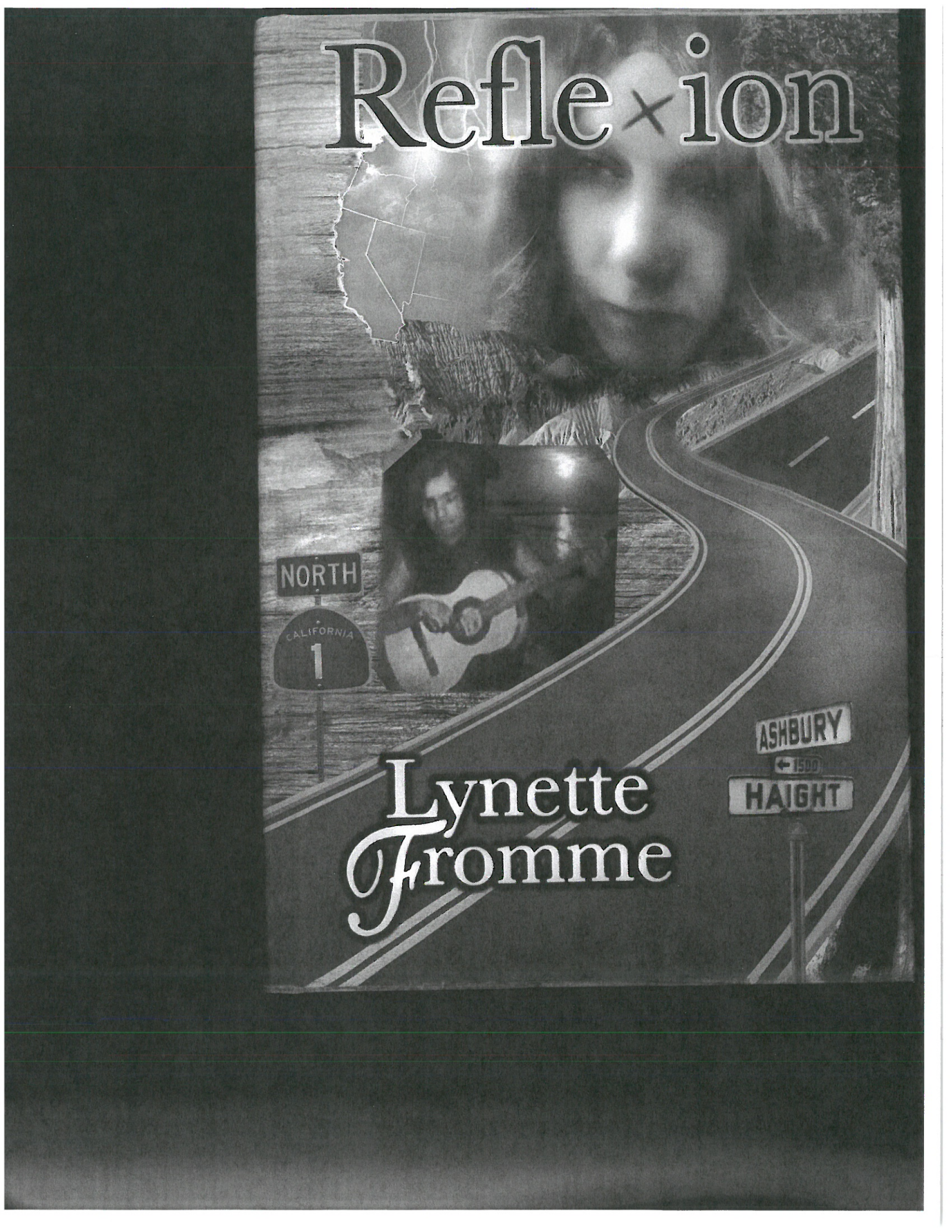


Reflexion



Lynette
Fromme

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The persons and events described in this book are real and true. In some instances pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy of individuals. In such cases the altered names are indicated by an asterisk (*) the first time they appear.

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close enough to hear him, and I had no idea what he was talking about. He concluded his monologue by standing, parting glass doors to the balcony, and disappearing into the night. Likewise, a few people drifted through the rooms like ghosts.

I headed upstairs to find a bathroom. Opening a door, I was startled by a movie-like scene. Dennis was poised over a beautiful woman on a bed. Before I could apologize, I realized they hadn't noticed me, and I reclosed the door.

Downstairs, Charlie had paused to see Deana Martin play the piano and sing. Incongruent with her surroundings, she chose an old blues song about cocaine. I watched her eyes, below tarantula lashes, slide sidelong to Charlie, and her lips mimic a sexy come-on. I never knew what Charlie was going to say or do. Meeting her gaze, he suavely propped himself against the piano like her father had done in countless movies and public appearances. After her last tragic note, she paused, looking up at him. "Well," she asked, "what do you think?"

He said softly, "I think you should go wash your face." To her expression of disbelief, he smiled and said, "I can't see you through all that plaster."

Dennis descended the stairs, telling us that he wasn't ready to leave, and we would need to come back later. Then he went back upstairs. It was a brush off. From my vantage, Charlie and Dennis were once connected in a brotherhood known to men since ancient times. There was love and honor between them. And then it was gone.

We left Terry's house and didn't come back. If Charlie had wanted a recording contract, he could have been more restrained. I once heard him answer Dennis by saying, "How do I feel? I feel that you can't

spend 500 years fucking up the earth, air, and water and then pay a Hindu to get you to forget it."

Being near or just seeing Charlie gave me a sense of being in the right place at the right time. I always latched onto the upbeat and humorous things he said, but one night he stopped mid-sentence, as though snagged on a nagging thought.

"You know," he finally said seriously, "not everyone can live off the land. Two hundred million people living off the land would strip the bark off the trees." After another pause he said, "When we got to the mountains and desert, most of the wildlife was gone. Mountain goats, deer, big-horned sheep, big cats — gone. I looked in the spring above Barker's and seen a dead rat, and I could see through that water all the way to the ocean all the shit and garbage being put in it." None of us spoke. I was thinking of the desert as one of the last places we could get away from pollution. He said, "It's not water here or there. It's ALL WATER. It's connected."

For years I didn't realize he was saying that we *couldn't* get away. *It's connected. There's no getting away from it.* But we were already on our way.

Brenda

Once the first dune buggy was together, Charlie and a couple of us girls took it out into the hills and lived in it. To me, it was a very serious practice run, and I spent the whole time going through the saddlebags and tool box to make sure everything we needed was there. When Charlie first asked for the binoculars, I found out what was there: soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, towels, extra underwear and clothes — all the things we girls packed. We could hardly get to the tools and binoculars. So, we fast found out what we could use and got rid of the rest.

We were testing the best ways to camouflage clothing, and considering the most durable foods like whole grains, dried fruits and vegetables, oil, honey, and nuts.

The need to travel unseen inspired fine-tuning of our senses and muscles, and melding with the vibrations of any environment. Clem could so thoroughly absent himself that even the dogs didn't hear him coming.

Charlie said, "A bird can make a sound you can't hear five feet away, but at twenty-five feet you can. Bush men use sticks and logs to do much the same thing. A drum or flute can be set to go over and around some people yet others can hear it clear." I had experienced sound as a vibration, but I'd never considered the possibility of bouncing it over and around things.

What each of us envisioned of our future in the desert came to light only after we were arrested. Scenarios varied from the need for basic survival skills and supplies to a phantasmagorical world beneath the surface of the earth where chocolate trees grew without sunlight. Charlie was wont to fantasize, and often in jest, but underground chocolate trees were not what I had in mind. Cappy, with scintillating zest, had told us a legend about Montezuma and his people's descent into the earth, and also of the Aztec's use of the cacao bean. Chocolate. To her it was an allegory, but in others' versions, we would meet the people already living underground. Prosecutors would inflate the ideas, claiming that our plan was to emerge like cicadas years later without having physically aged. In their story, Charlie intended to rise as king, Jesus, God. Hogwash. Charlie was looking at underground tunnels and caves to hide from the insane people who would destroy their own planet in pursuit of gold and oil. He inspired in me a sense of adventure that sup-

planted paralyzing dread. If chaos was inevitable, we would ride it out on top of our fears rather than cringing beneath them. We would do what was needed to survive.

from her former ranch was strangely nervous. Shorty would be coming to ride, "a showgirl" he'd been working as a bouncer. Shorty had known the girl, and he was talking to her about mar-

afternoon. There was a part, as she got out of her truck, and they didn't return until after dark. From the bunkhouse, George introduced his wife all the way. George whispered to

me, "Didja see Black Beauty?"

She was a smiling black woman in a wig, and everyone was cordial with her, but Shorty seemed to be showing off an exaggerated notion of his own magnanimity. In other words, it was all about him. My opinion may've been tainted by George's view of Shorty as a swaggering braggart, but George wasn't hateful and didn't elaborate on the subject.

In my teens I'd come to think that all black people needed help. Obviously, I didn't know there were whole towns with black doctors, teachers, and other self-sufficient people. I thought that the pursuit of human rights grew organically, whereas integration was an engineered arrangement, and resistance to it was not exclusive to white people.

Start here

and we entered the house, the young
and forced his over-proud smile, but
leaned back in their chairs, star-
of the table. The older man with al-
teous and suspicious expressions,
space, and commanded the order.
honors that he'd once been a military
and that the three younger men were
. Whether he was the product of
ree-lance philosopher was unclear,
that he did not want these men dis-
. After a brief, awkward visit, we
with referred to Barker's Ranch as
to Paul Watkins as "Little Paul," to
from the older, taller one.

Tex, Gypsy, and I, were crossing the desert in
a dune buggy, and had paused in a gully to rest when
two rangers came over a ridge above us. Cutting their
engine, they parked their Jeep on a hill, and walked
down the slope to meet us. After cordial small talk,
they asked to see our IDs. I don't recall how many of
us had IDs, but Tex was very cool, relaxing the atmo-
sphere.

One of the men asked, "Where's Charlie?"

Tex spoke up. He said, "I'm Charlie."

"The other Charlie," they clarified, smiling.

I believe it was Gypsy who answered next, also
smiling. "I'm Charlie."

Tex shrugged, with his big affable grin, and said,
"We're all Charlies." This banter was cut short when
the men saw another man on the hill near their Jeep.
They rushed to catch up to him, their hands on their
holstered guns, but when they reached the top of the
hill, the Charlie they were looking for was gone, and

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when they jumped into their Jeep to give chase, they couldn't start the engine. The doors flew open, and they got out. We took this as a cue to get in our dune buggy and hightail it.

Sandy

Several of us were walking leisurely on a dirt road when we heard vehicles and walkie talkie radios. Little Patty grabbed me, pulling me and Cho into the bushes where I crouched with my hand covering his mouth. We witnessed sheriffs searching our dune buggy. After the badges left, we knew the heat was on. When Charlie saw the white comforter and baby things I was carrying, he said, "Too much white. It needs to be camouflaged." Reluctantly I dragged the diapers and quilt thru the desert dirt until they blended in.

From then on, our days were spent on the cliffs being still and aware of planes, and taking only one sip of our small supply of water per day. We had way too much in our packs, so we stashed some of it in pocket caverns. At night we could stretch, and sneak down to the water hole.

Sandy

There was a tiny shack at Willow Springs in Butte Valley where we drank and bathed in water pouring from a large pipe. One dusk, as we were gathered in front of the shack Charlie spoke to a bunch of us about the need to defend ourselves. He said he couldn't be everywhere for everyone. He demonstrated martial arts moves as well as some motions that he had evolved for his own survival. Hefty Gypsy lolling

in the doorway, wearing a wool plaid shirt over a long skirt and holding a shotgun looked tough enough to scare anyone.

A group of us girls set out on a journey. Charlie said he and Clem would meet us on the opposite side of a distant mountain. It was hard to tell how far. We walked toward that mountain for some days, stopping at night to make small fires, cook oatmeal or rice, and lay blankets on the ground.

Upon reaching the mountain, we began the long difficult ascent up sharp rocks. It was then I felt the baby wasn't safe enough in my arms, so I traded him for the sack of brown rice Ruth was carrying. She was sure-footed, and eight years younger than me. I'd been so jealous of her that I couldn't see her, and now I completely trusted her to carry my infant son up a craggy treacherous mountain at night. We climbed for hours, and settled on a sandy plateau with sheer high cliffs on either side. Exhausted, we laid out our gear, and I fell asleep nursing my baby.

The next morning Charlie found us and gave us the "all clear" so we could make the descent into Butte Valley. Food was in short supply and people were looking thin, but because I was nursing, I was given first consideration, and ate half a can of fruit cocktail. I "washed" the wet and soiled diapers in the dirt, shook them out and got ready for the climb down the mountain to a Jeep and several dune buggies.

As many of us as could piled into the jeep, and Charlie sped through the Valley. The wind was whipping my face, and the valley floor with its surrounding mountains was brilliantly lit by the red glow of the setting sun. These wild rides in dune buggies or Jeeps with Charlie driving and the baby and I tucked in safely beside him were exhilarating. He stopped where the ground was more densely covered with bushes.

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We quickly unloaded and stretched our camouflaged parachutes over vehicles and between bushes, then placed bushes on top of everything, and climbed inside our bushy cavern just as the airplanes arrived to canvass our area. They didn't see us.

Ruth

We moved camp. The moon was out. As the Jeep headed slowly into the desert, a long line of dancing witches swept away the tracks behind it with desert brooms. We were disappearing, leaving no track or squashed down plant to let anyone know that we had headed in any direction.

The Jeep stopped after a long, long way, and soon all the witches caught up. Here was our new home. Now someone had to go to Barker Ranch and let Tex and Brindle know where we were. It was a ten-mile walk — the straightest route, over hills. I decided to stop thinkin', walk out in the night, and have a good time on me way.

The desert has so many voices and moans and groans and whistles. It has everything imaginable, and that's what I did; I let my imagination go and died a thousand million deaths every second, right on the point. But at last I arrived at the Barker Ranch in time to see the dune buggy fixed, and ride in it to the Jeep. It was getting light mighty fast, so we found a good stash place for the buggy. We covered it with bushes and rocks and all the desert things that stash dune buggies nicely. Just as we were finishing, we spotted a green Jeep far in the distance. Early morning made it clearer. And behind it was another one, and another one... all official green. If they had spotted us already, we knew to lead them away from the Jeep and the family of elves and witches.

Tex picked out a white shale mountain to lead us up... and up. Tex is like a lean, keen mountain goat, so we managed most beautifully. We had no shade, so there we lay on a white mountain, watching a bunch of green Jeeps race around with little stiff gray men looking for us and yelling, "We know you're here — come out!" ("Come down," they didn't say.)

The sun gets hot fast in the desert, and quickly we had peeled off our night clothes. The little men bored us into sleep, as the sun browned us and dried our tongues. At nightfall we awoke to the sound of an engine. It was a dune buggy with messengers of our new camp high in the hills.

We usually traveled only at night. One time we were caught in a shallow arroyo at dawn. The day was too hot to travel, and we needed sleep. Charlie suggested the parachutes for cover. Minutes later, we were about fifteen people and at least one baby lying side by side in a dry riverbed beneath a camouflaged parachute.

I awoke perspiring, hearing noises on the bank above us. It was a vehicle. It stopped. Almost everyone was either sleeping or listening. Two men were edging the embankment less than six feet above us, discussing their weekend plans. It was so quiet we could hear their words. Then Zeezo woke up, making small sounds. I grabbed a bottle of milk or water, desperately hoping he would accept it. He did. I think that I have never been as tense as listening to these men come terribly close to us, so it was a huge relief to hear them conclude that we were not there, turn, walk back to their vehicle, and drive away.