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I knew it was unusual. In nobody else's houses were there as many women as there were in ours. But my father was a little different. I remember how he loved to tell us stories about his bachelor days, how women had swarmed around him, how his looks were known across three towns. He would then tease my mother, telling her 'she was one lucky lady' at having been chosen as 'the one'. She told him exaggeration was a banal trait, yet silently she knew it was all true.

Bridget's room was near mine. I tried my best to become friends with her, because being an easily frightened child, suspicious of ghosts and noises in the dark, I needed her on my side. I regularly called on her to protect and reassure me and although she did a fair enough job during my late night attacks, I think that in the end, we didn't succeed as well as I had hoped. My heart always skipped a few nervous beats when I walked by her, no matter how long we had been in each other's company. She didn't have the same effect on everybody though. If my father's friends chanced upon a meeting, they would whisper, 'Gee that Bridget is a hottie, where did you find that?'

She was a hottie. Perpetually tanned, big blonde hair, breasts like ripe melons almost busting out of their skins; a natural and permanent pout. I would often steal peaks at her and then shut my bedroom door and check myself in the mirror for any signs of resemblance. Unfortunately there were none. I was born a weak and sickly child, neither pretty nor delicate but for my father, a man who prided himself so much on his looks, ugliness suggested something wicked inside, as if it would uncover a secret that he had done so well to hide.

Sateen shared my parent's bedroom. Sprawled across the coral-colored sheets, she was every man's fantasy: semi-naked and ready. Mother would close the bedroom door whenever we had visitors. My father's reputation had preceded him long ago and it didn't need a top up. On the occasion I was left home alone; I would keep her company. Sateen never said much; she was like a cat, waiting for compliments or perhaps some petting. Apart from her habit of wearing very little, I didn't mind her. I wondered about my mother though, I wondered what she felt about sharing her bedroom.

My mother had come over from a hard and dark city near Bucharest. She told me how the boat journey had taken three months and because she spoke no English, she didn't know how to ask to use the shower. Instead of trying to ask for help, she said nothing. Mother was like that, turning embarrassment into ferocity and its own embarrassing stubbornness. I buried this story deep inside of me, like the filth she herself had tried to hide. It took her a while to find harmony with my father. They were happy for a while; it then soured; now it's on the mend. She tried to leave once, yet it was cold outside, she

had nowhere to go, so she came back in and had a cigarette instead.

Years later, she found her power in her body. Again that fierce stubbornness is what drove her. She was tanned and toned, like Artemis the huntress. Yet like Artemis she used her body as a shield to protect her from herself. When complimented on her youthful frame, she would take it in like a hard chop to swallow and put it down at the back of the throat, never quite digesting it. Her body was one thing—she had long gone somewhere else.

I lost my girlhood in that house. Stephan walked in expecting and demanding. I took a peak at him from outside the shower curtain and quickly turned my head away. I laughed to myself, yet at the same time was relieved, it wouldn't hurt.

I remember when he first saw Sateen, how profane he found her presence, how he had questioned my father's morality, yet he himself would have liked to share her bed. It was the first time I felt protective of the ladies. I didn't understand what they were doing there, but neither could I imagine them gone. I ushered him into the lounge, but again we weren't alone, for that was Lulu's domain.

Lulu was my favorite, the only one with a story. She was a dusky-skinned beauty, untamed, alone. Her people were nomads; they'd traveled three years by foot to arrive to a place where disease finished their travels. They had found them, ten of them, packed into a tent, when they carried her away—the only one left breathing. My father found her years later, bought her for a fair price and brought her home to us. I gave her the name Lulu, nobody else has bothered—typical treatment of the underdog, even when they spend five years living in your own home.

If Stephan found Sateen profane, he thought Lulu ridiculous. He laughed at her, so I led him out of that room as well. I hated him then and to keep the world outside of my bedroom safe, I shut him up by letting him have his way with my own body.

When my parents left that house, the ladies came down from the walls and left too. I asked my mother what had happened to them, but she feigned ignorance. Instead of ladies, flowers and photos now adorn the rooms of their new house.

I didn't stay weak and ungainly, instead, like Bridget; I have hips, breasts, even the lips. I have a fondness for lying around for days on end and then suddenly I will feel the urge to pack up and roam—alas, I am my father's daughter.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Mira Cuturilo.*