

ROLE

I. ROLE OF MOTHER

1 Ever since I can remember, I wanted to become a mother. As children, my sister Pat and I endlessly
2 played a game of our own invention, "That's my baby." With one of us flipping through the pages of a
3 woman's magazine; the first to place her index finger on a photo of an infant and to utter the magic words,
4 "That's my baby," took maternal possession. We'd each count the number of our paper children and the one
5 with the most won the game. My future offspring, I fantasized, would be an unending source of complete
6 joy and profound satisfaction. With an attitude like mine and a younger sister and baby brother to practice
7 on, motherhood, I reasoned, would be a snap. Four children later, I look upon my early confidence with
8 bemused astonishment. Rearing children, I found, wasn't quite as simple as I had cheerily envisioned. While
9 I gradually acquired the necessary skills that successful parenting requires, I often think that the early years
10 of my first-born's life taught me the most about my chosen role of mother.

11 Joey's birth twenty-five years ago set me on the path to parenthood. Riding home from the hospital, I
12 dreamily envisioned the sweet smiles and squeals of delight that would soon be emanating from my sleeping
13 son. Whimpers and then screams later on that night quickly disabused me of the notion of the utter and
14 complete bliss of motherhood. Dirty diapers, fits of colic and constant feedings became my new reality.
15 Overwhelmed, I trustingly consulted my Doctor Spock. Diaper-rash—page 273, "expose diaper area to the
16 sun." Impracticable in February. Projectile vomiting—page 203, "offer smaller feedings." Unacceptable,
17 he hardly ate as it was; he'd starve to death. Intestinal gas—page 117, "change to a soy-based formula.
18 Impossible, I was breast-feeding. Disheartened by my failure to find solutions to all my baby-care problems,
19 I reluctantly came to the conclusion that maternal responsibility would sometimes mean that I would have
20 to rely on my own common sense. I would do what I thought was best even if it went against the good
21 doctor's advice. This revelation eased my mind considerably and led to my very first lesson on parenthood:
22 when in doubt, a mother should always listen to her own inner voice.

23 Although somewhat relieved, I still had to grapple with my disappointment with motherhood. Those
24 worrisome first few weeks made me question my decision to embark on parenthood. Where was the
25 contentment, the gratification, the pleasure I had been eagerly anticipating all those years? My child seemed
26 more like an eating, screaming, defecating machine than the fountain of happiness I had been expecting. As
27 the weeks went by, I slowly came to the realization that I had selfishly been expecting Joey to conform to
28 my own girlish fantasies. The child in my mind's eye slept, ate and eliminated on cue, unlike my real live
29 baby. Recognition of my misplaced duty led to my next lesson on parenting: a mother should always keep
30 in mind that it is she who meets the needs of her child and not vice-a-versa.

31 Once that fundamental principle became imprinted on my brain, life with baby became a whole lot easier.
32 In time, the sweet smiles and squeals of delight became a reality. Joey became less like a machine and more
33 like a person. Enchanted by my child, I soon filled up pages in his baby book recording for posterity—his
34 first haircut, first finger food and first steps. Our relationship was based on the mutual understanding of one
35 essential fact: he was the king and I was his willing slave.

36 Things continued on that harmonious note until we hit the terrible two's stage. The toddler must now,
37 Doctor informed me, "assert his independence. Joey's assertion of independence took the form of shouting
38 no to any and every parental request. "Let's go bye-bye" - "NO!"; "Wanna make potty?" - "NO!"; "Are you
39 hungry?" - "NO!" This was also the stage of "exploration" and "experimentation"; the way a child "makes
40 sense of his environment." In my case, my two-year old explored the ladies room in the basement of May's
41 Department store and experimented by trying to determine whether or not half a dozen polyester skirts could
42 be flushed down the toilet. They couldn't. Not too surprisingly, Joey's little foray into the world of plumbing
43 resulted in our permanent banishment from the aforementioned establishment. Toddlerhood taught me my
44 next lessons on parenting: a mother must cultivate patience, retain her dignity and poise under embarrassing
45 circumstances and never, ever let her child of her sight.

46 The following year, I remained as vigilant as ever since Joey's exploration and experimentation continued
47 unabated. With eagle eyes, I strove to keep my offspring in view. However, even my super-human effort
48 could not forestall my son's ability to teach me yet another lesson on parenting. He was at the age, the
49 venerable Doctor Spock told me, when a parent's primary duty, that of "role model" takes on new importance.
50 A three-year old "strives to imitate his parents" who are now a sort of "teaching tool" for their offspring. The

1 onus of parental responsibility was brought home to me by my son's unilateral decision to take up smoking,
2 a vice his father and I engaged in. Lighting up a cigarette is not usually something a preschooler is
3 particularly proficient in and so it was in Joey's case. The fire wasn't very bad; we didn't even have to call
4 the fire department. Joey, thank God, was completely unharmed although I can't say the same for the
5 red-shag carpet in the playroom. My son's ride into Marlboro country made me understand the most basic
6 of all parental rules: a mother should never do anything in front of her child that she does not wish him to
7 repeat. This includes cursing, hitting, yelling and, needless to say, smoking.

8 Joey is grown up now and out of the house. Despite earlier evidence of his, shall I say, "zest for living",
9 he has turned out to be a fine young man. Although his early years were often exasperating and frustrating
10 for both of us, they were also invaluable. For it was those years that I learned how to be a mother, something
11 for which Joey's three siblings, I'm sure, are particularly grateful for. (Word count: 1,045)

II. THE ROLE OF A MIRROR

1 A mirror plays a major role in my life. It does more than reflect a replica of myself; it embodies my
2 past like a movie camera projecting a scene which took place 20 years ago, putting on my mom's makeup and
3 perfume (no worries on my mind, only innocent fantasies of growing up)—why was I in such a rush? Being
4 an adult is not at all what I imagined as a child. I had no idea that as I grew, responsibility grew (to myself,
5 family, friends, work, creditors, government, society ...); like an instamatic camera, in a flash, I am given an
6 up-to-date picture of my present form (a little overweight and a bit too short for my taste); like a crystal ball,
7 it casts a smokescreen vision of my future, good and bad (a constant reminder of the two roads of
8 choice—right or wrong); and, like a mute psychoanalyst, it allows me to question, answer, criticize, praise,
9 hate and love myself and doesn't charge a fee. I can tell it all my worries, fears, secrets and mum's the word
10 (I have no fear that it will expose me or betray my trust).

11 It has reflected and continues to reflect what it sees. Throughout the years, it has shown me how
12 outside forces (junk food, depression, love, pregnancies, too much work and a polluted environment) affect
13 my physical appearance, and never fails to reflect my true self. I try to mask my true emotions, but it sees
14 right through me. It reads body language and definitely knows to read my eyes. My eyes tell all (when I'm
15 gloomy, my eyes lose their gleam like gold costume jewelry after getting wet; when I'm happy, they shine
16 and transmit the warmth of the sun; and when I'm angry, the pupils dilate like the mushroom of a detonated
17 nuclear bomb). My eyes can never lie.

18 No matter how much I try to avoid any mirror, every day I must face it and who I am—like it or not.
19 A mirror has its kin (tinted glass, puddles, ponds, lakes, bubbles, sun glasses, polished car surfaces, chrome
20 and eyes) to help keep me up-to-date with myself. They are everywhere to purposely remind me of who I
21 really am, what I have become and who I can be. I am constantly reminded that if there is anything that must
22 be changed in my life to become a happier and satisfied individual, I must take the steps to make that change.
23 A mirror cannot make the change(s) for me. It and its kin can only reflect my accomplishments and failures
24 as I strive toward change.

25 The only kin of a mirror that reflects my image differently is found at amusement parks and
26 circuses—the house of mirrors. These mirrors allow me to analyze ridiculous images of myself (a midget
27 sized body with jumbo thighs, Andre the Giant head with Michael Jordan legs or anorexic body with an
28 elongated head that looks as if it had just been pulled through a four foot cylinder, twelve inches in diameter,
29 and kept its form). As I look at these images, I laugh at what I see and am grateful that, no matter how
30 ridiculous the images appear to be, I can always count on my inner self being reflected in its true form, and
31 as I leave the house of mirrors, I walk away pleased that I am who I am. (Word count: 571)

III. THE ROLE OF DARKNESS

1 The word *dark*, according to the Macmillian Contemporary Dictionary, means something that is partially
2 or wholly devoid of light; reflecting or radiating little light; of a deep shade; nearly black. Darkness, in this
3 society, is often regarded with fear, despair, and as evil. But in my reality darkness can simply be associated
4 with safety, serenity, contentment, and pleasure.
5

1 I remember as a child running into the closet, instead of away from it, when I was scared. The dark was
2 a haven where I did not have to deal with my fears and anxieties. It was natural for me to do this; I don't
3 know exactly why, but it was. I do not remember exactly how much it (darkness) meant to me as a child;
4 however, today it is the place where I maintain my rationality.

5 For example, sitting quietly in the dark reduces stress better than any other means; to be in a cool dark
6 place, alone and where I can keep my solitude from being invaded by either the light or other intrusions, with
7 the exception of music (but of course, music that I have chosen) relaxes me as only something I have no name
8 for could, a something I have yet to experience. It is only with her (Darkness) that I feel complete tranquility.
9 She asks me questions about the universe; I hear them, with my eyes open. Sometimes I call out the answers;
10 sometimes I sit quietly and lapse into a meditative state. During these times my thoughts scatter and most
11 are not "rememberable." Through these dark interludes I am able to keep my soul and mind in contact with
12 each other.

13 I have been told by friends that I have a need to return to the darkness and contentment of the most primal
14 surroundings, the womb. This interpretation is interesting, but irrelevant to my relationship with Darkness.
15 That is, it doesn't matter where my need for Darkness comes from, I just know I thrive on it. I am alive in
16 the dark as I am not in the light. I free myself; creativity, love, compassion all come pouring out in Darkness.
17 The connotations of good and evil that lightness and Darkness have received from traditional Western society
18 are also irrelevant to me. My relationship with Darkness, however, has not persisted without change. The
19 role of Darkness in my life has evolved as I have evolved; that is, every few years the role of Darkness has
20 been enriched as I have been enriched, through my education. Through education, the more I learn, the more
21 things affect me, and the more I have to think about. Thus darkness has become a forum for social and
22 political debates.

23 Now, the effects of being in the dark have both psychological and physical effects. Darkness brings out
24 in me a certain kind of honesty, an understanding of peace and serenity I could never know in the light. It
25 gives me a sense of relaxation that seems to coat me, like warm honey, and allows an indescribable part of
26 my being a certain spontaneity that seems to flow from my pores. During the dark hours of the evening and
27 night, I allow myself to enjoy my sexuality—inhibition is at its lowest point. In this darkness, my Darkness,
28 I discover aspects of my own eroticism. Love-making has become more than a physical act; it has become
29 an act of spiritual bonding, in which mutual respect and love are not blinded. Lovemaking has become a form
30 of communication. Darkness, or at times a kind of semi-darkness, often sets my mood for these intimacies.

31 Darkness, when no one is there for me, has been, and I believe will always be. No matter where I am on
32 the planet, Darkness is there ready, waiting, and listening. She never judges, screams, insults or asks for
33 anything in return. All she does is sit by my side when I am in need. Sometimes we explore the boundaries
34 of the universe, but most often we just sit and stare into each other's loneliness. (Word count: 673)

1 IV. THE ROLE OF A SERIAL KILLER

2 It is not easy being me, I have so much responsibility to the human race. I have been chosen by God to
3 carry out His work on earth, and I dare not refuse. By having chosen me, God has bestowed upon me a great
4 honor. He has placed me above all others. My job is to rid the world of the evil pestilence that plagues it.
5 I must return the demons back to hell from where they have leaked out.

6 At first it was difficult to spot them in the crowd, for they have taken human form. But if you watch
7 closely they tend to show themselves, and God always helps me seek them out.

8 Once I have found one, I stalk it and study its patterns of behavior, so as to make the capture a success.
9 Most of the times it traps itself, and all I need to do is destroy it and send it back to damnation. Its blood
10 must flow to the ground so it seeps back into the dirt, and its shell must be dismembered so another will not
11 be able to possess it. I must bury the parts away from each other to assure that there will be no resurrection.
12 From each demon I keep an item to prove to God that his work has been done, and to maintain my power
13 over the ones I have conquered.

14 My methods of their destruction must cause them a great deal of pain, to assure God that His score has
15 been settled. The more it wails with pain, the greater satisfaction God feels. God has made me equal to him;
16 He has given me the power to crusade and to destroy. No one has to fear me but the creatures from Hell.

1 I laugh at the media when they call me crazy, or claim I am dangerous to society. The ones who tell you this
2 are also in cohorts with the demons. They want to end my reign, but I am too clever; I always elude them.
3 Their soldiers in blue search for me night and day. I even leave them clues, but they are too blind to see
4 them. I taunt them in the same way they taunt God, and that infuriates them, but I find it pleasing to watch
5 them squirm. They have no idea when I will destroy another one of them or where it will take place, which
6 makes my job more amusing. The demon leaders know that if they do not track me down, their lord will have
7 less power on Earth.

8 My headquarters are secluded, enable me to work without any interruptions. My appearance seems
9 normal, I can not risk suspicious. I carry on a normal lifestyle; I have a job, and good relationships with
10 family and friends. In fact, if I were to reveal myself to you, I guarantee that I would be the last person you
11 would have suspected.

12 It is all a game of cat and mouse; I seek it and it seeks me. However, I must say that I always win. I have
13 destroyed many of them, and I am quite good at my job. In fact I will go as far to say, that I the best in my
14 field.skills

15 So let everyone call me crazy. That is o.k. because it makes my cover that much better. While they search
16 for someone who might appear disturbed, I am standing right next to them saying, "Yes, it just might be him."

17 But think, about this: can someone so insane be so clever and cunning? A crazy person is out of control.
18 I am perfectly in control, for if I weren't, I wouldn't perform my job so well. So, all you sinners and demons
19 from Hell remember: I will be looking for you and stalking you. And when you least expect it, you will
20 return whence you came. I promise you. (Word count: 655)

V. The Role of the Motorcycle Rider

1 The flag drops, and the racers explode from the starting line in a cloud of choking blue smoke. Almost
2 before coming off the line, they bunch into the first turn. There is hardly enough room for all of them, and
3 certainly no room for mistakes. Viewed from the grandstand the leading rider's helmet seems to float along
4 the top edge of the guardrail. We watch his action, and, at the same instant, we watch the frantic fight for
5 position among the pursuing racers. The racers manipulate their machines between fast and faster. The
6 slightest alteration in rhythm or concentration could result in death. Thus, motorcycle racing requires a
7 special type of individual, one who is willing to develop his skills through hard work to become the best.
8 And, one who is willing to risk life and limb to test his skill and nerve against speed.

9 There are two basic reasons why people choose to take up motorcycle racing. First, motorcycle racing
10 is more of an acquired skill rather than a natural one. In sports such as basketball or football, the athlete must
11 have inherent skills to be the best in the sport. However, in motorcycle racing with practice, perseverance,
12 and physical conditioning success is possible for anyone interested in the sport. Young racers are therefore
13 encouraged to strive to be the best at what they do.

14 Secondly, motorcycle racing is for the person that thrives on speed and danger. The absolute
15 unpredictability of what is going to happen after the flag does down makes motorcycle racing even more
16 intense. In the Isle of Man, competition, one of motorcycling's Grand Prix Circuit, there are seven laps to
17 live through. Each is 88 miles long, and each lap has 219 distinct bends. The race covers 264 miles of back
18 country roads, bordered by behemoth stone walls, secondary roads, and packets of fenceless thousand foot
19 drops. The racers rocket down steep hills at 150 miles per hour and slam into S-curves at 90 miles per hour.
20 They fly past towns and villages boring into winds that slap their hunched, straining bodies. Flat out and full
21 throttle they race, generating friction and energy that literally lifts them up over the hard old roadway. It is
22 a very arduous and extremely dangerous motorcycle race. For the racer, the Isle of Man competition is the
23 ultimate test of skill, endurance and nerve. The elements of speed and danger woven into the action, ignites
24 racers on. The heat of the competition and the psychological intoxication brought on by the intensification
25 of the race drives racers to their limits and often beyond.

26 To race and to be a winner, one must have winning qualities and characteristics. The motorcycle racer's
27 physical conditioning is important in racing. The size and weight of a racer can help or hinder him. The
28 smaller and lighter racer will have an immediate advantage over the heavier, muscle bound racer. The
29 smaller and lighter the racer, the more he will be able to lean into his turns, and thus go faster. He will also

1 be able to go faster on straightaways, since the motorcycle will have to do less work to move him. However,
2 size and weight alone are not enough. The racer must be a strong person. He should be able to easily
3 maneuver a five or six hundred pound motorcycle around swirling X-curves and hold it under him around
4 tight corners. Another important characteristic he must have is agility. The racer will have an advantage if
5 he can shift gears faster than his opponents. Finally, the most important physical characteristic a racer should
6 have is endurance. A racer should be able to cling hunched and folded to a machine for hours, through
7 hundreds of miles of dust, grit, and danger. Thus, the motorcycle racer must be a superbly well-conditioned
8 athlete.

9 Along with physical conditioning, the mental conditioning of the motorcycle racer is equally important.
10 The racer must be able to concentrate on his objective over numerous thundering machines. His mind must
11 be nimble and decisive. Mor importantly, the racer must have a sixth sense. He must be able to
12 communicate with his machine at all times. In motorcycle racing, the rider is not a supplement to the
13 motorcycle but an integral part, an equal part of the racing process. The rider should have a “feel” for the
14 motorcycle. This “feel” or rhythm that is generated by man working in unison with machine is often the
15 determining factor for success or failure, life or death.

16 Nine grueling laps have gone by. In the remaining lap one racer emerges to the front of the pack. He has
17 the track’s groove to himself. He wraps his knees tightly around the tank and tucks his chin into the bars
18 and heads for the checkered flag. In the fury of exhilaration and emotion, he bears down on the symbol of
19 glory. When the race is done, the winner carries the flat around the track, stopping at the starting line for a
20 mere second as the grandstand salutes him. Then he moves off into the pits, his heart ceasing its frantic song
21 only when he turns off the beat of his machine. The risk was worth it. Motorcycle racing is for the man who
22 is willing to face his last race. The racer must be brave enough to understand his own limitations and
23 vulnerability. He must be mature enough to realize that failure could be worse than losing. It could even
24 be worse than death; it could mean mutilation or total disability. To an athlete, that’s must worse than dying.
25 To a strong, brave man, that is the unacceptable defeat. (Word count: 941)