



TESTAMENT

a novel

Vickie Gendreau

Translated by Aimee Wall

FIRST ENGLISH EDITION

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PAVILION A

VICKIE

Before beginning, I show you my card, you check your register. I'm the right girl, I'm the author of this book, I have access to the pavilion. In the photo, I have puffy cheeks. In the flesh, they're hollow. You're not paying attention. You concentrate on the words. I enter through the sliding door. Fireflies follow me, eight and a half by eleven fireflies. You're curious. You come to wait for the elevator with me. I tell you to take my life in your hands. The fireflies draw closer. The elevator arrives. You jump in, the fireflies too. Which floor? Third basement.

STANISLAS

She brought us all together. Me and her, me and her friends. A perfect circle, a clear-cut ring of little renown. She was careful not to name us. Like you, I'm holding the book in my hands. I'll read it at the same time as you. I'm probably going to cry too.

RAPHAËLLE

She wrote to us before she began her treatments, non-stop for a full day and a half. Everything that flowed through her poured into USB keys, slipped into brown envelopes to be distributed by her friend Mathieu. Poor Mathieu. It had to be difficult to know, to have known. Poor homeless fennec foxes. Poor homeless literature.

VICKIE

I have sad orange juice, the sad Virgin, sad Tia, I have no more whipped cream, I have sad tomato juice, sad green tea, a sad club sandwich, sad McNuggets pre-chewed by the blender sliding easily through the jaw, I have no more morphine, I have sad pear tea, sad brunch, totally depressed milkshake, sad pool water, sad chlorine, sad milk, sad mix, sad glass of water, sad applesauce, a champagne flute lying on its side. Sweet tears. Liquefied doughnut. Extricated ingrown hair. Underwear full of pus, sitting on the counter. It is June 6, 2012 and I'm sad. And always naked for nobody, in a big empty bed. With this never-ending glass to finish. Other adjectives escape me. Sad attitude, sad mill, I can't sleep, I'll never sleep again.

MAXIME

A man in black approaches. He gives her a fennec fox on a leash. I see other people behind him, with more foxes. I think they'll have to use the coffin for a litter box. It's empty in any case, for now.

Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal

CHUM

Week 1 – Monday

Diet: Normal, soft minced, liquid honey

Dinner

Room 5050, Bed 2

Name: Gendreau, Vickie

Please use the towelette to wash your hands before the
meal

Berry cake

Minced meat

BBQ sauce

Diced beets

Salt

Pepper

Margarine (2)

Whole wheat toast (2)

Creamy apple beverage (3)

2% milk

Hot water

Sad tea

Decadron (1)

NIPPLE KIDMAN.COM

I would give anything to forget that I had to urinate in one of the hospital's "guest toilets" the Monday of that dinner. In the middle of the night. I had to hold this colourful little train out of the water. It was no picnic. I'd been fantasizing about us, happy in love in the silent

savannah. As for him, he was fucking Samantha that whole time. He was telling her that her breasts are pretty. I close my eyes, I open my eyes. I'm at Mont-Tremblant. I close my eyes, I open my eyes. I'm at Mont-Laurier. I close my eyes, I open my eyes. I'm in Grand-Remous. I close my eyes, I open my eyes. I'm in Val-d'Or. I keep my eyes closed a long time. I came here to be told that my breasts are pretty. The bar is called Le 69. I'm in Rouyn. I'm one of the five pretty girls with pretty breasts promised in the lobby. The car is packed full of fennec foxes. The girls are pissed. Seven hours with a hundred foxes is a long time. No matter how cute they are. I should have put pearl necklaces on them, but I was a bit afraid the mean girls would steal them. All strippers steal.

MAXIME

She goes out to smoke a cigarette behind the club. A man in black hands her another fox. The girls put their suitcases in the litter box, which the driver emptied and then left with. The boss gave her a double room, she hides the foxes in there, she'll go down and clean that one too. They must sell litter at the grocery store. It is May 29, 2012.

NIPPLE KIDMAN.COM

Beautiful Tatiana takes the stage. Uneventful. She leaves. Sensual Candy goes up to titillate the gentlemen. A wallet draws attention to a pile on the edge of the stage. We're in Ontario. She leaves the Ontarian stage. English girls are all the same, their names are always edible.

Sweet Camilla goes up for her two minutes. An electronic beat. It feels like twenty minutes. The Notorious B.I.G. makes an appearance in the song. Never mind. She steps down. Then Ethereal Kaya shows everyone how it's really done. The dj has no idea what the word ethereal means. Kaya's amazing. He should have said excellent. But the other girls would be jealous. He said ethereal. She steps down. Generous Patricia takes the stage. She's fat. That's what generous means. I didn't tell the dj a single thing about my life. He thinks I'm intelligent. Intelligence left the stage a long time ago, babe.

VICKIE

I close my eyes, I open my eyes. I'm changing my tampon on the Voyageur bus. Sketchy maneuver, I know. I close my eyes, I open my eyes. I'm changing my tampon at the exit of a dépanneur on Duluth. I close my eyes, I open my eyes. I see Stanislas and his new concubine walking down the other side of a grungy street in Verdun. She has more class than me, he wouldn't be ashamed to introduce her to his parents at a pseudo-fancy Apportez-Votre-Vin, not far from a pretty cute girl inserting a telescope into her pussy, barely hidden behind a bush. I keep my eyes closed a long time. In comparisons, I'm always the smallest one.

NIPPLE KIDMAN.COM

Before I arrive, you text me to say that Samantha was an escort for a day. Great news. Why are you telling me this? Why is it relevant? She had something to prove, no

doubt. To whom? She definitely has an answer. At least I hope so, for her sake. You have to do that job for the right reasons. Otherwise kaboom, there goes your self-esteem, you can say bye to that sweet little soft ass of yours. It all goes out the window. Samantha and I are supposed to have all kinds of things to talk about because she was once an escort and I'm a stripper. This logic makes me sick. Makes me want to take a shower. We'd have Stanislas to talk about anyway. I took a lot of showers because of that guy. In his pants, the point exclaiming for Samantha. So many client erections, so many beds. The mattress is hard, the pillow is hard, my thighs are blue. I worked hard. I did whatever I could to feed my hundred foxes.

VICKIE

I close my eyes, I open my eyes. I'm at Emergency. I close my eyes, I open my eyes. I'm still at Emergency. I close my eyes, I open my eyes. I'm on my way to the Necrology Department. I close my eyes, I open my eyes. No, it's Neurology. My breath smells like a dead fox this morning. I think again about what the oncology nurse said to me yesterday: Use condoms, my girl, you mustn't get pregnant. My breath will act as a barrier. Seeing me on my stretcher like this is not exactly a turn-on. My right breast winks at visitors through my hair. But why is your right breast always peeking out like that anyway? Well, because I couldn't figure out my gown. It's new. There's Chinese stars on it. It's super cute with my tutu. It's pretty but even Daniel had a hard time doing it up. Good

thing the tutu is there to pull it all together. The outfit depends on it. Yes, I'm wearing a tutu in my hospital room. I'm in bed. In front of the empty chairs for visitors. The two empty chairs are pushed up against the wall. At any moment now one of the comedians from *Les Appendices*, Dominic Montplaisir, and his girlfriend could show up to tell me that they're going to name their baby Amandine Montplaisir. Amender son plaisir, enhance your pleasure, I think that's hot, it's poetic. At any moment now, Jim Jarmusch could come in to sing me *I Put a Spell on You* with his cigarette voice. At any moment now, the poet Andrés Morales could show up in boxer shorts with whiskey and offer me a Marlboro. I'm craving nicotine. I'm craving peace. I will always be craving something in order to be happy. Time, ultimately. Right now the chairs are empty, the possibilities are infinite, all the bums that could potentially fill these seats. Divine could come sing me *Female Trouble*, the giant rapist lobster could dance on the other chair. It would disturb Madame Tardif less if Divine whispered. Madame Tardif is the woman who shares my room, she's had a big operation on the vertebrae in her neck. Her lymphatic fluid gives her pain down to her legs. I'm a bit jealous. I'd like to be operable too. She's nice, she puts up with all my visitors. Stanislas could come watch me sleep, stroke my hair. Stanislas will always be the man of my life, I'm just not the woman of his. I'll explain that later. Later in this little book, later in my little life. I thought that I was going to write this book and then never speak of the subject, the boy, ever again. Everything is imperative in my life now. This is probably

the last heartache I'll ever have. The last times hurt. Life is vulgar. I would like to at least be able to chill out for a few weeks in the library with Genet and Guyotat. I won't bore you with that too much. My stories never work. That's why I like poetry, it's always infinite. I'm suspicious of people who end their poems with a period.

NIPPLE KIDMAN.COM

I can't stop thinking about it. About your cock between Samantha's legs while I'm here all saccharine in my .doc, unable to stop thinking about you. Imagining you kissing me. This new reality, this membrane frozen over. During this time, you'd meet her son. You played Wii with her son. You must love her, some part of you. You would never have met my son. If I'd had one. I aborted all three of them. That photo album doesn't exist. No beautiful family portraits. What if I sent you some dirty pictures. She stole my lover. You look at the naked photos of me together in her big white bed in Verdun. I'm so stupid. Big, hairy and stupid. I should have known. But I thought you would ask yourself the minimum amount of questions. Two psychologist parents. Apparently not. I was wrong. It's like those girls who think they're in love because they didn't use a condom with the guy. You justify your irresponsibility and I write in 125%.

VICKIE

The doctors always make me repeat it, it's June 6, 2012, I'm an obedient parrot, it's my father's birthday. The doctors tell me that I have a "cloud" tumour in my brain

stem. The doctors crash my party. The sequins cloud over. Later, I thought of my father as I pulled off my electrodes before the millionth MRI. My mother accumulates old visitor badges and cards for my appointments in her huge purse. Isabelle bought a cloth bag with multicoloured butterflies. Francis decorated my room with leftovers from Dollarama. Balloons that say "Happy Birthday" when you've just learned of your imminent death are kind of in bad taste. My friends are nice at heart, that's the important part. They're funny, they say that the doctors are always asking me the date when they come to my room because they're too spaced out to remember it themselves. For the time, it's the man in 5048. For the lunch menu, it's the lady in 5049. For the date, it's the girl in 5050. Isabelle called the hospital's film library to ask if they had the latest Xavier Dolan the other afternoon. No, madame, this is just for the serious things of life, no butter, no popcorn, no jujubes, sorry. June sixth two thousand twelve. I could write it out for you on a piece of paper, but my hand's so paralyzed I write like a three-year old now, according to Sébastien anyway. There are so many common names to retain, but I'm telling you, I retain nothing. I bring you back into my daily life, my private life. You must have a friend named Julien. I would like you to talk to me about your friend Julien. I remember. My aunt Julienne had given me temporary tattoos of butterflies for Christmas when I was fourteen. She'd surprised me staring at a butterfly hovering around a sunflower in her yard. I was staring at the butterfly the way Mathieu stares at the bread some-

times when he watches me eat. A few months later, this present. Aunts are all so terribly literal and uniformly lacking in originality. But sometimes an aunt is like a sister, and I know there must be some kind of cool foremothers out there somewhere.

NIPPLE KIDMAN.COM

Sexy Kimora moves toward the steps. Fuck, I have the same dress as her for my slow one. I'm going to have to put something else on. Four steps, the stage. I can't stop staring at her. The dress looks better on me, I have more of an ass. Everyone in the room wants to marry her, me most of all. No, I'll never get married. It was Stanislas or nobody. For real though, I would be happy that they found each other, he and Samantha. Happy for them for real. I'm ridiculously altruistic, which is not far from what love is of course. I would be jealous, for sure, but there are things that pass us by. Love is one of them, that I know. The thing is that I know him, Stanislas, and he doesn't give a shit. He just wants to get his dick wet. Being nice, meeting her son, it's a soft approach with a hard result. There isn't a shower on earth big enough to contain all my disgust. Makes me want to write at 200%. I vomit a hairball, the size of the head of a little boy with endlessly long hair like Rapunzel's. That's important in a ball. In the fetal position, obviously. Poor little boy.

MAXIME

A little boy dressed in black approaches, hands her the leash of a fennec fox. There is an army of toddlers be-

hind him. She cannot refuse refuge to a being as magical and badass as the fox. Even if she has to move to accommodate everyone.

Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal

CHUM

Week 6 – Thursday

Diet: Normal, soft minced

Dinner

Room 5050-02

Name: Gendreau, Vickie

Please use the towelette to wash your hands before
the meal

Beef and scallop soup

Ice cream à la jeune fille

Salt

Pepper

Ground poultry

Poultry gravy (Separate, 4)

Diced mixed vegetables

Potato puree

Margarine (2)

Whole wheat toast (2)

2% milk

Hot water

Tea bag

Creamy apple beverage (3)

Decadron (1/2)