

How I Didn't Get Myself to a Nunnery

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Adapted by Fishtank Staff

- 1 That girl they found ensconced in mud and loam,
she wasn't me. Small wonder, though, they jumped.
To a conclusion. Water puffs you up,
and we pale Danish girls looked much alike—
- 5 back then. Deprivation smooths you out.
Yes, that was the season of self-drowned maids,
heart-to-hearts with skulls, great minds overthrown.
And minds that could be great if they could just
come up for air. Not in that town. Something stank.
- 10 But me, I drifted on. I like rivers.
And I'm all right with flowers. I floated
on a bed of roses—well, O.K., rue
and columbine. It bore me up not down.
That night I made a circle with my thumb
- 15 and finger, like a lens, and peered through it
at the moon—mine, all mine. My kissed-white moon.
"Moon River wider than a . . ." Mancini/
Mercer wrote that, sure, but I wrote it first.
- You wonder where I'm going with all this?
- 20 Where water goes. It empties into sea.
Sold! I'd take it—the sea or a fresh life.
Some other life. A good man—good enough,
fair—fished me out. He'd come to quench his thirst.
No sun-god prince, of course, like him I'd loved,
- 25 *still* loved. (Some loves don't die; not even murder
kills them.) I married his thatched hut, hatched chicks—
kids running underfoot. Don't cry for me,

Denmark. I'd learned the art of compromise
back there, in the black castle—then came blood,
30 ghosts. Something in me burst. If not lover,
father, king, then whom can you trust? Alone,
I took up some playing cards. I played them
into skinny air. A voice said, *Swim or drown*.
It said: Your house caught fire, flood, caught fear—
35 it's coming down. No one loves you now, here.
By land or water, girl, get outta town.