

BLACK-EYED WOMEN

Fame would strike someone, usually the kind that healthy-minded people would not wish upon themselves, such as being kidnapped and kept prisoner for years, humiliated in a sex scandal, or surviving something typically fatal. These survivors needed someone to help write their memoirs, and their agents might eventually come across me. “At least your name’s not on anything,” my mother once said. When I mentioned that I would not mind being thanked in the acknowledgments, she said, “Let me tell you a story.” It would be the first time I heard this story, but not the last. “In our homeland,” she went on, “there was a reporter who said the government tortured the people in prison. So the government does to him exactly what he said they did to others. They send him away and no one ever sees him again. That’s what happens to writers who put their names on things.”