

Two

THE CONFESSIONS

(a selection)

Chapter II

Proud to Be Short

So bless us and splash us, as Gollum would say. (You do know *The Hobbit*, don't you? Good; I loved *The Hobbit*.)

I really ought to start at the beginning, oughtn't I? Okay then—I mean I *will* be jumping around a lot, but don't get the idea I'm out of order right here at the very beginning, or that we'll get ahead of ourselves or even end up *lapping* ourselves, if you'll pardon the expression. (Cackle.) I've always been pretty fast—um—should I rephrase that? I've always been quick on my *feet*, a pretty good *runner*, you know: ZAP! FLASH! here I go! there I am! But in gym there were always these giraffe girls who could take one slow step and be twenty yards ahead of me, the bitches. (Should I say bitches? I mean I'm not sure what a female giraffe is called—not a “cow” or “sow,” I hope; that'd make things too confusing.)

So anyway: here goes: “Chapter One—I Am Born.” And at government expense, thanks to my pahpah being in the military at the time. I was what they call a Marine brat, meaning that my father was a jet jockey for the Semper Fi and we were all the time moving from one air station to another. Just think! Little old me got born at the biggest one in the whole wide world: Cherry Point, Nawth Caylina. Which I reckon is jes' down the road from Mayberry and Mount Pilot and My What Tarry Heels You've Got. Hence my occasional natural-born drawlin' 'n' twangin' 'n' pickin' 'n' grinnin'.

Born to do nothing but laugh!—that's what they said about me, when I was little.

They were right, too; I was always the giggliest one in class. Used to tick off my grade school teachers something fierce. Miss Gibson (second grade: she was a pig woman) even made me go stand by myself in the cloakroom—to *no avail!* They could all still hear me in there, tee-heeing away. I could turn that cloakroom into a regular Gigglesville. Poor Miss Gibson.

What was I talking about? Oh right, being born. “Natural-born”—that’s how they phrase it where I grew up. Or did some of my growing up, anyhow. (As you can see, I grew up only just so far.) “That’s a natural-born whopper,” my Grampa Otto might say about a fish he caught, and go on to tell more whoppers about how he caught it. Or, “*She’s* hardly a natural-born blonde,” all the ladies might say about one of their friends on her way back from the beauty parlor. (I myself, let me emphasize, have always been a genuine original member of the Natural-Born Blonde party. *Strawberry* blonde, by heck. Red-gold! Texas tea!)

Actually I’ve never been to Texas. Lots of other places (including Greece and Istanbul and Hoboken, New Jersey, all last spring) but not Texas. And only briefly North Carolina—I certainly didn’t do much growing up there. Marine brat, remember. *Look Homeward, Angel*, ‘Cause You Can’t Go There Again. (See? Told you I’ve been to college.)

I don’t remember places too distinctly before I came to live with Gramma and Grampa in Marble Orchard, when I was not-quite-six; but I have this constant image of heatwaves rising over tarmac, with planes roaring overhead. (Ooh! always loved that sound—heavy metal boffola! You ever want to get me superexcited, just let me hear a sonic boom.)

Well anyway: we moved around a lot, and it was always someplace *hot*—Arizona, Hawaii, southern California. I never got to wade chin-deep through snow till I was going-on-seven, and you know that’s a crucial milestone of any kid’s childhood—something to hold over your *own* kids’s heads. “I had to wade forty-seven miles to school chin-deep through snow and with a milestone around my neck; so just count your blessings, young lady!”

It wouldn't take much of a snowfall for me to be chin-deep *in*, obviously. But my idea is that I was intended to be a Big Girl—not a *giraffe* girl, nor a fatty either, but regular Amazon material—oh about six foot THREE, say, with boobies out to *there* instead of out to *here*, and iron-pumping biceps and triceps and thigh muscles that could crack walnuts instead of pistachios, and I'd be the Central States champeen of the lady-wrassler circuit. You know: *vast*. But Mother Nature had other ideas. Cost me a lucrative wrestling career, but made up for that by giving me a permanent case of the leapin' jumpies. Hyperactive, you know: superexcitable! (Ever been around anybody with a case of the leapin' jumpies? Well honey, you have got yourself a TREAT in store.)

I once saw this old movie with Betty Hutton (and boy was *she* a loudmouth) called *Incendiary Blonde*, which I figure they'll have to remake about me one of these days. I mean, who more fitting? I'm telling you I was *born* to be explosive—in a good way; not like “Beans beans the musical fruit.” My Grampa Otto told me I was really a great big amazing colossal girl that'd been scrunched down into “a little ole bitty Skeeter-type doll.” Concentrated, you understand. Like a firecracker! Or, better still, like a *skyrocket*—SHWEEEEEE-OOOOP! I always wanted to have Roman candles on my birthday cakes, and twice as many as I am years old. (Did I mention I turned twenty-four last month? And that I'm willing to overlook your being late with the gifties, this year? Well I did. And I am. So make a note of it.)

Being all compactified like this, I just can't help but be extra-intensively *alive*. Which explains how come I've got these sunspot-baby-blue eyes and this incendiary blonde hair, and all this pixie dust in my brainpan and this bounce bounce bounce in my zap! flash! step—and why it's my duty to be *cute*. Buttoncute, that is. A cuuuutie-pie, as they say. Which has a particular aura of its own, you know, bold as whizbang whirligig brass:

CUTIEPIETY.

Va-va-vamoose!

(As long as I'm making these confessions, I better 'fess up to one horribly cutesy sin. As a kid, I doted on Harvey comic books. You know, Li'l Dot and Li'l Lotta and Li'l Hot Stuff and Li'l Richie Rich and Diamond Li'l—even Baby *Huey*, for crying out loud. Isn't

that awful? Aren't I ashamed? The only one of that bunch I couldn't stand was Clasper, the Personal-Space-Violating Ghost. Sure, he claimed to be friendly; but I could see right through him...)

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Dammit! Where's my lighter? Always keep your lighter near at hand: you never know when you might be called on to set the world on fire, or something. Hand me my poke, wouldja please? My *poke*. No, my POKE—that thing there! No, I do not mean “my purse”; purses are for picklefaced old ladies. This, my friend, is a POKE... Okay: *here* we go:

(Flick; drag.)

I started smoking when I was eight-and-a-half years old. Well obviously I've been *smokin'* all my life; but I mean cigarettes. Pall Malls, that is—“Pell-Mells.” So I guess there's no doubt as to what's kept *me* as tall as I got. But I'm perfectly happy being four-foot-eleven in my stocking feet: I hate wearing heels. Needless to say I look plenty *hot* in them, but let me go on permanent record as being goddam PROUD to be short.

Who was it?—Nikita Khrushchev?—who said, “Life is short; live it up.” One of those old Russian guys, anyway, Trotsky or Tolstoy or Rasputin or Rachmaninoff. That's my mantra, anyway: live it up! Seize that moment! Get that lead out! Put that butt in gear! Otherwise you're gonna go nowhere fast, and I do mean nowhere. And I do mean fast.

Hey! You being one of the Derentes and all, I bet you went to Cornwall High School, right? Did you know a girl there named Sally Whistletoe? She was probably my all-time idol. Hardly any taller than me, but I think a double-D bra would've been too tight on her. Gorgeous, she was. When I first got involved with stage stuff and Drama Club—I didn't go to Cornwall, of course, with you fancy suburban folks; *I* went to Bonum High [*clap clap clap*] deep in the heart of Demortuis, Nilnisi—

Anyway, I got coached by Sally Whistletoe on how to project myself. Not my *chest*, my *self*—voice, presence, aura. Sally tutored kids from all over town about all sorts of things: cheerleading, gymnastics, jujitsu, Being a Good Citizen. She told me, “You've gotta be a Hype if you don't wanna be a Ciphe, so go out there and *carpe* that *diem!*” I said,

“MA’AM YES MA’AM!” and tore out of her rumpus room like a regular Roger Ramjet:

YEAAAAAH!!!

I swear, she was the ultimate role model. And boy did she have big boobs—all that lung capacity, you see. Never had to use the phone; just opened a window and spoke right at you, clear across town, clear as a bell. That’s what positive projection can do for you. It gives you *aplomb* (hee hee! love that word). Helps you get through things, make the best of things, overcome things. Survive things. When I was a kid in Marble Orchard I had the most hair-raising escapades, and never once got hurt—not so much as an owwie. (I was going to say “as a booboo,” but I’ve talked quite enough about *those* for one night.)

Come to think of it, I did fracture a collarbone this one time, falling out of a cottonwood tree; but it wasn’t my bone. Or my tree.

There are, I must admit, a few drawbacks to being short. Like my attention span isn’t always quite as long as I’d like it to be. Intense, though, while it lasts. (Again like fireworks.) And even *aplomb*, you know, kind of starts to lose its elasticity after awhile. You may not believe it to look at me now, all trim and toned and tidy—if I do boast so myself—but not so very long ago I used to be a lot plumper. Especially on the rumper. Last New Year’s Eve I weighed in at 132 pounds, which may not sound like much to a big lug like you, but sure as hell *looked* roly-damn-poly on me. And it’s not like I was a fat little kid or anything, either; I never used to gain an ounce no matter how much I ate (or drank).

Well now I’m back down to 101 and can browse through the junior-misses again, though these days I’m more into what you might call Vintage Nouveau. And just in case anybody’s wondering, I wear a size 3 (sometimes 4) and you can thank Richard Simmons for that: it took a helluva lotta shake-shake-shake /shake-shake-shake /shakin’ my booty to get there, believe me. To a size 3 (sometimes 4). Now with shoes, such as you might happen to buy at a shoe-type store, it’d be more like a size 6 or 5 or even a 4, depending on how much of my li’l flat feet actually have to fit inside them. But with dresses and such—especially those meant to be worn *snugly*—aim for a 3. As in one-two-*three*. (You might want to jot that down.)

Now when it comes to swimwear or lingerie, you’d better take me along when you go

shopping: all bets are off. Of course it's a sexist insulting cliché to equate a woman's cup size with her grade-point-average—I mean, Sally Whistletoe was an honor student!—but in *my* case, they're both B+. Well, depending on the bra. And the phase of the moon. And whether I can avoid taking science classes. Any of which can suddenly turn a B+ into a C-.

Just the other day I put on my first bikini in three whole summers. Then I had to try on a dozen others till I found the right combination of top and bottom (in lobster-red: soooo cute!) that could bring back my True Bod exactly like it used to look before its blunder into plumpitude.

My friend RoBynne (have I told you yet about RoBynne O'Ring? she's writing a smutnovel) went on sunbathing display the other day in this set of leopardskin thongs and rhinestone suspenders; and she's only nineteen and maybe six feet tall and completely olivaceous to boot—but even *she* allowed that, standing next to me and my True Bod, she looked like “a foggin' giraffe.” That's an exact quote, too. (Actually RoBynne's terrifically attractive. For a giraffe girl, that is.)

So yessir! Li'l Miss Whuddababe is *back*. You can hardly tell I'd ever been anything otherwise. No way; unh-unh.

There's a dwarf-woman in—which Dickens novel?—*David Copperfield*, I think, who keeps saying “Ain't I volatile?” This guy I knew in college at Keening told me that “volatile” originally meant “able to fly.” And that “risible” means “able to laugh.” (Boy was that guy creepy—he used to send me bunches of flowers, but with these wacko *mea culpa* notes enclosed. Yugggh.)

Anyway, you see what I mean. Volatility—risibility. Indivisible, you see. Like projection and pyromania!

Maybe I haven't yet managed to set the world on fire, but hey! the night is young...