

1-1-1999

Life Story

Laurie MacDiarmid
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gvr>

Recommended Citation

MacDiarmid, Laurie (1999) "Life Story," *Grand Valley Review*: Vol. 19: Iss. 1, Article 22.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gvr/vol19/iss1/22>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Grand Valley Review by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

Life Story

One

She arrived while everyone was absent, her mother knocked out by drugs and her father in New Guinea hunting rocks. It was a year before the blizzards and the brain tumor, before those death-bed letters, and the corrosive silence.

Two

Enter the big, bad step-daddy from the South: He spanked her at the wedding and drove her mother over the border.

Three

They moved to New Orleans, into someone else's house, sleeping in borrowed beds and breathing central air. A flock of girls wearing plaid dresses landed in the schoolyard.

Four

They crossed into Mexico, passing a truck in the ditch. Furniture burned in the weeds while two men watched, hands on hips.

Five

The gym coach turned them over his knee, teasing the tender skin under their shorts with his blunt fingers. At a showing of *Manhattan*, the man in front of her put his tongue into a woman's mouth, twisting it like a fleshy snake.

Six

She lived with a man who waited in the dark bedroom to say *What am I going to do about you?* Her knee swelled with fluid, eating itself.

Seven

For three years, she rewrote a dead man. *Teach us to care and not to care*, he moaned into her sleep. She knit and unknit the bags of tangled wool as the baby dug its tiny heels between her ribs.

Eight

Finally, the doctor unzipped her. *My God*, she touched the infant's pinking face, *hair*. The girl creaked and the future yawned wide as her mother's body: undone.

Nine

Weeks teetered on the world's edge. She cried for her lost father; she wanted a dream with no sound of her name. The sun dropped behind the steeple—she imagined a hooded woman in the sky, head bent over her child's slender neck.

Ten

Everything opened: yellow, and black, and red.