Fortunate Daughter

Erika Doremus
Concordia University - Portland

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean

Part of the Fiction Commons

Recommended Citation
Doremus, Erika (2009) "Fortunate Daughter," The Promethean: Vol. 17 : Iss. 1 , Article 42.
Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol17/iss1/42
FORTUNATE DAUGHTER

Erika Doremus

"Some folks are born made to wave the flag,
ooh, they're red, white and blue.
And when the band plays hail to the chief,
Ooh, they point the cannon at you, lord…"
-Fortunate Son, Creedence Clearwater Revival

If I close my eyes and listen, really listen, I can feel the familiar coolness of the garage on an early August evening. I can distinctly remember the sounds of the tinny radio, a sweet taste in my mouth, and the colorful splotches melting into the palms of my hands. My gangly, five year old legs hang off the edge of the workbench as I watch Dad meticulously organizing an assemblage of metal pieces. "What's that Daddy?" I ask curiously.

"This is a revolver," he answers while opening a can of pungent smelling, black goo that assaults my nose. After dipping a long, circular brush into the can, he offers it to my sticky fingers instructing me to feed it into the barrel, and then twist it out.

I was getting the hang of cleaning the barrel, so I moved onto the cylinders when he began, "Guns aren't toys now; this is a tool Daddy uses for work. It protects us from the bad guys." He continued on with his philosophical explanation. "They are more like wild animals. You need to know how to handle them, but at the same time you must respect their power." I silently listened, tracing the smooth contours of the body. Learning to clean a .357 Smith & Wesson is one of my earliest memories.

Fire arms are quite possibly the single most destructive invention in history. Leonardo Da Vinci is often credited for inventing the first machine gun. Since then the Germans carried them through the Arden in the Great War. They accompanied half a million baby boomers barraging their way through soggy jungles, and they became instrumental when

the Bloods and the Crips revived the art of the urban drive-by on the streets of L.A. Yet even with all of this mayhem and carnage that they are responsible for, I never felt scared being around them. Maybe this is because both of the male figures in my life always encouraged me to learn to use guns. I grew up surrounded by law enforcement. My grandfather was a deputy during the rebellious sixties. He had seen the Black Panthers and thousands of hippies strung out on acid. My father is officially a detective, but our county is so rural that he often doubles as a deputy for most cases. Needless to say, a gun to them is like a calculator to a CPA. So why shouldn't their little girl have a substantial knowledge of how to defend herself? However, for me it is more than that. Yes, there is something about them- a quiet, patient beauty, so capable of complete annihilation. And it fascinates me.

"Some folks are born silver spoon in hand,
Lord don't they help themselves?
But when the taxman comes to the door,
Lord, house lookin' like a rummage sale."

A car stereo played as I perched myself on a nearby wooden fence. Again I was tagging along with the cadets, this time at their state level shooting competition. The Kitsap County cadets are high school students that take part in the nationwide Explorer Program. This program teaches them job skills, and gives them experience in the field of law enforcement. My dad is Post #1514's chief coordinator. The group was unpacking their gear and suiting up for the first event.

"Stephanie, will you call Jackie again? It is fifteen after and she is still not here," my dad huffed. "All participants for the stationary firing course report to range three!" a southern accent announced over the intercom.

"Looks like Jackie is a no-show," Officer Anderson, another advisor, deduced.

"Great, I am going to seriously reprimand that girl! In the meantime who is going to fill in for her during the first event?" Dad wondered. Officer Anderson eyed me, "I've got an idea," he said smugly.
"No! Erika is not a cadet, she cannot compete,"
"Oh come on Phil. She's taller than half of the female
cadets here. Just give her a uniform..."
"I don't know about this."

Suddenly thrilled by the prospect of getting to com­
pete alongside the big kids, I jumped off the fence and shouted
"Of course I can do it!"

My dad shook his head while he
fished an extra uniform out of the van.

Not ten minutes later I was being strapped into a bul­
etproof vest, safety goggles, and ear protection. “Remember
right foot forward in power stance, left hand cradling the butt,
aim lower because-”

“Dad,” I cut him off, “I know.”

Anderson handed me the loaded .357 and I stepped
up to the window, scanning the targets: a row of three metal
plates, easy enough; two more wooden silhouettes, staggered,
but plenty wide; the final target lay half hidden behind a mas­
sive oak, the trick would be to not hit the tree. “Set, aim, fire!”
the official called. Ping, ping, ping, the plates resonated when
struck by the round. As the gun kicked back I felt a sense of
complete euphoria. “Damn!” I hit the first wooden target a lit­
tle high. Adrenaline was pulsing through my veins, but it on ly
made me more focused. Thud, I hit the second target dead
on. I shifted towards the tree, mean and determin ed.
POW, the last silhouette went like the Frenc h Revolution. “Sharpest shootin’ twelve-year-old I’ve ever seen,” Officer Anderson
whispered to our group.

"Some folks inherit star spangled eyes.
Ooh, they’re sending you down to war.
And when you've asked them how much should we give?
Ooh, they only answer more, more, more.”

I hummed a familiar tune to myself while I waited for
the kettle to whistle. It had snowed so heavily the past few
days; very uncharacteristic for December in western Washin­
gton. I had spent the entire day shoveling a path to the street,
and my arms already ached with building lactic acid. Snow
started to fall again, blanketing the ground outside. So much
for my afternoon of shoveling, I thought. The leather groaned
as I settled down for an uneventful evening. I was unusually
content.

The very next moment I was startled by the ring of the
landline. Hmm, the caller ID says it’s Mom, she is prob­
ably dying to tell me about the gorgeous executive that came
in the office today. Or she is calling to brag about how she
simultaneously managed to paint her nails, get on her nylons
and eat breakfast while driving to work this morning. That is
my mother: life of the party, and unconventional in every way.

“Hey Mom”

“Erika-” her voice broke. I instantly knew that voice.
Something was very wrong.

“What happened?” I demanded. She did not answer
right away, but I could hear the labor in her breath.

“He’s -- he’s cheating on me.”

“Mom BREATHE! Stay calm, I will be there as soon
as possible.”

Facing the window I realized what I had just promised.
How in the world was I going to drive the five, snow packed
miles to her house? “Ben,” I called out. He heard the urgency
in my tone and shuffled down the hallway. “Andreas is cheat­
ing on Mom. I don’t know what is going to happen, but I have
to get over there now. Will you tell Dad what is going on when
he gets home?” His brow turned downward, and his dark blue
eyes looked scared.

“Ugh, yeah,” he stammered. Both of us knew that
this was jeopardous. Mom’s latest boyfriend is a recovered
alcoholic. He might have lost the sauce, but he still has the
raging temper.

The roads to Mom’s house were completely iced over,
so it was slow going. Twenty minutes had gone by since the
 alarming phone call. Oh God, what if he gets there before I
do? In another five minutes my car makes it to the end of our
cul-de-sac. She was there, at the door, waiting for me with the
most tormented expression on her face. “Mom, I’m here. It’s
okay now.” Another large sob bubbled from her throat and
she collapsed into my arms.
After she quieted I was able to maneuver her to the kitchen. The counter was strewn with crumpled pieces of paper. I picked one of them up and noticed it was an email from Andreas; however I did not recognize the receiving address. “Hey Kitten, let’s make this spontaneous. I don’t want any schedules. Just meet me at that motel in Shelton we talked about,” my eyes bugged, this was so blatantly obvious. Another one read “Thursday night on the boat was hot. What other positions do you want to try?” It only got more graphic…

“You are kicking this vile man to the curb tonight!” I screamed.

“What are we going to do when he gets angry?” Mom asked, mirroring Ben’s fear.

“We are going to get ready.” I instantly went into a phlegmatic, focused mode, cataloguing all of the risks this would pose. I left my mom at the kitchen counter to race up to the master bedroom. Underneath the bed was a metal case. This was Andrea’s .44 caliber hand gun. Next I went to the closet. Buried under numerous disheveled stacks of jeans was the shotgun—loaded and unlocked of course. Andreas was not very original when it came to hiding his things. Once he moved in I had made a point to search the entire house looking for paraphernalia like this. Two down, one to find. Across the hall in the office there was a seven drawer, solid cherry dresser. Second drawer, under the socks…shit, not there. He must have taken the .32 caliber pistol with him today. As I stood on the staircase landing I ran through my options. Scenario one: he will leave it in the truck, giving me enough time to sprint out there to get it before he understands what is going on. This leaves my mom alone and unprotected, but at least I can make sure he is not armed. Scenario two: he comes into the house with it concealed. In any case I was not going to be left vulnerable. I ran back to the bedroom, collecting the shotgun, and the .44. First clicking the safety on, I hid the shotgun in Ben’s closet down the hall. Then I shoved the .44 in my jacket pocket. Remaining in my one-track mind set I went down stairs to calm my mom. We could only sit and wait.

Around seven o’clock heavy footsteps sounded on the porch.

“Oh God, oh God, he’s here,” my mom was hysterical. We could hear the door open and the heavy footsteps continued down the hall. Finally he appeared from around the corner. He was completely unaware of the situation, until I gave him my death glare.

“What is going on?” he roared at my mother.

“Are you cheating on me?”

“No, I would never do that.”

“Then what are these?” my mom started to sob again as she shoved a pile of crumpled emails into his hands.

“It was a joke.”

“Like hell it was, you bastard!” she screeched at his lame excuse.

This was it. Those were the words that triggered his temper. His right hand twitched, and his face filled with red. Knowing what he was about to do, I sprang in between he and my mom, just as his elbow cocked back behind his ear.

“Outside, NOW!” I commanded.

“You should know better than to cross me. I have connections down in Portland. You had better watch your back,” he continued screaming profanities at me while digging out chains from the bed of his truck. I clutched the gun in my pocket and drew it intently. He had his back to me. All of the horrible things that he did to my mom, my brother, and I were flooding through my head. I could end this; I could end him, forever. In the middle of my deliberation he turned around and noticed his gun at my right side. I still had an unequivocally clear shot. For the first time all night there was only unbroken, cold silence. I raised my arms, and aimed the gun at his chest. We stared, without losing eye contact, for a mind numbing thirty seconds. I spoke while still aiming, “I suggest that you stop threatening me. Get
in the truck, and leave,” my words were callous. Slowly, his palms turned towards me, communicating that he understood that I was in control. He then back peddled into the cab and revved the ignition. His tires slipped, but he made it out of the driveway.

"It aint me, it aint me, I aint no senators son, son. It aint me, it aint me; I aint no fortunate one."

Unconsciously I dropped the gun in the deep snow, and reached for my cell phone upon hearing my Dad’s ring tone. “Erika, are you okay?” his vexed voice demanded. “Fine, Dad.” “I called 911. Bockley and McVey are on their way. My mind still numb, I stood there in the empty driveway, listening to the safe sounds of the sirens getting closer and closer.

My music enjoys my ears listening
I create my notes
Out of emotional depths
I conform my melody without:
    My particular
    Your particular
    Particular’s particular
I fall under no hole of uniformity
My music comes with this
As it goes with you

I do not see my music becoming true until it:
    Has form
    Has randomness
    Has tract
    Has wonder

My music is poetry
To my ears and to my body

For they are unique within my individuality
My music is my reality