

# Victim

## The Golden Palominos

I feel the motion of the car before I open my eyes.  
The air is blue-black, brown-black, black-black.  
Smell of gas, oil, animals.  
I'm in the trunk. My wrists and ankles tied.  
Tape over my mouth  
it almost covers my nose  
but I can breathe barely.  
I must have been here for hours,  
everything's stiff and my head throbs  
like someone's drumming on china. The car stops.  
He turns off the motor -- but there are no traffic sounds.  
No people sounds. No wind. What place has no wind?  
I turn my head towards the sounds  
like people watch radios when something terrible happens. My palms are sweating. Where am I?  
The trunk squeaks as he lifts it up and the sun blinds me.  
He almost looks like a faceless Jesus surrounded by light.  
He pulls me out of the trunk and bangs my head against the door.  
I try to cry out, but it comes like a hum. He drags me, half-standing, along a dirt road into a house.  
I can't see any other houses and it looks like a farm.  
The screen door bangs behind me and I feel a deep, deep pressure inside.  
All the rules have changed here. I'm dragged down a hall like a bag and I look for a phone, other doors.  
Nothing but bare floors and brown boxes in small rooms.  
He pulls me into the bathroom  
and I almost crack my head as he pushes me onto the floor.  
Tilts his head to the side and gazes at me  
as if I was a pet then walks out. I'm lying there for a long time, trying to get the tape off of me.  
My eyes are tearing. I don't make a sound.  
I can't get up and I keep rolling from side to side, trying not to make noise. I've got to get him to talk to me.  
If I can get this thing off my face I can talk to him.  
I'll tell him my name.  
Have you killed other women in here?  
I'm thinking you've got hundreds of them nailed down,  
hung on walls, hanging from ceiling fans  
swinging dead in summer wind. Why did you pick me?  
If I had stayed to finish at the library  
I would have been there twenty minutes longer  
maybe I'd have been OK.  
Would have rushed into the house, books piled up in my arms like a baby,  
and blurted explanations why I was sorry.

So sorry I'm late everyone. Would you have waited for me anyway?  
Would you have picked another woman?  
Would I have read about her in the paper and said  
oh my god, I was there that night...  
and called all my friends in a panic.  
Telling them then how much I loved them  
as if I'd never have the chance again. I wonder what everyone is doing now. Putting up signs.  
Showing my picture on the evening news. Calling old friends.  
Maybe I'm not even considered missing yet. The family will fall apart and my parents will go crazy. Slowly.  
My brother will be so quiet at the funeral and insist the casket be closed.  
(I never even told anyone what kind of funeral I wanted when I died.) Maybe years from now they'll find my  
skeleton  
on the floor here and they'll have to use dental records to identify me.  
My family will say "At least we know now.  
We always hoped she was alive somewhere.  
We just hope she's in peace." When I sleep my dreams are crazy -- I'm flying over fields.  
I don't think I sleep for more than twenty minutes and when I wake up,  
it feels like I'm under a heavy blanket. I'm still here. As I wake up I hear a dog barking in the distance  
and I think I'm in my parents' house in South Carolina.  
When I open my eyes, there's a shotgun pressed between them.  
I'll never get married.  
I'll never have kids.  
I'll never go to Europe.  
I'll never learn to play piano.  
I'll never write a book. The last thing I hear is a click

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