

# Lady Tannenbaum and Myself



# Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

**M.B. Goffstein**

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To Katy Steger,  
with love



If the Lorraines hadn't moved to Hollywood, I probably wouldn't exist.

My parents met because my father wanted to star Jane Lorraine in a movie.

I read this in *The Lorraines in Hollywood*, a novel that quotes my childhood diaries.

The author said she bought them at a rummage sale in Westchester, New York.

As she neared the end of the book she made her selections and typed them in.

When I rang her, she was excited. I heard her say, "It's Birdie Hirsh!"

"I'm sorry. Who?"

Her husband didn't remember me, though Brooke says it is her best book.

## M.B. Goffstein

She had reached her ideal, a rough and tumble art, very spare and simple.

Jane Lorraine embodies that ideal.

The author read me a poem by Po Chü-i, translated by Arthur Waley:

### THE SILVER SPOON

To distant service my heart is well accustomed;  
When I left home, it wasn't that which was difficult  
But because I had to leave Miss Kuei at home—  
For this it was that tears filled my eyes.  
Little girls ought to be daintily fed:  
Mrs. Ts'ao, please see to this!  
That's why I've packed and sent a silver spoon;  
You will think of me and eat up your food nicely!

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

It expressed Cesar Lorraine's feelings on leaving Jane when he joined the Marines.

The first thing Miss Goffstein wanted to know was whether I was a rabbi.

You should have heard her laugh when I said I was Lady Tannenbaum.

"Did Frieda marry a lord?"

"She's Orthodox and has six children."

"What!" she shouted. "Are they cute?"

"They're in their twenties."

"Their twenties!"

She certainly loves to talk.

•

I heard Miss Goffstein paging through her book. "Have you heard from Lady Penny?"

## M.B. Goffstein

I debated whether to say she'd been eaten by a tiger and hear her scream.

I think her husband, who seems very quiet, was pleased she had a phone pal.

"I'll put Brooke on the wire," he would say, after we'd said hello.

•

Brooke said she thought Cesar Lorraine looked like General Russell Honoré.

I Googled him and his picture came up.

Russell Honoré is Creole, not Cajun, but there is a real resemblance.

"I would like him to be president," she was saying. "I think he would win."

She said she had a *Photoplay* interview with Cesar that wasn't in the book.

Later that day she emailed it to me.

## **Lady Tannenbaum and Myself**

### **A Visit with Cesar Lorraine**

“Come in,” he said, opening the door of his bungalow. Sit down and have some iced tea and cookies my son, Faidoh, made.”

He wore a gray sweater with service fatigues and boots.

He came by them honestly. He was a Marine for eleven years.

He said, “I was proud to be a sergeant. I served in the Pacific and on Okinawa.

“That was where I developed my love of Asian artifacts.”

The bungalow showed no sign of them, and he doesn't have a wife I could ask.

## **M.B. Goffstein**

“I would encourage any young man to join the Marines if he thinks he is up to the challenge.

“Many men lead soft lives and have never been put to the test.”

Cesar doesn't have a wife who could tell me the things readers want to know.

He lives with his daughter, top model Jane Lorraine, who I hear is even prettier in person.

He apologized for the dog fur on the rattan sofa, saying Jane's dog is well trained and never gets on the furniture.

I have seen worse in other stars' homes, and no one has ever apologized.

His son Faidoh, a private investigator who lives next door, was out solving a case.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

Getting to the heart of the mystery surrounding Cesar Lorraine, I said his fans want to know about his background.

He said, “Please tell your readers I was reborn as a Marine.”

His dignity is such that you would be ashamed to probe further.

“It’s good training for the studio,” he said. “Don’t question the brass.

“When the picture comes out, you see they know what they are doing.”

•

Brooke likes scholarly books about the stars. Her favorite is *Being Rita Hayworth, Labor, Identity, and Hollywood Stardom*, by Adrienne L. McLean.

## **M.B. Goffstein**

She likes it so much, she bought the hardcover as well as the paperback.

She read me a quote:

Generally, most women stars are given core values like integrity and honesty and kindness by fan-magazine writers and publicists in the 1940s and 1950s, and all women stars want domestic happiness and children whether “now” or “eventually.” But beyond this basic feature of what John Ellis has named the star paradox—that stars are at once always ordinary as well as always unique and specially talented—the discourse on stars has to distinguish them from one another (Janet Staiger thus defines a star economically as “a monopoly on a personality,” his or her “unique qualities” deployed as a “means to differentiate product”).

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

She said this quote knocked her over. She had read movie magazines as a girl and realized that this was how she formed her personality.

I immediately thought of Abraham Joshua Heschel and mentioned him to her.

Yes, yes, she had read Heschel.

In fact, she recently told David she wondered how much of her was Heschel.

I read her a quote from *Man is Not Alone*:

What in my voice has originated in me and what is the resonance of transsubjective reality? In saying “I,” my intention is to differentiate myself from other people and other things. But what is the direct, positive content of the

## M.B. Goffstein

“I”: the blooming of consciousness upon the impenetrable soil of the subconscious?

I read her one more:

Upon the normal level of consciousness I find myself wrapt in self-consciousness and claim that my acts and states originate in and belong to myself. But in penetrating and exposing the self, I realize that the self did not originate in itself, that the essence of the self is in its being a non-self, that ultimately man is not a subject but an *object*.

While she exclaimed, I went online and bought *Being Rita Hayworth*.

•

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

When Brooke said she found my old diaries written in blank books called Record books at a church rummage sale, I wondered if I had hidden them in a desk or bureau that my mother gave away.

It reminded me of *The Chest with a Secret* by Yvonne de Bremond d' Ars.

I mentally walked through my parents' home on the beach in Santa Monica.

Then I called my mother.

"Of course I remember them, darling. I put them in a carton and mailed them to you.

"Didn't you get them?"

•

I appear at the end of *The Lorraines in Hollywood* because Brooke likes young artists.

## **M.B. Goffstein**

Now I feel I have to fulfill my early promise (and all the writing tips Brooke has been giving me) so I am taking notes for a book called *Conversations with an Author*.

•

You might think I had enough on my plate trying to keep up the repairs on Coverly.

You have seen the owners of old English estates on the HG channel.

The husband collects old slate to repair the roof, the wife washes windows, and their sons ride bicycles through the drawing room and entrance hall.

My husband got his baronetcy by making scads of money, so don't look for me in a tea room or gift shop.

In fact, stay off our grounds unless you are a friend of ours or work here.

•

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

You may like to know more about Coverly.

When anything breaks, we replace it with something new and special.

We have attics filled with old furniture, some from the days of Sir Roger de Coverly.

Labels tied to them have diagrams showing where they were situated.

It is quite different from my brother, Hugh's, place, which looks as it did in our grandfather's day.

Though if our grandmother can be believed, my brother *is* our grandfather.

In those days, Grandison had not changed in over two hundred years.

No fear my brother will read this. He loves his library but doesn't read.

•

## **M.B. Goffstein**

To return to a happier subject, we order from the Design Within Reach catalog.

The item is sent to one of Morrie's offices, and someone flies it here.

The pieces, which come from Europe, have to go to the States and come back.

You can't get more wonderful furniture, and there is nothing snob about it.

Have you ever spent a night sleeping on a Sonno mattress? It's just great!

Perhaps Design Within Reach will put my book in their catalog if I keep it short so this stands out.

•

Brooke said when she got the Design Within Reach catalog, she felt honored.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

She thought they sent it because she taught at Parsons School of Design.

Her first purchase was the George Nelson bench, which we have, too.

Ours is in the entrance hall, perfect for setting things down on and dealing with boots.

The catalog cover showed an artist sitting on the bench, looking at one of his paintings, or so Brooke thought.

•

“Do you know how your mother and Jane Lorraine met?” she asked.

She kept discarded sections of *The Lorraines in Hollywood* on her computer.

After locating it, she read:

## **M.B. Goffstein**

Jane had been asked to speak to the Home Economics class at Hollywood High.

The girls were excused from class and went to the auditorium.

Boys weren't allowed in.

The topic was Girl Talk.

The girls clustered around Jane: the pretty and popular girls, the studious girls, and the poor girls.

Jane was so pretty and simple. She said, "You have what it takes to be you."

"How did you become a model?" she was asked in the question and answer period.

She said, "After we moved to Los Angeles, my mother left us.

"Dad had been a Marine, so he got a job as a night watchman."

## **Lady Tannenbaum and Myself**

“He gave me forty dollars to buy clothes for high school, and I was in a department store when I saw a tall blond girl.

“I said, ‘You’re the prettiest girl I ever saw!’

“‘Thank you. I’m a model. I have a Go See in five minutes. Come with me.’”

Carole’s blond hair lifted in the sunny breeze as they went to the building next door.

Jane’s hair didn’t move.

But they took test pictures of Jane and chose her to be a model.

The girls asked about Jane’s father.

“Oh, he’s going to quit when his contract is up,” she said carelessly.

One girl cried.

## **M.B. Goffstein**

Later that girl wrote in a paper for Home Ec: “The only time we act like a family and all get along is when a Cesar Lorraine show comes to the Grandview.”

•

Brooke wanted to know if I am pretty. I had to say no, but that is not what I think.

Jake says I look like his mother, for whom I am named, so I think I am beautiful.

•

I think I’ve been talking to Brooke too much.

This morning I went out for a long walk with the dogs after breakfast.

When I returned to the breakfast room I saw a man putting my silver teapot in a bag.

I picked up a heavy silver salver from the sideboard and went toward him.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

He must have seen himself coming, wearing a look of horror, as I hit him.

I dragged him from the breakfast room, through the hall, and out the door.

I saw the Reverend's car coming up the drive, so I went in and rang for tea, handing the maid the teapot and salver.

Then I looked for scuff marks on the marble floor but didn't see any.

I had thrown the bag outside.

I tidied the carpet, sliding my feet along the ridges made by the burglar's heels, to smooth them.

•

When Mr. Beach arrived, he discovered the body and called the police.

While we waited we had tea, and when the policeman came I handed him a cup.

## M.B. Goffstein

I think it will be all right, but I know how it feels to have to take something out of a book you are writing—because of course I can't use this!

•

Someone is cleaning the entrance hall. The policeman's shoes must have scuffed it.

I hope they shine the salver. I don't think I should tell them to, in case there's an inquest.

Yes, your lordship. Lady Tannenbaum arst me to do a specially good job wiv it.

If I had hit him with the top, he might have my mother's armorial on his forehead.

I hit him with the bottom.

Silver marks can be deep and are randomly stamped in a unique pattern.

•

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

Last night I told Morrie what I had done. Of course he knew about the body.

I assured him the hall floor had been polished and that I had smoothed the carpet.

“How did he get in?” he asked.

As I say, no one is allowed in the park, and the house has a good protection system.

“Had you seen him before?”

“Never.”

“What did Mr. Beach want?”

“Another jumble. Horrors.”

Reverend Beach takes advantage of our position to extract money and favors.

•

The teapot the burglar was after had been written up in *Country Life*.

## M.B. Goffstein

My twin brother, Hugh, said he would like to have it as part of his heritage.

He never offers me anything from Grandison, which is part of my heritage.

•

“Why don’t you tell the inspector you conked him with the salver?” Morrie asked.

“I’ll end up in the dock!”

I wondered if that was what he wanted, so he could marry a younger woman.

“Are you nuts?” Morrie said when I asked him. “Who said anything about the dock?”

•

“Did you write about any of the servants at Coverly?” I asked Brooke.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

“Once,” she said, and I heard the melody on her computer as she started it.

“It was when Carole called Archie.”

“At the stables?”

“Is he really there?” she cried.

“When was that?”

“Carole had started to recall her past. Has she ever talked to you about it?”

“No, I read it in your book.

You were so jolly about it, but it must have been very traumatic losing her father!”

“We all lost fathers in World War Two, one way or another,” Brooke said.

“I’ll read you what I wrote.”

“Hallo, is this Grandison?”

**M.B. Goffstein**

“Yes.”

“May I speak to the stables?”

“This is the stables.”

“Is this Archie?”

“Yes, who is it, please?”

“It’s Carole.”

“May I say it’s good to hear your voice, Lady Carole.

Your pony, Edwina, is still here.”

“I’m five foot nine.”

“We can get you a taller mount.”

•

I thought it was so cute the way Brooke was eager to tell what she knew.

When I’m her age, I expect I’ll be the same, should anyone who is writing a biography of my father, Jake Hirsh, or a history of Coverly seek me out.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

There will be a great many books on Cesar Lorraine, though I can't say I know him.

I used to see him when I went to Frieda's, but he never said much to me.

He taught us how to count to ten in Chinese, and to say How are you?

Nii hao ma? Hao, bu hao?

If you are well, you say, Hao. Wo hao. If you are not, say, Bu hao. Wo bu hao.

The Oxford English Dictionary would say if that is where "Boo hoo" comes from.

•

I told Brooke about the murder.

"Who is the equivalent of Mrs. Eustace at Coverly?" I heard her ask while being distracted by a scream.

•

## M.B. Goffstein

I found my mother-in-law sitting at one end of a table, polishing the tea pot and salver.

She is a little pixie and you never know where she will turn up.

“I used to think of our silver in the death camp,” she was telling the Inspector.

His eyes were round with sympathy.

Our cook, Lesley Anderson, apologized for the scream, saying she thought she had cut herself.

•

Brooke said, “I’m running out of notebooks. I had a lot of one kind, the way you had Record books.

“My notebooks are spiral-bound and have a beautiful dachshund on the cover.

“I bought eleven of them.

“I’ve almost finished the tenth. It’s bad to be old and out of notebooks.”

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

•

Carole and Jake are coming for the jumble. They are bringing Jane Lorraine.

They are stopping in Germany to pick up Jane's German shepherd, Chü-wu.

My father gave her Chü-i. He was followed by Chü-ar, Chü-san, and Chü-syh.

Her sixth will be Chü-lio.

I doubt she'll have Chü-ba, Chü-jio, and Chü-shir, if I've got the spellings right.

•

"Do you remember I said I was running out of notebooks?" Brooke asked.

"David found them for me on the Internet, but they have a cat on the cover.

"I hope it's a rex."

**M.B. Goffstein**

•

Mummy,” I asked Carole, “Do you think Jane would open the jumble?”

“Of course, darling.”

“That will be great. It will make the villagers forget about the burglar.

“Please explain about going to all the booths and buying lots of things.”

“She’ll be adorable,” Carole said.

“Why don’t you ask everyone to give their old china dogs to the jumble?”

Mummy and I speak several times a day, and now I have Brooke, I’m lucky to get off the phone.

•

“How are Margie and Faidoh?” asked Brooke.

“You tell me.”

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

“I think they take care of Cesar and board Jane’s dog when she’s on location.”

“Margie goes to Tel Aviv once a year to see Frieda and the grandkids.”

“Faidoh doesn’t go?”

•

We hung up, and Carole called to say that Margie and Faidoh were coming.

So now I have three guest rooms to get ready; four, if Hugh and Pamela come.

Five, if Elaine comes with them.

Of course she will come to see Jane Lorraine, I thought, going out to the garden carrying secateurs and a flower basket.

•

“Did you know Margie lost a child?” asked Brooke.

“No!”

**M.B. Goffstein**

“Frieda was their second child. When I condensed *The Lorraines in Hollywood*, I took out the first one.”

She read me some scraps she had moved to the file called The Cutting Room Floor:

The doorbell rang.

“Hello little boy,” said Margie’s father, Mr. Gainer.

“What’s your name?”

“Yehudi.”

“Was he born with a little violin?” Mrs. Gainer asked Margie.

“Would they like to hear me read?” Yehudi asked his mother.

•

Jake and Carole’s twin’s first word was Yehudi.

They thought he was a god.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

He could read when he was two-and-a half. The babies listened to his book about a cat.

Birdie, who was the reincarnation of Jake's mother, had never heard a child read English.

Hugh *was* English. He thought Yehudi sounded like a Yank.

"Do you remember Detective Works?"

"I remember him from your book. I never met him," I reminded Brooke.

She read,

Works checked his weapon and went out to find the killer.

Ten minutes later, he was sitting at Faidoh's kitchen table.

## M.B. Goffstein

“Please don’t discuss crime in front of Yehudi,” Faidoh said.

Works felt frustrated because Faidoh used to inspire him.

•

Margie said, “Yehudi can sit up by himself. He says Da, Ma, Jay, and Choy.

“By the time Jane and Faidoh’s cousin Bobby leaves, I bet he’ll say Bah.”

•

“Hide the silver,” I told Morrie. I had seen Hugh’s car coming up the drive.

I kissed Pam, and she sank down on a sofa saying, “This is so luxurious!”

It was our new Vega sofa, quite low and firm, but the back cushions are soft, and it’s very comfortable.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

It was just funny to see her.

“What’s this?” asked Hugh.

My latest purchase from Design Within Reach was called a Primary  
Pouf.

It can be used indoors or out.

Hugh bounced, looking ecstatic.

“It’s foam!” I cried.

My mother-in-law loved the Vega Collection. (We had the  
ottoman as well, and I was getting her the chaise longue.)

They reminded her of the Bauhaus in her beloved Germany.

•

Jane’s young dog was allowed out of his crate and into the country.

As she praised him and held him to her side on a short lead, he thought,

She is good to me.

When I grow up, I will be her brain.

•

## **M.B. Goffstein**

The main question put to Jane by reporters was, “Why didn’t you marry Lazlo Molnar?”

She said, “I didn’t marry any of my boyfriends. They were all wonderful.

“One is a general, one is a flamenco guitarist, and one is an orthopedic surgeon.”

“Have you all got your pictures?” asked Jake. “Thank you for coming.”

•

Eventually we made our way back to Coverly and a delicious late supper.

“How are Cesar and Ada?” I asked, though I often speak to my grandmother.

•

“Are Cesar and Ada married?” Brooke shouted through the phone.  
“When did that happen?”

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

“I bet she got a Chinese garden and had a covered veranda added to her house.

“I can see them sitting there, he reading a poem by Po Chü-i, she describing a weird configuration of cards in the Solitaire game she just played.

“The first volume of Howard S. Levy’s *Translations from the Collected Works of Po Chü-i* was published in 1968. The fourth volume came out in 1978.

“David Hinton published *The Selected Poems of Po Chü-i* in 1999, and Burton Watson published *Selections from Po Chü-i* in 2000.

“I was so relieved Cesar would know about the stones from Lake Tung-t’ing, and opening the cranes’ cage and being in the presence of ‘these gentlemen.’”

“Sorry to burst your bubble, but I don’t think they’ve met.”

“Where does Cesar live?”

**M.B. Goffstein**

“He owns several houses on their old street. It’s quite upscale now.”

Brooke wanted to read me something about the old neighborhood:

Janice Lasagna was getting married.

You should hear this, Chewy said as Jane brushed his coat.

“Margie gave me her wedding gown,” Janice was saying. “It’s not my taste, and it’s too short.

“My aunt Emanuela is taking fabric from the skirt and adding it to the hem.

“She’s taking in the waist and changing the neckline.”

“Chewy, heel!”

He picked up his brush and they went inside so Jane could call Carole.

•

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

“Miss Jane is on the line,” said the maid.

Goody, thought Carole, who was lonely in her big house.

“Margie gave away the Norman Norell wedding gown we gave her!”

“*Harper’s Bazaar* paid for it.”

“It was our idea!”

Chewy put his head down on his paws and dozed off.

“Remember when Faidoh was trying out wedding cakes, and Margie ate them every night?

“They had yam cake, honey cake, spice cake, and pecan cake.”

“That’s why they had to keep letting out the seams,” Jane said.

“When she put on the gown, she said it felt strange. She didn’t know the muslin was a toile!”

**M.B. Goffstein**

“She’s always been different. That’s why we love her,”  
said Carole.

•

“I remember when you and Frieda were little,” Faidoh said, as I  
took him to the kitchen.

“You were always up to something!

I remembered the time we tried copying the Bible into tiny  
booklets we had made.

And I remembered making hollyhock dolls and floating them in the  
pool.

“I know you all don’t keep kosher. It wouldn’t matter if you did,” he  
said, “because I’m vegetarian.

“I want Frieda and her husband and kids to eat at our house when  
they come.

“Do you have butter, sugar, salt, water, flour, vanilla, eggs, oil for  
frying, and confectioner’s sugar?”

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

I told him we did.

He had offered to make beignets at the fair and wanted to try our ingredients.

The Inspector was with Lesley Anderson.

Just as we walked in she confessed, “I was married to Stephen Simon.

“He used to talk about Coverly.

“I left him and went to cookery school. When I got my certificate, I applied here.

“You didn’t tell me he was dead. I was afraid he had found me!”

•

Faidoh sifted the flour while heating butter, sugar, salt, and water to boiling.

Then he took the pan off the heat and added the flour, stirring like mad.

## M.B. Goffstein

The dough formed a ball and he added vanilla. He added one egg at a time.

The oil had heated in its pan. He dropped in three heaping teaspoons of dough.

They puffed up and turned golden brown.

He took them out, put them on paper towels, and dusted them with confectioner's sugar.

When they had cooled he gave one to me, one to Lesley Anderson, and one to the Inspector.

•

Weighing an extra five pounds, I went upstairs to check the guest rooms.

As I passed my brother's room, I heard my mother say, "You have the life you always wanted."

"Birdie and Morrie have more money."

"Darling, you don't work."

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

“I do repairs and help Pam with the tearoom and gift shop.”

“I know it’s hard for you and Pam. Maybe you’d be better off without it.”

“What! Better off without Grandison?”

“If anything were to happen to Birdie, Morrie wouldn’t inherit Coverly, would he?”

•

The next day was the jumble.

Jane left the puppy sleeping in her room and accepted a bouquet from a child.

Wearing a chiffon dress and an amusing hat, she gave a charming speech Jake had written.

They went to every booth and bought homemade jams, cakes, and dish cloths.

The women working in the booths blushed and bobbed little curtsies.

## M.B. Goffstein

•

I went through the jumble, squeezing pockets and putting my arm inside umbrella stands, feeling for a notebook or packet of papers to put in my book.

I recalled something Heschel said in my beloved Chapter Six of *Man is Not Alone*:

The self comprises no less unknown, subconscious, than known, conscious reality. This means that the self can be distinctly separated only at its branches; namely, from other individuals and other things but not at its roots.

Also,

I am endowed with a will, but the will is not mine; I am endowed with freedom, but it is a freedom imposed on the

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

will. Life is something that visits my body, a transcendent loan; I have neither initiated nor conceived its worth and meaning. The essence of what I am is not mine. *I am what is not mine.* I am that I am not.

•

As I felt inside a commode, I heard a little girl say, “Mummy, look at this dog!”

“You can’t have that,” the woman in charge of the antiques booth said.

“Why not?” demanded the girl’s mother.

“It’s for Miss Lorraine.”

•

Frieda and I had worshipped Jane.

We cut out pictures of her from *Harper’s Bazaar* and pasted them in scrapbooks.

## **M.B. Goffstein**

We had been told she didn't like children because of her own unhappy childhood.

I went around the table to look at the dog, an old Staffordshire "fairing."

It was a pitcher made in the shape of a King Charles spaniel wearing a yellow and green tricorne hat.

He was white with red ears and spots, and he was sitting up, begging.

He wore a gold collar with a padlock and had orange staring eyes.

What I liked best was his muzzle, sort of a peach color peppered with black dots.

His whiskers, which were long on one side and short on the other, went on a slant.

•

I felt my cell phone vibrate. "I think you should make your book 128 pages," Brooke said.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

“The pages of a book have to be divisible by eight. My first two novels were 128 pages.

“You only have to write 120, because there will be six or eight pages of front matter.”

She listed them.

“You have over a third.

“Be sure you see a scene and hear the words before you write it. Don’t make it up.

“For writing’s a pleasure and rewriting is grief, but a false-hearted sentence is worse than a thief,” she sang to the tune of “On Top of Old Smoky.”

We were getting to be quite good friends. She said, “I’ve had the best life!

“When my father was in the Aleutians in World War II, Sir Thomas Beecham used to wait near the elevators and carry me around the hotel lobby in Seattle.

## M.B. Goffstein

“In grade school the girls said my father was as handsome as a movie star.

“My first husband was a student of Mme. Lhevinne. I attended her master classes.

“‘Come to me, come to me,’ she would say, her hands stroking the keys.

“She meant don’t play *on* the piano, play *from* the piano. I have followed her advice in drawing and writing.

“Mme. Freschl played trios with Albert Einstein and the King of Norway.

“She said, Einshtein, count!

“I wish he could have met you, he would have *loffed* you, she told me.

“Those are blessings, aren’t they?”

“Yes!”

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

“When I signed posters for *Natural History*, on Fifth Avenue, at New York is Book Country, I had the longest line there.

“A man asked me to sign a poster to Greta Garbo. He said she collected my books.

“There’s a popular song in Japan called “Brookie and Her Lamb.” I corresponded with the A&R man from Sony.

“That was fun!

“A coffee wagon in a suburb of Tokyo is called *Brookie and Her Lamb*.

“I’m extremely grateful people like my books, but I never bought into it.

“I even changed my name once. That was a mistake.

“I love writing novels. It isn’t as scary as drawing, and you are never lonely.

•

## M.B. Goffstein

I thought, A hundred and twenty pages? I killed a man, and I don't have a plot!

•

Pam had figuratively rolled up her sleeves and was working at a booth.

“Here,” I said to one of the women. “I’m taking Lady Pamela to tea.”

Pam and Elaine were wearing her mother, the late Duchess of Fundy’s, clothes.

That hadn’t stopped them from buying bags of clothes at the jumble.

We got our tea and cakes and sat down. I said, “Pam, do you know a man named Stephen Simon?”

“Do you mean the nursery rhyme?”

•

“I’m stumped,” Brooke admitted. “Are you sure that’s his name?”

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

“Sometimes when you get a person’s name wrong, you can’t get the character.”

I said, “I don’t feel I’m doing justice to Jane, and she’s your favorite character.”

“You are, too,” Brooke said.

“Why don’t you write more about your brother? He has interesting problems.

“And why did Lady Alice, a.k.a Ada Camell, escape from your grandfather?”

“Don’t you know?”

“No.”

“I don’t either.”

“I thought he had picked up some unpleasant habit at boarding school,” she said.

“You could make it 96 pages. That’s a good length, and you’ve done more than half.

## M.B. Goffstein

“Now you should read it and add the things you thought were there.

“You’ll still have missing pages, but that’s good. It means you have to think of things.”

•

“Why aren’t you in movies?” asked the girls and women surrounding Faidoh.

“There was something wrong with my appearance on film.”

“That’s daft!”

At 72, he was still terribly attractive.

The aroma of beignets and coffee in the open air was quite intoxicating.

I ordered two beignets.

“You have great powers!” I heard the fortune teller say to him. “I’m just an amateur,” she confessed.

“You have to make a living.”

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

“Bless you. I do it for the church.”

•

“My dear Lady Tannenbaum,” said the Inspector, “I’m not like your Columbo.

“I don’t notice some small thing that’s out of place that bothers me intellectually.”

He didn’t notice he was getting sugar on his tie and jacket.

“The burglar was at your grand front entrance, lying with his feet toward the door, his arms at his sides, and an empty pillowcase on his chest.”

“At least he didn’t get in,” I said.

“You must not have examined his pockets. He had four Charles II silver trefid spoons. The backs of the terminals are engraved with your crest.”

•

## M.B. Goffstein

When I escaped from him, I saw Margie and walked around with her.

“Look at those big hats!”

“They’re tea cozies,” I said.

She chose the most hideous one, and I imagined Jane and Carole’s reaction.

“What did the fortune teller say?”

“A little boy named Yehudi is watching over us.”

•

My mother-in-law stopped Jane to say, “You looked so sweet in your bed!”

She hadn’t crept down the corridor and opened Jane’s door. She was thinking of the last scene in *Jenny*.

•

I went to see the fortune teller. I knew her, as she lived in the village.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

She told me not to worry.

Mummy went in after me.

“Lady Carole,” I heard, “do you remember me? I am Ann, your old nurse.

“I retired here six years ago, hoping to see you.

“I pushed you in your pram, and we fed the ducks. Later, I took you to school.

“Your father was what they call an abuser. In those days, they called it having a temper.

“He was like his father, I’m afraid.

“After your mother took you to America, I went to work for the Windsors.

“It was a come-down, as I no longer had the prettiest child.

“Is Lady Alice well?”

Listening outside the tent, I realized my grandmother was an illegal alien in the U.S.

**M.B. Goffstein**

“Come and visit,” said Carole. “We have room for you on the plane.”

“It’s kind of you to offer, but I’m afraid I’d feel shy around movie stars.”

“You made Jane happy by saying dog spirits are guarding her.”

“I’m sure it’s true. I read movie magazines. Lady Alice always liked them.

“Later, she sent me a mental suggestion to look at fashion magazines.

“That was how I knew you were a model and married Mr. Hirsh. I hope you’ve been happy.”

“I would be perfectly happy if my son were happy, too,” Carole said.

“He has a lovely family—I don’t know if you’ve seen Pam and Elaine.”

•

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

California air and sunshine and fresh fruit and vegetables keep my parents slim and strong.

At 80, Jake is the image of a Hollywood producer married to a tall elegant blonde.

He is fifteen years older than Carole but doesn't look it.

I had no ambition and was glad to marry their friend Morrie, who is Carole's age.

•

Hugh's problem is that the English aristocracy no longer has meaning.

Socialism made us redundant.

When anyone cares that Hugh is a lord, he basks in their admiration for awhile.

Then he says if they think Grandison is something, they should see his sister's place.

I hope he didn't say it to the burglar.

## M.B. Goffstein

•

Brooke says when you finish a book your real work starts. Every revision makes it clearer.

Listen for the words. The book is complete somewhere in space, word for word!

Dig into it again and again—even if you think you will have a nervous breakdown.

•

Hugh and I grew up believing our grandfather had been killed in World War II.

He had returned and remarried.

When our great grandfather died, our grandfather became the fourteenth Lord Corgi.

Then he died, and his widow, on a trip to California, ran into Alice and Carole.

The Corgi's had no children. That is why we got Grandison.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

Jake paid the taxes, made necessary repairs, and kept the servants on.

Grandmother doesn't like Hugh. She thinks he is the reincarnation of her husband.

I reckon that's what hurt him and makes him think he is being cheated.

You can't go back and change the past, but I do wish I could help him.

•

The fair ended and all the rubbish was removed from our field at our expense.

Carole and I drove Margie and Faidoh to London.

We stood outside the gate and watched the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace.

Then we went to Kensington Park and saw Carole's childhood home, Kensington Palace.

## M.B. Goffstein

We ate lunch at an Indian restaurant and went in to some souvenir shops.

Margie chose two commemorative cups, one for Queen Elizabeth and one for Princess Diana.

Jane had stayed home to train her puppy, so we bought her a china corgi.

•

Jake brought a DVD of Jane's new film, *Little Lady Eat No Candy* with Ray Ng.

Unlike most new releases, the continuity was flawless and the plot was great fun.

John Travolta kept trying to kill Jane to prevent her from revealing his past.

She didn't know him from Adam, and Ray Ng had to protect her.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

Having read Travolta's thoughts on dancing with the Princess at the White House, in *The Diana Chronicles* by Tina Brown, I wondered what he was like to work with.

Jane has never tried to look young (she is 70) and has never stopped working.

Aside from her beauty, she has a kinetic quality like that of Buster Keaton.

She doesn't act but lets the part come through her, as Brooke described.

I stole glances at Hugh. He was eating popcorn and enjoying the show.

I don't know why I have never given him more thought or realized he wants to be happy.

•

## **M.B. Goffstein**

Hugh used to ask our grandmother about Grandison, the kind of information one can find in *The House, A Portrait of Chatsworth*, by The Duchess of Devonshire.

I shall quote two things from the book that stole my heart:

The chest of drawers is stuffed with ties belonging to the organizations Andrew is interested in. As he is colour-blind he has to be inspected before going out, as he once went to the Game Fair (who gave him their tie the day before) wearing that of the Conservative Friends of Israel.

And:

The last room of the tour of the house has been turned into a monument to my passion for commerce. It is a shop run on the lines recommended forcefully in Beatrix

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

Potter's *Ginger and Pickles*, a cautionary tale of a village shop, and surely the best book on retailing ever written.

Living in a great English house is a life of privilege—the privilege of work.

Grandmother felt nothing but scorn, and Hugh's great interest fed her dislike for him.

Coverly is another story as it belonged to her family, but she can't or won't see it again.

•

Brooke thought Grandmother would marry Cesar Lorraine.

But it is too late for Hugh to have grown up knowing Cesar and Faidoh.

He isn't close to Jake, though he did learn from him to respect his wife and daughter.

It is his saving grace.

## **M.B. Goffstein**

Elaine is a sweet girl who adores him, and it is nice seeing them together.

•

“Can it be 64 pages?” I asked Brooke.

She laughed and pointed out I hadn’t described coming into the kitchen and finding my mother-in-law polishing silver, so I went back and put that in.

I got immersed and put in things and took them out and am now on page 66.

I will aim for 80 pages.

I’ll lose some as I delete boring scenes and gain them as I add new ones.

Brooke uses the Widows and orphans function as a discipline, cutting it close.

Lines leap from a page. You take out one and an entire page vanishes.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

The great thing is to have too many pages and hunt for things to remove.

•

Brooke thinks I should say Jake brought me a diamond brooch, but he always does that.

He brought brooches for Morrie's mother and Pamela, and a necklace for Elaine.

•

Faidoh hadn't gone to Israel because he didn't want to leave his father.

He might have liked France, and must wonder what he is doing here.

He and Margie do enjoy Indian food and are taking home jars of chutney.

•

"The cat notebook came."

## M.B. Goffstein

“Do you like it?”

“That cat could never help me write.”

•

At one time it seemed to us that Cesar would marry Linda Van Islip.

It was when he made *The Journey to Washington*, beginning with the Farewell Address at Springfield, Illinois:

My friends— No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe every thing. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be every where for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To his care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

Paramount made the film to try to win him back, but it was his last film.

Linda had sent him *Herndon's Lincoln*. Earlier, her mother left him a mountain.

Government was considered an art in ancient China, and Po Chü-i was a censor.

“If your Majesty’s political measures should be at variance with The Way, would Your Majesty not be eager to know about it?” he wrote in one of his memorials.

## M.B. Goffstein

It was a logical move to Lincoln.

•

In the end, the Scotland Yard Inspector blurted out the truth to  
Faidoh:

“I’m afraid I must be leaving. It’s been delightful meeting you and  
Margie.

“I got two neckties at the jumble and shall always remember your  
beignets.

“The Crown wishes me to say the cause of death is unknown.

“I got to meet Jane Lorraine and get a personally signed picture of  
her.

“I also look forward to receiving by post a personally signed picture  
of Cesar Lorraine.”

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

My friends— No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe every thing.

“It’s apt, isn’t it? I can say the whole thing, but I’m only going to London.

“It was odd seeing him without his mustache, but I soon got over that.

“He has always been my hero.”

“Darling, what is that pin you’re wearing? I don’t think I’ve seen it before.”

Carole is the jewelry police.

The small mother-of-pearl disk had a gold color cat sitting on a tourmaline crystal, next to a crystal ball of yarn. The tail was made of tiny dark crystals.

It was prettier in sunlight.

## **M.B. Goffstein**

I also bought a chipped Willow pattern cup with a mismatched Willow pattern saucer at the jumble.

I wanted to hear what Faidoh and the inspector were saying.

“Meeting you has been the high point of our trip.”

“My pleasure. By the bye, is Loretta Lorraine your mother?”

“Yes, but we’re not close.”

“Why don’t you and Margie come to London? I can show you around New Scotland Yard.”

“That would be great!”

•

I went upstairs to my sitting room and played Solitaire on my computer.

When I win, I know my brain is working, but I lost four games in a row.

I got a call from Anat Berger. “Anat!” I cried. “Is everyone all right?”

“Yes, of course.”

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

“Where are you now?”

“Oxford.”

“What are you studying?”

“I already have a doctorate. Look, could I speak to my grandparents?”

“Come for dinner! Stay as long as you like!”

I opened the drawer in the telephone table and found the train schedule.

Just then a taxi drove up and Penelope Airdale got out. I recognized her from photos she had left here.

I went to the kitchen and told Lesley Anderson we were having two more guests.

“Put minced salad on the breakfast buffet,” I said, remembering our trips to Israel.

I called the housekeeper and we went upstairs.

## **M.B. Goffstein**

Coverly has fourteen visitor's bedrooms, so we still had nine to choose from.

I looked in the occupied rooms and saw Jane's dog pitcher on her mantel.

I washed it and was going to fill it with flowers, but a jet of water shot out of a crack.

Morrie came and said that James Bland, who is a movie producer here in England and a friend of my father, was coming to stay, so we got three rooms ready.

He offered to tell Lesley Anderson that James would arrive before dinner.

This is Coverly's *raison d'être*.

Like a novel, it must be populated, and I do wish the burglar had come at another time.

There are usually guests in the breakfast room from seven till eleven.

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

I had envied Brooke her life of dedication, but mine is equally dedicated, down to making sure there are clean bowls of water for the dogs.

•

I drove to the station. Anat's hair is a darker blond than Frieda's, and straight, not curly.

I was so glad to see her that I told the station master she was my oldest friend's daughter.

•

When I got back with Anat, two gay couples I had invited to make up the numbers were there, so I went to check the table set for twenty-four.

You may wonder if we dress for dinner.

Coverly is quite warm, but our neighbors wore long skirts as did Pam and Elaine.

## M.B. Goffstein

They smelled like their dogs, and Chu-wu thought they were interesting.

Carole had told Margie to bring a long dress, but she didn't, so we didn't dress.

•

Brooke can be ruthless, taking out a toddler who could read at two-and-a-half.

When we went in to dinner, I wrested Anat from her family and put her on my brother's right.

She had done active duty in the Israeli Defense Forces and was now a reservist.

"If they call me, I'll drop what I'm doing and go," I heard her tell Hugh.

"What do you do in the army," he asked, "besides give the soldiers something nice to look at?"

"Don't be stupid," she said. "I'm a sniper."

## Lady Tannenbaum and Myself

•

“After a year on Hua, I wanted to smoke, so I started down,” Penny was saying.

“Very steep and harrowing.

“I made the cigarette sign and bought one, but my God, it was terrible.

“Then I couldn’t find Hua Mountain.

“Huashan? I asked.

“A Chinese farmer pointed west.

“Huashan?

“This went on and on, and I ended up in Afghanistan.”

“You are such a nut,” Carole said, looking goofy with love for her cousin.

I was lucky to have Frieda, but when she became Orthodox I lost her.

•

## **M.B. Goffstein**

This little book wasn't meant to be sad, it was meant to be a confection.

But as DWR says on its brown packing tape, "The details are not details. They make the product. Charles Eames."

This is just an exercise, but I do feel I have gained some understanding of how a novel gets written.