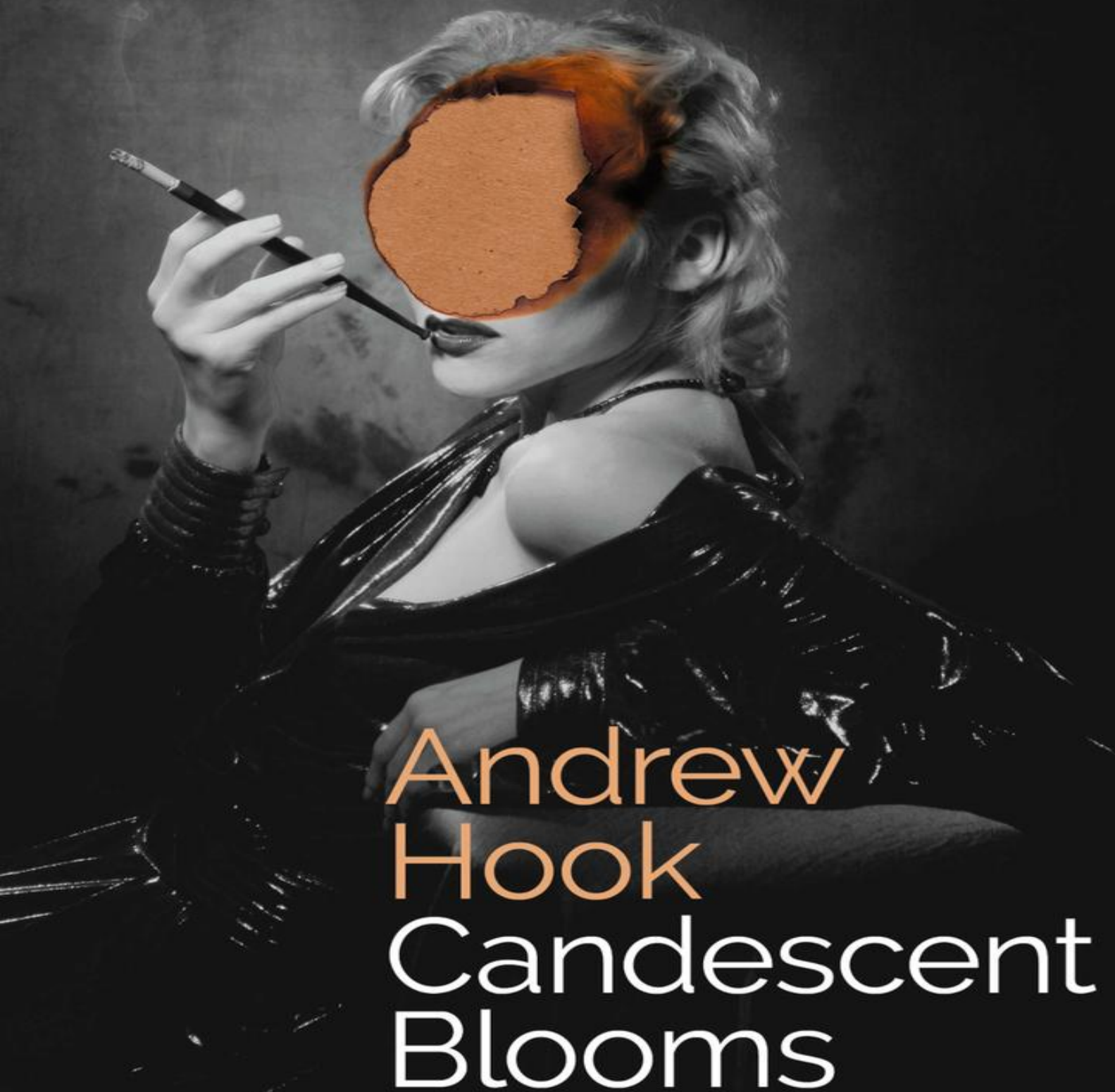
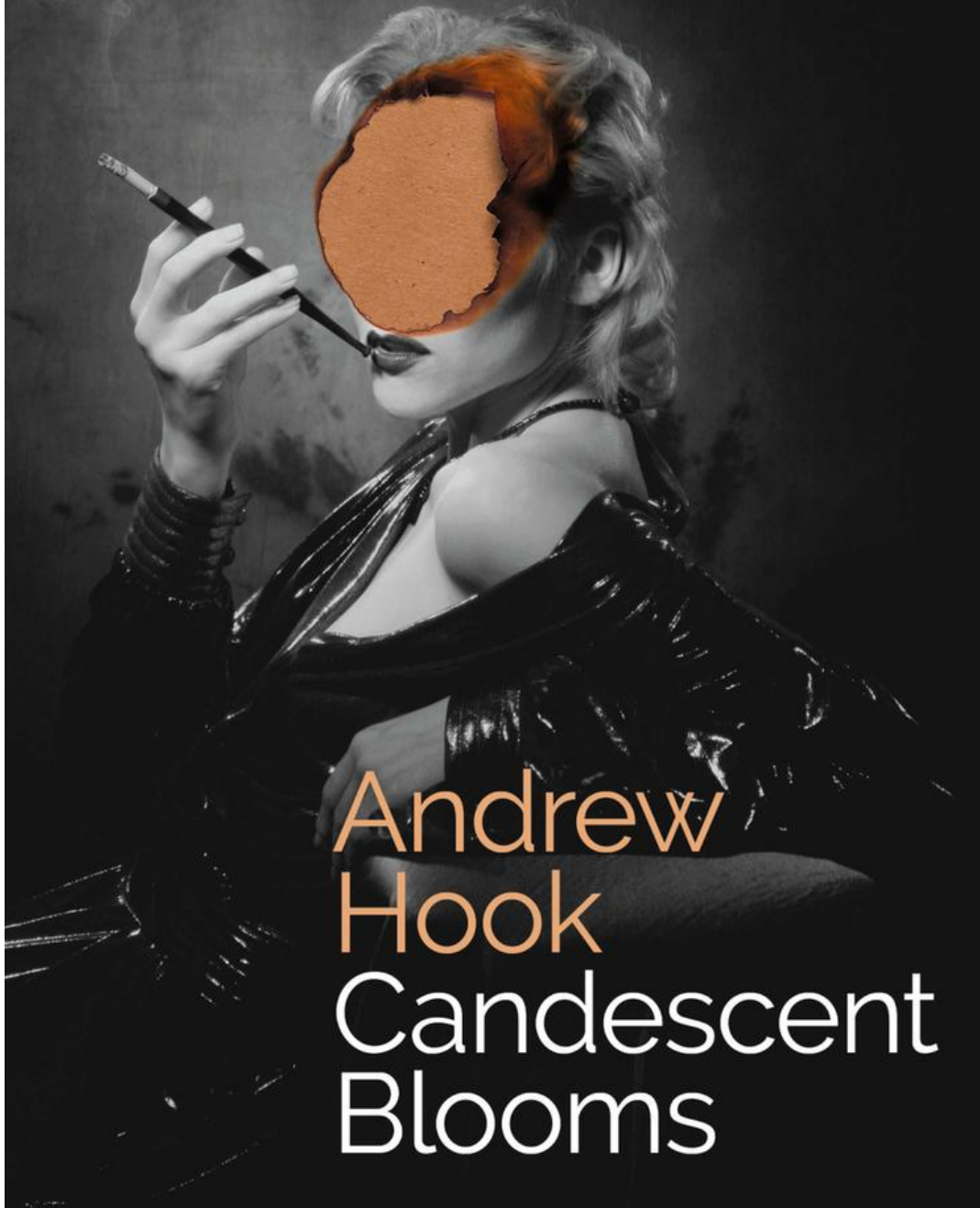


SALT  
MODERN  
STORIES



Andrew  
Hook  
Candescent  
Blooms

SALT  
MODERN  
STORIES



Andrew  
Hook  
Candescent  
Blooms

ANDREW HOOK

CANDESCENT  
BLOOMS

SALT  
MODERN  
STORIES

**S**  
SALT  
CROMER

*This book is dedicated to all those actors and actresses who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defending and protecting the arts and the cinema*

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**1932**

*Introduction: H is for  
Hollywoodland*

**45ft  
1932**

**H**OW DID I get (up) here?

The evening forms a cool September, nothing yet to bite. My jacket hangs loosely over both shoulders. My knees, bent in this position of departure, remember those stepladder rungs, the indentations in my soles. Nine months previously, the first official snowfall had been recorded in the United States Weather Bureau's fifty-four year existence in Los Angeles. The snow-storm had begun at 5 a.m. and continued for over two hours.

Today it is I who shall fall.

One foot above the Hollywoodland sign, my jacket expands like wings, pulling away from my body with inexorable motion.

Two feet off the Hollywoodland sign my shoes hug tight, afraid to let go. One becomes braver than the other.

I hold a breath.

My fingers clench the purse containing the note.

I am afraid, I am a coward. I am sorry for everything. If I had done this a long time ago, it would have saved a lot of pain.

Will my life flash before me? Studies suggest the phenomenon could be caused by parts of the brain that

store autobiographical memories like the prefrontal, medial temporal, and parietal cortices.

You know, I've completed my research.

I am Peg Entwistle. An actress about to lose sense of time; memories converging from all periods of my life.

I am P.E.

An actress about to lose.



## **44ft** **1920**

Just as Bette Davis had told her mother she wished to be exactly like me, so - in 1926 - did I aspire to Olive Thomas.

I had been recruited by the New York Theatre Guild. Broadway there I came.

There was success in my twenty-eight performances as Martha in *The Man From Toronto*. Not bad for an eighteen-year-old from Port Talbot. And unlike movies, my mouth ran with words, my scenes developed in colour.

You know, at the height of Olive's fame, the Hollywoodland sign wasn't in existence.

Olive would have no memory of it.

Yet - as I return level - I have a memory of her.

Because she died four thousand three hundred and eighty nine days before me. That's how memories are formed.



## **40ft** **1926**

Oh, Valentino!

Valentino.

I am sucked in descent. A sudden punch to the soul. Valentino doesn't acknowledge as I hurtle, snagging stockings on a bullfighter's muleta. The concealment of a sword.

I saw him in *Blood and Sand*.

I will be blood in sand.

Perhaps I might have played Vilma Bánky's role in *The Eagle*. How we would have soared. Perhaps I might have saved myself. Could it be I would have saved him?

Valentino died two thousand two hundred and sixteen days before me. That's how heartache is formed.



### **36ft 1933**

In early 1932 Broadway was already a distant memory.

Boredway.

Even with Bogart.

The films were there - those films - just at the ends of my fingertips.

Perhaps I caught them. Perhaps I was there, at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco in September 1921, watching as Arbuckle opened the refrigerator.

Would they have called me that?

Would I have haunted Fatty, two hundred and eighty six days after my death?



### **32ft 1935**

I am most often cast as a comedienne, most often the attractive, good-hearted ingénue. For that reason I might have starred alongside Thelma Todd instead of ZaZu

Pitts. But I would rather play roles that carry conviction. Maybe it is because they are the easiest and yet the hardest things for me to do.

So I shrug myself into Todd. The wind billowing her dress as I slip inside, slough her off with my role. Isn't this how subterfuge starts? Whilst here, I play opposite the Marx Brothers.

Laughter carries with my shoe at head height. I flail towards it, as though it were of the utmost importance.

I die one thousand one hundred and eighty six days after my death. Photoflash.



**28ft**  
**1937**

I could get used to this. Forcing my way into films, novels. Dotting the I's and crossing the T's.

Pretending to die, one thousand seven hundred and twenty five days after my death: segue from one life to the next.



**24ft**  
**1942**

If you're looking for something circular, I have it right in my hand. When my thumb flicks vertical I expect to see light.

But unlike Stan Laurel it is *I* who turns somersaults; aflame.

One coin in the air, whilst the leather of my purse contains more money than I will never spend.

The force relaxes my fingers.

Which falls faster: a ton of purses, a ton of shoes, a ton of jackets or a ton of a girl?

Bets are taken on the sidelines.

Heads.

Or tails.

I skew the difference, make a disaster movie three thousand four hundred and nine days after my death.



**20ft**  
**1955**

I hand Dean a lit cigarette, Laurel's trick after all. The culture is different here. I have come a long way.

I continue to come. In backs of automobiles upholstered with denim.

Eight thousand four hundred and fourteen little deaths.



**16ft**  
**1959**

We form a comedy act: Entwistle, Reeves and Switzer.

Watch how we fight over our billing.

Carl, George and Peg.

Do I star as Lois Lane or Darla Hood?

Where is the order to it?

Catch me.

*Catch me!*

I want to be saved. Even on a bed of alfalfa, on average nine thousand six hundred and ninety six days too late.



**12ft**  
**1962**

I struggle claustrophobic. Hidden within a role within a role.

*Peg Entwistle: Some Like It Hot*

The billboard pops coloured lightbulbs all around the picture houses.

To play any kind of an emotional scene I must work up a certain pitch: the quality of a sound governed by the rate of vibrations producing it; the degree of highness or lowness of a tone, the steepness.

Have I really made ten thousand nine hundred and fifteen movies? Are honestly none of them serious roles? How can I live with myself. Isn't ...



**8ft**  
**1967**

... my life just a car crash.

Twelve thousand seven hundred and four car crashes.



**4ft**  
**1982**

Tell me I was fantastic in *To Catch A Thief*: a cat burglar at age forty-seven.

Tell me I was superb in *Rear Window*: a socialite at age forty-six.

Tell me I was perfect in *Mogambo*: on safari at age forty-five.

Tell me I was in *The Wedding in Monaco*. Tell me it wasn't Grace Kelly.

Tell me I wasn't already eighteen thousand two hundred and sixty days dead.



**Oft**  
**1932**

How did I get (down) here?

Well, it's a long story.

The hiker who finds me wraps up my jacket, shoes and purse in a bundle and lays them on the steps of the Hollywood police station.

She doesn't want the publicity.

My last role was in *Thirteen Women*. Whilst it was one of the earliest female ensemble films it premiered to neither critical nor commercial success. It was released after my death.

*I* was released after my death.

I *am* Peg Entwistle.

I committed suicide in Los Angeles off an advertisement for real estate development.

And there are thirteen letters in Hollywoodland.

Thirteen symbols of thwarted ambition.

1920

## *Memories of Olive*

*O*<sup>H, MY GOD!</sup> I was born Oliveretta Elaine Duffy in Charleroi, Pennsylvania on October 20th 1894. Misinformation disseminated throughout the silent movie era is that everyone spoke in title cards and there was no colour in our lives. If this were true then watch me rise from my mother's womb an ashen grey, my tiny crenulated fingers clutching the three-lettered sign, *Wah!*

Jack insists on interjecting that whilst life isn't so prosaic the whirligig of movie making adds sub-strata to existence unprecedented in other methods of employment. With this I'm prone to agree.

And in this regard, *caveat lector*.

I open my violet-blue eyes to the pale pink of breast. I suck life in.

New sensations: the odd transition from carpet to floorboard, the planed-smooth surface of my wooden rattle, the aroma of foodstuffs I am as yet unable to eat, those birds so far, far away, the smell of cold steel on my father's rough hands, his clothing, his destiny.

And in my mouth. Everything. In my mouth. Right now.

*Oh, my God!*

What I remember about 1906:

The Great San Francisco Earthquake smudged in newsprint, buildings crumbling onto my twelve-year-old fingers.

Pride in white-chalking this spelling of the Monongahela River despite twenty-seven variations. My

fingers touching my tongue on the return to my desk.

Twice the population than there is now.

The electric theatre. A silent trigger.

0.8 square miles of land. 0.1 square miles of water.

That it wouldn't be the Magic City in my lifetime.

The tragic death of James Duffy. My father.

True death is always *tragic, glorious* a misnomer.

*Oh, my God!*

When I worked at Joseph Horne's department store the L-shaped structure was in two, yet to be three. Six storeys faced Penn Avenue, six storeys faced West. Selling gingham was similar to forays in the movie industry: tiny checks. *Hold your title card now.* I have no recollection of the three-sided clock. I remember the six-story electric Christmas tree occupying a place on the corner of the building at Penn Avenue and Stanwix Street. I remember the crowds, gawping.

Jack insists on interjecting to add that this building was at McKees Rocks. He expects to know my life better. There are three variations of that spelling, too. The oldest human bones in eastern North America were discovered here during an excavation. None of them were mine.

My wage was \$2.75 a week. In your time this might buy you a Mission tortilla, a box of Mrs. T's Potato & 4 Cheese Blend Pierogies, a cantaloupe, some tissues. Total: \$2.64 plus \$.11 tax = \$2.75.

I might have gone to the pictures.

When Bernard Krugh Thomas proposed I didn't really know what I was doing. All I took out of that marriage was his surname. I'm sixteen with nine years remaining. Two spent with him.

*Oh, my God!*

New York is just so.

So.

And the people so.

My aunt took me to the Armory Show on Lexington Avenue between 25th and 26th, sometime between February 17th and March 15th, 1913. I bought a circular button with blue edging and a stylised green tree as its centrepiece. Select here a title card - in red - reading *The New Spirit* to signal the change in my life. I was an astonished American. Fauvism, Cubism, and Futurism: there was none of that in Charleroi or McKees Rocks. Approximately 1/5 of the artists showing at the Armory were women, many of whom have since been neglected. Jacqueline Marval / Kathleen McEnery / Katharine Rhoades. I ate colour.

My aunt introduced me as a model. No longer a salesgirl in that gingham dress. *Fuck*, I won *The Most Beautiful Girl in New York City* contest. *Fuck (title card)!* I was on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

My own life: a dream of make-believe.

Jack is here again. Pointing out that some reports suggest Fisher introduced me to Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. - *the glorifier of the American girl* - whereas my recollection is that I walked straight in and asked for the job. Sometimes he's uncomfortable that I made my stage debut in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1915* on June 21st. Sometimes he's even more uncomfortable that I was cast in the *Midnight Frolic* show. But I'm his. I wasn't then, but I forever will be.

Besides - *yes please* - money in my clothing. No change, please. Title card: *she was chaste and chased*. Pass that white correction fluid for those black pages of history. It could be cold on the roof garden of the New Amsterdam Theatre. But - oh! - the lights. Each one a pearl. Each pearl bought by German Ambassador Albrecht von Bernstorff. All ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) worth.

My worth.

And in my mouth. Everything. In my mouth. Right now.

*Oh, my God!*

“Head back.”

Brown hair cascading - *oh how it cascades* - to shoulder length. Red barrette, just so. Eyes closed. Lips parted. *What was I thinking?* Visible upper set of teeth. Jack: *delete set, sounds false*. Pale pink rose twixt thumb and ring finger. Black silk gown bunched, on the slide. Such exposed flesh. Breathe in. *Breathe in*. Left breast clutched (echoes of *Wah!*), nipple palmed. Right breast exposed: a masturbatory tool. Such sweet scent.

Topless portrait of Olive Thomas (*Memories of Olive*), painted by Alberto Vargas for Florenz Ziegfeld. Current location unknown.

*Oh, my God!*

So this was how it was: model, stage, screen. So many of us. I was a girl like that.

And here comes the Santa Monica Pier. I shouldn't remember the carousel hippodrome, but I somehow do. The Pacific Ocean roils beneath us. I was young, romantic. *Jack says I still am*. We loved to dance. Nat Goodwin owned a cafe and cabaret, *Cafe Nat Goodwin*, right on the pier. It looked like a battleship. We were there a good few years before the sun set. I was young, wildly happy. *Jack says I always was*. And Jack was such a beautiful dancer. You can quote me here. You can quote me here in full.

*Jack is a beautiful dancer. He danced his way into my heart. We knew each other for eight months before our marriage, and most of that time we gave to dancing. We got along so well on the dance floor that we just naturally decided that we would be able to get along together for the rest of our lives.*

Like those artists at the Armory we did things different. We announced our engagement a year after we married. *Surely a title card here?* It wasn't always black and white. I refused for my career to be hidden in his

shadow nor propelled by his limelight. I am my own person, yes. No question. And all the movies came.

My wage was \$2,500 a week. In your time this might buy you two Smith & Wesson model 17 classic pistols, one thousand two hundred roses, twelve leather top hats, eight thousand seven hundred and thirty packets of potato chips, two thousand nine hundred and ten candy bars, or eleven white leather biker jackets.

I was in the movies.

*Oh, my God!*

Like everyone I knew, I wanted serious roles. Jack: *There was only so much you could do, baby vamp. No need to have gotten into a flap about it.* He jests. I made *The Flapper* in 1920. The first movie to portray the *flapper* lifestyle; my lifestyle. We were seen as brash for wearing excessive makeup, drinking, treating sex in a casual manner, smoking, driving automobiles, and otherwise flouting social and sexual norms. I played a sixteen-year-old farm girl sent to Mrs. Paddle's School for Young Ladies (I am *not* making this up)(someone else did), who gets embroiled with the fast life of an older man. It was comedic. It was my most successful film. I loved it.

Intermission: Misinformation disseminated throughout the silent movie era is that everyone's lives were lived to the accompaniment of piano music. I'm told the best score for *The Flapper* is that by Robert Israel who was born long after my death. Kids need to grow up.

*Oh, my God!*

*I love you.*

I'm sick of arguing.

*You know Olive.*

Know what?

*You know Olive you?*

What?

*Olive you Olive.*