

TR FOUR

By Jerold London

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jlondon@deepweaversfaith.com**



TR FOUR

TIME AND PLACE

Present. Nighttime.

United States or Canada. Bedroom of an apartment. King size bed. Next to it is a nightstand with a lamp, a music system with a CD player, and a stack of CDs in their cases. On the walls are posters of Candy Darling, giraffes, elephants, and hippos in the Serengeti, a picture of the Milky Way, and a print of Vincent van Gogh's Starry Night. Near the bed is an open, bright pink travel suitcase. The stage may be lit, alternately, in white, pink, rose, pale blue, orange, yellow, and at the end, purple, in the Director's discretion.

CHARACTERS

CHLOE. Female, 28.

CHRIS. Trans girl, 28.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

... // in the dialogue indicates interrupting (but **not** overlapping) text.

Chloe laid her head back on the pillow and turned to her side, facing a poster of Candy Darling on the wall. She thought about giraffes and how long their necks were, and even elephants and hippos and how hot it must be out there on the Serengeti. She thought about Candy, the Warhol girls, how she didn't actually like any of those movies but still kinda felt like she had to because of their history. She thought about the Milky Way, red dwarf stars, quarks, quasars, and other things she wasn't sure about.

– Tyler Vile, *Read to Me*, **Resilience**, 2017.

We often feel that we lack something, and seem to see that very quality in someone else.

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, **The Sorrows of Young Werther**, 1787.

SCENE

CHLOE and CHRIS are in bed together, CHLOE nearly asleep now. CHRIS, with her head and shoulders propped up by pillows behind her, has been reading aloud from a book of Linda Gregg poetry. She puts the book down.

CHLOE

Oh, don't stop, Chris.
I love to hear you read.
Please.
Please....

CHRIS slowly picks the book back up and resumes reading.

CHRIS

[reads] Alone with the Goddess.... Linda Gregg, of course....

The young men ride their horses fast
on the wet sand of Parangtritis*.
Back and forth, with the water sliding
up to them and away.
This is the sea where the goddess lives,
angry, her lover taken away.
Don't wear red, don't wear green here,
the people say. Do not swim in the sea.
Give her an offering.
I give a coconut to protect
the man I love. The water pushes it back.
I wade out and throw it farther.
"The goddess does not accept your gift,"
an old woman says.
I say perhaps she likes me
and we are playing a game.
The old woman is silent,
the horses wear blinders of cloth,
the young men exalt in their bodies,
not seeing right or left, pretending
to be brave. Sliding on and off
their beautiful horses
on the wet beach at Parangtritis*.

* Par ang TREE tis

* Par ang TREE tis

CHLOE

[*beat*] What does it mean?

CHRIS

She's thinking of a man she loves.
Haunted, maybe, since they've broken up.

CHLOE

What makes you think they've broken up?

CHRIS

Halfway around the world? By herself?...
You figure....
Anyway, Parangtritis is terribly dangerous for swimming.
She's watching a group of young men, riding bareback along the beach.
Showing off. It reminds her of young men who showed off for *her* in the past....

There's a superstition, in Parangtritis,
that if you make a gift to the goddess of the waters, you'll buy protection.
Linda throws her gift in, and it comes back to her.
An old woman tells her the goddess doesn't care for her gift.
Linda prefers to think that it's a game she and the goddess are playing in the
water.

From there, it's up to you. That's what good poetry's all about.
It's where poetry of the poet's mind meets the road of the reader's mind.
Poetry's not complete if the reader doesn't participate in completing it.
And you don't need some expert to tell you how great it is. You know.
Anyway, I picture Linda saying: Isn't life a little like this beach?
You offer gifts to love, and some get washed back in your face.
Then you have a choice: Accept rejection.
Or accept the fact that that's just part of the game, and keep trying....
Never mind. The boys are still riding and goofing off. It's what boys do.

CHLOE

[*yawning*] Where is that beach anyway?

CHRIS

In Indonesia. Near Australia, if I've got it right.

CHLOE

[*yawning again*] Have you ever been there?

[*in a laughing way*] No!!

CHRIS

Ever ride horses?

CHLOE

Used to, some.

CHRIS

On a beach?

CHLOE

[*laughs*] No. Not on a beach.

CHRIS

Like in Equus?

CHLOE

What about Equus?

CHRIS

Horses become thirsty, for Christ's sake, on a beach. Like sex.

CHLOE

Chloe? Are you asleep?

CHRIS

CHLOE has fallen asleep.

CHRIS

Wish I could fall asleep like that.

CHRIS groans slightly, leans over, gives CHLOE a kiss on the forehead, and puts her book on the nightstand. As she reaches to turn the lamp off, she knocks an imaginary glass to the floor. Sounds of it shattering. CHLOE springs up.

CHLOE

[*startled*] What?! What's that?!

CHRIS

Sorry. Nothing.
I just broke a glass.
I'll get it cleaned up.

CHRIS cautiously gets out of bed (avoiding the broken glass), leaves the room, and returns with a plastic whisk broom and a dustpan taped with silver duct tape. She begins sweeping up the imaginary shards of glass (sounds of them tinkling).

CHLOE

You like Candy Darling, don't you, Chris?

CHRIS

Never knew her.

CHLOE

I mean, watching her on YouTube.

CHRIS

Being a women, they say, was the greatest thing in the world to her. I like *that*.

CHLOE

You know, don't you?

The day Kim Novak's photo came to her, in the mail, when she was young, she said she could hardly move for the rest of the day, staring at it.

CHRIS

[*beat*] You like boys, too, don't you, Chloe? Not just men.

CHLOE

Of course.

CHRIS

When I was young, I felt horrible.

Like part of me was being eaten away by testosterone.

I just wanted to crawl in a hole and come out with a brand new body.

CHLOE

Into a cocoon.

CHRIS

Yeah. A cocoon. And come out a butterfly instead of a caterpillar.

I really don't know how I survived it, back then.

CHLOE

You had me.... Thoughts of me. I guess.

CHRIS

Yeah, I guess so.
Some nights I spent all night, thinking about myself.
About being all grown up. Being a woman. Like you.
No one really knew how I felt.
Inside boys' clothes! Ugh! Boys' underwear!
My main happiness was *girls'* clothes. Wearing girls' clothes.

CHLOE

My main happiness is feeling wanted, and needed.
It's shit, the heartfelt shit of feeling alone and unwanted.
Like happiness for Candy Darling was being in films.
Bringing happiness to people being a great actress ... //

CHRIS

Was she? Really? ... //

CHLOE

And going to parties, loads of parties,
and having lots of furs and beautiful clothes to wear.

CHRIS

I guess you might say Christmas trees are happy the same way.
Until January, at least.
Desire doesn't aspire much higher than itself.

CHLOE

Do you know what happened to her?

CHRIS

She died young, I know. Twenty-nine, I think. A year older than us.

CHLOE

From lymphoma.
She wrote a letter, on her deathbed.
To Andy Warhol.
It said:
Did you know I couldn't last?
I always knew.
I just wish I could see you all again.

CHRIS

No picnic, I guess.

CHLOE

She said her friends probably couldn't understand how she'd already made herself happy. It's everything she wanted in life. Maybe even a bit bored with it all.

CHRIS

When you've got everything you want, *what else is there to do?*

CHLOE

For me, a new man.

CHRIS

Oh?

CHLOE

Don't sound so condescending.
What's Linda Gregg say about it?
What is Linda Gregg for "Fuck"?

CHRIS

She doesn't quite talk the way you do.

CHLOE

You mean, "vulgar"?

CHRIS

You could say.

CHLOE

Well, it's not so much the arms and fingers. Or the mouth and tongue. And certainly not the expectations. Every time you get excited about a great orgasm to come, it doesn't. Men sorta know how to screw it up at the right moment. What I like is seeing the power we have over them. While it lasts. Sometimes you just feel like you need a man crazy for you. Crazy just to get you naked. It's my greatest thrill: Men's illiterate enthusiasm. While it lasts.

CHRIS

Buddhist monks say that's a woman's greatest sin. Her naked body. I'm not sure whether Buddhist monks like women to be happy all that much.

CHLOE

No Andy Warhols, are they?

CHRIS

How do you mean?

CHLOE

Andy Warhol almost died so that the women he cared for could be happy.

CHRIS

He did die.

CHLOE

Don't we all?

CHRIS

Never quite knowing how much male and how much female we are inside.

CHLOE

When was it you first knew? How many of you there are?

CHRIS

Never have. How about you?

CHLOE

Me? If it weren't for you, I'd be happy thinking every girl was like me.
But it's not all a bed of roses, Sweetheart.
Love's the same emotional mule train whatever gender you are.

CHRIS

It sucks, doesn't it, when you believe someone cares for you?

CHLOE

That's part of it, isn't it?

CHRIS

Was safety in a person's arms always so conditional?

CHLOE

Body chemistry. There's a kinda climax waiting for it to arrive,
when, at the same time, you know it's bound to go away. It's a body's fate.

CHRIS

My body *is* my fate, when it's not music, or poetry.
And it would be too hard without you, Chloe.

CHLOE

[*beat*] It's strange, isn't it, thinking about Andy Warhol?
No one really knew what Andy Warhol really was.

CHRIS

Other than Andy Warhol.

CHLOE

How he became, in our minds, what we thought of him.
And it may not have been him at all.

CHRIS

It sorta takes away a person's freedom. Violates them, in a way.

CHRIS takes the whisk broom and dustpan out and empties the dustpan into an offstage trash can before returning. When she comes back, she crawls in on her side of the bed.

CHLOE

Can you play some music?

CHRIS

Not now, Chloe. I'm tired, and I need to get some sleep.

CHLOE

My Billy Tipton CD, maybe? Please?

CHRIS

Why do you even like Billy Tipton? He's so ancient.

CHLOE

It's just his music I like. At night....
And why do you like Linda Gregg?

CHRIS

'Cause I like horses. And *she* likes horses.

CHLOE

Do you know anything about Billy Tipton? Other than not liking his music?

CHRIS

Isn't that enough?

CHLOE

He was a popular band leader, from the 40s through the 70s.
Married. Adopted three sons.
And no one knew until he died that he'd been in a woman's body all along.

CHRIS

Doesn't it figure? Things always work out easier for trans men.

CHLOE

Christine Jorgensen didn't do so bad.
Or Caitlyn Jenner, either....
Can you rub my back?

CHRIS

Oh Chloe, I told you I'm so tired.
Please, not tonight.

CHLOE

Oh please. *Please*. Just a little while.
I'm hurting.

CHRIS

Aren't you always?

CHRIS kneels up to massage CHLOE.

CHRIS

Where do you want me to start?

CHLOE

My neck. It's stiff.
And then my back.

**CHRIS rubs Chloe's neck and shoulders.
Then she stops.**

CHLOE

My back, too. It's really hurting.

CHRIS

I'm just chasing pain around. And feeling pain myself.
Go to sleep. You were asleep before.

CHLOE

You broke the glass, and woke me up. And now I can't.

CHRIS

You can't get to sleep?

CHLOE

Not unless you play Billy Tipton.

CHRIS

Oh, all right. All right.

CHRIS finds the Billy Tipton CD and puts it into the CD player. Tipton's *Perdido* or *Take the "A" Train* is heard.

CHRIS

[beat] I don't know why, but his music always makes me feel *cold*....
I wish we were on a warm beach somewhere.

CHLOE

With all those young men, riding horses? And Linda Gregg?

CHRIS

When I get cold, do you know what I want to do?
I want to be warm again. That's what....

Can I?

CHLOE

What? Snuggle?

CHRIS

A little.

CHLOE

Sure. Come here.

CHRIS

And then we can go to sleep?

CHLOE

Like what? Like magic?

CHRIS

Match my breathing.

CHLOE

What's that supposed to do?

CHRIS

Make your breathing match my breathing, and you can go right to sleep.

CHLOE

Doesn't it already?

CHRIS

Chloe? I wish I could tell you how much you mean to me.
Like Candy Darling loved being a movie star.
And when this feeling goes away, maybe I won't want to live any longer.
What is there, after friendship?

CHLOE

I don't know.

CHRIS

I just wish, more than heaven and Earth, I could be you.

CHLOE

You *are* me, Darling. Don't you know?

END*

*** Recognition to *RESILIENCE* (edited, Amy Heart, Larissa Glasser, and Sugi Pyrrophyta, Heartspark Press, Olympia, Washington, 2017 – and in particular to Tyler Vile, *Read to Me*) and to Linda Gregg's *All of It Singing* (Graywolf Press, 2008).**