

## GHOSTBREAD: Two Excerpts



### Excerpt 1: Cosmology

I know where I came from.

It must have been April or May when he came through town, a vacuum-cleaner salesman with a carload of rubber belts, metal tubing, and suction hoses. Spring in Rochester, New York--it was probably a sunless day. He may have been chilled as he grabbed hold of his Kirby upright, walked to the door, and rang the bell.

She was a well-formed redhead with a dry-cleaning job and a house full of children to forget. She must have put hand to hip, flashed falsely shy eyes, and said something about not needing another vacuum.

He had full lips, and used them to throw a smile in her direction. And she, who was partial to full-lipped smiles, let him in.

He rang; she answered. She was hungry; he had a bit of sugar on his finger. He was tired; she provided a pillow for his head. Soft. Sweet. Easy.

Sometimes it's just that simple.

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“Kirby Rochester” Oil on Panel, by Jim Mott. See [jimmott.com](http://jimmott.com) for prints and other landscapes. Used with permission.



## Excerpt 2: Power

“Shoot me.”

“Shoot me.”

“Shoot *meeeeee!*” I screamed over and over, loud as I could, ‘til someone made a finger into a gun, used a mouth for sound effect, and launched bullets into the air.

“Puh, puh, puh, puh.”

The sound of bullets whizzed my way. I raised my wrists to meet them, deflected them soundly with my tin foil bands. Wonder Woman wore bands made of *Feminum*, a magic metal mined only on Paradise Island. But the coconut-scented place and its ore-producing Amazons were a long way from Grand Avenue, so the best I could do was to steal strips of aluminum foil from the kitchen and fold them into wide silver bracelets. I slapped them on my wrists and walked out the door, ready to face anyone, anywhere.

Sometimes the shooter would get fancy and use a machine gun, or two kids would come at me from different directions and shoot me at the same time—so that I had to separate my arms and keep both wrists in perpetual motion to meet the onslaught of air bullets.

But always, I managed.

I’d keep the wristbands on all day. I grabbed a bit of clothesline and coiled it into a loop at my waist. Steph sprayed my lasso gold with leftover bike-paint. She was the only one who allowed me to use it on her, which is no great surprise. The lasso was magic, after all; it forced the person in its hold to tell the truth, so naturally, most people avoided it.

But the wristbands had a more general appeal.

It was the wristbands people noticed, and in an attempt at kindness or perhaps a desire to shut me up, they’d succumb to my request, straighten an index finger, point it into a gun, and shoot me.

I wore denim cut-offs and a white tube top, my hair shimmered from time in the sun and was newly feathered. I applied a coat of white paint over the brown of my clogs, added the golden wings of eagles, and finished them off with red and blue stars. They were my Wonder Woman clogs, and when I had them on I swirled round till I was all satin and power. A super hero. Strong and proud. Capable. Beautiful and protected.

“Shoot me.”

“Shoot me.”

“*Shoot meeeeee!*” I’d scream, till someone finally took pity, pointed a finger my way, and sprayed me with bullets.

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