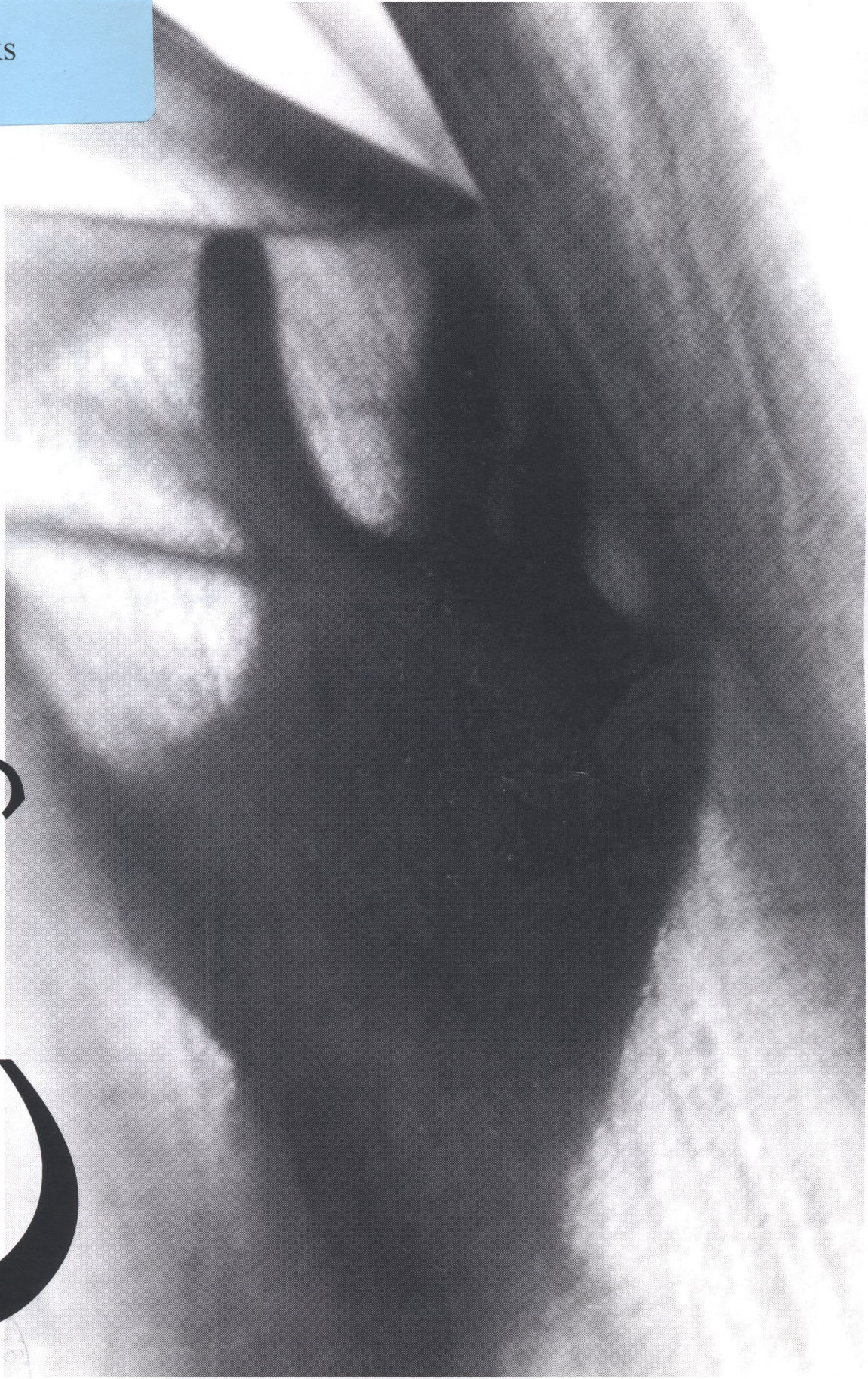


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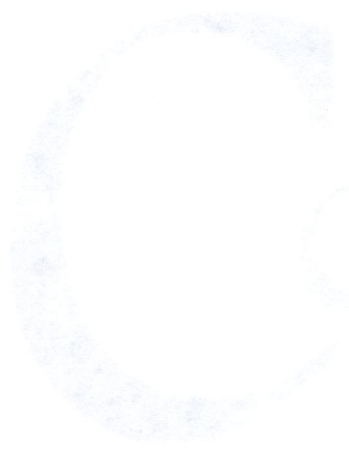
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Water

Night into day
like water through
my heart.

Not wine
as it was before
of old.

Not blood
as it was before
that.

But water,
eternally recreating
itself.

The original religion.

Ever giving, taking,
quietly having its
way
with the Earth.

Try to stand in its
way
and it will sweep you
gentle
from where your feet are
planted in the rock.

The water in my heart
is primordial,
always changing
always the same,
as night goes
into day,
and day night.

May the cycle never,
cease.

-Tobin Addington

Guns

Jaja Niedermeyer

The showdown had been inevitable. He had survived the six other attacks. It was now down to Jacob and him. That was how it had always been. They would come home after school, outfit themselves in their playground camouflage and commence the daily installment of war. He knew that most other kids called it "guns," but that name never seemed to fully convey either the strategy it took to win or the meaning it had for him.

He was positioned in what he considered the most secure location in the park. The hydrangea bush he was standing inside was flanked by large Douglas fir trees on both sides, making him virtually invisible, yet completely capable of surveying the territory in front of him. He knew he really couldn't move around much, for a rustling bush was what had helped him get Simon earlier that day. And because of this, he might have been worried about somebody sneaking up on him from his backside. But he wasn't, for he doubted that Jacob, crafty as he was, would want to brave the blackberry bushes that were densely entangled behind him.

He scanned the field, knowing that Jacob was not going to hole up as he had and wait for the other to attack. He saw a movement a ways off, a rather subtle one, that could have been one to arouse his suspicions. Only he discarded it in light of the feeling he had that Jacob was in fact close. He focused intensely on the ground before him and made his ears keen to the slightest of sounds. The ubiquitous silence seemed to serve notice that indeed, Jacob was close.

"Bacaw!"

He jumped, for a moment thinking that Jacob had let off the fatal shot. He realized, however, that it was only a crow flying overhead that caused the

ruckus. He has always known crows to be rather skittish birds, to flee at the smallest of movements. The back of his mind told him to check the blackberry bushes, that something had caused that crow to take flight. But for some reason, that was where he left the thought, stubbornly telling himself that the only place anything was going to happen was out in front of him. It was then he got another feeling in the back of his head: that of Jacob's finger pressing on it.

"Bang!"

He started at the sound, his eyes darting about this place that he knew should be familiar, but for some reason, wasn't. His focus then fell upon two guys laughing, and he knew where he was.

"Jackson man, you're not supposed to have flashbacks until after the war," the young black man said before taking another puff from the joint he had in hand.

"Yeah man, that was like-" the other man cut himself off by giggling, "like . . . ah man, let me get another puff."

Yes, he knew where he was now. And he laughed to himself for the thousandth time that these guys, guys he considered to be his friends, took this, an actual war, more lightly than he ever took those battles in Franklin Park. The scary thing was, so did he. He wasn't fighting against his friends for bragging rights, he was fighting against somebody he called Charlie, only it was a different face every time. He never knew where he stood, how many were left on his side, how many were left on their side, who was winning. He only knew he was alive, and somehow, that didn't mean as much as it had when he was a kid.

"Men, fall out!"

The voice of his commanding officer tore him away from his thoughts. He looked around, saw his fellow soldiers traipsing through the thick underbrush, and followed suit. The two men that had just messed with him were still puffing away on the last remnants of their joint. He then watched as one of them accidentally dropped it, causing the other one to push him and curse his stupidity. Jackson smiled as both of them frantically patted themselves down in hopes of finding another one to light up.

"I've been waiting so long," the black soldier sang to the joint he pulled out of his pocket, and his friend chimed in, "to be where I'm going. In the sunshine of your looooooovvve." They sang while lighting up what they liked to call their daily dose of vitamin THC. They both then began to play the air guitar and make what Jackson guessed to be the accompanying sounds, but sounded more like one of his little sister's tantrums.

A rustling in the trees above stole Jackson's attention. Emerging from the dense foliage was a brightly colored bird vigorously flapping its wings. It flew across the sky with a sense of urgency, as if driven by fright. The sight stirred a distant memory inside of him, but he couldn't place it. Besides, he had to watch where he walked or he might get snagged by an above ground root, things his fellow soldiers liked to call ground sharks. As his eyes slid down the nameless tree in front of him, however, he caught a glimpse of what could only be sunlight glancing off of steel.

He now knew the memory. The crow.

"Get d-"

He found himself on the ground, crawling among plants he had never seen, in a country he

hardly knew, yet he was overwhelmed by a sense of familiarity. He scanned the area as best he could, looking through gaps between the leaves, hoping to find protection from the onslaught of gunfire.

He caught sight of it. The hydrangea bushes and Douglas fir trees just sitting a little ways off. He dragged himself across the soil, knowing that once he reached his outpost all would be fine. The bullets that whizzed over his head went completely unnoticed, as did the cuts that were growing on his hands, for he was focused only on reaching cover in the bushes before he was seen by Jacob.

Jackson pulled himself between two leafy trees, and positioned himself so he had a clear view of the field he had just made his way across. He surveyed the territory, hoping that he might be able to draw a bead on his adversary. He was out there, Jackson knew that much, but where was the question. He looked back and forth across the area, in the sort of panic that he had felt back in Franklin Park when only his pride was at stake. Seeing nothing to alert him of his enemy's presence, Jackson paused for a moment.

The blackberry bushes.

Taking a firm grip of his rifle and placing his finger confidently on the sensitive trigger, he turned around, expecting to find Jacob standing behind him. He was ready to claim victory.

He heard the shot that hit him before he felt it. He reached around to his back and placed his hand over his shoulder blade. He let his hand linger there for a moment before bringing it slowly in front of his sweating face. The dark red blood felt thick on his fingers. And he remembered, this was a game he never did win.

Bungee Jumping Bovines!

Nay, 'tis to be blind.

Sons of the soil, the people, clouds, the rock,

"Tis all nothingness,

Temporary tenants of this great ball of land and water,

Just fuckin' temporary tenants.

Ready to be blown away in a whiff of time,

Or by a small errant one of Jupiter's moons.

Nay, thou must not contest the forces of time,

And nay, one must listen to that appetite now,

Now, nay, now, knave, now, babe, now, now,

And we jolly of to the cave, babe, knave, nay,

Neigh.

The dog purrs, the cat retches as it atones for your sins,

Zero has evolved.

Silence.

Slowly, creepily, slimy as that snakish mind

Ritzy Glitzy.

Nay, we are blind yet to the follies,

'tis the original sin 'tis the original coke

'tis a caffeine high and a resistance to mending

Oh. Mending,

The original sins in that World Views paper.

Nay, thou art wise.

Nay, me is foolish yet.

-Debu Gandhi



Jazz: Mike

Ki Sun Ruiz

Philosophical Bullshit and Backdoor Promises

Raging eloquence radiates from his body

As I fall into his river of midnight.

I am surrounded by the stars,

Swimming, floating,

But no, I am drowning.

His shadow flies above me

On black wings of hypocrisy,

Engulfing me with his shining eyes

And overpowering, sensuous smell.

It's so much easier to let go

Than to hold onto something I hate.

A flawless rose glistens in the dawn,

Infinitesimal drops of dew caressing its perfect petals,

Refracting the early sunrays

Into a thousand tiny rainbows.

I want to be it.

I would that you looked upon me

With the same divine beauty in your eyes

As when you look upon it.

But no, even the moon is mocking me,

"Poor, poor little girl," it laughs.

Take me away and fill me up

With you superfluous tragedies and love stories.

Take me to a world

Where I can pretend to be what you want

And forget myself entirely.

Entice me with your philosophical bullshit

And backdoor promises,

Just because you pity me,

But don't forget that I am human.



Jazz: Jeff
Ki Sun Ruiz

The Young

Ray Ki Sun Ruiz radiates from his body

As he falls into his river of midnight

Down surrounded by the stars

Safety issue

But you're looking at his eyes

Smell

I hate

and yet, underneath...

new cars

But you're looking at his eyes

Smell

I hate

and yet, underneath...

new cars

But you're looking at his eyes

Smell

I hate

and yet, underneath...

new cars

But you're looking at his eyes

Smell

I hate

and yet, underneath...

new cars

But you're looking at his eyes

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I hate

and yet, underneath...

new cars

But you're looking at his eyes

Smell

I hate

and yet, underneath...

new cars

But you're looking at his eyes

Smell

I hate



Someday



Who did it?



I don't get it.

The Story Writes Itself

Jonathan Wexler



The Story Writes Itself

Jonathan Westfall

The Story Writes Itself. What does that mean? A story that just happens? Without planning? Without forethought? Is this possible? Can this be done? Well, its happening, dear reader, and it's happening right now. So, you need to have a character, right? And he or she will need a name. Let's call her Mary. Yes, Mary. That will be her name. Let's say that Mary is... in college... on a date. Yes, and she's going to a soda shop in the fifties has she had blonde hair and is wearing all blue, including a head band, and she looks like Kevin's mom from *The Wonder Years* except she's younger and prettier and somewhat different looking altogether.

Uh oh. A *commercial* reference. *That'll be the day I die.*

So Mary's on a date with a young man from her college and she's sipping down sodas with him and his name is er, um, Rick, yes Rick, and he's got black hair that he's slicked back with some ungodly oil and he's wearing brown corduroy pants and a white and brown short-sleeved and collared dress shirt and he's got brown glasses on and Mary is blue and Rick is brown and it's their very first date and he's nervous but it's going good for the two of them as they sit in this soda shop on a street with the motorcars that drive back and forth and back and forth and say "Vroom! Vroom! Vroom! Vroom!"

Mary Rick blue brown.

So Rick is feeling a little nervous. Let's say this is his first date. That makes things more interesting. Obviously, he's a little nervous. His spoon shakes a little as he dips it into a scoop of ice cream that seems to chill the spoon as it kisses

it and he scoops up some ice cream and some fudge topping and he eats it and it tastes delicious. *Now* comes the symbolism part. Is it too early for that? Too early in the story? Well it's happening, it's happening, and there's nothing you or I or anyone else can do to stop it. Rick is afraid of mirrors, you see. He won't even look into one. not even if you paid him a dollar. He's afraid of something, but he's not sure what. He just won't do it. Well, that's a lie. He's afraid of seeing himself. He's doesn't like pictures of himself either, but he doesn't mind other people seeing them. When Mary picked up her spoon just now - to eat her dish of ice cream - he averted his eyes to avoid his reflection. That's how scared he is.

He can't even look at himself.

What does this mean? Is there an emotional, psychological, or maybe even mental correlation between his unwillingness to face his true self and his irrational fear of mirrors? Hmm...I wonder! Rick is now a dynamic character, or at least has the potential to end up as one. He's afraid of himself now, but what about *later*? Hmm? What role does this fear play in his life? Only time and this story will tell.

Rick has many fears. He had many too. He's faced one: asking Mary out... Still, there is another. Now he must follow through with it. Now he must go on the date. He's doing that now, but will it last? Rick is frightened, even though he shouldn't be. He's doing great. Mary isn't just smiling, she's laughing and she's crying. It's been the best twenty minutes of her life. Rick is hilarious. She thought he would be a loser. She thought she'd give *him* a good time, but she's never laughed *this* hard.

Mary can't believe it.

What's happening? She thinks: *I think I really like Rick!*

Yes, dear reader, italics mean thinking. And emphasis. And maybe a few more things? Is there a reason for this? Or reasons? I wonder... Do Italians think more? Do they put more emphasis on their words? And why are they called italics? And why not **bold** or underlined or ALL CAPS or a **Crazy Font** or something else... or maybe even put them *between stars*? Oh well, it doesn't matter. *Italics mean thoughts. (or emphasis!)*

I'm falling for Rick!

And Rick can tell that she's thinking this, somehow, and it's not helping him any at all. Success can be as scary as failure, you see, especially if you're not prepared. And nobody, but nobody who can't accept themselves can enjoy themselves on a date, no matter *how* funny. Besides, dearest reader, isn't humor an outlet of the uncomfortable? Rick excuses himself and walks into the bathroom. His eyes turn away from the mirror and he carefully avoids seeing his face in the reflective chrome handle of the toilet as he send his waste to the sewers.

Whish! Bye-bye!

What am I doing here, Rick? He asks himself nervously. *I don't know what to do! I know, I know. You're nervous. No! You don't understand! I don't know what to do! I can't finish this, but I have to. I think you'll find the answers inside yourself. Trust your instincts.*

And so now comes the wholesome feeling grade-A cheesy part as Rick trips on his shoelace

and catches himself on the white plaster counter. His arms are in front of him, at his chest, and his muscles are bulging about his shirt. His posture is as if he were doing a pushup and his heart is beating like crazy. If you made the floor, his body, and the counter into a right triangle then his body would be the hypotenuse, hands at his chest, holding on for dear life. Rick is doing something.

His eyes are looking at the mirror. He's looking into his eyes.

Whoah. Thinks Rick, and it's profound to him at the time. *I'm really strong. Just look at me!*

And he flexes for the mirror and enjoys his muscular body. *Well, he thinks, I don't know what I'm so worried about. I'm a knock out and I'm funny and I know it so I'll do it. I'll finish what I started. Come on, Rick, she's waiting for you outside.* A revelation in no time flat. And Rick heads back into the soda shop and he sits down right across from Mary and he says:

"Hello Mary, I'm back from the bathroom." And she hears what he's really saying and her eyes go wide with excitement.

And now he doesn't turn when her spoon rises, and now he just talks like himself all the time. They have a great date and maybe they'll even get married someday. Would *that* be happy enough? Well, maybe that's what happens... I don't know, the story is stopping.

So there you go and now you know the story that wrote itself.

~slow fade~

Porpoises

Saw two porpoise
surfacing in unision
today
the lead one overstepped herself
grey rainbow
choppy waters

yes strained to see
them resurface, to
penetrate the depths
of their racing dive
eyes strain to see your
memory in the dark

the dive
where did we leave off

your body
fleeting smooth
cutting water
so
perfect

-l

Cookie Monster

Amid my self-doubt
and low sadness
I saw a blue figure.

His googily eyes smiled at me
and his hands offered me a cookie
— though reluctantly —
and I smiled.

Not all my monsters consume me.

-Dan Rivas

Broken

Theirs is something broken
he would like to fix.

It's just parts, scattered
like scratched bits of metal

and glass, with a few ripe
berries squashed, and a smear

of something that looks like
sunlight on a red dog's

fur. Such is the gathering
he keeps near, but what is broken

stays undone.

- James Bertolino



Jazz: Matt

Ki Sun Ruiz

The Desert

An explosion of color
Dancing lights fill eyes and mind
The wellspring of life dried up
Replaced only by the void of what was once held dear
A wanderer with no Penelope to wait for him
No Ithaca to remember
Lost in a shimmering desert
Forever
Beyond birth
Placed yet always there
Constantly lost, but always in familiar surroundings
Throat dry, hope lacking
An oasis forever present
Perpetually out of sight
Its presence always out of reach
Tickling the edge of the mind
More painful than the reality of mile after mile of desert
Cold comfort found in ignorant bliss
As the solitary figure strides on
His feet disturbing the sand
His passing causing a ripple
Leaving naught but a lonely path of footprints
In the ever-shifting sand
Disturbed carrion birds squawk in indignation
And beneath this thin surface
The infinite particles of sand
Form a single, implacable entity
Scarce feeling the tickling of the man's feet
As he makes his weary way towards a goal
That does not exist
He looks back and sees no past
He looks forward and sees no future
And moves on in spite

But he man's strength begins to leave him
As his directionless Odyssey overcomes him
He sinks to his knees
Looks up
And smiles
As the glowing red sun begins to set over a distant dune
Though it has never risen
And will never truly set
Far beyond his small husk
Barely forcing a small part into his mind
Footsteps continue on
And he is tired, and observes his surroundings
And finds his goal at last
He has no need to journey on
He is content
As his questing mind is now at rest
The second half of the divisionless truth eludes him
Far behind, before his footsteps
Another set recedes into the distance
And moving forward, to where his own path begins
And moves in a wavering line
Other footprints appear
Some weave in and out
Others cross but once
And some join with his for a time
Then the wind blows
And a wall of sand arises
Obliterating them from view
Their imprint yet exists
That tickling sensation, so slight, so insignificant
Exists nonetheless
And so hope is found

-Ben Stafford

come fill me again

Elizabeth Crouch

I burst into tears and my hands started to shake as I walked home tonight the rage at the people at the machine at the outcome all I could do as walk and breath nearly brought on an asthma attack fucking computers all they do is mess with your life and force you to work harder for something that you dont give a shit about and now my feet hurt walking can be so nice except when your shoes are digging into your feet and your shins are burning from the splintered remains of your muscle and joints my eyes are burning oh to sleep till its all over and then not to have to worry about life anymore to sleep perchance to dream maybe when the prunes form Ill feel renewed again je nai aucun idea and all I do is sit and wonder about tomorrow and the next day and Sunday and how am I going to do all that needs to get done and how can I finish all my work and what should I wear when I get up tomorrow morning and is it even worth waking up and trying to face this load of shit for another day Tom calls women the Antichrist but its really men and their utopian ideals about how love should work and how women should act one kisses you and them pulls away one sleeps with you and then treats you badly and the one you love the one you dream about and think about all he does is hurt you and ignore you I sit in the company of men yet I cant understand a damn thing about them gay or taken taken or gay happy or tied down outcast or accepted loves men or loves women or hates both but lips pressed against lips that sweet and tender feeling with lust a slight pressure of anxiety what do you want from me what are you feeling what am i feeling big egos and bad hair nice boys but not for me too young too eager too out of my league confusion we often speak of living life for the moment and not worrying about the future my glasses only look forward and my heart is entrenched behind me

Lather up and down my body the nonpolar end of soap surrounding the grease on my skin I try in vain to wash away all traces of you the water with its slightly negative partial positive charge sliding down over breasts and stomach and knees into the unknown depths of the drain hanging in the air mingling with the steam there remains musky aftershave mixing with the spices of body wash unclear until evening or at least until the next chance to bathe oh to be in water always so free form care not held by arbitrary laws and other peoples conventions gravity clothing hairstyle magazines dictatating beauty 6 feet tall 100 pounds d cup dont read fashion magazines they only succeed in making you feel worthless unless youre a supermodel and its your flawless complexion and come hither glance that adorns the cover of every waiting room in America sex sells in more ways than one time is on my side except this week when time is in a winning battle versus my life and sanity and everyones a winner except of course me

Clean such eroticism wrapped up in it all the building pressure mounting within and then a handle is turned bursting forth rapid and hard and stinging and all to wash away the sins of the day filled with doubt and fear losing hair lumps in the breast warnings everywhere oh the pain never play with knives stings the blood mixing with the air steady stream almost as steady as the water from the faucet love undetectable Id love to be a cat so free so graceful never caring what anyone else is thinking slinking from place to place demanding attention and love but only so long as you enjoy it petting and purring that guttural slur pouring forth constant sleep master of my own domain humans just dont understand

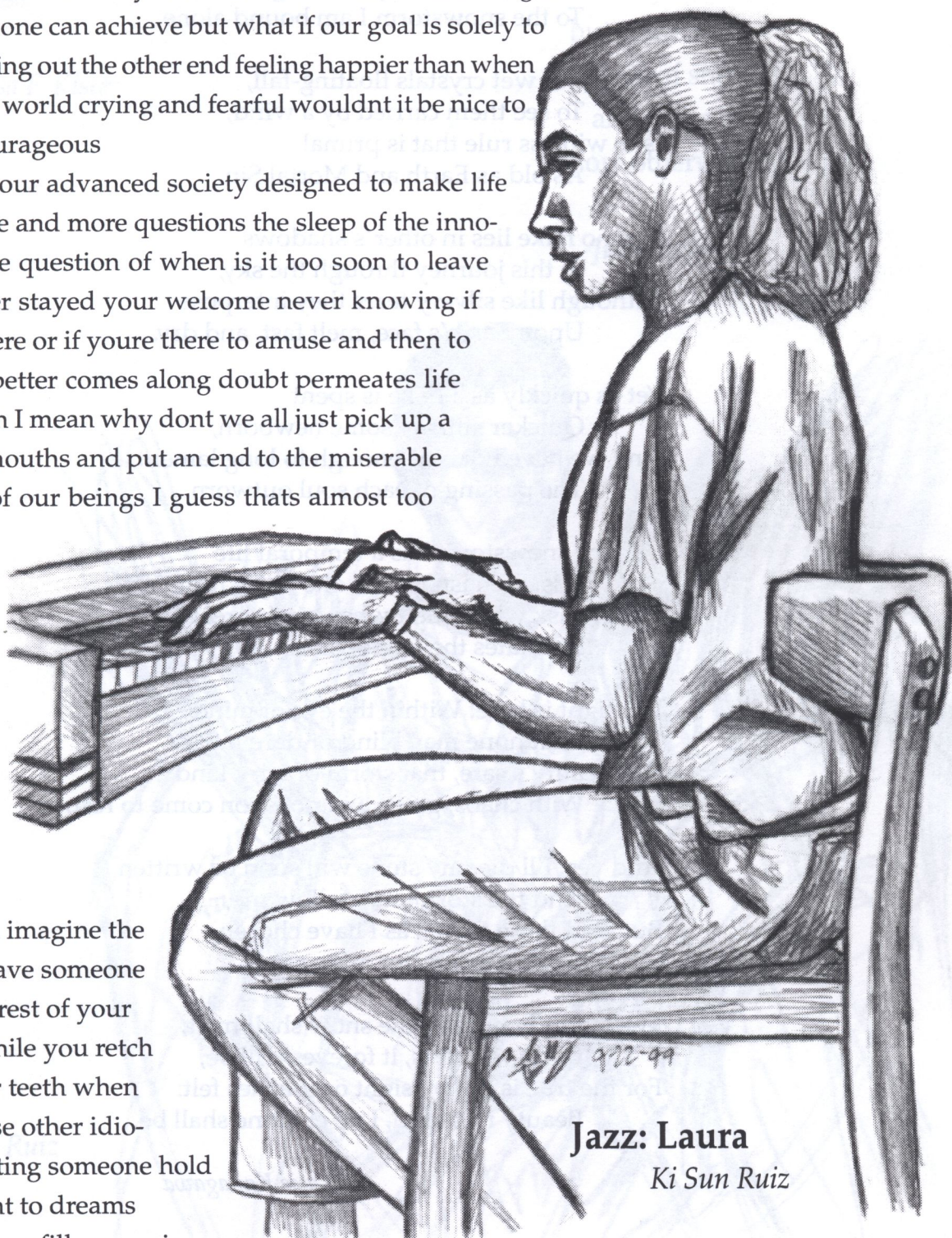
Is it really worth the love we base everything on the hope of perfection obviously nothing attains it at least not in my life I cant help but wonder if the one is really out there I need to feel love as much as anyone not

as a heartbroken not as a sex object but as a woman a flesh and blood woman who wants the house and the garden and the family and the excitement too the chance to transform myself into someone else why the opposite poles two rights and all the other stuff I cant help but want to be something more that what i am isnt that how the world is supposed to work where we all want what we dont have so how are we satisfied men cant handle being with one person for their whole life women cant handle sharing their love but in reality men only want adoration and women only want protection how can it work like this I want to be in love in a movie a wonderful romance set during the war with jazz and the knowledge that there is only a short time together that every moment must be used because who knows when the next time is you'll meet again

my goals are limited because when you reach it its all over and setting a goal is never as high as one can achieve but what if our goal is solely to make it through life coming out the other end feeling happier than when we started we begin this world crying and fearful wouldnt it be nice to leave it peaceful and courageous

So many choices our advanced society designed to make life easier only leads to more and more questions the sleep of the innocent always left with the question of when is it too soon to leave and when have you over stayed your welcome never knowing if one really wants you there or if youre there to amuse and then to leave when something better comes along doubt permeates life who can handle so much I mean why dont we all just pick up a gun and jab it into our mouths and put an end to the miserable and pathetic existence of our beings I guess thats almost too easy

Yet so tender when we touch falling into one another you fill up my senses like a wide blue ocean I need to believe in the kind of love that lasts forever maybe its passion maybe its just a passing moment but oh can you imagine the joy and excitement to have someone take care of you for the rest of your life to hold your hair while you retch in the toilet to find your teeth when youve lost them all those other idiosyncrasies about life letting someone hold you as long as they want to dreams fantasies nightmares come fill me again



Jazz: Laura
Ki Sun Ruiz

A Storm

When I've grown tired of the cheap half-life
Of dying flesh and weakened bones,
Of faces scarred with wrinkled strife
And once new maidens left poor crones

When Nature jests with prideful men
And leaves them children to their own,
I feel the fire o'ertake my heart again,
To the snowstorm I am bound alone.

Ah! To see wet crystals floating-fall,
To see them carried by a wind,
Is to witness rule that is primal
As old as Earth and Mortal Sin.

See, no flake lies in other's shadows
In this journey through the sky,
Although like silvery tears they interpose
Upon Earth's face, melt fast, and dry.

Yet as quickly as a flake is spent
Quicker still are some newborn,
And we have not care enough to long lament
The passing of each soul outworn.

Yes, the snowstorm has a temporal life
It is, then isn't, with one day's heat.
I might ask what is left when sun's great knife
Mutilates the tender sleet-

But sight is here! Within the eye of mind
That none may blind or dare molest
The Beauty's safe, that storm of fairy kind
With chaos, grace will not soon come to rest.

And yes, I'll die, my stone will soon be written
And the storm may follow me,
But read these words as I have chosen,
Upon a grave, for all to see.

The storm may pass, the snow shall melt,
But it was, it is, it forever will be,
For the true is not by sight or touches felt:
Beauty is mortal, I ne'er alone shall be.

-Katie Kanagawa

Survivor

Her smile,
just a scar
left over from an old scrape
with happiness.

-Liesa F. Kister

winter

I promise myself
that I will not
pine
for you
but drawings
so vivid of snow
and pines
know otherwise

-Julie Stefan



Jazz: Phil

Ki Sun Ruiz

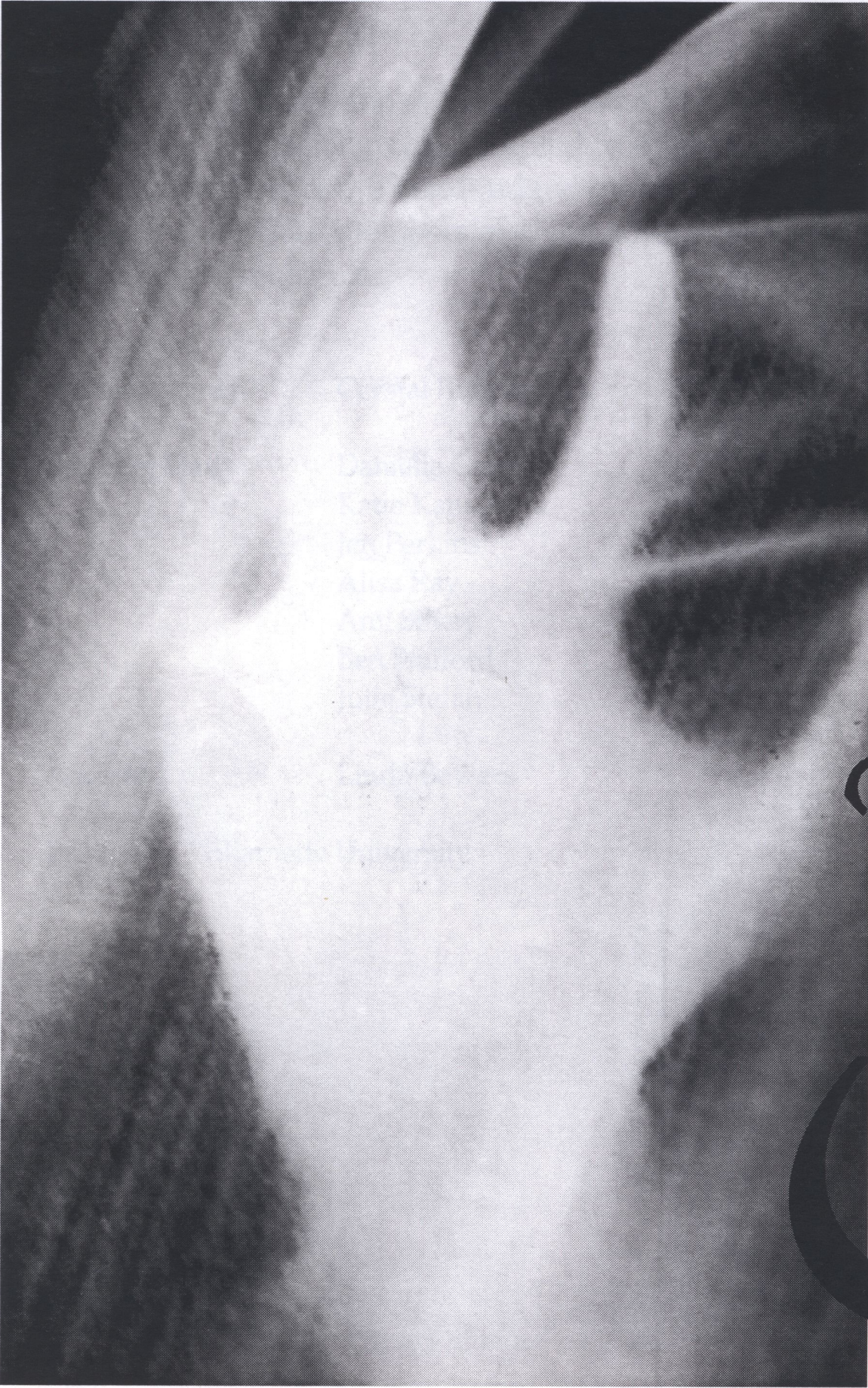
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