

BURIED TREASURES



JEN DEER

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The following works appeared in print in slightly different form and under my birth name Jen Bills:

“Come, Come!” *Fourteen Hills*, Vol. 15.2, Spring 2009

“Graduation” *Sentence: A Journal of Prose Poetics*, No. 6, 2008

“Holes” *Cream City Review*, Vol. 32.2, Fall 2008

“Instrument” *The Malahat Review*, No. 156, 2006

“J” *Puerto del Sol*, Vol. 43, No. 2, Spring 2008

“Lace” *Rhino, A Poetry Magazine*, 2010

“Legerdemain” *Prism International* Issue 46.3, Spring 2008

“Missing” *Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature & Fine Arts*, Vol. 20.1, 2007

“Necklace” *Gargoyle* Issue 56 2010

“Pools” *The Rambler*, Vol. 5, No. 5, Sep|Oct 2008

“Size 00” *Rivet*, Issue 20, Spring 2008

“Spiders” *The Pinch*, Vol. 28.2, Fall 2008

“The Museum of Noses” *Pleiades*, Winter 2009

“The Slides” *Slice Magazine*, Fall 2008

“The Stairs Are Broken So I Took the Elevator Again” *upstreet*, 2008

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First ebook edition: *May 24 2024*

Secrets

What if you could bury a secret anywhere on your body?

Where would you hide it?

Would you tattoo it on the inner arch of your foot? Between your toes maybe?

Perhaps you would stick with something non-binding like henna or Mehndi?

Or forget ink.

Would you engrave it with a knife on your palm, the letters commingling with your life and love lines? A palm reader's dream?

Would you stencil it on the inside of your thigh while lying in a tanning booth?

Would you stitch it with a few strands of hair on your scalp and sweep it under your bangs?

Would you write it in a trail of Braille on the inside of your lips? A dentist's (or Ob/Gyn's) quandary?

Where would you conceal your secret? Where would you stash your Pandora's box? Your "Oh, shit. No!!" Your inner dialogues with the Devil (or God)?

Secrets

Would you embroider it between the varicose veins behind your knees? A delicate pattern of blue willow china? A grid of crisscrossing train itineraries?

Would you burn it in strips on your wrists? Or pierce it in the sulcus of your penis?

Would you lift your fingernails and stamp it in the white space of the half-moons?

What if your secret could forever be sealed? A fallen tree in a forgotten forest? A speck of powder in a padlocked vault? A confession in lemon juice calligraphy?

What if your secret could be forgiven? Forgotten? Annulled? Unhulled? Or charged to a pre-approved heavenly credit card.

Would you save your hide?

Where would you entomb it on your body?

Would you suffer so the secret could rest in peace?

Necklace

You know the story of the woman with a red ribbon around her neck whose head rolls off if the ribbon is untied? I think that woman was Anne Boleyn, or rather, the actress who played her on Showtime's *The Tudors*. That curved smile is a fake. That rice paper skin does not encase capillaries and arteries. That neck with the B necklace is held together, for broadcasting purposes, with a little glue.

At the end of the night, in her trailer, "Anne Boleyn" takes off her wig and her head. For a moment, there is only an empty mirror above the vanity table. "Anne Boleyn" sets her wig on the mannequin's head. Then she brushes the curls that are tangled from the hair clips of her crown. It is so hard keeping your head together from the inside, she thinks. It's like wearing braces on the back of your teeth instead of the front. She rubs the stiff knob of muscle at the back of her neck. Then she caresses her limp head in her lap. For a moment, her face is between her legs. But she stops herself before things get improper. She lifts her head and snaps it into place above her ruffled collar. Then she pulls the red ribbon into a bow.