

Rape, by Adrienne Rich

There is a cop who is both prowler and father: he comes from your block, grew up with your brothers, had certain ideals. You hardly know him in his boots and silver badge, on horseback, one hand touching his gun.

You hardly know him but you have to get to know him: he has access to machinery that could kill you. He and his stallion clop like warlords among the trash, his ideals stand in the air, a frozen cloud from between his unsmiling lips.

And so, when the time comes, you have to turn to him, the maniac's sperm still greasing your thighs, your mind whirling like crazy. You have to confess to him, you are guilty of the crime of having been forced.

And you see his blue eyes, the blue eyes of all the family whom you used to know, grow narrow and glisten, his hand types out the details and he wants them all but the hysteria in your voice pleases him best.

You hardly know him but now he thinks he knows you: he has taken down your worst moment on a machine and filed it in a file. He knows, or thinks he knows, how much you imagined; he knows, or thinks he knows, what you secretly wanted.

He has access to machinery that could get you put away; and if, in the sickening light of the precinct, and if, in the sickening light of the precinct, your details sound like a portrait of your confessor, will you swallow, will you deny them, will you lie your way home?

Adrienne Rich, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers"

Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty.

Aunt Jennifer's finger fluttering through her wool
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand.

When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid.