

## KIT EASTMAN

*Femme Fatale*, 2016  
Photo-intaglio print,  
9 x 9 in image on 15 x 11 in paper



COURTESY THE ARTIST

## DAVID DOWNIE

### Me Jane

Okay, I'm an unlikely Jane, and maybe that's why it didn't work between us. I still can't believe the first thing I said when I introduced myself was, "Me? Jane." And then you laughed and said, "Tarzan." While we were still shaking hands, you leaned over and kissed me on both cheeks, in front of everyone at that party full of French people, even Professor Lafayette, who turned out to be gay. I thought you might be too, you were so suave and so like a Frenchman.

Actually, you kissed me twice on one cheek, left-right-left, for a total of three. I felt your stubble. You said in that lilting tenor of yours that was the way you greeted people in Paris, whereas in the provinces, where your Huguenot grandmother came from, it was four. Four kisses among strangers? I hated you instantly, because you had a French grandmother and would boast about it in public to a stranger who'd made a fool of herself. My face flushed the same red as my hair.

Since I see the reviewers describe you as an "expatriate Franco-American intellectual," I think you'll understand me when I say hatred is as strong as love. I'm sure I've misquoted someone important, but you get what I mean.

You are possibly not aware that we met exactly twenty-one years and seven months ago, give or take a day. How could you be aware of it or remember? People wrote letters back then and mine were returned undelivered. I wrote three that first fall, after it happened, and while I would never hold you responsible for the two sent to Paris, Texas, I made sure to underline "France" on the third. I watched the woman at the post office in Des Moines and told her not to add "TX." I still have them in my sewing basket.

Do you even remember me? Jane. The girl from Iowa, not Ohio, as you kept saying. Idaho you knew because of the potatoes and because Hemingway blew his head off there. But those other I and O states were all the same to you, a West Coast guy from Northern California. Jane? The girl with red toenail polish and carrot-colored pubic hair? Those were the two things about me that seemed to excite you most.

Brace yourself and blame this on Rich, or the Internet and social media and your website if you prefer—I sure haven't hounded you over the decades. Our daughter will be in Paris the day after tomorrow. She is determined to meet you. Yes, I said, I mean, I wrote, "our daughter."