



## The Prophet

by Lucille Lang Day

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Sid tried to do everything right. He graduated at the top of his class in high school, received his MBA from Berkeley when he was twenty-three, married a slender, intelligent woman with light brown hair and an upturned nose, bought a four-bedroom Tudor-style home with a panoramic view of the San Francisco Bay Area, and fathered two well-behaved mathematical geniuses, a boy and a girl. He jogged on a fire trail in the Berkeley Hills every morning, skied at Squaw Valley or Boreal every winter, took his wife to dinner at Chez Panisse each year on their anniversary, and shopped with her for organic vegetables on Saturday mornings at the Farmer's Market. With his athletic build and boyish good looks he might have been a Calvin Klein model, but at thirty-seven he was vice president of a prospering insurance company.

Although reality TV was not Sid's ideal for Friday night entertainment, it happened that when the doorbell rang, he and his wife Carrie, a social worker, were reclining on one of their Persian rugs, watching helmeted individuals swing from a giant crane and crash into a wooden barrier. Sid rose to answer it, leaving Carrie to watch one of the more successful contestants smash through the barrier and throw a beanbag toward a target marked on the ground on the other side.

The man facing Sid had eyes that glowed like small green flames set deep in his bony face. His sandy mustache and beard were untrimmed, and his straight blond hair, which reached to the middle of his back, was caught in a ponytail at the nape of his neck. He wore a coarse white cotton shirt, embroidered around the neck with red and blue flowers, and faded jeans, flared at the bottom, with an Old Glory patch on the left knee. The first decade of the new millennium had recently ended, but he looked like someone arriving directly from Woodstock in 1969. His age was indeterminable: he might have been eighteen or thirty-five. Shifting nervously from one foot to the other, he began to speak in soft, breathy patter, like a frightened child making an oral presentation at school.

"We been neighbors for three years. I live on Pleasant Wood Drive, in the house right below your backyard. I see your wife out there sometimes in her swimsuit, and when I seen her last weekend I thought how we been neighbors for three years and never even said 'hello.' I seen her again tonight watering some plants on your deck, and I decided to come over and introduce myself, so we could know each other like neighbors should. My name is Jesse Goodlove." He held out his hand, which was trembling so much that if he'd held it a little higher, he would have appeared to be waving good-bye.

Sid hesitated several seconds. The jerk, he was thinking, is attracted to Carrie and can't even conceal it. "Sid Findlay," he finally said, with a gesture that was more like steadying Jesse's hand than shaking it.

"Could I impose on you for a short visit? I don't want to interrupt nothing."

Before Sid could say that he and his wife were unfortunately very busy that evening, Carrie appeared at his side. She introduced herself, said she'd seen Jesse many times and was glad to meet him at last, and invited him in.

She switched off the TV and sat down by Jesse on the beige corner sofa. Sid

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faced them from the rocker that had been in his family for five generations. He often sat there, although it was not a comfortable chair.

Inhaling deeply, Jesse began to speak. "Actually, it wasn't me who decided I should come see you tonight." His voice was more audible and controlled than it had been on the front porch. He turned to Carrie. "I had a vision after I seen you out back this evening," he said, "and the Lord told me I should come talk to you people. I know this'll sound crazy to you, but I'm a prophet. I received the call in Tilden Park when I was seventeen. I was doing a lot of ecstasy at the time, but I wasn't on nothing when I got the call. I was standing on a hill where I could see the whole Bay Area, and God spoke to me from behind the Golden Gate Bridge."

A sudden burst of adrenaline made Sid tremble slightly, and he gripped the arms of the rocker to steady himself. He did not have to entertain this freak in his home and listen to such nonsense, and he was glad that the kids, who were at a slumber party in Mill Valley, were not home to hear it. In another minute he would have thrown Jesse out. What stopped him was that he began to see the humor in the situation. He imagined himself recounting Jesse's visit to associates at a business lunch. It would make a good story, so he decided to listen.

"Anyhow, the Lord told me I should come here tonight and tell you my life story and warn you about the dangers you face." Jesse's voice quavered. "This is ain't easy for me. I don't ordinarily intrude on strangers like this. I wouldn't do it but that God told me to.

"My dad and my granddad were ministers in the Church of God. I never knew my granddad, because he died before I was born. My dad went into the wilderness in Canada when I was ten and he never come back. Some hikers found his body three years later. Nothing was left but the bones, but it didn't shake my faith at all. I knew that God took him because his time on Earth was up; God knows when everyone's time is up. My daddy's risen, though. God told me so when I got the call: He said the sound of eucalyptus trees creaking in wind was really my daddy's bones walking, because believers never really die.

"The first mission God gave me was to go to the home of a famous medium and try to save him. I thought God wanted me to go there because I could save him, but I know now that I was wrong. God wanted me to go there so I could learn humility and understand the limitations of my power. The medium's home was filled with crystal balls and astrological maps and other things of the Devil. I told him that his power came from the Devil and he should take Jesus into his heart and be saved, but he just laughed at me. He talked circles around me. I knew I was right and he was wrong, but at that time his power was greater than mine, and he easily overwhelmed me. I ain't never been so ashamed."

Sid glanced at Carrie to see how she was taking this. He would have made Jesse leave if this raving were upsetting her, but she had the intent expression of someone engrossed in a good movie.

"I threw my glasses away this morning, because God told me that He would heal my eyes. I'm nearsighted and can't see good enough to drive without my glasses, so I gave my truck away too. I'll get a new one when my eyes heal." Jesse appeared to be looking through Sid and Carrie rather than at them.

"This ain't the first time I threw away my glasses. I did it once when I was a kid, because I thought God told me to. For a month I went without them, but my eyes

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didn't heal. My mother told me it wasn't really God but the Devil who told me to throw them away, and that God didn't heal my eyes because I was a sinner: I told lies and played tricks on my little brother. I wasn't really so bad to Michael, but my mother always liked him better, so I got blamed for everything."

Sid's own feelings of childhood betrayal flashed through him like an electrical storm. He too had a younger brother whom his mother had favored. She had always taken Lee's side, and Sid had always hated him for it. Once when Sid was eight and Lee was five, their parents had gone out, leaving them with a sitter they especially despised—a grumpy, middle-aged woman who always said she'd call the police to come take them away if they didn't go to bed on time. To get even with their mother, Lee had take a kitchen knife and slashed her blue satin evening dress while the sitter watched television. Sid was angry with Lee, because he loved his mother in the long blue dress; he thought she looked like a princess. The next day, when she found the tattered dress, she held Sid responsible. She said that even if Lee *had* done it, Sid should have stopped him because he was older. He could still remember the woody scent of her bath powder and the firm curve of her thighs beneath her pink chenille robe as she paced the kitchen yelling at him. His parents took away his allowance for three months and wouldn't let him go to his best friend's birthday party the following weekend. Sid never forgave Lee; it would be years before he could get up in the morning without thinking first thing about how wonderful it would be to slug him or mete out some other punishment. Jesse reminded Sid a little of Lee: they were both losers and religious fanatics with long blond hair.

"I'm a sinner," Jesse was saying. "One of the things God wants me to do is confess my sins to you, and I don't question God's will."

Sid thought the man was emotionally disturbed and feared he might also be dangerous. There didn't seem to be any imminent danger, however, and he felt confident he could handle Jesse if trouble started. The voyeur in him wanted to know what Jesse's sins had been.

Carrie assured Jesse that she wanted to listen and offered him a glass of wine, which he readily accepted.

When she left the room, Sid asked Jesse about his work, and Jesse said he had recently quit his job cleaning the primate cages at the Oakland Zoo. Deciding not to ask any more questions while Carrie was gone, because he didn't want her to miss anything, Sid stared at one of the three Escher prints in the living room, the one over the sofa, directly behind Jesse. In it, fish were metamorphosing into birds, or birds into fish. There were bird shapes between the fish, and fish shapes between the birds. Sid thought he and Jesse were as different as a fish and a bird.

Carrie brought in a tray with a bottle of Pinot Grigio and three tulip-shaped, long-stemmed wineglasses. She filled the glasses and handed one to each of the men. Jesse nearly emptied his before continuing.

"I'm a sinner," he said softly. "When I was eighteen I met a woman with curly red hair and a narrow chin, which made her face look kind of like a heart. Sarah wasn't really beautiful, but I felt a bond as soon as I seen her, and I knew that her destiny would be connected with mine, and that somehow, someday, we'd be together. I began to pray for forgiveness right away."

"There's nothing wrong with being attracted to a woman," Carrie assured him,

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sipping her wine. "It's perfectly natural, the sort of thing everyone experiences."

"This wasn't natural and it wasn't right: I was breaking one of the Ten Commandments, because she was already married and had a year-old son."

Sid could have predicted Carrie's response. Showing not the slightest twinge of surprise or disapproval, she continued, "It's perfectly natural to be attracted to a married woman. You mustn't feel guilty about it." Sid found her smile condescending, and it annoyed him.

"I didn't see her for a long time, and I lost track of where she was. I didn't want to be with no other woman, but I felt this awful urge so I started buying magazines with pictures of naked women, and sometimes I masturbated while I looked at them. Sometimes I even went to porno movies. In one of them, three men fucked a woman who was tied to a bed with her arms and legs spread wide. She wasn't wearing nothing but green silk stockings and red garters. I prayed for forgiveness every day. No one knew what I was doing, because I pretended to be a good Christian."

"You committed what you call 'sins' because you denied yourself normal experiences with women. I'm sure you're really a very good person." Carrie's words hissed and buzzed in Sid's ears. Snakes. Bees. He couldn't stand her psychologizing. To him, her assurances sounded about as personal as the recordings on a phone tree.

"That ain't all I did." Jesse paused. "I'm so ashamed of what else I did that I don't really want to tell you. I have to do it, though. I have to tell everything. I had a cat and a dog at that time, and sometimes when I was undressing, the cat or dog would come over to smell my crotch. Sometimes I let them lick me and once the dog licked me until I came. Do you think I'm crazy? Am I a pervert?"

"No, you're just a person with normal sexual desires. All you need is a girlfriend."

Sid had never seen Jesse with a woman, so Carrie's assumption didn't surprise him, although he didn't agree with her. "I think a psychiatrist would do him more good." Sid spoke as though Jesse weren't in the room. He could scarcely recognize his own voice. It wasn't like him to blurt out what he was thinking, but it had been happening more and more frequently lately. He hoped it wouldn't happen at work; it felt like he was losing control.

He was repulsed by Jesse. He was also repulsed by the Escher print hanging over the fireplace, in which segmented, wormlike creatures were emerging from doorways, marching in columns, and ascending and descending stairways situated at angles that made it impossible to determine which way was up or down. The creatures—with their beaks, six squat legs, and black eyes bulging on the sides of their heads—were disgusting. The prints had been Carrie's idea. Sid never would have bought them.

Her voice came from far away. "What's the matter with you?" she seemed to be saying. Was something the matter with him? Possibly. Lately his emotions had been working like The Demon at Great America, taking him on rides from which he couldn't get off until they came to their own inevitable conclusions. Just last weekend, fearing that Carrie was still in love with one of her ex-boyfriends, he'd smashed a china cat the man had given her several years ago for her birthday. Yes, it was true that something might be wrong with him. It seemed more certain, though, that there was something wrong with Carrie, Jesse, and the goddamned

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Escher prints that Carrie had hung without consulting him.

“That was all a long time ago.” Jesse didn’t seem offended by Sid’s remark. “I’m married now and have four children.”

“Where’s your wife?” Sid had been certain Jesse lived alone in the basement of the Hoskins house.

“She lives with her parents in San Jose. I left her three years ago because I had this feeling it was time for me to find Sarah. Gail knew it would happen someday. I told her before we got married that my destiny was connected to this other woman.”

Sid was livid. Jesse was worse than Lee, who didn’t support his illegitimate son. Jesse had deserted a wife and four children! Sid would never desert a child. When he was a teenager, Sid had gotten a girl pregnant, but she’d had an abortion, which he’d helped to pay for with his earnings from Sheila’s Sandwich Heaven, where he worked after school and Saturdays. Lee told their mother about it. If it hadn’t been for Lee, she never would have known. Their mother never forgave Sid for contributing to the abortion, although she forgave Lee for not supporting his child. Sid couldn’t see the logic of this: his was the more responsible act.

“I think we should call it a night. It’s been a long day, and Carrie and I have to get up early tomorrow.” Sid looked at her rather than Jesse. His expression did not invite compromise.

“But I have more to tell you. I ain’t told you my prophecies yet.”

“We hope you’ll come back for another visit.” Carrie’s voice was gentle. “We’ll be home Sunday afternoon. Come back then if you can. Otherwise, just stop by some evening.”

After closing the door, Carrie headed to the bedroom. She was already stretched out with *101 Poems that Could Save Your Life* when Sid entered.

“Why did you invite that creep back? Don’t you think we have anything better to do?” His face was flushed, and though he tried to sound casual, his voice had a harsh edge.

“He needs someone to listen.”

“It doesn’t have to be us.”

“Then it can be *me*.” She paused. “You seem irritable lately, not yourself. You should ask yourself why.”

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Sid didn’t want to be home on Sunday afternoon, when he was sure Jesse would be back. At 11:00 a.m. he took Eve and Miles to the Lawrence Hall of Science, intending to spend the afternoon building snake ladders with them and watching the Brainiacs Science Discovery Theatre, but by 12:30 he couldn’t think about anything except Jesse and Carrie. Jesse could be dangerous. Sid had left his wife at the mercy of a madman. Why had he been so ineffectual in handling this? He didn’t have to let Carrie endanger her life by playing therapist to a weirdo. He

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gave the kids money for lunch, told them he'd be back at 4:00, ran upstairs and out across the plaza, all the way to the parking lot, jumped into his red Mercedes, and was home at 12:41.

Carrie was finishing her lunch of chicken salad and pita when Sid walked in. She looked startled to see him. "I'm not letting him in the house," he said.

"That's okay. We can go out for coffee." Her voice had no trace of annoyance.

Sid had choices: he could forbid Carrie to go out with Jesse and risk an awful fight (normally she was calm and understanding, but a couple of times lately she'd been fierce as a startled rhinoceros when he tried to put his foot down), he could say, "Okay, so go out," or he could let Jesse into the house. He decided to let him in, so he could keep an eye on him.

When Jessie arrived, Carrie was ready with coffee and homemade peanut butter cookies. Sid stationed himself in his great-great-grandmother's rocker; Jesse and Carrie settled again on the sofa.

"You were going to tell us what happened when you left your wife. Did you find the woman you were looking for?" Carrie asked.

"Yes, and that showed me I really am a prophet. Just two weeks after I left Gail, I was watching this woman belly dancing on Sproul Plaza, and I noticed that Sarah was standing beside me. She didn't recognize me at first, but she remembered me when I told her who I was. She and her husband had split up, so she gave me her phone number and address, and I started visiting her a couple times a week.

*Oh God, Sid thought, just what a kook needs—one of those freakish coincidences that make even a sane person wonder if it could mean something.*

Jesse stared straight ahead and spoke as though in a trance. "At first I just told her about Jesus. I thought before we got married she should be saved. She liked hearing stories from the Bible. I never tried anything sexual with her. After I'd been seeing her for about two months, she told me I'd made a great change in her life, that she could feel the Holy Spirit rising inside her. I thought it was time to tell her about our destiny, but my timing was wrong. When I told her I'd known for a long time that we were meant to be together, she started saying I was crazy and wouldn't see me no more. The last time I called, she hung up. Gail wants to go back with me, but I think the time for me and Sarah to be together is coming real soon. I love Gail, but I don't want to defy God's will, and I know He wants me to be with Sarah. I ain't gonna call her, though. God will send her to me again when He's ready. Gail understands; she's a believer too, and there are some powerful good vibrations between us."

Carrie poured herself more coffee. Sid's frown was as deep and fixed as that of a largemouth black bass.

"I want to tell you my prophecies." Jesse turned to Carrie. "That's why God sent me here. But first I have one more confession: I'm guilty of the sin of pride. I go around thinking I'm better than everyone else because I been saved." His face reddened. "I even think that whenever I see you two."

"How do you know I haven't been saved?" Sid asked.

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“Do you love Jesus?”

“No, I’m an atheist.”

Jesse’s eyes blazed, but his voice was gentle. “Jesus died up there on the cross,” he said, gesturing toward the Findlays’ chandelier, “so that you could have eternal life.” He paused, as though trying to remember what he wanted to say. “A lot of Christians have the sin of pride. It’s real hard to overcome it.

“There’s gonna be a big earthquake here in California next summer.” His words were now rushed, his voice uncertain. “It’ll be like Sodom and Gomorrah; no one’s gonna survive. I think you should move to Nevada or Oregon real soon. I’m gonna send out letters to all the newspapers next week. I know they must get a lot of letters from crackpots who predict earthquakes, but I hope I can convince them I’m a real prophet.” He sounded like he needed to convince himself. “Sometimes I worry that I ain’t a real prophet, that I’m just another loony. Berkeley is full of crazy people who talk to Martians and predict earthquakes. It makes it hard for me to believe in myself. Predicting an earthquake! In Berkeley, of all places.” Jesse turned to Carrie, his face drawn and imploring. “Do you think I’m crazy? Am I like all the rest?”

“No, you’re not crazy. You wouldn’t ask yourself these questions if you were crazy.”

“I ain’t paid my rent for two months. I stopped paying when I quit my job. God told me not to worry about it no more; He said He would take care of me. Mr. Hoskins says he’s gonna evict me if I don’t pay real soon. If he evicts me, then I’ll know I ain’t a prophet.”

“What will you do if that happens?” Carrie sounded genuinely concerned.

“I don’t know.”

“Well, if you do find out that you’re not a prophet, I think you should go back to your wife—and maybe see a therapist to help you find yourself.”

“I hope he won’t evict me.” Jesse put his hands over his face. When he put them down again, his face was wet. He looked at Carrie. “What I’m gonna say next is the hardest thing of all to tell you: something awful is gonna happen to your family. I seen it in a flash on Friday night, but God wouldn’t tell me what it was. I prayed to Him to tell me, so I could help you more. But there was just this flash of light and the sudden knowledge, and nothing more.”

“Thank you for telling us.”

Sid glowered. Why couldn’t he bring himself to throw Jesse out?

Jesse began to sob. “I hope I ain’t crazy; I hope I ain’t leading you astray. My mother always thought I was crazy. She thinks I should go back to my wife. Maybe I am crazy, but at least I ain’t dangerous, not like the guys at Columbine or Virginia Tech. I ain’t a bad person. Maybe I am a bad person...I don’t know. Do you think I’m a bad person?”

“No, you’re not a bad person: you’ve never intentionally hurt anyone.”

Jesse’s body shook, his bony face glistening with more tears. Carrie took his hand in hers and spoke in the voice she used with the children. “It’s okay. I don’t

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think you're crazy or bad. We want to help you."

Did Carrie have to waste her time comforting a lunatic? Did Jesse have to be one? Did he have a choice? Sid felt like lifting the tray of coffee and cookies and smashing it against the wall. Instead, he headed back to the Lawrence Hall of Science to see what the kids were up to.

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On Monday evening Carrie visited Jesse at his apartment, and on Tuesday Sid arrived home from work to find them leaving for dinner at King Yen. Jesse was wearing Sid's brown corduroy shirt, and Sid began to fear they were having an affair. He thought Carrie might have had an affair with his brother Lee, although she'd never admitted it and he'd never found any evidence. It was the way they looked at each other that raised his suspicions. Maybe she was attracted to the lanky, long-haired oddball type. She might even be doing it therapeutically, thinking that Jesse's problem was primarily sexual.

When she got back, Sid said, "I don't want you to see Jesse anymore. He's a nut, and no good will come of it." He'd wanted to speak in a normal voice, but his words came out more like a strangled scream.

"Save your orders for the kids," she snapped. Her voice softened as she added. "He needs help...and so do you. You're wound up tight. In all the years we've been together, I've never seen you as tense as you've been lately. It started before Jesse, and it makes me edgy too."

Sid was too distraught to listen. They were not only having an affair but were flaunting it. Jesse was walking around in Sid's clothes. All that remained was for Sid to come home and find them in bed.

He slept fitfully, bumping into Carrie, waking frequently, and working his way through a maze of bad dreams. In one, Jesse had replaced him at home and work. Still, he got up at six and went jogging as usual. In the morning air, surrounded by eucalyptus and pines, he got an idea: he would win Carrie back. Whether he was winning her back from a true affair or just an overactive do-gooder compulsion didn't matter. They would do something very romantic, something they had never done before.

She was putting French Roast from Peet's into the coffeemaker when he stepped through the sliding glass door that had been installed when they remodeled the kitchen the preceding year. He put one arm around her and used his free hand to stroke her buttocks through her fuzzy purple robe.

"What are you doing?" she said, lightly pushing him away as she pressed "on." It was the same voice she used when the children were picking their noses or playing with food.

"I've been thinking we should do something special, just the two of us, maybe a B&B in Carmel for the weekend."

"Why Carmel? It's such a tourist trap."

"You cavort around town with a goddamned hippy, but you're too good for Carmel! Too good for me!" Sid yelled, surprising himself with his anger.

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“Don’t be ridiculous. There are plenty of other places where we could go!”

His heart beating against his ribs like a caged animal, he picked up the coffeemaker and smashed it on the floor, breaking the Pyrex pot and splattering boiling water in all directions. Carrie jumped back in time to miss the spray, but it caught Sid’s bare calf, and his face contorted in pain.

“You’re turning into a madman. You need help.” It sounded more like she was pleading with him than passing judgments.

All day, the incident bored through Sid’s brain like so many shipworms: *I should have apologized and let her propose something else. Do I need a therapist? No! Jesse is the one who needs that kind of help. Carrie is degrading herself and making a fool of me. I should just leave her. Pack up and go. Have an affair myself. I can’t do it; I love her.*

People at work gave him puzzled looks. Serena Wing, a new claims representative, even asked if something was bothering him, but he felt it imperative to keep his private life out of the office. He told her he hadn’t been sleeping well due to allergies. He wondered if he could even admit to a therapist that he thought his wife was having an affair with a scraggly creep, possibly dangerous, who claimed to be a prophet.

Late in the afternoon he asked Dorothy, his secretary, to bring him the file containing his notes for a lecture he was preparing for the company agents. “I left it on your desk before lunch,” he said.

“I haven’t seen it.” She rolled a pencil between her thumb and forefinger. “Maybe it’s in your briefcase or under the papers on your desk.”

“I know what’s on my desk!” A small jackhammer drilled at the base of his skull. “Let me know when you’ve found it,” he barked.

When she left, he picked up the new issue of *Insurance & Technology*. The file was on his desk, underneath it. He’d looked there not five minutes earlier. How had he missed it? After calling Dorothy back in and apologizing, he decided to leave early to talk with Carrie. She’d told him she wasn’t going back to work after seeing the dentist that afternoon. Maybe he’d let her recommend a therapist.

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She looked up to acknowledge him when he entered the living room, but Jesse did not. They were sitting on the beige corner sofa with their arms around each other, Jesse sobbing, his face buried in Carrie’s shoulder. She was comforting him with words Sid could not discern.

The late afternoon sun created a glare that made it almost impossible to look out the west-facing living room windows, where the bay gleamed metallically and the sky was ablaze. Turning back toward Jesse and Carrie, Sid caught a glimpse of silver from an object in Jesse’s pocket. A gun!

In the Findlays’ third Escher print, *Other World*, which hung beside the windows, three wooden birds with humanoid heads stood beneath a portico surrounded by craters. Beyond the horizon, planets, stars, and galaxies floated in space. As in the print with the segmented creatures and stairways, there was no true up or down. Sid felt dizzy. There was no up and no down. He stood at the edge of the

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portico, holding tight to one of the pillars, an invisible force pulling at him. He struggled to hold on, but his strength was gone; he had to let go. He spun, falling, falling through space.

Carrie and Lee stood on the porch of Sid's parents' many-windowed summerhouse at The Sea Ranch. "Leave us alone now," she said. Her head rested on Lee's shoulder; his arms circled her back. She'd been crying. Sid knew what they had done. He picked up a vase from the coffee table and smashed it over Lee's head. The sound was surprisingly loud. Blank at first, Carrie's expression quickly turned to anger, then fear. Shards of glass clung to Jesse's shoulders and her arms. Her shirt was soaked with water. Carnations and daisies were scattered on the sofa and rug.

Without speaking, she got up, letting Jesse slump to the sofa. She looked at Sid as though he'd revealed himself as a visitor from an elliptical galaxy on the far side of Andromeda. He pulled a harmonica from the unconscious man's pocket and held it up triumphantly for her to see. A rivulet of blood trickled down Jesse's forehead. As Carrie ran to the phone, Sid couldn't move; it felt like his body was carved in granite, but his mind started to clear. Her voice was rushed, hysterical. "Please send an ambulance and the police."

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**Lucille Lang Day's** memoir, *Married at Fourteen: A True Story* (Heyday, 2012), received a 2013 PEN Oakland – Josephine Miles Literary Award and was a finalist for the 2013 Northern California Book Award in Creative Nonfiction. Her short stories, poems, and essays have appeared in more than 100 literary magazines, including *The Cincinnati Review*, *Eclipse*, *The Hudson Review*, *Passages North*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, and *The Threepenny Review*. She is the author of a children's book, *Chain Letter*, and eight poetry collections and chapbooks, including *The Curvature of Blue*, *The Book of Answers*, and *Infinites*. Her many honors include the *Willow Review* Award for Creative Nonfiction, the Joseph Henry Jackson Award in Literature for her poetry collection *Self-Portrait with Hand Microscope*, and a Notable Essay citation in *Best American Essays*. She received her M.F.A. in creative writing at San Francisco State University and her Ph.D. in science/ mathematics education at UC Berkeley. The founder and director of a small press, Scarlet Tanager Books, she also served for many years as the director of the Hall of Health, an interactive museum in Berkeley. Her website is <http://lucillelangday.com>. Twitter: @LucilleLDay.

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