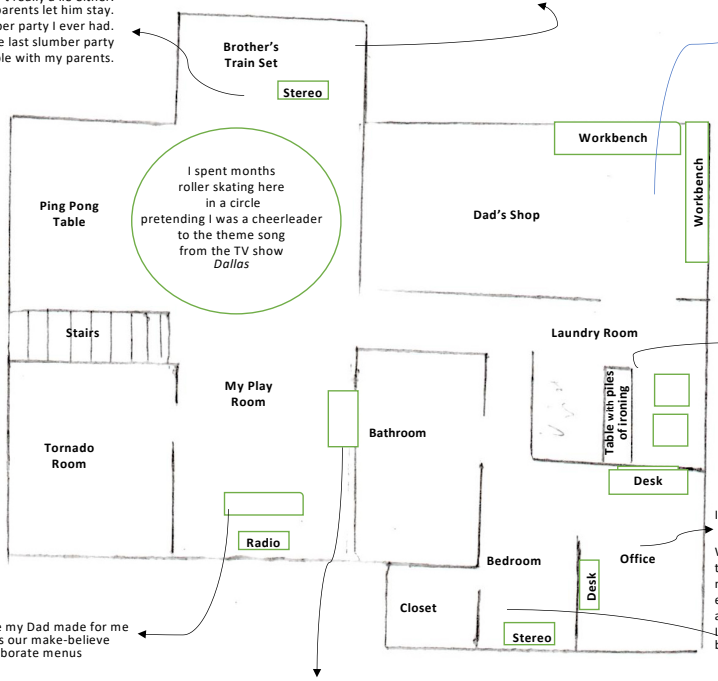
Confessional Media Map 2

Basement

I had a slumber party down here in high school.
We snuck our new friend Paul into the party.
My brother came down on his way to his room,
saw Paul and ratted us out that we had a boy there.
I was called upstairs. I told my parents Paul was gay.
He wasn't out at the time but it wasn't really a lie either.
My parents let him stay.
That was probably the best slumber party I ever had.
But it wasn't the last slumber party
where I got in trouble with my parents.

This was a creepy, dark rathskeller area under the Den.
After the train set was thrown out, there was a turntable there.
I listened to some of my mom's 78 records and Cher's "Prisoner" album
(which I liked and then didn't like and then did like and it's been that way ever since)
and that white, unnecessarily gate-foldeded Barbra Streisand/Barry Gibb album
with "Guilty" and "Woman in Love" on it.

I took all the $25 saving bonds
my grandmother gave me
and bought a Victorian dollhouse kit.
My Dad was kind enough to built it for me
but he made me glue all the shingles
onto the roof myself.
My grandpa (on my mother-side)
was living with us at the time.
He came down to help,
which only meant teaching me
how to "organize my tools."
As I was alone gluing shingles,
in the workshop, I finally figured out the
about picking up a boy "just south of Mobile"
in Cher song "Gypsies, Tramps & Thieves."



We called this bedroom the Tornado Room
because it was allegedly the safest room
during a tornado. When we came downstairs
during a tornado alarm, we never used
the tornado room. We sat over by the Ping Pong table.
We also tried to use it as a bedroom
but nobody liked to sleep in there.
It was a haunted room.
From my playroom, I would never turn my back
on the Tornado Room. I remember playing Yatze
in there once. Eventually my mom
put her old Las-Vegas-trip dresses in there
still packed in their moving boxes.

My mother got up at 6 am every morning
to do all our laundry.
There was a laundry chute
from the upstairs hallway
and we would throw our dirty clothes
and laundry towels down the chute
every day. If we didn't, she'd yell at us
through the chute. We were so spoiled,
we didn't even know.
We used that laundry chute as an intercom
from the basement to the upstairs
when we were too lazy to go find somebody.

I learned to type in here and use a DOS computer.

When we were little, Krissy and I would pretend
these rooms were apartments and we were single
mothers with babies. We would go to work
every morning to some vague jobs
and leave the babies unattended.
It sounds alarming now
but they were fine.

This was an antebellum dollhouse my Dad made for me
back in New Mexico. It doubled as our make-believe
restaurant bar, complete with elaborate menus
I made from old lingerie boxes.

We built elaborate Fisher Price villages here
and invented sexy Barbie soap operas.
My parents used to give me celebrities dolls
like Cheryl Ladd and Donnie & Marie.
You had to disassociate their iconic personalities
to work them into the sexy dramas.
Donnie & Marie were always the it-couple
because they were the cutest.
Sonny was always the villain
because he looked like the bad guy
in Sergio Leone movies. Cher could not be separated
from her personality and so she was obligated
to sit out all the sexy dramas.

One by one, all my friends left the play room,
grew too old for toys and started playing with boys.
I was incredulous. Boys were trouble, I said.
As they were leaving, I wondered,
"How can you leave all this?"

The previous owner left a wooden toy bench.
I stored all my Cher scrapbooks in it.

For a while I had a radio down here
and would dance for hours all around
after school, mostly to Pointer Sisters songs
which were hits at the time. It's where
I first confused Madonna with DeBarge.

It's also where I picked out the first song
to describe to myself what it felt like
to be in love.

When my brother moved back home
he lived down here with P.J.
his pet ferret. I went down there
to listen to his records, which included
Elton John's "Yellow Brick Road."
I also bought Sting's "Dream of the Blue Turtles"
and learned about extended metaphors.
The ferret didn't like ladyfolk. She was a sexist ferret
and would come out from under the bed,
and bite me on the hand and then run back and hide.
It was annoying, but I have a high tolerance
for ferrets in crisis.

Key

You might not think this is a poem.
And maybe you're right.
In fact, it wanted to be an essay.

I had to fight to keep it small.

The floorplan was recreated
with the assistance of my Dad
who fixed up the basement;
so he remembers
where the walls
were.