narrow-minded I had been.

Sitting in the backseat on long car rides,
studying the map to find the "YOU ARE HERE" arrow.

A generation lost in space
no time left to begin again

As avid listeners of The Cure and Depeche
Mode, looking depressed and talking about
depression were quite fashionable, but being
depressed was rather, well, depressing.

This is me imagining something different.

So, in my wisdom, I suggested to this
particularly anxiety-ridden and uptight
girlfriend that she should spend some
serious time "loving herself," explaining that
it was simply unfair for boys to have the
opportunity to touch themselves all the time

while we dieted and starved, primped and posed.

finger-licking good

Reaching a rhetorical climax, I emphasized that these boys were not only touching it every time they went to the bathroom but also rushing home every day to “work it” in the shower, in bed, wherever they liked, while we stupidly busied ourselves planning outfits and doing our nails.

In the morning, in the evening, ain’t we got fun?

Years later, this would become the beginning of the infamous “Masturbation’s fun for the whole family theory”—but that would have to wait for another chapter.