When I told Father Damien about the rape, he was furious with me for letting Trent in the house. *You had to know he was high on something, didn’t you?* I’d never seen Damien angry before. I remembered Birdie, the crazy nun from high school, and the wacko warnings she’d given us about not tempting boys and how to keep ourselves pure. I knew instantly that I was, if not totally to blame for the rape, then, at least equally. *I let him in.* This was my mantra whenever I unfroze long enough to think anything.

I waited to tell my new therapist, Marina, until I’d been seeing her for six months and was pretty sure she wouldn’t ream me as well. To my surprise, she said that Trent would have gotten in no matter what. That he would have pushed the door open or smashed a window, that there was no way I could have stopped him.

But I wonder. My friend Roxy took karate and broke two boards and got a green belt and has never been assaulted.
I did not report the rape. There was no actual weapon. I had no visible bruises. He was nuts, of course, and most likely high on something, a big muscled guy. I encased myself emotionally like a mummy, and that was that.

A few months later I went to my first women’s-only meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous and sat there. The other women (maybe fifteen of them) were older and of the hard-assed variety of drunks in recovery. It was one of the first women’s meetings ever organized in New York state.

I told them.

I’ve been to a lot of AA meetings in my life. You could say maybe seven thousand plus. I’ve discovered you can pretty much tell those folks anything. But I didn’t know that then. When I opened my mouth and out came the rape account, then the part about Father Damien’s betrayal, and then I was sobbing, I was simply done with my secret.

Out of the fifteen women in the room that day, all but three or four had been raped. I couldn’t have known this, of course; I wouldn’t have predicted such a thing.

The women told me their stories.

My life has been a gathering of elegant information. Everything I know has come to me through what I’ve done and what has been told to me; or, everything known already exists and I have walked through some of it, guessing at significance. When the women had all spoken, we did not hold hands for the final prayer like they do now. Only Californians held hands in those days. The custom didn’t reach New York until ’79, and then it would start with the young and work upward.