

SISTER

I always wanted one.
More than a pony or piano lessons
which I added to my mother's shopping list the year I was twelve.
I considered becoming one, too: Sister Theresa Ann
and was one
to an older and younger brother
the rose between two thorns
my mother used to say
kidding those boys she loved so.
I was wanted. She made that clear,
and named for a great-great grandmother
so we could hang her portrait
above the living room mantel.
I've sought them out, as well.
Always.
A bevy of best friends from Ruthie Feiser onward:
Betty, Debby, Judy, Cynthia, Debbie, Sandy, Mary Louise, Patti, Kathy, Florence, Joan, Cindy, Beth
a whole circle of feminists
four writing circles
one book club
numerous correspondents
former students all grown up now
mentors and bosses
women I barely knew
women I didn't know at all.
Sandra Day O'Connor—who cared if she was a Republican!
When she was announced I sat in the Student Memorial Union weeping.
Wilma Mankiller, Cindy Sheehan, Gloria Steinem
Emily Carr, Judy Chicago, Georgia O'Keeffe,
Jane Austen, Mary Ann Evans, Virginia Woolf,
Mary Oliver, Emily, Jane Kenyon.
At the moment I'm losing one of my dearest friends
just as another stepped over the wide water I'd created as a defense.
The sisters believe and act and do,
Carolyn down at the courthouse every evening for the six years we've been in Afghanistan—
one more grandmother for peace.
This afternoon I'll visit with Be
and we'll plan a celebration for the autumn equinox.
I keep track of my life with *The Women Artists Datebook*
which has this quote by Virginia Woolf for the week:
*Arrange whatever pieces come your way, to which I add,
Sister!*

~Ann Staley