

2nd 1/2 of 1996

number four.

Painter Lewis

\$1.00



an almost fiction
zine by sts

baby I think
I love you
n shit.



painter lewis #4
was written in
the last half of
1996. The chart
that follows
is an accurate
display of how
I feel.



EVERYBODY!

Back issues of P.L. and
Nightmare girl are one
dollar each, or stamps
or something. You can
write me at
po box 40821
portland, OR 97240. ♥sts



Idaho Jen, the legend.

She came to Portland after weeks of homeless wintering in Seattle. She lived those dreary + hopeless days in her car + cafes with her cat Zoya. One day she dragged her beaten + weary body to the tip of Oregon + waited for the right moment to make her move. She had come from Idaho where the long fields + old roads wind + divide everything, where the sky is so huge the city feels like a batcave. The Portland clouds hung heavy + grey over her. She blew her cigarette smoke into them, Zoya curled on her lap on the front porch rocking chair. She shrugged off the cold + waited with patience for time to bring her to the right place. Meanwhile she entertained the deranged guests, soothed cuts + burns, got drunk on request, watched everyone else's favorite movies, + lay thoughtfully with her cat by the warmth of the solitary floor heater in the huge old house. She worked a triple split shift in day care + was still up for more compassion + listening, caring, hospital rides, + short visits to her home state with select Portlanders. With her, she carried the ability to heal in a will to survive. For those who would rather die, Idaho Jen could convince otherwise.

One late winter day after snow + ice season passed but before flowers + trees bloomed, Idaho Jen took a room at the house in which I rented out the basement. I was in + out of



town most of her stay, but I knew she would spend hours alone in her room, letting Zoya out + back in occasionally, walking from her room to the bathroom, working her triple splits at the Y. Time wore on and it brushed everyone

but me the wrong way. (What did I care? I kept making trips down to California.)

That's when the tables started to appear. Multi-teared, abstract, hand made by Idaho Jen tables with cut out pictures from National Geographics shallacked over the wood, pictures of wild flowers in hills + fields of valleys, mountains + streams, close up of animals, tall grass + bears, wide expanse of night skies, layers + levels of pictures + wood, nailed + shallacked into towers of shelving, wobbling precarious over cardboard on the basement floor. The trash bag overflowed beyond use, the ashtray was a pile of light orange butts + matches, ashes + old cigarettes spilling onto the cut outs. When I went past this basement corner I monitored progress + knew someone lived here while I wasn't looking, someone cared + built + dreamed, meditating on her

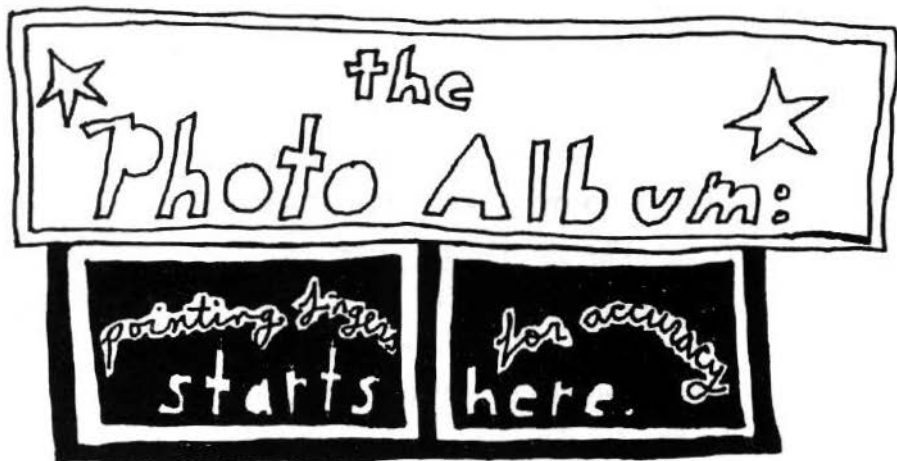
life in all its tenses, cutting shapes with hand saws, pounding + gluing everything together in hopes of reaching some distant + vague goal. Her cat watched on + lived around these smells + sounds for months. Her workplace was a station underneath the only basement window but she hardly noticed spring shooting grass into her view of the outside.

She helped our housemate plant a garden + took more trips to Idaho until one day I caught wind of her notion to leave Portland forever. I ran down into the basement to catch her + found the multi-leveled table knocked apart + broken, strewn against the storage boxes + work bench legs, the National Geographic bent, water spilled ruining the pages, cigarettes remaining in their neat pile based on the little glass tray underneath.

Everything was destroyed + I couldn't find Idaho Jen. With passing days I was informed she was moving away because of some new revelation found in her work in the basement - a discovery of her future, + insight that she'd long hoped for. A month earlier she had gotten rid of the triple shift with a bang committing the day care crime of following through with your threats of quitting. As free as she was to leave Portland, she did, back to Idaho, leaving behind the smashed table + some other things she said she'd send for later.

Before she left I was able to write a note + leave it on her car, but all I could verbalize

was good bye + take care. I couldn't explain the more important parts of how I knew I had lived with a legend who I watched transform from a dark + freezing basement to the warm Idaho summer.



This one night I had to leave, it was late + I felt all crazy + hopeless + I was outside trying to unlock my bike + turn the combination the right way. She opened the door + said, I hate you! and shut it again, then opened it + shut it harder + opened it + shut it harder then kept it shut + flicked the outside light off, then on, + I was trying to turn the lock as fast as I could but it was cold + rainy + my fingers were shakey + she kept flicking the switch off + on, off + on, flashing like a strobe + I got on my bike finally + rode off quickly + knew I'd really, really fucked everything up with no going back + I was crying when I got to wherever I was going.

MAZZY ☆

I'm riding this orange 3 spd down a bike path

+ it's nighttime + under a bridge it gets scary
+ I imagine a leather gimp is chasing me full
speed through the dark as if he just waits in
the chain link for me to come because I always
do - this is all because the xtrans found out
about me + her. No, I mean, I told them,
one of them, the leader, and he told me this
was the best for everyone.

i don't remember, i cried in a lot
of different places then. Nothing
anyone said could make me feel
better, make me stop, so i just
let myself cry until i fell asleep

ESTRELLA'S PROPHECIES



It's me after a show and it's 3AM + the
family I now live with lives 15 min. out of
town. The bike path is scary but it's a
continuation of me every day fearing for
my life. This is when cramps are so bad
I don't want to move. It's winter so the
grass we sit in is wet + I give you my
coat hoping I freeze to death + I get sick.

Since it's California the next day is hot + I ride to school sweaty, cramped, + it's totally perfect because I'm coughing like crazy but I'm not dead.

But what the fuck. Soon I'll be in love + I'll return the bike + nominally move in with some xtians but really spend all my time at this girl's apartment.

But wait - somewhere inbetween being hot + scared + sick on a bike in the dark and moving in safely with the girl I go crazy in my house + break my guitar into a wall + throw clothes + furniture + just when I'm about to never come back I start smoking again.

see it's like a big chase except one second I'm doing the running away + the next I'm doing the chasing + it's all whirled together so when everyone stops + I duck and the person in front of me smashes into the thing behind me...



White on Black.

She came up to my room really late after everything else was closed. They even dimmed the dorm lobby lights after 10. The institutional bathroom was all fucked up dirty white, orange scum all over the shower walls, the curtains stuck together. But at 3 or 4 only me + the RA would be in there. We showered at opposite ends of the stall, a couple half ass partitions between us, talking our only conversations only because we always stepped out of our bedroom doors in our bath towels at the same time, too late to turn back, so in we went. Afterwards I'd be changing back into my clothes + she'd be in there waiting for me to come back from the shower. We smoked + drank raspberry Snapple + kissed on each other + listened to my antipunk music. It started when she wrote on a peice of paper in my science notebook, how she had a crush on me + it went from there. It seems like it was written on a black peice of paper in white out because we were trying to fix everything from the start but in all the wrong ways.



una mama



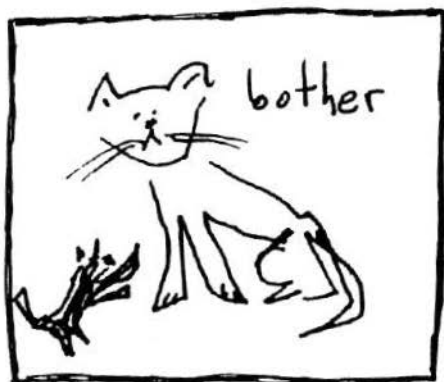
ok, so there's this girl + she's a great dancer but sometimes she gets so sad her legs won't

move - her feet get stuck to the ground right wherever she last put them + they just stay there for long amounts of time...

break

it

kitty
cat



MOWMOW?

down.

I got a cat +
named him
spencer. He
wears the
key to my
heart on his
collar.



rrr-prrr-rrr-
prrr-rrr-prr

She grew up in a little LA suburb. She walked forever to get to her friend's house just to see if she could play music that day + sometimes she was home + sometimes she wasn't + sometimes she was fast asleep still + couldn't get out of bed.

She's such a great dancer. All I can do is watch her + catch that look in her eyes, how maybe it will come my way, how she can look + pull me over.



She says, the summers are always hard for me. It's like time opens up + tries to suck me up through the tv or something. I really think clouds put a stop to too much time - caps off too much endless blue space. She'd love to get on + ride away but it only goes so far + once she gets there she'll just break down.

i want to say i'm sorry
all the time to everyone
of you but where do i
start? how do i tell you
so you know?

Sleep Forever



- cos i knew
we could never
be happy.



some things

I have to get up early for work again + that totally destroys my point of view on how a healthy person should live. I'm surrounded by people + the table is rocking when they move. The torture theatre group is doing a dyke version of our Town in the next room—right now some lady is belting out words against some tuba piano song, a little trumpet. It's crazy how each point in my body is sore, right down to my inner brain, how my right leg is achy from pushing the rest of me along on the skateboard, the pinky rubbing against the paper is all cut up from moving our couch back out of the kitchen, shoulders tense from keeping them hoisted up for hours, feet crammed into boots, and none of this would agitate me if I were alone in a room getting drunk with her + I didn't have to work tomorrow. People say that maybe I will build character if I do things even if I don't want to do them. April calls me late at night for the 7am shift. Harm + g just got me this orange + white striped cat so I named him Spencer. We stuck him in bed with us that first night + he slept through under the covers, my body around his, hers around mine, like a dead conga line. I tore the pillow from under my head right before I went to sleep + put it over my head, one of my arms behind my head, one of my hands holding one of Spencer's paws. Almost every part of my body felt good + warm except one which was freezing cold like someone put an ice cube there. So I just thought about how once we fell asleep on a beach in Santa Cruz + it was warm everywhere, all over.





Bob

It's late. You can't go anywhere. they took your scooter + now they want to sell it back to you. It's too bad. You're hungry. You have a big scooter key + nothing to stick it into. You were drinking. It's a quiet night; just the small

roar of cars going by making you wait to be on a not so busy street, + the sound of crying in the kitchen. There's nowhere to go, no home to go to, no place all your own, you don't want it that way, but you don't have a home. You're sitting alone on someone else's bed, you wonder how they'll feel when you try to move in for a while - no home, lots of wreckage. Every single place people go they have to wreck it, they have to dish out shit + alienation + throw around beer cans + roaches + steal other people's stuff they have no business messing with, + give each other headaches + heart trouble + don't say hey at shows or restaurants. It's late.

Judgement





Forget it

it's isolation + usually I don't care + everyone is drunk I just realized that everyone's been drinking all night + that's why they're dancing all crazy + energetic + I've only had 4 hours of sleep + 6 hours of fighting + now I'm tired



+ all I want is to go to sleep + I've spent way too many nights doing this exact thing, doing this waiting around

for drunk people to ask me to drive them somewhere + waiting for xtians to get done praying or doing whatever it is + they do that takes so fucking long while I'm outside having a cigarette + wanting to get the fuck out of there + I can almost not stand this, it's almost too much to be here again + I feel better with them ignoring me + **they can't see me** + son so is totally getting down + she's totally cute + son so are all bustin' moves **you'd love it here** on the tables + you'd probably try to rip my arms out of their sockets cos you were so stoked.

this lady i know

she watched the Barbara Streisand movie "NUTS" about 5 times. The first time she rented it she was crying so hard she didn't catch the end. The next two times she curled up alone in her bed, on days off from work, and sank her heart into the ver. By the fourth time she was barely able to fight off these fucking memories - the sly twenty slipped under the bathroom door, the vacant gazes everyone but Richard Dreyfus had, this non stop sense where, even after the movie ended, she felt guilty + wronged + no one loved or believed her. But the last time she saw it her stare was blank too, dried up + forgotten, + she just couldn't remember why she cried so hard before. "You like that movie?" I asked her. "Well - it's sad," she affirmed, fixed on hollywood + Barbara + not me or herself.

1958



Work.

It has felt so good to drink that lately I've been doing it almost every night. It's always whiskey + that has a tendency to stay stored up in my body up through the next day when usually by 10:30 or so I'm a van driver for the Y. Then I'm wearing about 8 layers of clothes at the start but when the van gets hotter I do too so I start taking off the layers till I'm down to a t-shirt with holes all over that I haven't gotten out of in a while. The kids do this thing where they insult me to death, then ignore me, then run around the van screaming while I'm turning corners on yellow lights at high speeds, + after I've yelled at them until I finally get sick of hearing myself think + turn up the radio so loud I can't hear anything but some lousy song — then suddenly we're best friends. I walk into a site to deliver something or someone + suddenly I'm over run with my latest best friends, a couple of kids who call my name + try to climb me. I say "So all that yelling wasn't enough, huh? You still like me?" and they always say "Yes," + I'm always surprised. When I was a kid I hated people who yelled at me. How come I can pull over a van + turn + glare at some kid for screaming too much + the next thing I know the kid thinks I'm the shit? The kids always tell me I stink, that I wear the same clothes too often, + I look like a boy. Maybe they like me because I don't care when they say things like that — appreciation of honesty.



I put
my hands
on
my friends
shoulders.

Why does



it
hurt
so
bad?

I ask
her.

Ocean

her shirt is
blue, she as
ks how i am,
& i tell her -
we don't beli
eve each other.

i try to
tell her
i love he
r but i
don't fi
nish.



i learned
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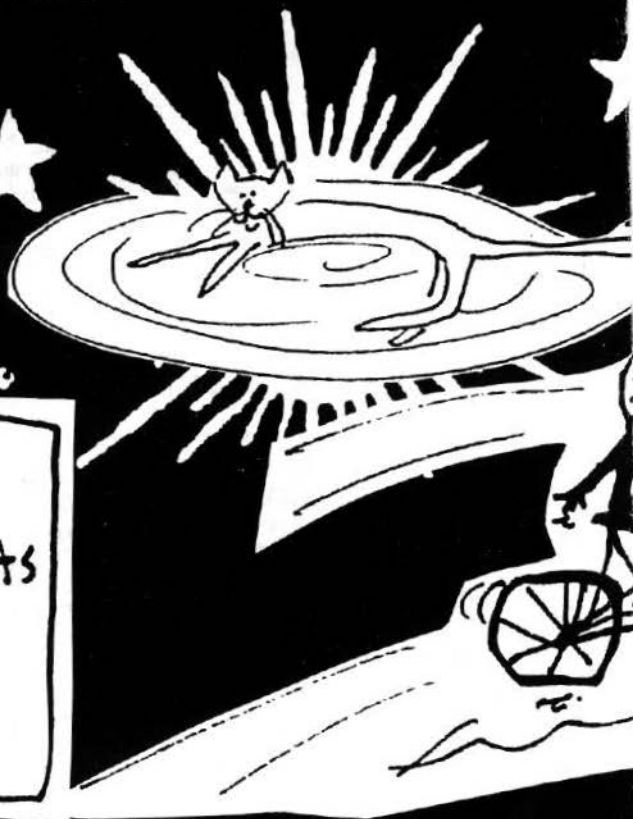
v could
nt tell i
t was ali
ve at all.
could you?

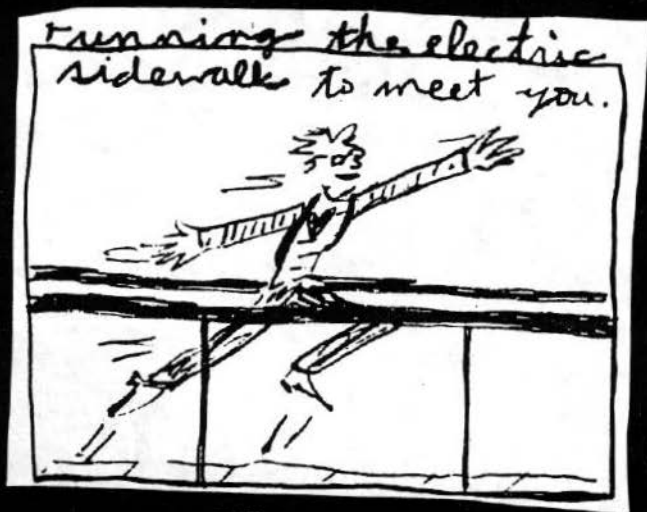
scared

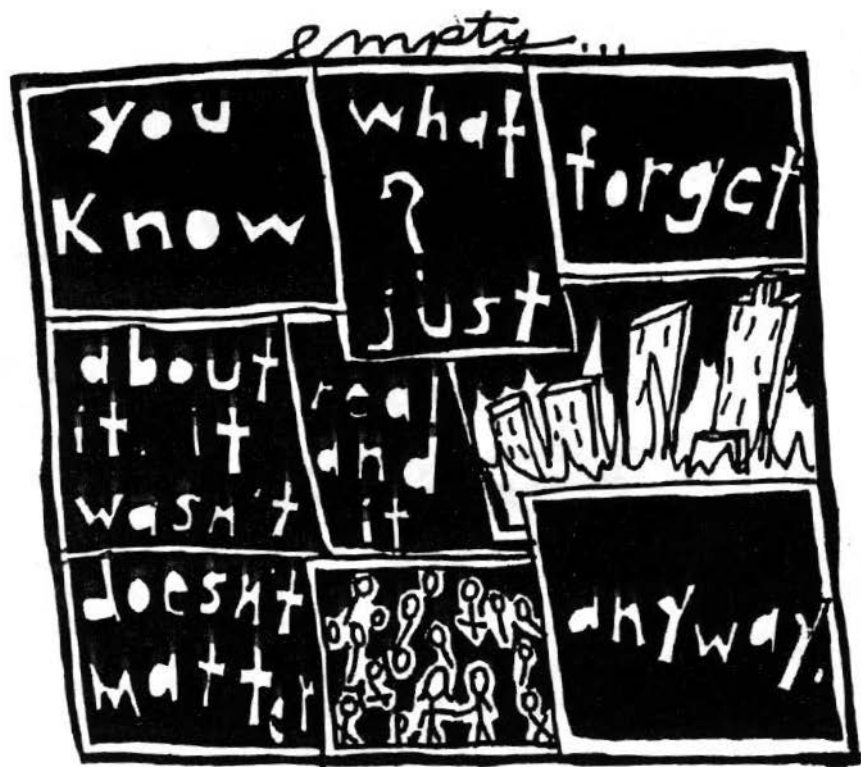
well, the one time i had a cactus plant it didn't have thorns. it just sat there in a pot in my dorm room and i never watered it. i guess a big flower was supposed to come out of it but nothing ever happened, not even a little. maybe cause it never was in the window or that i never watered it. but it had an exterior just like a hard lizard, maybe like an alien, which is another thing i'm afraid of. i got the cactus from a girl who dropped it by my boyfriend's house for me as a going away present. it was sort of a wierd thing to do but it was nice--i don't know how she picked that particular plant. after about nine months a different boyfriend had it at his house and his mean housemate threw it in the trash because the dirt kept getting knocked out of it. that guy clark was one pure asshole. he used to yell at me for leaving my shoes and backpack around the house and he'd trip over them. he'd yell at me to cover up his slutzy old self. he'd try and impress me by weightlifting but it just scared me how intense his face got, how the arteries would show and ~~xxx~~ tendons would stick out of his neck. it scared me so much it made me never want to date anyone who was stronger than me, or better at fighting. i mean, he'd really hurt you if the thought crossed his mind, and i like being safe, how maybe i'm dating a girl and being nice to her, maybe saving her from somebody else who might not feel like being safe or something. but that guy clark wasn't my boyfriend, bob was. this girl--i can't remember her name now, went out with him and she became my housemate after awhile, and she'd complain sometimes about him being such a mean jerk. i'd complain about bob too, by that time. it was way hotter than any summer i'd even been through, dry-like a desert, sticky at four in the morning trying to get to sleep. one time me and that girl went swimming, and that's all the hanging out we did. after i wouldn't have sex anymore with bob he told me it'd be nice to still date me as long as he could take girls home from the bar sometimes. i didn't respect that though, thought he might just end up using me and passing along some diseases or whatever. he probably already was doing that, i don't know. but this one time i had a new girlfriend a lot of years later, still the same town, and she had a cactus in her window. it was thin and wide sort of and tall, with a ton of spikes coming out everywhere, so that if you leaned back in your chair you'd get a whole head full of them, i swear, so i don't know why she had it right there for her cat to knock off or to get stabbed by while trying to open the window. i hated it so much that right when we got back from driving up with her falcon from l.a. we put it on the front porch, doused it with red fingernail polish, which leads to another phobia of mine, red fingernails, and lit it on fire. we photographed the whole thing;

that was nice of her to let me do that, but i guess she wanted me to feel safe. but i'm sure not everyone cares like that. i used to have some friends who had a few cacti in their apartment, and one boy used to hold the phallic needly thing like it was his peter and chase me around the place with it. one time instead of locking myself in the bathroom i got a bike lock and swung it at him and almost got his leg and he almost dropped the cactus. it wasn't until then that they got made, until i fought back with a big chain. he used to try and trick me to walk close to cactus plants. but you know, i swear this is true. my friend who painted with me one summer told me her dad was walking by his cactus garden, which is just a stupid thing to have in the first place, and one of them threw a bulb at his leg. it's true--the cactus sensed his presence and assaulted him with one of it's own spikey parts. it just rolled around his feet, cause there's not much momentum in a stationary cactus, but you better believe it tried to get him. what good is a cactus garden anyway?

the alien phobia started w/ ~~XXXX~~ with the phallic cactus people, at their new house one night, but it wasn't their fault. we rented fire in the sky, that movie about a guy who gets abducted by aliens and finds all these gory old chopped up remnants of people, and he gets operated on his eye of all things, and the aliens are really brutal with him, then he gets back to w the forest he was ~~in~~ taken from, tries to live a normal life but keeps having evil flashbacks. see, it's not his fault or even the aliens who are just ignorant and curious. i'm sure that if an alien knew you needed water and vegetables they'd give it to you, or if they knew you'd give them all the information they wanted about people and earth that they'd take it rather than operate on scared abducted people. it's just really scary that aliens do hurt people not because they want to but cause they don't know any better. same goes for people, but that's even worse and more complicated cause people hurt each other just if they feel like it. but somehow i'm not phobic of people, just aliens and cactus and nails with red ~~lip~~ polish. that's just cause i remember it was red nails that always were digging into everyone's arms, mine and my dad's included. but fortunately i don't hang out with red polihotypes or cactus, unfortunately i know a lot of people who once they find out about the whole alien thing like to bring it up when i'm around i have little respect for people like that, with the exception of my housemate currently, who just really doesn't understand and always tries to scare me with star trek aliens, which are not at all like the real ones.







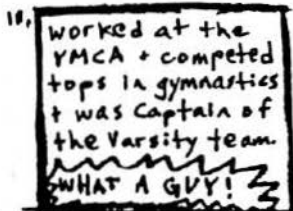
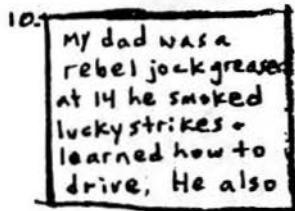
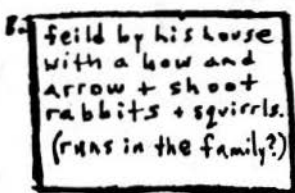
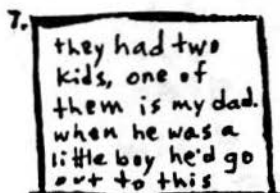
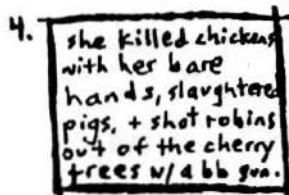
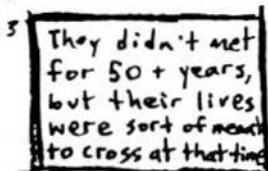
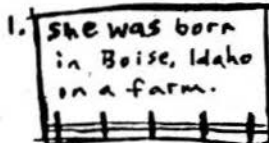
one thing I remember about Happy Days is how whenever someone had some bad news they'd say, "Are you sitting down?" and I think that's where the trend actually started, or somewhere in Hollywood. But my dad actually said "Are you sitting down?" and I knew it meant my spencer had died of some kidney failing shit or another. It wasn't going to surprise me really. He actually shot himself. I wasn't prepared for that. It's a long story...



stupid.

Belle + Spencer

originally I wrote this epic drama that was 16 or so pages long. Although the fondness I feel for these two people would have me dedicating a whole book to them, my epic story just didn't seem right. But I want you to know some things, so here they are, fact + fiction.



16. her formal education. she may be finished high school + he was an engineer.



they were married for over 20 years when Ken had his first heart attack. a year later...



20. he died of a second onrigh in my dad's lap while they were doing yard work my dad was only 16.

21.



22. she says, "He never cheated on me. He was always so kind + polite, he always lit my cigarettes. Your dad does that too, you know."

23. she took in various run away friends of my dad's, through high school + after she got a job

24. at a near by dept. store called The Broadway, + stayed on for almost 30 years.

25. my dad married my mom, and he went off to Viet Nam for 11 months or so. My mom moved in with my grandma with her dog Sarge.



27. then one night 6 years after

28. a cocktail waitress at her favorite bar introduced her + her friend to spencer.

29. "was he cute?" I asked her.
"Well, sure," she smiled.

30. sure enough, they started dating, the old old fashioned way...

31. coffee shops



32. Sunday drives



33. flowers



34. He was alone, too. He'd recently left his fucked up alcoholic wife. He was worried about his dog.

35. He'd worked his whole life to become a smart man so he'd never have to starve like he did during

36. the depression when his mom had to send him off to live elsewhere because there just wasn't

37. enough money. He wanted to take care of everybody, but his wife was a jerk...

38. and his son a lying thief weirdo. He was nuts, he left her + just worried about his dog.

39. he crossed 'em out.



40. after a few years Belle + spencer started living together. they loved each other + never got married.

41. he was a chemist at dupont. he'd have two different types of nightmares, both from job anxiety.

42. in one, the communists would break into their home + torture or kill him and/or Belle for

43. information. TELL US EVERYTHING OR THE LADY GETS IT!



44. (it was in spencer's job description to NEVER tell ANYONE what his work was.)



46. spencer read about everything. He + Belle would talk about it all, like she + ken used to. For the most part,

48. I liked him a lot. He was always very rude + liked to argue over every last thing.



49. He was an out-cast, like me, hardly ever smiled, a loner at family events.

50. He had no outward display of emotion, only a constant show of dis-approval...



52. apathy is just about the right word.

53. after 32 yrs went by of friendship, his kidneys failed, rotten + dead in his

54. lower back, churning out poisoned blood. None of the dialysis program worked for him. He had to

55. turn in his favorite tan brown polyester outfits for new clothes, smaller for a thinner body.



56. a belt would bother the plastic tube out of his belly, so my grandma ever so stylish from her 1/4 century in clothing sales, had him wear jeans, t-shirts, + bright red suspenders.

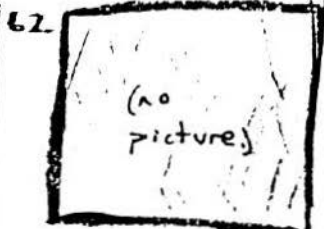
57. he moved at a crawl + couldn't catch his breath. He was becoming the ghost of Spencer, pale + weak + hardly there.



59. He probably went to the library to read up on suicide, looked for the best way to do it, the easiest,

60. Cleanest, quickest, + most stylish gun shot. I know he did. This was his style. He put a chair next to the car in the

61. garage after he sent my grandma on some errands, turned the ignition on, sat, pointed the gun right at his heart.



63. + shot himself. His body fell forward + he landed on his knees. His hands landed empty in his lap + his head

64. bowed down, silent, posed, a circle of blood swelled out around him. She found him like that.

65. As usual, he had everything in order. No memorial service, cremation by the Neptune Society, etc, etc, etc.



71. "Oh, go ahead + smoke in the house" she said. "You don't have to keep going outside."




73. "I don't know why, but I haven't cried yet. I just can't get him out of my mind, you know?"



75. mow the lawn, and those bags of dirty blood from that dialysis machine were getting too heavy for me...

76. ... I miss him, you know? I'm glad you're here but I do miss that man, she said. At 10 PM, every night,

77. like she has
for the last 30
years, she pours
herself a drink.
For the first time,
she offered me
one.

78.  one shot jd
(black label), 7yr,
squeeze of lime,
and some ice.

she can't get him
out of her mind.


she fell
in love
again.

but hearts
break **just**

"I don't regret anything," she says—

it just takes
a little TIME.

• • • some good friends,

It maybe a
lot of
whiskey 

then—

(she called me a doomsayer...)

i am a
skeptical kind
of
person
too...

(the
end



a girl...



Frustrated because you
can't reach me and i can't
help you and you can't help
me.

This whole idea of love...
Sarah says she's glad it's
finally occurred to me that
it's a chickenshit crusade
to not believe in love.

But when i see my married
and/or loveorn friends, i
don't especially admire

their tears - who would want the trouble? i thought i was making a smart move to steer clear of love + rely on myself + my friends - why should i need anything else? how many little tattoos of sewn up broken hearts do people want? how could love - the kind that people are searching for in the faces of everyone they see - live up to our high expectations + actually turn out to BE what we wanted and dreamed of?

the bruise on my nose.

on video

so i was skating in the house with Emily egging me on by video taping my 'round the coffee table tricks + Erose asking us to be careful + not let me break my head on something — then — i gave 2 good pushes, heading straight for Emily who was at a great angle on the floor. i was trying to enter the kitchen at 40mph when i tripped on some phone cords and slammed my face directly into our kitchen floor. Fortunately i'd taken 6 advils to relieve my cramps earlier that day. OUCH.

SIX A.M.?!⁰⁰⁰

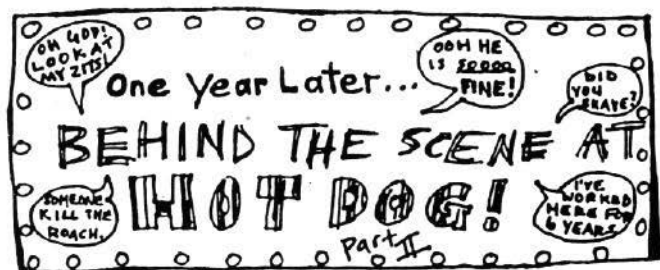


NOW I KNOW WHY SOME OF
THOSE HIGH SCHOOL SUBS WERE
SO CRANKY/HUGE MUGS OF COFFEE
PLANTED ON THE DESK AT NOON.
THEY WERE ALL WHERE I'M AT
NOW - STUCK WITH SCREAMING
KIDS WHO, AT BEST, TOTALLY
DISREGARD MY PRESENCE AS A
TEACHER. OH WELL, THAT'S
NEVER THE REAL PROBLEM.

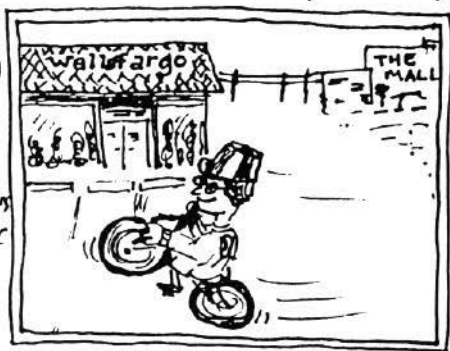
WHAT GETS **ME** IS NOT EAR
DRUM CRACKING DECIBELS
OF SHREIKING, BUT
THE SOUND OF MY
BOSS'S VOICE AT
6 AM TODAY SAYING,

"WE HAVE NO ONE
ELSE TO TURN TO;
PLEASE WAKE UP AND

SKATE IN OUR CITY'S 30°
WEATHER TO MEEK SCHOOL WHERE ALL THE
ADHD KIDS ARE, WORK ON NO FOOD OR
COFFEE BECAUSE WE DON'T PAY YOU
ENOUGH TO MAKE AND BRING A SACK
LUNCH, AND THOUGH YOU HAVE ONLY SLEPT
FOR 3 HOURS TONIGHT, REMEMBER YOU
PROMISED TO SUB AFTER YOUR REGULAR
VAN RUN TOO." **WHY THE FUCK AM I
STUPID ENOUGH TO STAY ON THE LINE?**
I SHOULD HANG UP ANY TIME I HEAR HER
VOICE ON THE PHONE - AND THIS MORNING I
WALK IN, AND SHE SAYS "HELLO, MY RISING
SUN!" THEN I SAY "SHUT UP." ... ROUTINE.



I was 16 when I applied at Hot Dog on a Stick in Thousand Oaks, CA. My hair was long + blonde, + I was this hippy jock smoker with glasses competing for what I now see is the sexiest, legal job a minor can get. How'd that happen? I arrived in blue baggy shorts that hung to my knees, + a quicksilver surf shirt, flo-hos, my stylish mom-bought-em glasses, full hippy dero, the works. Good thing my parents raised all 5 of us kids in the same town. My future boss, a well tanned ex-TOTS prom queen's best friend, recognized my last name + said she knew my oldest brother, thought he was cute, + hired me, his misfit geeky sister, + we're not even blood related. Anyway, she asked if I might be able to work without my glasses. I couldn't, I told her, I'd hand a guy twenty bucks change for a fiver. All right, she said, and took me in the back to find me a uniform. That tanker + hat FIT just cause they were so wrong. I totally loved it + immediately adopted the abhorred job of gopher. I guess all those hot doggers felt comfortable enough in their own territory, but were too cool or embarrassed to cruise the mall or get change at the bank. Not me! I enjoyed the break from mall lighting + serving up 20 cups of lemonade a minute. The only catch, "one of my seniors told me, "is you can't take off your hat anytime you're on the clock, got it?"



"No problem!" I told her. At first, the missions through the mall just took me to Taco Bell and Round Table to fill my co-workers food requests. That wasn't so bad because all my derlict friends worked at these types of places + we'd chat + scam deals, plus I could take a smoke break with Tom, my boyfriend. He worked at Round Table Pizza, a half minute walk from Hot Dog. Since I couldn't be seen with a cigarette while wearing my ever-present beautiful hat, we'd sit in the back hall breakin' mall rules with ovr drinks + smoke. I'd complain about my day + he'd blow smoke rings saying, "That's nothing; I'm covered in Pizza sauce that my boss threw at me." At least he got to work with most of our hang out crowd. I had a few gaps to bridge with the girls at my place. Then, one really fucked up



Saturday around Christmas time when you could've wiped out half of Southern California by bombing the Oaks mall alone, my boss approached me. "Will you go



"YEAH, I NEED, LIKE, \$40 IN QUARTERS OK?"

down to Fargo + get some quarters?! We're almost out! Hurry!" She was in a panic. "Do I have to wear -" "YES!" she yelled before I could say "my hat?" + I was out the door with 2 twenties + my Hot Dog sweatshirt. I got

on my bike + rode accross the parking lot, accross a main parking lot street, and up to the bank. It was a nice ride but waiting in line kind of sucked, like it always does at banks. Then I'd ride back with about 900 pounds in change in a bag, smoke a cigarette, +

go back to work. I had absolutely no shame. Well, I guess I did have some limits. Everyone knew that Dave, the owner of all 83 or so Hot Dog joints, could pop in at any moment, close the store, + take all the present employees bowling, fully uniformed of course. Yes, we'd have to wear the god damned hat too. He'd pay for the food, the game, + our time cards stayed IN. Well that's all just too weird to me. But what a way to advertise. That Dave



killed me. oh - he actually died during the 2 or so years I worked for him. On each holiday he would tell his employees to treat themselves to the appropriate, co-ordinating candy. My boss would hang a sign in back saying we had such n such amount of money for red + green Xmas kisses, or whatever. In the spirit of Hot Dog style observance, I faked a note from HQ saying "Please use \$10 out of the till to purchase black jellybeans for the store in memory of Dave." Needless to say the girls, especially my boss who'd been there for years, were mortified. It wasn't long after that I got the drift that his daughter + heir of the Hot Dog fortune, was gonna change everything. Eventually, one of her spies ordered my boss to fire me because I just wasn't a good cleaner. Must've left that note in my file on accident too, I was **CANNED**.

Laundry

By the time I was alone in the rented lodge on this women's retreat + there was a fire, it was snowy, + everyone else was eating, by this time I had made it to the t-shirts for the clothesline project, our own version of NOW's storytelling method of survival, of betrayal, overcoming trauma, pride, whatever you have to express, + you're supposed to use these markers + write on a t-shirt, + hang it up for everyone to admire + smile at + listen to, + for everyone to know THIS is your story, this is your laundry, this is what you've carried with you to this day + you want to put it out now.

So I sat there in the dark lodge checking out the other girls' shirts. They had drawn cunts as trees that grew into goddesses, they'd written about abuse a lot, they'd drawn gay pride rainbows + streams flowing from more looming cunts + huge dicks crossed out, blown up, dismembered. And I was totally alone, + totally inspired. I opened my daily planner to some empty pages + drew in purple marker the outline of my t-shirt.

I let it all flow out of me because I knew no one would see my t-shirt to get mad at me + say I wasn't a real feminist. I wrote all over the pages in + out of the lines how they didn't care who I was as long as I followed the propaganda, gave my time as a mindless wide-eyed girl, kept my opinions to myself because I wasn't as schooled, hadn't read bell hooks, hadn't minored in women's

studies, hadn't come completely out of the closet, how they ate away at my whole person until I was a bird pecked mash of shit, and then how they wanted me to write about the glory of my life as a member of the feminist movement here on a t-shirt when all I had in me was the understanding that I wasn't good enough for anyone there - and fuck all that, so I was mad + writing shamelessly about how I felt about + em. They fought each other for stealing boyfriends, girlfriends, having secret lovers + lies + going after ex's whenever one became available, + they'd tell me in secret all about it, all hurt or hateful or jealous, how shitty + selfish all these girls were, then we'd throw parties + get really drunk as if it didn't really happen like that. They would pretend to like you but listen for the wrong words to come out, how I couldn't call myself a girl even though I didn't feel like a woman, how I couldn't wonder about riot grrrls because they were stupid brats, how I couldn't afford to be vegan but they rejected that, said it wasn't a matter of money but a matter of desire. Can you believe I fit all these rants on a size 8 1/2 X 11 t-shirt? There was more I'm sure, some good CVSS phrases + finger pointing. I'd love to show it to you but somehow I lost it. Those girls allowed my oppression in an environment that was supposed to help set me free of the omni-oppressive patriarchy. They commanded

more feminism from me while they bit + chewed each other + I will never go back there + sacrifice my happiness like that; it's 2 years later + I can finally write this fucking story.

And now for a comic about a video I made. Order a catalog from Emilia smokebomb, or wait till I get famous and pay \$5 to see it at a dumb theater somewhere. Who am I kidding? It may be great but it's only a few minutes long.

Germany: a 15 minute video



germany germany i ♥ a germany germany

you can write to me if you're a collector!



it's Claire! ("oh no! please
call me
KATHERINE!
it's my real name!")

I've met some interesting kids while working as a Van driver for the YMCA, but now I must introduce you to one particular 5 year old. Here are some quotes:

"Look, now my stomach is skinny enough to be on Baywatch." (upon lifting her shirt + flashing her sucked in stomach.)

"You look like the queen of the H-word place." (re: my newly bleached hair w/ reddish tips + orange + black nail polish.)

Claire: When's the last time you had a boyfriend?

me: Way before you were born.

Claire: Have you met Shane?

me: your Site Director?

claire: Yeah, he's a real pain in the butt. You'd be perfect for each other.

me: But I don't want a boyfriend.

claire: But you're a woman! Every woman needs a man!

a few days later...

claire: OK, I've hooked up you + Shane on the Internet.

me: But I'm not on the Internet.

claire: Don't worry, I'm taking care of it.

(I wouldn't put it past her - check for me in the singles chatrooms on AOL.)

me: Hey Claire, check out my nail polish.

claire: OH! It looks absolutely divine on you! Black is such a wonderful winter color!

"oh please don't make me sit next to any gross + smelly boys!" (said very dramatically.)

claire: well of course I've read every word in the dictionary.

me: ok, what does preposterous mean?

claire: I don't know what the words mean, I've just read them!

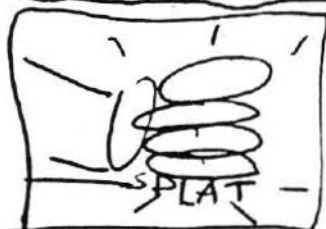
Whenever I walk into the Y room I usually get a warm greeting from Claire, but lately she's taken to stopping whatever she's doing, leaping up, + running at full speed at me into a hug that nearly knocks me over. Then she looks up at me + says "faster than a speeding bullet." painfully true.

For my birthday + Christmas present, Claire + her sister gave me a Whack IT orange. The tag was signed "From Claire" but she didn't leave enough room for her sister to sign.

hanging out with kids again lets me in on all the secrets I've forgotten in my old age. There are things I promised myself as a kid to never forget just because I grew up, but in the hurry to be cool with my friends in Jr. High, + turn 18 to move out of my parents' house, the promises got lost somewhere. Now I remember how obvious it was to me that not enough adults cared in the right way. They were always off somewhere being busy with ulcer + lousy jobs, telling me how easy I had it being a kid, that my worries weren't real, + just wait till you get old, they'd warn. Well, I'm old now + I still haven't any idea what they were talking about.



shut out, sweet + forgetful.

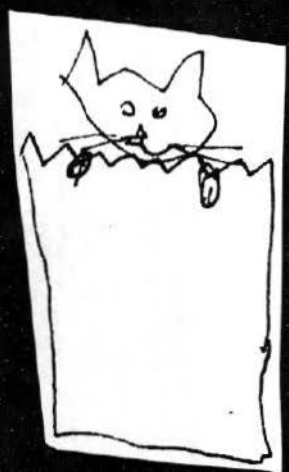


i was at
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in the
bathroom

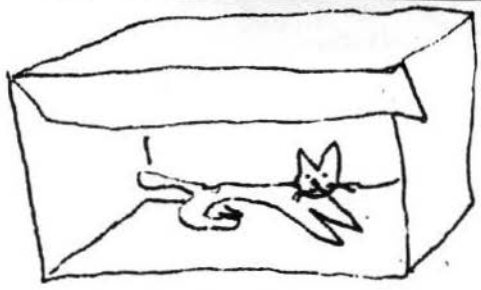
14+50
346
maybe
i was sad



everyone's zone



Reach



★ SFS ★
 Po Box 40321
 Portland, OR
 ★ 972340 ★

