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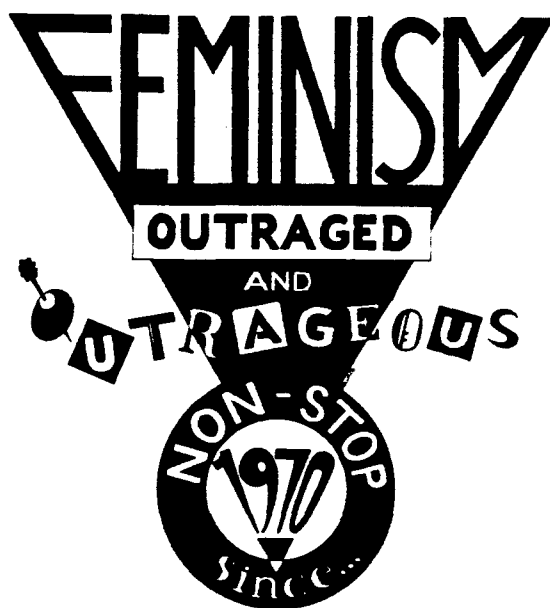
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LYN LIFSHIN

My Sister Says Doesn't Everyone Waste Their Life?

as Mother shrivels, as her
kingdom reaches only to the
night stand, to arranging the
way her slippers point. "So

full of the joy of life,"
someone wrote in her college
yearbook, maybe why she named
her second child Joy. Maybe

she felt it slipping from
her. My sister, blonde,
the pretty one with
boys giving her roses

and watches now sinks
back into her shell like
the turtles she cages,
covers windows to keep

out light. She reminds me
of our mother, sitting
in darkness with a
cigarette, waiting for

my call, expecting the
worst. My sister and I
chose to have cats
instead of children.

We feared becoming
what we clawed at and
bit to move away from,
as if we could help

keep genes hostage,
howling at each other
like animals caught in
traps they'd gnaw
their own legs off to escape

Lyn Lifshin lives in Washington, D. C., U.S.A.