

One Woman

By Cecilia Copeland

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Time: The present day, 2008. If the year is not close to 2008, the script should be altered to keep it current.

Set: The performance space needs to be large enough to accommodate the choreography. The set should have levels, and stairs. Onstage should be a small table with a glass of what looks like white wine, a bottle of water, and a small sweat towel. Leaning against the table is a large pointer. Next to the table is a stool. On the various levels and along the edge of the playing area are pairs of high heels. Off stage is a projector for the images which should be shown on the back wall or a large screen upstage.

CECILIA

I have an unnatural hatred for any woman who is taller me, than I- than I am. This is not to say that I hate all tall women. In fact my best friend is five eight. Her giraffe like stature taunting me with her long lean limbs of art deco perfection. “Five eight”, you say “is that really tall?” – Yes. It is to me. I stand at a measurable five three and one quarter. Now usually I just say five four. But since I’m being completely honest with you, I suppose I ought to admit to the three quarter inch lie I continually tell. But tonight, I will tell no lies. I am proudly Five Three and one quarter inch tall.

Now, you would *never* know this about me for two very good reasons, and I know you would never know this about me because whenever I tell people my height- the Five four version of course, but when I tell them five four, without fail they say- “No! Really? I thought you were taller.” I seem taller because I have tall personality. I wouldn’t really call it imposing. I mean, how imposing can I be at a hundred and (cough) pounds, and five... three? Not very. That said I stand up to my full height at all times. I don’t slouch- ever. I did ballet for so many years the result has left me looking like I wore a back brace throughout my childhood. It actually hurts for me to slouch. Not to mention slouching makes your tits sag, and makes you look- short. I hold my head high, and I look you straight in the eye. You don’t feel like you’re looking down on me, because you aren’t. I don’t allow it.

Don’t get me wrong in thinking that I was born with a sense of self aggrandizing egomania. Hardly. The steep ascent to a healthy self-confidence had many painful plateaus and set backs. Oh yes? You say. Yes, we would like to know when little miss entitlement felt small.

(Begin to change into dance clothes of a long skirt and tank. Show various images of New York with the projector.) I was in New York for the very first time. Love, is a strange thing. I think that when you truly love, it's something that exists inside of you from the time you're born, and when you finally come face to face with the object of your love it is at last realized. I have loved New York since forever. Since I saw Silk Stockings with Fred Astaire, since I heard Sinatra's anthem, since I learned of Broadway, since I looked around myself as a child and saw that I wasn't made for a conventional Midwestern life.

Some women are made to breed. They love it, and I'm glad they do, because we need to carry on the species. Children are, (*Pause.*) important? But for me, to quote Billy Holiday- (Change out of heels into modern toe pads.) 'I was built for speed.'

(Enter music... Add choreography without text for a little while, and then, add the text in a voiceover. The music fades out, and one last image of the New York is left and held.)

I was not quite sixteen, and my mother was taking me on a trip to see the big city. We were walking down five flights of stairs after getting a massage from a friend of hers. Anna was a former dancer turned masseuse. Anna worked on my mother first, and then me. Afterwards, she told us that Jennifer Beals was coming in next. She said that Jennifer had been one of her clients for years. I sipped my after massage tea very slowly. I lingered on the last swallow until I thought it was beyond obvious that I was waiting in the hopes of having an encounter with my childhood idol. Flashdance came out in 1983. I was eight years old. I don't think my mom was completely aware of the all the plot specifics when she took me to see it. I was a little girl obsessed with dance, and it was a movie about dance. It was rated R, but in those days rated R could've meant anything. In

the case of Flashdance rated R meant Risqué. To my eight year old mind, Flashdance was heaven, and Jennifer Beals was a goddess. I used to play the Flashdance album over and over in my bedroom making up choreography for hours. I was a solitary little girl with dark curly hair, and lofty hopes of being a ballerina. I was a little girl who loved Jennifer Beals. So here is the part I'm getting to. Right, when my mother, having indulged my obsession as long as she could without being totally impolite suggested we be 'on our way', I reluctantly got up to leave. We got all the way to the bottom of the five flights of stairs when I saw her. (Stop Dancing and stop the voice over.)

Is it her? Yes, that's her. She's wearing a big hat, but it's her. I want to say JENNIFER! Ms BEALS! But I don't say anything. I want to look at her straight in the eye. I want her to see me, but I don't want to bother her. I don't want to be some annoying fan. Who am I? I'm just some little kid who fell in love with her. I'm nobody. I'm- and she was gone. I stood outside the building for a moment knowing that she was making her way up the five flights of stairs to get a massage from Anna. "That was her." I said. "Why didn't you say anything?" my mother asked. My infuriatingly lame reply, "I didn't want to bother her." I could've maybe run back in, but then what? Said what? In retrospect, I should've just said the truth. I should've just said. "Hi." And considering she is another human being I'm pretty sure she would've said "Hi.", back. I could've then moved forward with the truth and said. "I just came from a massage with Anna. She told me you would be coming in next. You're Jennifer Beals right?" and because she is Jennifer Beals she would've answered "Yes, I am." All very common sense. And then I would've had the opportunity to tell her any number of things. I could've said, "I loved you in Flashdance." Or I could've said, "You became my idol when I saw Flashdance."

Or how about this? “It’s really an honor to meet you, I’m Cecilia.” (*Stick out hand to shake.*) And then I could’ve shook her hand! Jennifer Beals! But I didn’t, I couldn’t.

Instead, I stood outside the building knowing that she was going up the stairs. I stood there, and then I walked away from my idol because I thought ‘Who am I? I’m nobody.’ (Put heels back on and change out of dance clothes.) Keep in mind I have no illusions that Jennifer and I would’ve become best pals or anything. But know this, when we met Anna for lunch on the last day of our New York trip, before heading back home to Des Moines Iowa, my mom brought up the whole Jennifer Beals non-incident on the stairs. As I flushed the color of tomato bisque, my mother told the story of my childhood afternoons spent with Irene Cara and the rest of the Flashdance soundtrack. I was, of course, totally embarrassed. Anna, hippy, pot smoking, former ballerina, sweetheart-punched my arm hard enough to leave a bruise. She said, and I quote, “You idiot! She would have loved to talk to you. Why didn’t you tell me you were a fan? You could’ve waited in my place. It would have made her day. She’s quite insecure you know.” What? Jennifer Beals? Beautiful, talented, goddess Jennifer Beals? Okay, if you say so.

It’s been more than 15 years since then. Over the years and throughout my travels I have come to realize that I am not, nobody. Some of that comes from having lived in the city of my dreams, and finding out that it is the one place that I feel truly at home. It isn’t my home, but when I am there I feel home. And yes New York is the greatest city in the world. Now, I know that while you sit there and listen to me tell you I’m at home in New York, and I’m somebody it’s natural for you to hate me a little bit. I don’t know why it’s natural. I just know it’s the way it is. Like when two sixteen years olds girls, or rather young women, pass each other in a high school hallway they will evaluate what it is that

makes the other one different. The sad and funny thing is that they are usually having the same exact thought, at the exact same moment. “She’s a stuck up bitch. I hate her.” And so they hate each other. Each afraid of the other, and mean to the other in her own little way. In fact I’m pretty sure that there are many of you thinking right now, “She seems a bit cocky to me.” Perhaps you’re right. Because now, at this stage of my life, this much I can say with certainty, and you might chafe to hear it said aloud, but I must tell you despite feeling so nervous that I want to puke, despite feeling afraid that it will taken the wrong way, and knowing that it might cause you to hate me a little bit. I. Have. Value. I will add value to your life, if you invite me into it. As a friend, as a lover, as a colleague. Please don’t think that I am never plagued with insecurities.

I often wonder...

Am I good enough?
Do I have the right to be here?
Have I read enough?
Am I smart enough?
Am I talented enough?
Am I pretty enough?
Am I sexy or too sexy...?
Am I coming across arrogant?
Am I listening enough??
Am I talking too much???
Did I say the wrong thing??
Have I done enough?
Am I whatever enough?!!!!

Every time I open a door and walk into a room I face a battle. I walk in and face my enemies. Oh, not you. My enemies are all the different me’s I think you see. I have to fight her, and her, and her, and her. I look at you, and you, and you and see you looking at me. I see you staring at my hair, my shoes, my lipstick and I have to fight against the kind of woman you think I am. I have to fight her to get you to see me. I have to kick her

ass with my stilettos to prove to myself that I have the right to wear them. Once I can do that, I don't seem small, because I don't think of myself, as small. I just am.

And the second reason you would never know I am five three is because I am never seen in public without wearing high heels. Very. High. Heels. They are every Spanish woman's best friend and lover.

There are two kinds of women. The first kind is made up of those who stagger around in pumps twisting their ankles, complaining of blisters and cramps, and taking their shoes off in public carrying them around in their hands while they get about in dirty bare feet at a wedding reception. Just a moment I feel a little ill. Let me take a drink, I'll be right with you. (Takes a sip of wine.)

Alright, now to be fair I should also briefly mention the small number of flatfooted high heel supporters. These women are most often in their mid-fifties and up. They are well put together from belt to bag. They've aged with grace, and when you see their mischievous smile, you just know that they are having sex on a very regular basis. They can be found dining in the coolest restaurants in small groups of two to five. Their boisterous laughter fills the air with the sound of life well lived and appreciated. These grande dames are quick to complement a younger woman in a stylish pair of heels. They will smile warmly and say, "Sweetheart, I just have to tell you those shoes are lovely, and that dress is absolutely gorgeous.", the rest of the ladies will nod and then one of her friends will chime in, "And you wear it beautifully." Afterwards, smiles and thank yous will be exchanged. Sometimes this leads to introductions and conversation, but often this happens on the street simply in passing.

Clearly these stunning women of a more mature age were one of two things in their younger years. They could've been part of the camp who wears heels on a daily basis, and while they can no longer due to the impact of gravity on the joints they still appreciate flattering footwear. On the other hand, they could be a woman who, in her youth never felt comfortable in heels, but over the years has cultivated her own unique sense of style and relinquished any negative judgment about heels. Either way, their vivacious attitude, and genuine kindness has made them many wonderful friends and passionate lovers, and thus has kept them beautiful at every age. Regardless of whether these women have on a pair of pretty summer sandals, well oiled loafers, or smart little kitten heels... they stand miles above the rest.

Unfortunately, those women are few and far between. Sadly, most of the time the 'no heel' camp is comprised of women who claim comfort is everything. They will wear orthopedically designed monstrosities and call them footwear. They will amble about in filthy white tennis shoes and pulled up socks to see the most beautiful sights in Rome. (The projector should flash paintings up onto the wall.)

While they stare up at breathtakingly masterful works, they remain blind to the responsibility to include themselves in that aesthetic of color and beauty. On the plus side the ensemble of high waisted pleated khaki shorts, sun-visor, and fanny pack completes the look marking them decidedly Wonder bread American. This classic stereotype of the tasteless suburban forewarns members of the service industry not to expect anything more than an obligatory ten percent tip, and a barrage of complaints. These women snarl and stare at the other type pointing with palpable insecurity, while their partners lustily

stare at the scenery. They make comments like, “oh my god, would you look at that.”, or “Who’s she trying to impress?”

I have become used to hearing comments like that, but I was recently taken aback and it made me wonder if I perhaps I had gotten too complacent.

(Run upstairs for a costume change into little jean skirt and guess candies.)

I was taking my Grandmother and my Auntie out for brunch on a typical summer Sunday. My Grandmother and namesake Cecilia Rivera is as Spanish as our name. Even at the age of 78 you won’t see my Gran at a special occasion without a little heel. This was a very average Sunday, and so she was sensibly attired in terracotta orange, leather, with extra padding in the insole flip flops.

(Image projected on the wall and then fades out to a summer sky.)

My Auntie is... I wanna describe her to you, but I don’t want to give you the wrong impression. Auntie Sue... is... unpredictable. She’s unpredictable like Ophelia, and unpredictable like Lil Kim. That’s really the best way I can put it. Well, when my Auntie Sue climbed into the car that morning the first thing that came out of her mouth was, “I’m in a bad mood today!” At that moment I formulated a plan of action. Get to the restaurant, and before we even open the menus order a round of Mimosas. In my experience two Mimosas can magically transform a wretched Sunday morning into a glorious Sunday afternoon.

(Finish with the change and walk downstairs.)

So we arrived at the restaurant and casually strolled in. Much to the very vocal displeasure of a group of women, I had on a little jean skirt, fitted white tee, and a pair of

three inch wooden heeled, Guess Candies. The sound of my heels striking the floor,

(Sound effect of heels striking the floor turning into a marching drum.)

was like a call to arms for those unhappy women dressed in their ugly thongs, box cut t-shirts, pleated front shorts, and conservatively colorless worst. They “pfffffd, kahhhed”, and “uuuhhhhcchhd”

(Sound effects here of a restaurant which slowly build.)

while they nudged each other and rolled their eyes as I passed. Now, bear in mind all these noises were a bit distant to my thoughts. I was very focused on getting a table and a round of drinks. To my Auntie Suesan however, they were far too loud. My Auntie Sue no longer wears really high heels. She prefers clogs with a heel of a more modest height, but never less than a one point five. In any case, she didn't like how they were behaving towards me. She took offense at the comments that were apparently loud enough for half of the restaurant to hear.

(Sound effect starts to fade out.)

(Embody Suesan and switch back and forth.), “They act like they've never seen a pair of heels before.”, and then she said, “Hey, what are you starin at!?” and the women began to cluck and mutter amongst themselves, and then my Auntie Suesan went on loud enough for the whole restaurant to hear, “It's rude to roll your eyes at people! You got something to say?” At this point my Gran and I were as dumbstruck as the group of women. “Well that shutem up, didn't it.” Then she laughed a little bit. “I don't care, that's rude. They don't know me. I'm in a baaaad mood today.”

As I said, unpredictable. “Three Mimosas please. Right away please.”

My Gran chimed in, “Oh Mimosas!”

Auntie Sue went on. “Don’t they know all the girls dress like that these days?”

I was tickled by the fact that even at my age, 32, my Auntie still considers me a girl. I suppose to a woman in her late fifties, I am a girl. The thing about my Auntie Suesan is that she’s seen a lot in her life. She’s known the kind of tragedy that changes your entire perspective.

(Sound effect cuts out completely.)

She often says, “I don’t take shit from anybody. I don’t care.” And she means it.

Those women learned something that very average Sunday. Over the years, they had gotten used to saying, “She’s a stuck up bitch. I hate her.” They had gotten so used to saying it in their head, that they started saying it aloud. That day, the rules got changed. Faced with a captain unwilling to swallow their treasonous behavior, they got a gut full of smack down. I don’t know if they were even aware that they had been cutting the knees out from their own team? In fact, I doubt it. I doubt that they fully comprehend the outcome or the meaning of their own actions. Self hating women are much more dangerous and numerous than man haters. Traitors always cause more damage. Now, I am nothing like my Auntie when it comes to handling that sort of thing, but there was a little part of me that smiled when she stuck up for me.

(Start to put on cork wedge lace up Grecian sandals.)

My modus operandi is to ignore women like that and have an absolutely wonderful time while glare at me.

(Sounds of Paris and images of Parisian women in Paris from lots of eras, but all wearing heels, projected.)

Right. So there are those women, and then there are, the other kind.

(Turn to face projections with a large pointer.)

Women who wear heels as if they were born in them. In winter, they stroll casually wearing stacked heel, knee high, leather boots along a cobblestone street in Paris. They do this without so much as a near miss in the minefield of dog shit.

(The images of Parisian women switch to a colorful sunset that morphs into a sunset behind the Statue of Liberty.)

In summer, they meander effortlessly down the warped Coney Island boardwalk in six inch platform, cork-wedge, lace-up Grecian sandals. These women never whine about their aching feet. They can give you a walking tour of Manhattan, and when you are ready to sit your ass down and grab a drink near the Seaport, they will advocate walking just a couple more hot, sweaty, city blocks over to Battery Park. Where, you can enjoy a cocktail and take in a perfect sunset behind the Statue of Liberty.

(Sit gently and take a sip of wine looking at the image.)

Of the two types of women I have just described, I think it's pretty obvious which one I am. As a matter of fact, I refuse to engage in any housework if I am not in heels of some sort. I iron, blow dry my hair, strip the bed, do laundry, and vacuum wearing some kind of heel. For me, the act of wearing a heel while doing these chores of maintenance makes them enjoyable. It feels rebellious and almost a little deviant. I would hate, hate to be forced to clean a dish barefoot. I would loath to fold clothes wearing just socks. My mother, the strongest woman I know said to me, "You were made to do more than clean floors." That sounded great to me cuz I hate to clean, but the problem I'm left with is that I do have to clean my floors. So, when I do this activity which has been assigned to women along with our subservient place, which my own mother rebelled against to leave

me feeling like it was beneath me, how do I do it without feeling like I am less than my potential? For a start, I put on my stripper heels, the heels that I would never wear in public. The heels that are too high for me to be able to fight back if I was attacked. The heels that are too high for me to run in. Why do I like them, these relics of foot binding? These nods to my subservient place in society? Why? Because I haven't yet resigned myself to the fact that everything the western white world thinks of as feminine, like cleaning and high heels, should be dismissed for me to have self respect. I blast Madonna, and indulge the fragility that I don't have the strength to show the world.

This identification of being a stiletto loving woman has often been at odds with my vehement desire to be seen as a radical feminist. When I say radical feminist, I mean exactly that. I believe that while there are some things I can not do better than a man like fix my car, or carry heavy bags, or get confrontational with an uppity concierge when the hotel room we have booked has turned out to be less than spectacular- I do have complete faith that there is most probably a woman out there who could, and I may even know her. And yet, I value the existence of men. I value the difference they bring to our world, albeit at times misguided and filled with loathsome violence, the brunt of which is more often than not, felt by women. Now, am I a bitter at the obvious advantages that come along with getting a penis in the genetic lottery? Not at all. I love being a woman, and I adore men. I adore gay men, straight men, bisexual men, men of all colors, men of all ages- except perhaps the very young ones, but to be fair I don't really like female children either until they can hold a decent conversation. It just generally takes men a bit longer to develop that skill. So, I do like men, but I am a lipstick wearing radical feminist.

(Introduce some images of Linda Carter as Wonder Woman the early 80's and Charlie's Angels with Cameron, Drew, and Lucy in fighting poses and heels.)

There are two kinds of women in the world when it comes to lipstick. There are those who will fearfully but indulgently, sinfully, and typically with shaky hands apply bright red lipstick. They will do this only after six pm, or in the privacy of their own home. The result of their application can sometimes leave you with the effect of staring at a clown school inductee, or a four year old child playing in her mother's cosmetic bag. Even though some of them long to do it, these women, each for their own private reasons are not comfortable painting their lips. Some of them will never don any color at all. They will allow their faces to be like a desert canvas. Sand and weather. And then...

(Images of Paloma Picasso.)

there are women like Paloma Picasso who understand the subtleties of the various shades of red. They can tell you the exact moment when a brick red dips into a sunset red, and then fatally falls into the abyss of a coral. They know exactly how much blue is required to make one's teeth appear blindingly white, and when too much blue tips the color into a wine, or a burgundy. They are aware of the nearly imperceptible difference between a soft gentle red, and the first shade of pink. These women wear red lipstick any time of day. They put it on without the use of a mirror and it is always flawless. When they apply color to their mouth they do so with relish, and pride. They bring attention to the sensual shape of their lips. They remind you that below their navel is another pair and wouldn't you just love to have a peek at those.

I have heard tell about a mythical shade from Estee Lauder called China Red. I heard that it was the perfect color. I myself have never seen it, and from all accounts it is

no longer in distribution. Personally, I have only ever known of one such red which was close to that perfection. It remains nameless due to the folly of my youth. I had pinched a lipstick from my mother's purse and wore it with careless abandon. When it ran out, I threw it away without marking the name. I have never been able to replace it. I stalk out cosmetic stores everywhere in hopes of seeing it again, but somewhere inside of me lurks the secret despair that I will never find its likeness again.

I love red lipstick. I wear it to the beach, to the gym, to my gynecologist appointment. I'm not married to the color. I do wear others, but red is by far my favorite. It is the armor of womanhood, the distinction of blood earned pride of femininity, the sensual equivalent of removing a man's trousers and pulling him into your bedroom by his cock, and as a lesbian it was a red badge of courage against the condescending stares of my peers.

For the duration of my five year love affair with a woman I wrestled with being a Lipstick lesbian, or Lipstick Bisexual. I must admit, that when I became a member of the LGBT community I ran out and cut my hair into a relatively unisex but unflattering style. The transformation of my footwear in relation to this new aspect of my life was not small. I admit I did willingly buy a pair of half inch heeled designer Diesel sneakers full of androgynous glamour. I know that sounds like an oxymoron but assure you it is not. But by far, my favorite addition was something I found in the hallway being thrown out by a neighbor, a pair of two inch heeled, black, Frye motorcycle boots with a mean leather strap and silver buckle. Instead of gliding down Eighth Street in my off white Ferrigamo three inch heeled loafers, I strutted with the masculinity and sensuality of a

young, thin, John Travolta. Now a woman can strut in pumps, but it's just not the same as bad ass boots.

I caught a lot a flack from my vagina loving sisters for clinging to my seemingly uncomfortable footwear. But then, I have been harangued by straight women just as often. It takes balls to stand in spikes, wearing blood red, and face the world with your head held high. The loudest chorus of disapproval comes from within. We take on the voices of the world telling us what we cannot be because we are women. We hear that phrase of unworthiness in all its manifestations.

(Do a Kata here while the “voice over” **echoes...**)

“Who do you think you are?
You can't go out in that...
They will think you aren't cool if you wear that.
Are you really a cardigan type of person?
Are you really that much of a flirt?
Are you?
What are you?
You can't be that...
That's wrong.
That's ugly...
That's bad.
That's not valuable in society...
If you dress like that, no one will take you seriously...
They will dismiss you.
They will look right by you.
Maybe they shouldn't see you anyway.
Maybe you should just blend in...
It's better to fit in...”

(Fall in the Kata and *Pause*. Speak to the audience)

The fight starts when I'm fresh, and strong. But my, work, begins, after I've been knocked down, hard when I'm tired, and hurt, and embarrassed. My work, starts when my technique is weak, and slow, and I feel like I'm out of my depth. But, the good thing about getting knocked down a lot...

(Jump back to feet off back Burce Lee Style. End Kata with a loud Kiai that silences the last of the echoes. Bow to the invisible opponent.)

I got pretty good at getting back up. The fight never ends. For me it's everyday, every door, every room, and every outfit. As a woman, the voices are louder than those men hear telling them which shoes they can wear. The accusations of how to look don't stop with which bra to select, the push up or the A cup that I am. Do you think I should I get my nose done? Have a look from the side. Is that what you would call, a Roman nose? It was broken once. It was as if the universe was saying, honey you think your nose is big now? How bout NOW? It has been suggested, intimated, hinted at, and outright said I should get it chopped, smoothed, anglophide. It's a very Jewish nose. How Jewish is too Jewish? How Gay is too Gay? How much Caliente Mamasita is too much? I'm just curious, how much boring rich preppy white girl is like wayyyyy too much?

Ugh, I have to shake that off. (*Takes a sip of wine.*) I am not advocating that every woman get dolled up in high heels and red lipstick just because I find it to be a picture of perfection. I am however, suggesting that we embrace our own idealized version of ourselves. We're gonna get slammed anyway, so it may as well be for who we are. Front page headlines, some somebody, a woman of course, gets a new haircut. Do we like it? Collectively, as a country, do we want to emulate her? What does this mean? Who is she now? Can a woman who looks like that be the President? Can a woman who has tattoos and piercings all over her body be a great mother? Can a woman who wears a push up bra be anything other than a brainless stripper?

(Projected images of Hepburn, Marlena Dietrich, Eva Peron, and Madonna as Peron, Madonna, Jenna Jameson, and Diablo Cody.)

Katherine Hepburn dressed in a way that was completely unapologetic. Marlene Dietrich and Eva Peron never had the words “I’m fucking sorry” written across their bodies when they stepped outside. The choices should be broader than Paris Hilton or Hilary Clinton. I don’t want to sell out my gender to make a buck or strap it down to prove my intellect. I have faith that the tide is turning, slowly. Jenna Jameson can debate her right to be a porn star at Harvard. Diablo Cody accepted her Oscar showing off her tattoo wearing skull and cross bones dangling from her ears.

What would you wear if you knew you were gonna live for another hundred years, and you had to look back with the memory of having done it, or not? Do the consequences outweigh the chance to have done it, worn it, been there, seen it, made love to the person of your dreams knowing that you never could again, or would it not be worth living with the thought of hurting someone, lying to yourself, denying yourself? I am not saying live without consequence, but add perspective. As we stand in the mirror and look at our reflection can we meet our own eyes with a sense of pride, or do we shy away from our own self because we embody a body or an outfit that is not valued? What does it mean for us to be completely naked?

Yes I am- short, petite, diminutive, vertically challenged. And yet, you would never know it. Because the truth is, there is really only one kind of woman, one kind of man. We all spend our childhoods learning how to obey the rules, because feel the sting of reprimand and the pain of failure. We fall down and hurt ourselves, only to have insult added to injury by hearing, ‘I told you so’. Mind you, this process of constriction is not done out of malice, but to keep us safe. Those who went before us know the dangers that

exist when you deviate from the path. The girl who cannot prosecute her rapist because she wasn't wearing underwear?

The woman who can't sue her lecherous boss for sexual harassment because she's- When I mention those things I am not talking about nameless faceless women. I am talking about my sisters, my friends. One of my best friends recently graduated from Iowa. She struck out on her own overflowing with promise and a dash of Midwestern naivety. She's the kind of woman who's so beautiful it's easy to miss just how smart she is. She was offered a job by seemingly wonderful boss, but once she got hired her opinion of him changed rather dramatically. He pursued her with a single mindedness that destroyed her idealism. When we met over Christmas to discuss her options, a lawyer friend of mine was kind enough to tell us both the truth. He said, "Look, I'm not saying it's right, what he did, but you have to be careful. Best case scenario, you win and he has to pay you but then you get stuck with a reputation as a trouble maker that'll follow you everywhere you go. It's not right, but that's just the way it is." With a degree in communications and a minor in women's studies she didn't have the armor to defend herself against one jerk. Why? Because she needs more of us to stand with her. Never have those in power censured themselves. Can't you just see it?

"Let them eat cake! Actually, you know I've been thinking about this all wrong. I've been totally unfair to the underlings. I intend to turn over a new leaf today. Raise my chalets to the ground! I am a fat cancerous mole on the ass of society. I have sat in a coveted seat for far too long! Off with my head!"

I can't stand, like a victim, and point the finger at the haves and say "give!" I have to stand with all the other have-nots, I stand in my living room with my girlfriends and

we shout “All for one and one for all!!” Yes there is real danger, but when we stand together we don’t have to be afraid.

At some point, at many points we come to find that the limits imposed on us are imaginary. The judgment handed down to us is inherently flawed. We disagree, we revolt, we fight, and fight back. We place a bet on ourselves. Standing up to our own full height we don’t feel the completely overwhelming desire to shout “She’s a stuck up bitch. I hate her.” Instead, we can reach out an open hand knowing that it might get knocked back. Those perfect women up on pedestals, the ones we admire and hate at the same time, they make me feel shy and awkward.

I’m so nervous about wanting them to think I’m smart enough or cool enough to be their friend that instead of being funny and warm I come across as icy and distant. I don’t want them to know I haven’t read most of the classics or hardly anything for that matter, and I know next to nothing about politics so anytime the subject comes up I often just nod my head like an idiot horrified that someone will ask me a question about some political figure and I won’t have a clue who they are talking about. I eat fast food at least once a week, I shop at Walmart sometimes when I’m really broke which is completely against my own morals and makes me a hypocrite. I sell my plasma for money when I can’t pay my rent, and while yes my phone does ring an awful lot making me look super popular the truth is most of the calls are from credit card companies wanting to know if I plan to pay them, ever. Although I never did before, I am beginning to feel like I should be embarrassed of having a ‘failed’ marriage because of how everybody reacts when I tell them I left my partner over a year ago. I want to shout “It was a break up, not an F on a paper!!” but I never do. I never think of a good comeback when I need it, and even if I do

I never have the guts to say it. I tell myself I am taking the moral high road, but really I think maybe I'm just a coward who can't stand up for herself. I'm not as strong or sophisticated as I want to be, I'm not as skinny as I want to be and nearly everything I put on I do so in hopes that it will make my thighs look thinner. And what's worse, is that I'm ashamed of myself that I do that. I shouldn't care about it. I should be past it, more evolved.

(Image of quote on the projection, "Being well dressed can give one a sense of inner peace that religion is powerless to bestow." Read Quote)

I believe in that. But for me, part of being well dressed has to do with fitting in just enough so as to not be completely shunned and at the same time still attempt to be myself. Even though I want to sometimes, I don't wear black satin corsets to class, full blown drag to go the local pub for a beer, or gothic make up to the gym. Well, that one's just practicality. But the point is I make that compromise. I wear a black pencil skirt with red patent leather Mary Jane's to class instead of a corset. I don't want those perfect women to know that I am being a watered down version of myself because it's as much as I can take just to be her. I don't want them to know how much I'm not being so I can get by a little easier, because I think they're perfectly who they are.

Tonight, I still have a small amount of hatred for any woman who is taller than I am. I have plenty of insecurities and jealousies, but that may change tomorrow, because part of who I am tonight is changeable. At least for tonight though, I am committed to keeping those nasty voices corralled so they don't stop me from reaching out an open hand, or putting on my favorite lipstick. Which, by the way, is a combination of Red Lips by Estee Lauder and Red Rhapsody by L'Oreal.

Even though you know all those things about me I don't want anyone to know, tonight when I'm done up here, I will try to look you in the eye. Because, there's only one we must judge, one we must hold up to the light and scrutinize, *one* that we *must* love, one we must listen to. And it's not the Cecilia I think you see.

THE END