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A Nonfiction Fictitious Remembrance of Wendy Wasserstein

by Marleen S. Barr
February 6, 2006



*On March 24, 2004 I participated with Wendy Wasserstein at a City University of New York Graduate Center event called "Live, Laugh, and Love" where Wasserstein read from *Shiska Goddess* and I read from my first novel *Oy Pioneer!* In order to remember Wasserstein's hilarity and attention to women, I offer the following humorous woman-centered account of the event, garnered from the memoir based upon my true biography, in which Wasserstein encounters my favorite vampire and flies.*

* * *

The City University of New York Graduate Center audience, ensconced in the Skylight Room, applauded after Wendy Wasserstein finished reading. President Frances Degen Horowitz gave me a gracious introduction. I stepped in front of the lectern wearing the red clogs I customarily used to summon my trusty friend Ilya the magic wielding vampire. No one noticed when I clicked them together. Ilya appeared. As usual, he placed the audience in suspended animation.

"I am always glad to come when you call me. But what now?"

"I'll tell you in a minute. I just have to make sure my husband Pepe Le Pew is frozen solid. As I have let you know, he would be a little perturbed if he knew his wife fraternized with a vampire. He can hardly deal with my new role as an emerging novelist. Are you sure Pepe is frozen?"

"Of course. Do you think I would do a half a** audience freezing job? Do you need anything else?"

"Yes. Fairy dust."

"Fairy dust? Why in hell do you need fairy dust?"

"I'm giving a reading with Wendy Wasserstein. I want to make Wendy fly to communicate a feminist point."

"I shouldn't have asked." Ilya snapped his fingers. He placed a bag of fairy dust in my hands. He snapped his fingers again. He disappeared.

"Wait. Ilya. Come back," I screamed while frantically clicking my clogs.

"What's the matter now?"

"What am I supposed to do with a room full of frozen people? I don't know how to unsuspend suspended animation. Fairy dust makes people fly. It doesn't function like antifreeze. This is a procedural irregularity, as the frozen CUNY provost sitting in the front row can tell you."

"Sorry. You're right. I should not have dashed off without first giving you all the necessary magical accoutrements. Here, take this water filled vial. Bye."

"Wait. You still can't go. I have no idea how to work this water vial. Despite my forays into the fantastic, no one told me how to use a magic water vial to nullify fairy dust and bring people out of suspended animation."

"First, deploy the fairy dust. Then, spritz the flying people as well as the audience with the water. After you spritz, everyone will forget everything and return to normal."

"Spritz? Since when do goyische vampires mention spritzing? The label on the vial says 'holy water.' Spritzing with holy water is not kosher."

"Details. Details. I'll unfreeze the audience. You have your directions. Deploy the fairy dust. Spritz. Bye."

"I spritzed. I sprinkled the fairy dust on Wendy, President Horowitz, and myself. The Empire State Building's spire, visible outside the Skylight Room's glass ceiling, backgrounded our activity. Neither Wendy Wasserstein, President Horowitz, nor I are thin--to say the least. Picture three hefty Jewish women hovering overhead within view of the Empire State Building. The scenario violated Pepe's sense of propriety.

"What are you, Wendy Wasserstein, and President Horowitz doing? Come down from there," he screamed while craning his neck upward.

"We're flying. Oh what lovely fun. Watch us everyone. Take a look and see how easily it's done. We're flying."

"Come down immediately if not sooner. I don't want to be associated with someone who causes a celebrity author and a college president to fly. Furthermore, to say the least, none of you are thin. What if one of you falls on someone's head and squashes them?"

"There is a glass ceiling in the Skylight Room. Women hit glass ceilings all the time. Wasserstein and President Horowitz have shattered the glass ceiling. If a woman Pulitzer Prize winner and a woman college President are seen flying beneath a glass ceiling, it becomes perfectly clear exactly how untenable the very real glass ceiling is."

"Why are you doing this?"

"Would you believe that I lost my shadow? Would you believe that I am sick of being judged in terms of the image my body presents. On my color. On my age. On my sex. My body and the social shadow which must always appear in its wake are not the sole means to make decisions about me. My writing, though, functions as a mere shadow in relation to my body. Okay, now that I staged this entire scene to get this matter off of my chest, I feel better. I have to put everyone back to normal. Even though no one will remember what has taken place, I suppose I should apologize. I am a mere shadow. I did not mean to offend."

I spritzed Wendy Wasserstein and President Horowitz with the magic water contained in the vial Ilya provided. They landed smoothly in their respective chairs. The audience, believing that they had thoroughly enjoyed a normal evening listening to Wasserstein and me, applauded.