



Mary Lou Menchaca

### My, Myself and Collette

She named me Collette. Collette only lived for four days. But she has yet to die. I never knew her and at the same time she is part of me. Collette and I are both very lucky. We were given a second chance.

Twenty-one years ago, at a fork in the road, the person to my left saw the rough terrain ahead and the uncertainty of what was to follow. The person to my right gave a gentle tug on my sleeve to reassure me that no matter what, she was strong enough to carry me over the narrow bridges and at other times, lay down her coat so my feet would not get wet. It was at this point that I, Jennifer-Marie, was born.

I am sure she can still see me through the trees, this woman who let me go, although it may not be a clear view. Perhaps she can see my shadow at times. Collette, the girl I might have been by her side. Sometimes I stare at this shadow in the dark with the covers pulled up to my neck. She shows up only when I'm alone and I wonder what it would be like if I were in her shoes. Does she eat? Can she read? Does she believe in Jesus Christ or does she bow only to the needle?

One can only wonder.

The weather has been good and I have yet to step on a thorn. There are five other travelers with me and we are all in step. Perhaps to onlookers it does look strange for me to be the only blonde, blue-eyed in the bunch. But without this oddity, it would be odd. This raises an eyebrow and the question, "Who is she? Previous marriage?"

I am lucky. And I am loved.

I am French-Irish, Mexican, Italian, “Precious little girl,” “JENNIFER-MARIE”, Collette,  
my mother’s lullabyes, One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish, red lipstick on my forehead  
before I go to school...

And I am thankful.

Written by Jen Menchaca