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Annie Oakley

# **GIRL WITH A GUN**

**Courtney E. Webb**

**Stories about girls and their troubles  
...and the troubles they make.**

*The hands of the sisters of Death and Night,  
incessantly softly wash... this soil'd world.*

Walt Whitman

I feel like have known these sisters and their minions in my life from time to time. The characters in these stories have also spent some time with them and these are their stories.



## GIRL WITH A GUN

*You can't always get ahead but*

*you sometimes can get even.*

My next-door neighbor had everything. She lived in one of the best houses on the block, she had bleached blond hair at age thirteen, and she always wore it up high and 'teased' with a ton of hairspray. She wore real black eyeliner, cut-off jeans and big white men's shirts over that. She was cool. Her mother didn't work and spent time making cookies and pies so that when the 'girls' came over to Linda's house, there were always cookies and lemonade.

Her real name was Belinda, but she shortened it to Linda. She was one year older than me and had one brother who always played football. Not only was her house nicer, her parents drove bigger, newer cars and her mom had time to take her shopping for all the latest clothes. When Linda moved in next door, she blew the socks off everyone in the neighborhood and she became an instant hit. Everyone always wanted to hang out at Linda's.

I, on the other hand, had non-descript brown hair, not bleached and not ratted (what's that?); I don't think I owned a can of hairspray. My hair was mostly stick straight except for one little spot that likes to pop up into a weird curl all the time. My mom worked five days a week and when she wasn't doing that, she was shopping for fabric to make us all 'hand-made' clothes. Most of my clothes were either 'hand-made' or hand-me-down until I was almost twenty.

I lived next to Linda with my mom, dad and two obnoxious brothers. It didn't seem fair that Linda got so much attention from everyone; I lived there first! Anyway, like I said, my mother was usually either gone at work, playing bridge or hidden away in the sewing room. She could be counted on for saying things like, "That's nice," or "If you don't like them Cissy, why don't you stop playing with them?" That's my name, Cissy Caufield, named after one of my mother's friends. Who names a kid something like Cissy? Dumb.

Oh, and my dad. My dad was a big guy, very handsome at one time, lots of black hair and

shiny white teeth. He was a WWII veteran and loved nothing better than to tell a ton of stories about the war. He would ramble on about some story or other about the war or the military, have a sip of scotch, and continue. He was proud of the fact that he still had three service revolvers in the garage. There were always loaded, 'just in case.' He kept them locked in a steamer trunk, but I knew where the key was.

Did I mention the scotch? Yes scotch, and lots of it. My dad was a drunk. In addition to telling stories, he loved to get drunk. Yes drunk, not tipsy, but smashed, blotto, wacked, bombed, stewed to the gills, pie-eyed, blind drunk, stumbling drunk, very, very drunk.

My mother would spend time, when I got into one of my fits about Dad, to use her best calming voice to talk me down and tell me how we needed to be understanding of Dad; he's got problems, he needs our support, etcetera, etcetera, blah, blah and blah. She would get that pensive, screwed up look to her face and look a little bit like a suffering puppy and I would finally snap out of it and she would go back to her nice-nice face. Gag!

Time marched on and before long Linda, my brothers, and I, were all at the same high school. Linda still had the bleached blond hair, and I still had the weird hair but these days she was on a 'diet' specially constructed by her mother. She was trying out for the flag twirling team and had to 'slim down'. I never had to go on many diets as I had a stick figure already. I too tried out for a cheerleader position and worked at it very, very hard. However, Linda got picked for flag and I didn't get cheer. So now, in addition to seeing her next door all the time I also got to see her kicking up her heels and showing off her satin rump while twirling a flag at half-time. Lucky me.

Eventually, being the good-girl type, I joined the Key club and we all ran around doing service work. There was also a boy section to this service thing and the girls and guys would occasionally get together for projects. It was on one of these projects that I saw him. One year older than me, slim with a little muscle, black hair, blue eyes and very, very nice. Peter. Peter was the president of the boy's side of the Key club and he was gorgeous. Wow.

He would start talking and I would hang on every word like a dog waiting for a biscuit. He walked by and I almost drooled.

I am not sure if I ever really talked to Peter, other than in my head of course, but I was certainly working up to it. In addition to that, I had plans, many, many plans for me and Peter.

It was with thoughts such as these dancing in my head that I drove home from school one night to a big surprise. As I pulled round the cul-de-sac my headlights hit a car that was parked in front of Linda's house. Suddenly, two heads popped up from the back seat. I drove by and parked and the heads disappeared. As I was walking inside it hit me as to who

they were; it was Linda and Peter! I was shocked, stunned and disbelieving. Oh no - that - that...how could she! I saw him first!

Later days proved the grim and disappointing truth; Linda and Peter had become an 'item' on campus. My soul was dark and filled with dread whenever I had to drive by her house, afraid of what I might see again. Good God, this couldn't be happening. But, oh yes, it was.

Winter unwove into spring and the end of school approached with the end of year activities: dances, dinners and the like. Key Club decided to have a big end of the year dinner at a fancy restaurant in town. My mother dutifully created another 'hand-made' dress for me. I hinted around at one of the other guys in the group that I needed a date and he obligingly asked me to go. Jeff was a nice enough kid, cute and pretty smart without being movie star good looking or brilliant. He wasn't Peter, but as a member of the Key Club, he was still in the 'inner circle,' and I was still holding out hope.

The big day arrived and I got into my new dress, my hair looked presentable and I spent an hour on my makeup. Jeff was scheduled to pick me up and as I was getting ready to go a thought struck me: my dad. My dad was always about half in the bag by dinner and by the time Jeff and I got back, he would certainly be way gone and around the bend liquor wise. I had a hurried and feverish conversation with my mother and she promised to 'get him out of the house.' I said to her, "Can't he just go to the Club for a few hours? He's there all the time anyway." She made promises to make it happen and my ride picked me up without a hitch.

We got to the restaurant and immediately saw Linda and Peter by themselves in a booth. Peter summoned us over and we 'got' to sit with them. My dress at the time was a yellow, polka-dot affair that my mother thought was 'really cute.' I thought it looked really dumb but what choice did I have? Linda was sitting, regally, by Peter's side in a low-cut black cocktail dress, no doubt purchased for the occasion. My eyes bugged out a second while I took this in and for a moment considered covering myself with table napkins. However, this passed and we got to soup when I realized Linda was wearing a new necklace. Was that a diamond heart setting? I couldn't bear to ask. The last remnants of hope were drifting out the window with the beef vapors.

Two painful hours later, Jeff brought me home and we sat down in the living room to chitchat a bit with my mom. Things seemed to be going well and Jeff was starting to look better to me. Suddenly, the front door opened and in walked my dad.

Walked in is too generous a phrase; stumbled in is a better way to put it. He stumbled in with a shot glass in his hand. "Ello, everybody," he slurred. "Woos' 'is," he continued, pointing at my date.

I got a grip on myself and carefully said, "Jeff, this is my dad. Dad, Jeff."

"Glad 'met 'ya young man. Want a drink?"



"Dad, Jeff is sixteen years old, I don't think he is old enough to drink," I responded tersely.

"Oh, no," Dad continued, "Never too young to have a drink. Man's drink," he lurched a bit toward the increasingly nervous Jeff. "Scotch?" he queried hopefully.

Jeff was starting to look wildly around the room, trying to find the escape hatch. My mom was twisting a paper towel in her hands and I had, by this time, stood up.

"He doesn't need a drink, Dad; he's fine," I spat out.

"Oh, no," Dad responded, "Little drink. Be right back." He veered off course toward the kitchen.

The moment he was out of the room, Jeff leapt up and started to stammer, "Well, nice meeting you Mrs. Caufield, nice, nice house. Ah, thanks Cissy, I, I've got to go. So, see you at school, right?" And without completely running, he got himself to the door and out like a flash. I didn't even bother walking out to his car.

My dad came back in carrying two glasses with brown liquid. "Where'd 'e go?" He sagged down on the Barcalounger, his favorite chair.

"The young man left, Dan," was my mother's plaintive reply.

"Oh," my dad started to sip his drink again. "More 'fer me."

I could feel a curtain of rage sweep over my body. I tore out of the room and ran toward the garage.

My mother yelled, "Cissy, Cissy where are you going?"

I knew where I was going; I was going to the locked trunk. I found the key, wrenched the lid open and found the revolver, loaded as per usual. Running back into the living room, aiming with both hands, I pulled the trigger and shot my dad. Boy, was that sound loud. My mother shrieked.

I almost fell backwards from the recoil. A second later, my dad was touching a little red streak on the top of his head and there was a hole in the Barcalounger.

"You shot me," he said blankly.

Let me digress just a little; I never really meant to kill my dad, more like just make a point, if you know what I mean. I had taken riflery and small arms at summer camp at his insistence.

"Any daughter of mine," he had said pompously, "should know how to shoot like a man, and defend you." So, I did learn how to shoot like a man and was pretty good at it too. This was

just a little statement shot so to speak.

My mom was open-mouthed. I threw the gun down and ran to my room, slamming the door behind me as hard as I could. Throwing myself on my bed, I burst into tears.

The next day our house was pretty quiet. Dad and Mom were at the kitchen table when I came down for breakfast. My dad's head was hanging and he had that special kind of green look I knew so well. On purpose I banged down my cereal bowl. He jumped a little and winced, but didn't look up.

My mother was fiddling nervously with a fork when I sat down. I didn't say anything. She chirped brightly. "Cissy, your dad and I have had a long talk. Didn't we Dan?"

My dad moved his head a little.

"And, well, we have decided he is going to go get some help with his, his...problem. That's right, Dan, right?" Little head movement from my dad.

"Oh, and about those guns in the garage," my mother continued, "we have decided we are going to get rid of those too. Might be better for all of us," she finished brightly sounding a bit like we were planning a trip to Florida. I nodded glumly and finished my cereal in silence.

Actually, my mom was right about the guns. It probably would be better for all of us; next time I might not miss.

## INTERNET LOVE AFFAIR

He was everything. She was nothing.

No one had ever made her feel this way before - no one, not ever. Never. She loved him completely with everything within her. She loved him so much.

Her fingers flew over the keyboard. "William, my love, how are you today? I'm fine - this is Susan," she wrote. She started to tell him about her day, her work in the library. He was always so interested, unlike her family who couldn't care less about the library. They all thought her work was incredibly boring.

"You won't believe what happened today! Remember that funny little man that came into the library last week and looking for a copy of -" she typed and typed.

She told him the story of the little man, and the kids that came into the library who were supposed to be doing their homework. The kids who somehow, always tried to get her to figure out their papers for them, and give them ideas, and show them books and do their research and on and on and on. Anything but do the work for themselves. The old geezers who came into the library basically because they had nowhere else to go and wanted some place warm where they could use the bathroom and have company.

There were the alcoholics who were homeless and lived in the park and came for the same reason. They would read the newspapers in the middle of the day, looking very preoccupied, just like they were waiting for their stockbrokers to call and needed to sit down a minute.

She wrote about the frantic housewife-mothers dragging their raggedy broods down to reading circle to hopefully get them out of the house for a few minutes and buy themselves a little break, the college and high school students searching every nook and cranny for just that book that they had to have to finish the last bit on some paper, the ebb and flow of humanity that came and went and came and went.

She wrote and felt like she was talking to him, talking to a friend, a very good friend. And he listened. He listened as she told all the details of her daily life, her problems, her fights with her parents, her struggles with an insensitive management group that she worked for, her failed romances and lost loves, her dreams and aspirations. The wanting to get married and wanting to have children, to take those trips to Europe and other exciting places she hadn't yet been to and yearned to go.

He listened, and consoled, and was patient, and wrote back, and was kind, and understanding. He was loving, and, well, just everything a friend could be but never was. He was everything

a man could ever be and never was. He was handsome (he had sent her a picture) and tall and strong and beautiful and kind and wonderful and, oh my god, how much she loved I him. She wondered over and over where he had been her whole life.

Susan did have a friend, Emily. Emily was such a pragmatist and realist and just, well, really no fun when you looked at it that way.

"Have you met him yet?" "What are you waiting for?" "He sounds too good to be true to me," Emily queried.

Susan back pedaled and made excuses and said things like "We are going to get together; there just hasn't been time yet. We just met on the Internet two months ago. I wasn't even sure I was interested."

"Sure," Emily said doubtfully and shook her head.

Susan was having some second thoughts. Maybe she should just go and check out his address. They had never really exchanged addresses; somehow, they always seemed to have so much to say they hadn't gotten that far.

On her last email to William she had pushed ever so gently about getting his address and their getting together. "Darling," he wrote back, "I would love too, big business meeting coming up and I have to get prepared for that. We will get together soon, I promise."

She had sighed and pushed away from her desk feeling all warm and tingly from the "Darling," thing. Yes, he was a darling, it was true.

Susan was sitting at the reference desk and it was a Friday and things were winding down to closing. She sat drumming her fingers on the desk, indecision clouding her thoughts. It was five minutes to six and they were going to be closing pretty soon. She made up her mind and turned to her desk computer. "Let's see," she thought and did a reverse directory search.

"I know his full name," she thought to herself, "and I know what town he lives in." She began to hit the keys and enter the search. After a couple of false tries she was surprised to see the full name flash onto her screen. She sat staring at the name. It was too weird, seeing his name there in print on the screen. It made him somehow more real and somehow farther away. It was like she was looking at the name of a complete stranger from some ether world come here to visit.

The library chimes began to ring softly and the security guard was moving toward the front door. That was the 'all clear' sign for 'everybody out of the pool.' She grabbed a pencil and a pad of paper and wrote down the information furiously, cursing herself all the while for not trusting him.

Later on, she sat at home eating soup distractedly. Emily had called and asked her what she was doing and she gave some fuzzy, vague response about some work project and rang off. She thought Emily had a bit of a hurt tone in her voice, but she didn't care.

"Serves her right, she's the one that started this anyway," she thought savagely.

It was raining and late November when she put on a heavy coat, boots, gloves and grabbed her purse and keys. At the last minute she snatched a pair of binoculars out of the bottom of the hall closet.

"Shit," was all she could say to a confused Bubbles the cat as she ran out the door. She didn't want inertia and more indecision to slow her down now that she had gotten this far.

She drove slowly to his section of town, stopped to consult her town map several times. Finally, she got to the neighborhood, an older, middle class section with lots of red brick houses built after the war.

"Wow," she thought. "I love this section of town!" She could just hug herself for picking a guy with such good taste and so much like her own.

The house was small and cute, with little neat flowerbeds around the front. There was a huge walnut tree in the front yard and Susan couldn't help getting caught in the fantasy of moving into this darling little house and living here with William. She sighed a happy sigh. She did love him so much. What a perfect guy! She felt like a creep for being out here.

"Anyway," she thought, "I will show you Susan Smith that you are wrong about this guy. Wrong, all wrong!"

She parked the car past the house and got out quietly and closed the door. If William discovered her out here spying on him she would die of embarrassment. She tiptoed back to the front of the house in the rain.

She could see that the lights were on brightly in the house and that the front curtains weren't even closed yet. "See, Susan Smith, the guy obviously has nothing to hide. He leaves his curtains wide open for the whole world to see!"

She tippy-toed over to the house across the street, which was dark and hid next to a large tree. She didn't really need to binoculars because she could see so well. And then, he walked by the front window.

Her heart stopped, she recognized him immediately from his photo. He was exactly like the picture, tall, blond with a broad chest and wide shoulders. Her heart stopped and she felt her knees start to get weak. She stared at him transfixed. She could have just stood there on the grass, in the dark, drinking him in forever.

There was a car door slam somewhere and the back door to the house opened. Susan's mouth opened as a young woman came into the lighted living room carrying two bags of groceries. Wha-what? Her mind felt stunned and confused. Wh-who...a sister? A friend? She was feeling light-headed and her mouth was dry.

The young woman, also blond, with long, straight hair approached William and kissed him on the mouth. Susan was starting to feel like she was seeing stars, when the woman put the bags down on a table and turned. Susan gasped and almost called out. The woman was pregnant! And, it was looking like she was very pregnant. Susan started to feel cold all over, her knees buckled and she felt herself sink straight down into the grass.

She realized that gasping sound was coming from her and the tears rolling down her cheeks were mixing with the raindrops. She felt numb as though the world around her had turned to gray and then stopped revolving. It was as though everything, everything around her had stopped and was frozen in time.

She didn't know how long she was out there. She realized finally, that her knees were incredibly cold and wet and the rest of her was starting to get wet in spite of the raincoat. The curtains to the house were now, mercifully closed.

She slowly got up, tears still coming down and got into her car. She started the engine and cranked on the heat and just sat there sobbing, her head hanging over the steering wheel. Eventually, she drove herself home and went to bed where she pretty much stayed for the next two days.

Sunday night she sort of came to and opened her computer. She could see several messages waiting for her in her inbox. They were from William. She slowly erased the messages one by one and then went and erased all the messages she had saved from him. Then she added a blocker to his email address to block his further messages. Then she closed the computer and went to watch TV.

It was a very quiet Susan who came to work on Monday. Emily looked at her curiously and was about to say something when Susan held up a finger and said, "Don't".

"But," Emily stammered.

"No," said Susan, "I don't want to talk about it," and walked away.

Later, at lunch, Susan and Emily were having sandwiches.

Emily, always the nag couldn't stand the silence and finally said, "Well, can't you tell me anything?" with an exasperated tone.

Susan took a bite of sandwich, chewed, swallowed and said, "Yeah, I can." She sipped some Pepsi.

Emily looked expectantly at her.

"No more internet dating," replied Susan and continued to finish her sandwich.

Emily stared at her friend with her mouth open. If she had expected some more discourse on this topic, she wasn't getting any. Finally she sighed and joined her friend in finishing lunch.

## Number Two Girl

Looking down,  
I noticed the shoes.  
Very sparkly with lots  
of rhinestones,  
four inch leather heels.  
"Little early in the day isn't  
it?" I think.  
My eyes travel up, nice legs,  
good outfit.  
Pretty face? Not exactly, just nice.

About 35 years old;  
she's going up in the hotel elevator  
with a man twice her age.  
She's not his wife,  
she has settled in life.  
She's the number two girl.  
He pays the bills, she gets nice things.  
He gets to feel younger for a while,  
'til he goes home to his wife.  
She'll go back to her apartment,  
and wait, until the next time.

## BARBIE

*Surprising what a little alcohol can do!*

She blew into town, big white trench coat, knee high boots, blond hair pulled up into a pony - tail in the back. All smiles and dimples, she flashed those whites at every turn. Her face was a little too narrow to be a model, a little pushed in at the teeth level. But the men were stunned, fascinated, mesmerized. To a one, they were drawn to her like the usual moths to a flame. She would laugh and toss her head, she knew, she so knew.

Our group? Well a motley assortment of down-in-the mouth, surly, hard-bitten, not end-of-the-road-but-you-can-see-it from-here types. We were teachers, teaching on the outskirts of civilization. Where? Asia. The last call of the wild and wicked, them that the rest of the world has cast aside, losers and wannabes, washed up on the shores of life, trying to make a living while playing and drinking as hard as was humanly possible while still attempting to show up to work the next day.

We had had, variously in our group: a schizophrenic, a child molester, a second story man (breaking and entering,) a kleptomaniac, various assortments of alcoholics in differing stages of their own personal happiness, run-away children, and then, the likes of me. Just call me Skippy B Jones, that will suffice. I was a runaway too - but runaway from an ex-husband and surly, teenage 'child'. I came to Asia to teach and 'find myself'. I did teach alright but what I found was a bunch of weirdo's.



Anyway, I digress. Back to Barbie, she blew in from the Mid-west, fresh degree clutched in her fist, ready for the world. She had absolutely everything a girl could possibly need, except of course, a 'Him'. She began interviewing for the job almost as soon as she was able to break out her four-inch heels and tight waist-cinching belt. Two swains elbowed out the competition right away and then they were in the running with each other. This was all very fun to watch and Barbie had the time of her life as the tightly controlled competition unfolded. One day, one guy was on top, then the other guy, then the first guy. And so it went for several breathtaking weeks.

Finally - I guess she had had enough of the fun and wanted to move on to the really good stuff - she made her decision and picked Jeff. The collective sighs of sexual fulfillment could probably be heard all over campus night after night. Thankfully I don't live on campus so I just got to watch the happy faces, and winking, going on the next day. Sigh - true love.

Unfortunately into all this happy sunshine, a little rain was bound to fall - and it did. His name was Elvin.

Elvin, not Elvis or Alvin, Elvin. Although I didn't have much sympathy for this guy, even I had to admit it must have been painful to be correcting people your whole life about your name. What kind of parents names their kid something like Elvin? Jesus.

Anyway, Elvin was a lizard - a reptile - a lowly creature. He was a serpent most foul, something that crept out of the darkness. I would have run him in through the heart myself but I didn't have anything sharp in silver. I was considering bringing garlic to work and leaving it on my desk just as a precaution. Elvin was mean, he was low, and he talked about people behind their backs. He was a gossip, he carried tales, he was critical, obsessive, compulsive, driven to do the dirty unto his fellow man. He tattled to the boss, he was a friend to no one and cared only about himself. Unfortunately (for the rest of us) he had been crippled in a bad auto accident and the matronly types in the office felt sorry for him and constantly 'forgave' his little peculiarities (back stabbing.) You couldn't pound Elvin like he deserved because a) he was a cripple and b) he had sufficiently sucked up to the boss that they were now 'best friends.'

It was probably inevitable that Ms. Barbie with all her bouncing happiness with her new 'beau' friend was going to rankle Mr. Mean and there was going to be some kind of impasse. There was.

Ms. Barbie had hooked up with a good-looking, not too bright lad, also from the Mid-west, who had graduated from a big-name religious university. Now, although Jeff was big with Jesus, apparently not so much as to preclude him from doing the nasty with Ms. B on a

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