

FABLE

Nobody's memory of the time when Cookie danced is great but it wasn't like Forrest Gump said it was. Sunshine felt rotten and lukewarm, like a severed head touched through a plastic bag and all the dogs puked garbage. It sounded like lion's roar turned inside-out. 'Call me when you're sober' was a hot thing to say in those years. Everybody carved it into their arms for peace of mind. 'God' was around, chiefly to crash cars and stalk the trailer parks he'd later flood with purple drank. 'Sorry, Jerry', he slurred, clutching a strangled cat, 'it's just sometimes I have these thoughts.' The original Lassie hadn't succumbed to her urge for surgery yet, though she was routinely seen gallivanting in the company of somebody from *The Munsters* and licking up Long Island Ice Teas from a special glitter-encrusted dog bowl at the bar. The Wicked Witch of the West was interviewed in her castle on live TV at Christmas every year and said, 'It's just another quiet holiday here, my pretties, nothing but downers and ice cream for the Queen.' Canned applause.

Everybody had brown teeth and everything went according to plan.

'Look at that pumpkin-headed goon', boys said when they saw a certain famous child star on television, the light gone from his eyes.

Cookie had an alligator. She laid the creature in a bathtub full of cold water and the poor thing croaked from shock. Her sister yelled from the front door and she dashed back from the weirdo thicket where Dennis was wagging his hog for her to discover her new pal dead on the sticky floor. When that Saturday's episode of *Howdy Doody* was over, she laid roses on the creature's shallow grave or, maybe, at her mother's skittish insistence, hurled him by the tail into the sun-fried muck of the local swamp with a

ghastly squelch. ‘Farewell, brave rascal!’ She mumbled after blowing the faded alligator a kiss, and she wondered if she could score an industrious monkey named Claudius. She had a thing for weird creatures now.

Girls kept their windows shut for fear of disease. A lot of the girls looked like Chloë in *Gummo*, bleach blonde vampires, and they ripped duct tape off their nipples to ‘make them fatter and pop them out bigger’ in between dancing on their beds to ‘Everyday’ by Buddy Holly.

Mothers used to say, ‘I’m so thrilled the Eisenhower Administration has given us eighteen new ways to hate ourselves and that we’re only allowed to masturbate under the stairs like common trolls.’ Edith Massey crowing, ‘The world of heterosexuals is a sick and boring place’ was a long way off indeed. Cookie’s grandma got married at fifteen and she had eleven kids.

Nobody was thinking about Kate Moss’s leotard or Kate Moss’s translation of *Spring Awakening* or Kate Moss’s mysterious pussy. She was up for the part of Cookie in *Pink Flamingos: The Opera* but she was super-high at the audition and chewed up the script.

Later, in *Kiddie Flamingos*, the part of Cookie was played by a seven year old girl in a blonde wig.

Meanwhile, a lot of fathers had horrifying dreams and slowly congealed into bad people who haunted attics and played with the dead. ‘Men are such cunts’ is the line barked by Cookie in *Female Trouble*, which still is not, sadly, wrought in gold as a public sculpture in Baltimore.

Nobody was nostalgic because nobody liked the past too much and anti-depressant companies hadn’t invented shows like *Friends*. Children knew a big hungry vortex was rumbling inside them but they didn’t know what to call it so they blamed winter or Pennywise the Dancing Clown or the Jews—they never seen them in real life but understood they were supposed to have

fangs.

The devil grew up to be Jeffrey Dahmer.

Mike Kelley met Santa Claus.

Paul McCarthy got his first boner, which he commemorated in early sculptures long since devoured by a fire.

Lolita was hot.

Good old Dracula threw terrifying parties at his house in the woods. When he OD'd in his pyjamas, Warhol and Frankenstein came to the funeral in velvet capes and wept for their favourite deviant.

Cookie befriended cute snakes after school, falling in love with how they nestled around her lonesome heart and blew her house a thousand miles away.

Gangs of randy homosexuals (known as 'faggots' back then) roamed the night like trick-or-treaters, craving sweet flesh. They all lived at the amusement park, creeping out of the spook house as the sun went down.

J.W. hadn't even asked his legendary question about British pantomime yet: 'Is there scat in it?'

When car crashes happened, Cookie lined up all the furry bears in her bedroom and requested their traumatised testimony. 'The noise was hideous!', said the bear with the missing eye. 'Why are there so many crashes?', Cookie asked the aggressive daddy bears and the depressed mama bears. They said, 'Because we're hideous drunks. Please stop making noise with your face.'

Anne-Marie Wiazemsky and Balthasar the donkey wandered around looking for somewhere to get high.

It was a fun time to be alive.

When Cookie did her dance routine, all was quiet and still. Not every girl is

a cautious owl. No way, hon. The dance saw her whirl to and fro with scary abandon as if at war with ferocious weather. Once the solo was over, she wandered past her teacher, this crone named Miss Thrasher (who was wont to shiver` inwardly whenever she overheard any talk of `coitus`) and, flabbergasted by the dance, Miss Thrasher asked the question she knew made all children in her power feel ill and lost.

‘What do you want to be when you grow up, Cookie?’

Now, Cookie wondered for a moment and then grinned, flashing sharp little teeth. ‘Oh, I want to be a beautiful wolf, Miss Thrasher’, she said, ‘and to sink my fangs right into your stupid brain.’