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Something wild: Through her latest metamorphosis-into legitimate actress-may make her downright respectable, Drew Barrymore still knows how to shake things up.

Something Drew Barrymore wrote in her journal in a New York bar, December 1996: I don't think I'm smart. I believe I aspire to be evolved. But I do like to be alone, and smoke and write. All my favorite writers smoked, drank, and talked dirty. They usually have a tortured heart, because that's when the creative flows are the most fluid, I am in my own world a lot of the time, but little compared to the amount of myself I give. Sometimes I am thinking: Fuck off-only to the person who has horns for an aura, the demeanor of hell and the charm of smelly vomit. There are people in the universe who will not-and I don't know why-get along or have their energy agree. So just walk away respecting individuality, kiss it off as they say, because, if anything, kisses-even to the air-are beautiful.

Drew Barrymore is 22, though when you have lived the years like Barrymore, the numbers don't mean much. She has already been through more changes than most of us dream of, or fear, experiencing in a long lifetime. She dates her most recent metamorphosis to her 20th birthday: "I think I was born with this notion that I wasn't going to live very long, so I rushed through life; when I hit 20, I realized I was alive and I didn't have to rush anymore."

From where Barrymore stands, things are going well. She paints herself as a calmer, less exhibitionistic creature these days (though, as we shall see, she exhibits her habitual, very Drew Barrymore version of calm and reserve). Her career is edging forward nicely. She pulled herself out of post-E.T. teenage doldrums by playing the young minx, but now she is putting that behind her. (As she must, she uses denial as part of the process: "I happened to choose a couple of bad-girl roles and got stereotyped. And that was terrifying to me, because that certainly wasn't my intention.")

Barrymore is currently shooting a film called Home Fries near Austin, Texas, has two films, Independence and Wishful Thinking, awaiting release, and has just appeared as a innocent both in Wes Craven's wry horror escapade *Scream*-her well-practiced quote on this: "I screamed so much I didn't have PMS for four months"-and, to her quite evident delight, in Woody Allen's *Everyone Says I Love You*. (It's a musical, but she didn't sing. She tells me that was not, as reported, because her singing voice is quite so terrible-I hear her warbling along to plenty of songs, and her voice seems to be no disgrace-but because she couldn't sing in the quiet, pretty tones of her character. Her well-practiced quote on this: "It would have been all of a sudden Cinderella meets Louis Armstrong.") Allen took a long time to decide Barrymore was right for the part, explaining that he had found it a stretch to imagine her as such a nice, demure

girl. "It's not the kind of thing most people would have picked her for, this Upper East Side girl," says her onscreen fiancé, Edward Norton, "but she sort of puts on the little sweaters and this little blonde wig and you kind of remember: She's a Barrymore. And she wears it very well."

I ask Barrymore how proud she is of the result. "You know, my ego won't allow me to answer that question," she replies, thus answering it with perfect clarity.

Barrymore is smart, which is not to say that she is necessarily sorted out. She has certainly, in the American way, learned and grown former trials and tribulations-and as she has lived through an unnaturally precocious flurry of both, she has learned and grown an absurd amount. (Her kind of knowledge and intelligence is impressive and enviable, though it is not, of course, the kind that necessarily protects you from further tragedy or pratfalls.)

Barrymore's most frequently expressed maxim is that she doesn't judge people. She says this often enough that it is impossible not to realize that she is also saying the reverse: that she doesn't want to be judged. If there is a conundrum at the heart of the current Drew Barrymore, it is relatively simple and benign one: She does not want the world to judge her, but she would nonetheless quite like it to love her.

This is the kind of thing that happens when you spend time with Drew Barrymore: We meet in an Austin hotel bar-she closes her journal and her copy of Tom Robbins' *Still Life with Woodpecker*-and she doesn't waste any time. Among the subjects she covers in the next 45 minutes: the relationship between social smoking and Prometheus; Woody Harrelson's pro-hemp crusade (He's got it so right"); the comeback of fur wearers ("I shoot them a spiritual dart every time"); the role of the nipple in society ("Men want a woman with the nipple growing out the top of their head"); her belief in animism ("You believe that everything has a soul-you start having respect for objects, even"); Bill Maher ("I just think he's fucking smart man- all the guys I've ever been in love with have always been quirky, smart, funny guys"); posterity ("I could give a flying fuck about the aftermath, the glory, all of that"); the mirror ("I used to look in the mirror and feel shame; I look in the mirror now and I absolutely love myself"); her current boyfriend, actor Luke Wilson ("He's cute"); her former boyfriend, Hole guitarist Eric Erlandson ("I would yell with great ferociousness at anyone who spoke anything less than beautifully about Eric"); butterflies ("Why I love butterflies so much is the metamorphosis, because I think humans go through so many in their lives"). And some other stuff, too. And then...

The waitress interrupts us to say that a man in a red hat is asking for the actress. Barrymore doesn't recognize him and decides to stay out of sight. Fifteen minutes later, the waitress returns. The man insists he and his wife are supposed to be having dinner with her. Barrymore is about to deflect this a second time; then a look of total panic overtakes her. "Come on," she says. She had forgotten. The stranger is a man whom she has telephoned and asked to meet. And now, in the Drew-ness of it all, she whisks me along; and that is how I end up completing a cozy foursome at dinner with Texas' most famous filmmaker recluse, Badlands author Terrence Malick. I'm sure he is more surprised by this sudden public exposure than I am, but he and his

wife are charm itself, with each other as much as with us. ("I walked away from that dinner," Barrymore says later, "literally being most inspired by their love for each other.")

Anyway, Malick must learn: This is the kind of thing that happens when you spend time with Drew Barrymore.

The next morning, at just after 7, we head off in Barrymore's van to the set of Home Fries. (Often, she has to leave for work at 4:30 a.m. "You know how cold it is at 4:30?" she says. "It's that nipple-pain cold.") She drives the way she talks, with an engaging degree of over enthusiasm, a breathtaking disregard for the fussier rules and an only intermittent interest in aiming straight ahead. ("I start looking around," she breezily confides, "and I forget I'm driving.") Whenever she passes a field of cows, she yells, "Hi! Hello! How ya doing?" generally followed by "Hope you're dairy!"

In the makeup trailer, Barrymore sits considering her breasts, alternately complaining about them (They're so in the way") and praising them ("God, I love having tits sometimes"). She decides that she'd like to be able to just put them on at night. She straps her character's pregnant stomach, a foam mold that she claims "smells like pancake mix." (No, she says, it doesn't make her feel more like having a baby, because she wants one so badly anyway. "Women want babies to procreate," she says, "just as men feel the need to"-she mimes a masculine hip thrust-"cross pollinate." I tell her to wait. "I will wait till the time is right," she says. "That could be in a month; it could be in five years.") She talks with the female makeup crew about flowers and spirituality and animal rights. (The other day, she had to threaten to walk off the set to stop the crew from killing a wasp that was disrupting filming.)

Today's scene is in the fake fast-food place called Burger-Matic. Barrymore's character must apologize for her drunken father to Luke Wilson's character. You wouldn't know about the actors' off-screen demeanor. "Our profession is too important," she says later. "We'd never be on the set and even sit on each other's lap."

Wilson also played opposite Barrymore, as her husband, in her previous film, Independence. It was a weird thing: They were cast together in two films before they had even been in the same room. Barrymore's account of meeting Wilson: "I just remember looking at him, and I was so embarrassed. I've never had love at first sight, and he was the first person I've ever had it with; and I thought for sure he'd be able to read it right in my face. And I remember looking down in embarrassment and seeing his shoes, sort of light brown, suede-real non-descript, unostentatious, cute shoes. They seemed to me to look like camels that I would trek across any desert to follow."

Camels I would trek across any desert to follow. You can see why the world tumbles over backwards for her.

From a poem that Barrymore wrote on an airplane:

Making love is as high and low as one can go  
Like color having camaraderie in a tangled rainbow

If you ever go driving with Barrymore, there is one thing you must never do. You must never assume control of her window. Never roll it down. Most especially never roll it up. That window is hers-up, down, up, down, arm out, closed shut, whichever-and it is her freedom.

"It's a weird claustrophobic trip I have," she says. "I'm completely fearless-I mean, even death, I'm not afraid of death- except about windows. My weird pet peeve." And that's all she wants to say about this.

Here is another, seemingly unconnected fact: Mad Love, the 1995 film in which Barrymore plays a disturbed teen-age girl who is eventually locked up in a psychiatric institution, really got to her. "I went into the deepest depression I've ever been in after that movie," she says. "That really fucked with my head. I had to tap into demons that were really painful. It reminded me of some of the shit I had to go through."

The shit she had to go through was being incarcerated as a teen-ager, put into a forced-lockdown version of rehab-by her mother-after Barrymore had appeared to be uncontrollable one too many times. Being strapped down. Being shut into a tiny, windowless room if she misbehaved.

So I wonder: The car-window psychosis, does it come from being locked up?

Barrymore looks surprised. For a while she doesn't say anything. "Yeah. That's exactly where it comes from." Back then, the windows were always closed, and there was nothing she could do about it. "I would love," she says forlornly, "to have controlled my windows there." She smiles with determination. "That experience damaged me in only one way, which was to make me really claustrophobic. It's the one thing I can't understand why it had to happen; but I'm so glad it did, because I have the fervor of a newborn animal. That made me the most humble, grateful, stable person. When I see the sky, I appreciate it."

This is the kind of thing that happens with you spend time with Drew Barrymore:

The first sign, a few miles short of Johnson City, Texas, says, LIVE SNAKES--100 YARDS. The second one says LIVE RATTLESNAKES. We do a U-turn and pull into the deserted driveway. There is a handwritten note on a door saying that if no one is around, we should honk our horn. Barrymore honks. An old man steps out of a nearby mobile home and shuffles our way:

"Howdy. You want to see them?"

We do. In a gravel pit are approximately 30 snakes. The man wanders among them, picking up the non-venomous ones and poking the rattlesnakes with a metal pole or holding out a boot for them to bite. We stand just the other side of a wooden partition. When a rattlesnake lunges,

Barrymore clutches my shoulder. Then the man tells her that the small transparent box, right next to where she is standing, there is a tarantula.

Barrymore screams and shoots back several yards, almost without moving her feet.

"OK," she says. "You got me on that one. They're the only thing that scares me more than anything in the world."

"Up until I was 20, I was frightened of spiders," the man tells her, "and the way to get over it is to pick one up."

"Oh, my God!" she says, at the very thought of it. But after a little more reptile show-and-tell, she walks back over. He gets the tarantula between his fingers and turns it to show us the fangs. Then he holds it so that we can touch the top. "I'm so scared," she says. This is the moment when Barrymore—who is wearing a pajama top and ludicrous fluffy pink coat—finally makes the tarantulas contact. She screams, but it is done.

Barrymore gave up drinking spirits a couple of month's back. "It clashes with my personality," she says. "It didn't enhance me as a human being." (She used to favor tequila shots: "Miss 'em like crazy sometimes.") But the girl that was the public poster child of rehab culture in her midteens has drunk alcohol for the past two or three years. "I drink beer because I love it," she says. "I love the little tingle it gives on your shoulders. I love wine with meals."

We talk about this for a while, which Barrymore finds a little annoying, especially when I refuse to take the hint to change the subject. She feels that the mischief's of her past have been dwelt upon plenty enough. Here are some extracts of our conversation, printed at some length not because the fact that Barrymore likes the occasional beer is a big deal (I think she has far less of a problem with any of this than those who would censure her) but for what it reveals about her now.

I suppose there are Some people who are horrified if you drink at all.

They shouldn't be. I hate to say it, because it sounds like a cliché, but I'm so in control of my life, you shouldn't dislike anything I do—because I'm not only in the best place I've ever been, but it keeps getting better and better. So, I hope they would encourage my ability in my own responsibilities.

So why might people think that?

I think what it all stems from is fear. And that's a burden I can't carry. I think because I've grown up in front of people, people have a tendency to have a maternal judgment: "You should do this; you should do that." And what's so funny is, did you ever stop to think that you don't know me? Although I've been willing, because I've grown up in the public eye and all this stuff had happened to me, to bare my soul, there's a part of me that now asks for your trust in me, rather

than your doubt. Your doubt will not do me any good...I experimented with drugs when I was young, just like every other kid on the planet. Mine just happened to be public, so people thought I was a drug addict. I never have been into drugs.

Very few kids end up in rehab.

[Sharp intake of breath] yeah, but my mom put me there. There was a decision made-[stops suddenly]. It doesn't matter. The past is bullshit. I feel I'm not doing anything wrong, and therefore I don't need to explain myself. And it's really quite a beautiful relief. I think also it's much more important to focus on the bigger issues. We've got to prioritize. The unnecessary murder of trees and the environment-that's important. If I have a Corona at the end of my day, that's not important.

It is her charity work that Barrymore would rather we talk about. Her work for the Pediatric AIDS Foundation, for instance. And then there is the female condom. Barrymore was recently asked by the Female Health foundation to be the female condom's national spokeswoman.

Hmm. I feel obliged to ask what degree you've road tested these devices.

I was very shocked at the national press conference that they didn't ask me that. The only thing I can say is, of course, I would never endorse a product I haven't tested myself. That's absolutely abominable.

So?

I have to say, this is not only the most wonderful thing for women, but men are going to be thoroughly pleased because it is much more pleasurable to the man. It just works better all the way round.

Barrymore gets free samples. She has been handling them around on the Home Fries set. Just to the women.

The character witnesses: "She's very savvy. She's 22, but she's an old soul," says Edward Norton, who has remained friends with Barrymore since the Woody Allen film. (They share a New York apartment, generally in each other's absence.) "I think some people go through bad experiences, difficult experiences, and come through it cynical. And she seems to have come through it with a heightened sense of compassion."

Harvey Weinstein, who along with his brother, Bob, heads Miramax, the studio that released both *Scream* and *Everyone Says I Love You* (and where Barrymore's production company is developing a film called *Like A Lady*), is taken with her. "I think the sky's the limit," he says. "She is in Gwyneth Paltrow's territory, and I think Gwyneth's the best young actress of her generation. And Drew's right up there." But it's more personal than that. "If Bob and I could adopt her--" he

says. "Maybe we should. Actually, not Bob and me. We want to get my mother, Miriam, to adopt her. She'd be great as mine and Bob's younger sister."

Wes Craven talks of Barrymore potential to become "one of the major actresses of American cinema." If it works out. "With Drew," he says, "it's like a great racer. You know that she could go into the wall or she could just show you a line through the curves of life that nobody else has been able to define.

Tim Roth, who also appears with Barrymore in *Everyone Says I Love You*, describes her as "like a 50-year-old-head on 20-year-old," He too, is impressed by how much she wants to move on, to be taken seriously. He suspects, though, that she may have to be patient for a while. "It's very hard when you look at her now; she's such a cherub,' he says. "I think when her face changes, as it will, she'll be able to expand more. It's hard for directors to look at her and place her in more challenging roles because of what they see when they look at her."

What do they see?

"I think perverted innocence," he says. "I think a lot of directors look at her and just plain want to fuck her. She's got that built in, so she tries to fight that."

A couple of years back, Drew Barrymore went through what could best be described as a taking-her-clothes-off-phase. "Yeah." She nods. "That was fun. Those periods only last so long, so you should take advantage of them. It's a part of that dying on your deathbed and knowing that you've lived every moment to its fullest." She posed for *Playboy*; she stripped in a New York club; she jumped onto David Letterman's desk and flashed her breasts at him.

"Promoting freedom and comfortability," Barrymore says. "The only message I had, if there was one, was just to be happy and comfortable in your skin. It was never about exhibitionism. It just happened that my friend and I did this thing one night at this strip club, this performance-art trippy place, and then the Letterman thing happened, and the *Playboy* thing had happened before that; so it kind of seemed like it was a taking-off-my- clothes period."

And then Barrymore moved on. "You know what came after that?" she says. "The scarf period. From head to toe, I wouldn't show a fucking thing." She made a calculated decision to try to keep herself out of the gossip columns. So, she stopped dancing naked in public, but the stories continued. There was the one about her marriage-wrecking affair with *Batman Forever* co-star Val Kilmer.

"It's funny," she says. "I finally saw Joanne Whalley-Kilmer in the elevator of the Chateau Marmont about six months ago, and I was like, 'I'm really glad I ran into you. I just wanted you to know that I never would have touched your husband, never have, and I hope you know that. I hope you know that the whole thing was very embarrassing for everyone.' She got off the next floor and that was that. She kind of looked at me. I couldn't tell her reaction. But, oh, my God, Val and I are totally only friends. Never ever touched each other. It's amazing-in Hollywood, you

can't really be friends with other people without having sex with them. There are so many men I'm friends with and I haven't slept with-may I shock the world! I'm actually quite selective."

Barrymore was also suddenly being talked about as the New Lesbian on the Block.

"Me! Oh, I've always been bisexual," she says with a laugh. "The new lesbian on the block! It's no news flash. There's something androgynous and ambidextrous about my sexuality. But I haven't been with a woman in a long time. About two years. But I was with women much more regularly before that."

Were you with a woman before you were with a man?

I think so. [Smiles] I've always liked making out. I think you'd be surprised by this, but I'm actually sensual-but I'm not sexual. I'm much more into the romanticism of things than actually going out there and crying it out. I want to kiss for 10 hours rather than have sex any day of the week.

And so we talk of Letterman.

"Talk about moments," Barrymore says. "Definitely one of the best moments of my life. I'm just standing there on Dave Letterman's desk, and the only thing that's going through my mind is, what are you doing? It was never planned. I just did it. And that was so liberating. For the rest of my life, I get to go back to that memory any time I want."

And so does he.

I'm so glad. I really like him so much. I've always had a crush on him my whole life. Up until I was 7, it was Ted Koppel; then one night, I put on the wrong channel. Ted has intellect, but Dave has intellect and humor.

Is he sexy?

I think so. Because he's charismatic.

Does he have boyfriend potential?

Definitely. But every time I see him, I just happen to be with somebody else. Also, I would never-the funny thing is that I'm the most risk-taking daring person in the world-dare ask David Letterman out.

So, if you're ever single again, should he call?

Are you kidding me?



No. If has read this far, he's going to want to know the answer.

Of course. I meant, "Are you kidding me?" as in "Absolutely."

You're not worried about the age difference?

No. [smiles] I've always dated men much older than I am.

But surely, even by your standards, that's stretching it. You've never dated anyone quarter of a century older.

Not that you know of. [Giggles]

This is the kind of thing that happens when you spend time with Drew Barrymore:

We go to Wal-Mart. "All my socks have got holes," Barrymore says. "It's gone way beyond cool. It's kind of sad at this point. No heels." Wal-Mart is where she usually gets her underwear too. "Packs of three. The magic number. I like Hanes Her Way, Jockey, Gap. I'm an all-cotton girl."

She buys socks, then dotes over the children's Spider-man underwear. She confers with a local girl shopper. "Why don't they make this stuff in our size?" Barrymore asks. She moves on.

The girl in the underwear section catches up with us just as we pass, dumbstruck, the Kathie Lee Gifford collection. The penny has dropped. "I recognize your voice!" she says. "I watch your movies. Boys on the Side and everything. I was, 'Oh my God, she's talking to me!'" She says that her friend Courtney looks like Barrymore. (People always tell Barrymore that.)

A few minutes later, today's girl-who-looks-like-Barrymore, who has been speedily summoned by phone, turns up. Naturally, she doesn't look much like her at all, but Barrymore chats sweetly. We buy some cassettes, and Barrymore buys some cheesy paintings in wooden frames. (She uses the frames, to press flowers in.) We begin moving faster, but people begin milling around. So, she signs a few autographs at the checkout, and we scamper out. "You could feel the vibe through the aisles," she says, now safely in the car. "I had a bull's eye in the middle of my forehead."

Sometimes Barrymore will let slip a phrase-like, "I say to all my fellow orphans'-that might lead one to believe she has no living parents. And surely that is sometimes how it feels to her, but it is not the truth.

Her father, John Barrymore Jr. left when she was young, after a certain amount of violence and nastiness, and abandoned an acting career for a shoeless life of drugs and wandering. Periodically, he reappears. Recently, Barrymore was driving along Sunset Boulevard when she saw her father in the car next to hers. (He was in the passenger seat. He can't even drive a bicycle," she says.) He asked her for help, which she gave, and they took the opportunity to

build some tentative bridges and to express their love for each other. "He and I are more similar in that we understand that we're family but we don't need to speak every day and have the traditional family relationship, because we never had it. I think my mom wants that; my dad doesn't." So, ironically, Barrymore got her father a place in Santa Monica, Calif. "He's just hanging out, doing his thing," she says. "I don't check up on him. I'm not his mother."

It was her mother, Jaid, who nominally raised Barrymore. They stopped talking in her teens and then, a couple of years ago began corresponding. At the time, Barrymore was guardedly excited that some kind of reconciliation might be beginning. Eventually, they met a couple of times, but now they are once more out of touch. (Barrymore won't quite say that it is her decision, but she gives that impression.) "I just don't think it's our time yet," she says. "I just think it's smart. We just have completely different interests in life. Utterly opposite. Yin and Yang." When I press her, Barrymore chooses her words carefully. "I feel like I need to sense growth between us as individuals that I don't sense from her yet," she finally says.

Last year, Barrymore's mother published an explicit sex guide, *Secrets of World Class Lovers*. "It seemed appropriate for her," says Barrymore patiently. Jaid dedicated it to her daughter, but Barrymore only flicked through it. "It's probably the last person on earth you want to take sexual tips from," she says.

And then there was *Playboy*. Barrymore posed for the January 1995 issue, a decision she does not regret. Her mother posed for the September 1995 issue. "How would you feel," Barrymore asks, "if your mother posed for *Playboy*?" And it must be even more uncomfortable when the principal reason your mother's body is of interest is you. "I didn't like it," Barrymore says. "I thought it was inappropriate."

Were your pictures better? I ask her.

Barrymore looks up at me: "That is the oddest question."

Another day, in a Mexican restaurant, Barrymore shares her nervousness about spending Christmas with her boyfriend's family: "I want to scream, do you realize I've lived alone since I was fourteen years old! Alone? And I didn't even have anybody before that, just different, weird, trippy, random people. There's a part of me that I feel like this alone woman on earth who spent every Christmas and Thanksgiving alone. Of course I'm terrified."

Barrymore tells a story about last year's lonely Christmas, when she stayed home alone recovering from a tonsillectomy, sitting in the bath listening to Judy Garland records and crying. "I hate ice cream, and that is all I could eat," she says. "Ice cream to me is cold vomit with a spoon."

It is easy to observe how excellent Barrymore is at drawing people toward her. I must ask: How much of a drive is it that you want people to love you?

Barrymore looks a little nonplussed. "I would never want anybody to love me," she says. "I am very happy if they do. But if you have a job in the public eye, and if you are someone in a different position, if both people said yes, how badly they want people to love them, it would always seem like the person in the public eye is a shallow a-hole." She edges a little closer to the truth: "Of course I want people to love me, but it's not going to hurt me if they don't."

I think that, realistically, it's quite a big drive in you, I tell her.

"I think a bigger drive in me is to take care of people. It's maybe..." She stops. Maybe it's just so obvious what she really means. Anyway, this is when she begins to cry. "I hate the holidays," she says. The tears drip down. "I think, in all honesty, what would probably feel good is if somebody wanted to take care of me. I never felt sorry for me that I've had such a weird life. I just want to fucking make it good."

From a Drew Barrymore short story: I can remember a Christmas in ----, with this family who claimed me as their own, amongst many other families. I spent a grilled Velveeta and fresh strawberry jam Christmas with them. Pork chops were a favorite, but I always preferred the macaroni and cheese, and I did question how many boxes they would have to make to achieve the bulk that would not only feed the family but my own greedy white trash and youthfully deprived appetite.

They were traditional in the way of having a son and a daughter, living in an old haunted historical land turned golf course. They went to church on Sunday, and inevitably I would have to have the father's handkerchief to snot my laughter away because in my own nontradition I can't help but laugh at the seriously unlaughable.

We would retire home where I shared the only room with the daughter upstairs. It was the only second level of the house, where we would get into our pajamas and dream of boys to come-at the time it was any member of Duran Duran, with the rude exception and exclusion of Roger-and pretend to play games that seemed appropriate for girls our age. But really we were focused on other things. Our minds were like dancing mushrooms in a frying pan, or eggplants any old soul could sink their teeth in, with the juice in their mouths and the seeds traveling through their gums.

If you want to know my secret desire, it was to have her nightgown. It was something that Sue Lyon or Carroll Baker could have sunk their teeth into, let alone their prepubescent bodies. It had a faded sun-shine-yellow baize with a red gingham trim lollygagging around the arms and the bottom. It was just short enough to be politely suggestive. Oh, how I wanted that nightgown, and its sex in that random piece of cloth. I wanted to privately roll around on the green grass bed that surrounded their Norman Rockwell home, and jump on the trampoline, to climax with potato chips and chocolate-chip ice cream running down my face, and for that dream to come and to clean me off and make me pure again so I could return to that little sacred room upstairs meant for little girls, and I could be a woman with a secret of just even knowing the depths of pedophilia orgasm.

But she wore the garment that I believed was freedom, and I bore the threads that continually tied me down.

Barrymore reads this story to me at the counter of a busy Mexican restaurant, over a late Sunday breakfast of chalupas, trying to throw her voice in my direction without drawing attention of the other diners. She is filling in the details of good Christmas stories leave hanging (it's a true Christmas memory; she was 8 or 9; favorite Duran Duran member was John Taylor; no, she never wore the gown) when a girl breathlessly parks herself by Barrymore's shoulder.

"Are you Drew Barrymore?" she gasps.

For a moment, Barrymore looks confused. She was somewhere else. "Er," she says. It doesn't seem such a difficult question, but she struggles with it. "Yeah," she finally answers, "I am." Then she grins that butter-mouth-melt smile. "I had to think about it."