

KORRUPT YR SELF #8



NEVER
FALL IN
LOVE

NEVER
BE A
WITNESS



DISRUPT YOUR SELF #8

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Other issues can be obtained by writing the author at goodgovernor@yahoo.com
The words here were written and pictures taken by E. G. Oldman, or possibly Bill
Lard, but definitely not Speed Ball Dale. Other images stolen from the internet.
Names were not changed because they exist in the past and can't possibly be real
people anymore right? Anyway, Billy, Matt, Mika or anyone else I referenced, if you
did this somehow, I'm sorry. This is my truth as I remember it.

V COOL JR.

"I want a woman and not some little girl," sang Stephen Percy, the gigantic, cut front man for Rat. as 1988; the song was appropriately and illicitly titled "I Want A Woman" from the hair metal band's *Reach for the Sky* album. At eleven years old, alone in my bedroom as California sunshine beat through my curtains, the song sting from my cassette player, I laid on my bed ring at the white stucco ceiling and I thought, "I too".



Of course it's absurd to believe that an adolescent boy could really differentiate between the adolescent girls of his fifth grade social circle and the hyper-sexualized, oiled and tan women that were sent writhing on sound stages all over Hollywood in these ridiculously misogynistic rock videos. The only thing I knew about girls was that they somehow suddenly materialized as something different than what they were before. I had no idea what that difference was but suddenly these people were serious. Schlock rock tapes, videos and magazines did not help this at all. Almost all the songs were about girls (rarely women), doing things and being coy and rocking on the boys. Motley Crue's 1987 staple, "Girls, Girls, Girls" a song I had no idea was about strippers and strip clubs, the dramatic unfolding of misogyny and hetero-male sexuality. But in my innocence I missed this bluntness. The band was just hanging out having boyish fun. "Friday night and I need a fight, my motorcycle and a switchblade knife." What could be more appealing and tantalizing to a young kid lost in suburbia? The sound of motorcycles revving up as Vince yells to his "bro" Tommy to notice these "girls" just seemed like the good time I would have with my friends as soon as we got our own motorcycles. In the meantime we would replace those hogs with bicycles, substitute with rare trips to the convenience store by my house for an unsupervised candy or soda pop.

But the only good thing I can point out about hair metal was that even at its worst sexist moments, the lyrics weren't men infantilizing women, they too cast themselves as boys. The metaphors made the whole dynamic of the lyrics confusing. They were obviously trying to recall a time of innocence and playfulness, the phase of life that I was just beginning to enter. Knowing all too well the reality of adult sexuality, even the first aspects of their own male dominion, especially as rock gods, their songs sought something more beautiful, pure and real. This was the playful eighties after all, the height of cocaine parties, never ending fun and girls in bikini's everywhere as everyone used the American Dream bathed in beautiful Southern California sunshine. In just a few years the hard rock world of hair metal and its lifestyle of riding motorcycles, wearing tight pants and leather vests and watching girls dance on cars would start to crack and break apart, ready to be repaved by a much more violent and socially telluric narrative from hip-hop and buried by a more conservative and humble aesthetic in a new genre of music that wanted to believe it had separated itself from rock and rolls juvenile sexist past. But I didn't know that then. Nobody knew that then and no one cared. The thirties were never going to end, the trail of blow, fake tits, short skirts, tight pants and spray blow outs was going to stretch out for infinity.

ring this time women weren't my mother and my friends' mothers and my teachers' mind. Those people were just adults, authority figures, with boring lives and jobs & shitty attitudes that seemed to squash fun with homework and chores and times. The "women" of rock videos were carefree beings, seeking fun and adventure. As an only child, but living in a place that wasn't made for suburban bike messes and neighborhood connectivity, I spent most of my time in my room, hours and hours of listening to the same songs over and over again on my cassette player. Issues



of *Circus* and *Metal Edge* magazine littered the floor, pictures of my favorite bands mercilessly torn out and taped on my walls in uneven patterns. Each band each setting, each triumph or failure was all centered on the affection and attention of 'girls'. Of course the confusing gender fuck of hair metal didn't clarify things too much. The men all wore their hair long, something at the time I was forbidden to do, and their arms were covered in bracelets, faces adorned in make up. It wasn't until purchasing Poison's *Open L and Say...Ahh!* album that the revelation the band was made up entirely of men despite individual monikers of C.C., Bob Rikki and Brett and a facade of make-up the totally feminized their masculine face. The images of bare chested, longhaired men hanging out in pools with margarita and models blew my mind. They were my favorite band and I was so excited that

metal had this rock group of all ladies that totally kicked ass. Suddenly the content and context of so many songs had changed. They weren't the only ones glamming down at the time it seemed so surreal. My mind just went with it, unable to really analyze what was at stake, what was being played with, what all the drag was about.

In 1989 my family prepared to leave our California home across the country to some foreign land called Virginia. My world was changing rapidly. My 6th grade year was a whirlwind of growing up, acting cool and trying to figure out this whole 'girl' thing. Suddenly boys and girls were hanging out again. But the dynamics were different and I was lost on me. My best friend was Kristi Haskell; Candice was the first girl I had a crush on. Later I had a crush on Andrea, but was angry with her because she dated the meathead bully. She broke my heart at camp. At the same time I would be told that Allison had a crush on me I was too busy trying to get the attention of Angela, the cheerleader. No one seemed to know or notice before that spring when she made the cheerleading team. Possibly inspired by the genderfuck confusion I was living with unconsciously, Jeff Eller and myself would make an attempt to try out for the cheerleading team, citing that it was discriminatory to exclude the boys. The school year went by fast. I spent my weekends hanging out with my buddies Chris (the good-looking Lothario) and Lorin (the shy, unsure, but determined best friend) riding bikes & skateboards, listening to Guns and Roses, swimming all day and talking about a schoolyard gossip of who liked who and who broke up with who and who had usually kissed who that seemed to hold our constant attention and need our critical analysis.

my final year in Granite Bay was coming to an end, that spring would see the release of Great White's cover version of the 1975 Ian Hunter song "Once Bitten, Twice Shy". To this day I have not heard the original, but the Great White version, an MTV cash hit in 1989, and one of the last, great hair rock moments, played over and over in my room, my father's car and anywhere else anyone would let me insert the dub cassette I had made by copying the popular tune over and over again from the radio. " *Times are getting hard for you, little girl. I'm a humming and a strumming all over your world. You can't remember when you got your last meal. And you don't know just how a woman feels.*" The lesson ingrained in me over the mid-paced rock groove was of course that it was men that turned "girls" into "women" and in my naïveté I believed this was accomplished through a steady diet of rock music triumphantly and heroically delivered by bare-chested men in denim vests, flowing long hair and sunglasses to sweep the world through. The steady backbeat was hypnotizing, the piano trill was stunningly clever and the lyric scheme and structure of the song with a dramatic key change was breaking out of the typical rock and roll formula so far as I knew it. The school year was coming to an end. In May I celebrated my twelfth birthday with my first co-ed party. Ben made a dramatic entrance on his BMX bike, huffing down the street, claiming his friends were chasing him. We watched at the window as my dad dashed out the door and into the streets, but the party resumed without fanfare. He apologized for not bringing me a gift, stating the switchblade he intended for me was lost on the ride over. At the end of June I packed up all my rock and roll tapes up into a box, took the glossures of all these rock and metal Gods off my wall, folded my black t-shirts up and took them to the only home I knew.



My father and I loaded up his 1984 Corvette with clothes, camping gear and the stereo board that I insisted on bringing and set off to see the country over a three week road trip. Trying to pacify me and ease my angst and discomfort from hours in a cramped and over-stuffed sports car and despite a tight budget and time constraints, my father was pretty generous. When we visited Albuquerque, he let me buy a handful of cassette singles at the Thrifty drug store. I'm pretty sure I bought the entirety of Bon Jovi's *New Jersey* in that format, along with, of course "Once Bitten, Twice Shy". I finally got to see the video at the house we stayed at. There was the band, also driving around the country, decked out in denim, guitars always at arm's length, empty beer cans overflowed and chicks demurely entering and exiting the giant silver bus that

MATT AND SKATEBOARDING

ring my final spring semester of college and into the summer that followed, I would go skateboarding at night with Matt. Matt was living with my friend Vida, first at Vida's mom's house and then in a row house in Alexandria. He worked at a Whole Foods Market. I would often have good veggie/vegan food to share with me when I would pick him up once his shift was over. Vida enjoyed the fact that Matt had a friend to get him out of the house as he had newly moved from exciting New York City to the less cool Washington D.C. suburbs. I enjoyed the fact that I could skate with someone who wasn't judgmental about my subpar abilities and was not only fun to hang out with but also challenging intellectually. Skateboarding for Matt and I was about our freedom, about our adventures, about us.

Matt and Vida's early living situation was a definite catalyst for our skateboarding adventures. When they lived with Vida's mom, he stayed in the front room of the house, the tearoom, as Vida referred to it. I got the impression that, like many mothers then, Vida's mom was old fashion, so despite being in their early twenties, Matt wasn't allowed to stay in Vida's much more comfortable bed room. I remember his few meager possessions spread neatly on the floor next to the blankets and pillows he had laid out to sleep on. When I would arrive, he would gather his wallet and keys and skateboard, offering what he could in terribly worn clothes and off we would go. At the time, Matt was different than anyone I had ever known. He didn't live a life of possessions or privilege. He owned very little, but for a few books he would often give to me, his notebook he wrote in, and a scattered collection of clothes. About the only objects he cared about were skateboards, which he broke often.

For Vida, she was going to school to be a nurse, which she became and excelled in. I want to talk more about Vida, but this is a story about skateboarding. Vida didn't skateboard, but she was Vida Mia. That's her name. My Vida. She always has been, and she always will be. And as such, I want her to have a presence in this story as much as possible. So I can recall the times when she was home and she would smile at me. I'll never forget her with her glorious and beautiful smile, as we got ready to leave. In that way, Matt and Vida were like surrogate parents to me. They shared everything they had, which was very little, and took care of me in ways I didn't realize then that I needed. That's why Vida needs to be part of this story, even if it distracts from the point.

During the early days of our trips, Matt gave me a pair of skate shoes that were worn. I'd never worn shoes that were so full of holes. I started trying to be more like Matt. I aired down my wardrobe (sort of) and would try to live with less. It was a very odd, minimalist life I was living at the time anyway. My nights usually found me intoxicated sleeping on friend's couches and not going home. I was lovelorn with a broken heart, pathetic and chock full of Braid, Promise Ring and Lifetime quotes that nobody else would be interested in. I felt disconnected, entering adulthood without the same desire my friends had. Once again I was looking for something most of the time, except when I was with Matt. There, I had everything I needed. A deck under my feet with four wheels, vegan food and a male companion that was non-competitive, judgmental or arrogant. He had his aggressive side, Matt was a lot harder than anyone else I knew at the time, but he never directed that tension at me, which was rare. He mostly acted as a mentor and a confidant.

It provided the inspiration and motivation I was having trouble finding. He would show me to try harder, without making it about anything other than me. It wasn't goals; it was to push my own limits, to expand my boundaries. He articulated what was in my heart, but I was always afraid to say loud. He said what I needed to hear that no one else could tell me.

Skateboarding is a constant lesson in geography. Skateboarding forces the skater to explore the world. It's all part of the nature of skateboarding, to hunt out new, untapped spots; to be constantly pursued by cops, security guards and other keeps or social enemies; to seek out that far away park, bowl or ramp that someone told you about. Skateboarding has its own folklore; it's own tall tales and magic destinations. And because of this, skateboarding forces the skater to learn more about the place they skate. Your map gets bigger and filled with more details about ledges, stairs and rails. You find pathways and labyrinths in broad daylight that are hidden to others. Tunnels and escape routes are always noted as means of cover or escape. Roads and alleyways others won't travel soon become common routes for you. Things you can't see are always hiding underground, around corners, and behind buildings. As a skater you begin to look where you are not supposed to go, to see the landscape in a way others can't. You imagine what is possible and you search for where those dreams can manifest.

My favorite places to skate with Matt were the parking garages in Crystal City and this awesome little three step on the campus of my college alma mater, George Mason University. These were our night skating spots for obvious reasons. Matt scored us that Crystal City spot after talking to some co-workers that were more familiar with skate



spots near his work. They were these great, massive concrete playgrounds with hills and curbs and small bars that were completely unattended late at night. Matt, much skinnier and more fit and athletic than I am would offer to race around them as we pushed

through these massive and miraculously unguarded underground mazes. Me, being more of a klutz, much preferred endlessly working on my ollie to 5-0 grinds and backside board slides on some odd pieces of bench that were around. For hours we were left alone, under the darkness of night, but bathed in the light of the overheads, the sounds of our tails and boards slapping against the concrete, echoing forever. We would leave, hours later, often covered in black grime we picked up from endless sessions, stinking from sweat as the swampy, DC heat drifted even into the depths of our secret spot

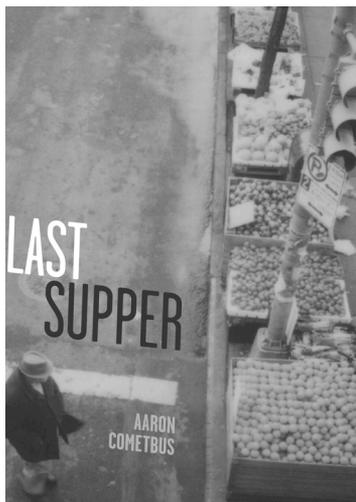
a three step outside of Fenwick Library will always be my favorite memory of skateboarding. Mostly because I had the most personal success there. A small three p, with a nice little bank that had rough pavement was where I landed ollies to nual, my first kick flip and 180 shove-its. It was also nice to be able to skate at my school that during the day I would dream about shredding unencumbered by the ssive amounts of people. Back then, at night George Mason was dead. No securit student body, no classes to go to, no cute girls to distract you. We could spend all ht there and never be bothered. It wasn't Matt's favorite place, but it was our go to en we got chased out of everywhere else. Sometimes, when we were tired of iting or just look for peace, Matt and I would hike over to the pond that sat just off y university and talk about books and music, life and love and the other intangible ormed dreams we had. George Mason remains a conflicted place in my life, ause the days were filled with academic boredom, social confusion and a nagging iformity trying to be pressed on me. But at night, the landscape opened up, signal dom, not just to push through the night air, but away from the world that seemed ect so much from me but didn't want to accept what I actually was.

on't know what happened to Matt. Eventually he started making more friends, and ould often skate with them when I couldn't or found myself on my own adventures. entually he and Vida moved out of their crappy row house in Alexandria, unable to / the rent on his shitty salary alone. Then they broke up not too long after, but we ren't hanging out that much at that point. I had stumbled my way into a full time job an Internet bank as the dot com bubble was starting to expand beyond recognition ring that time I also was arrested on a DUI and wasn't able to live the life that I nted to since I couldn't drive freely. I stopped skateboarding after a while. My life anged, new adventures occurred, my world expanded. It wasn't necessarily out of



Skateboarding, but my tim and energy went to other things. And besides, I'd los my partner. No one else could or ever did replace Matt in that regard. I've picked up skateboarding a few times since then as a solitary pursuit. That is one of the beauties of skateboarding, is you don't actually need anyone else do it. You can just grab your board, throw it under your feet and push down the street into a whole new

venture. Skateboarding is something I do on my own now mostly. It's something I me and only me. Re-establishing myself, I get to set my own goals, conquer my o rs and make it about my own milestones. I get to be free, for a moment, wheels ing under my feet. But the time I spent with Matt, shredding around Northern Virgii Washington DC, was my favorite time I ever spent on a board. Matt gave me a use of self I didn't know how to find on my own. And in our companionship, we got free from all other expectations, sharing our small feats of success over a take ou tainer of rice and buffalo tofu.



If I ever had any inclination to actually pay attention to detail I might well have skipped purchasing Aaron Cometbus's new book, *Last Supper*. Had I bothered to notice that it was a collection of poetry and not another novella I would have passed it up. Cometbus, perhaps America's most profound and unheralded DIY publisher has created the *Cometbus* zine since 1981. He still manages to publish his zine about once a year, often giving his fans a novella length tale, rich in language, deeply personal but never over emotional, and whether he is reliving a month on tour with Green Day as they sell out stadiums in the Asian Pacific or writing the history of two warri used bookstores in Berkeley, his stories always dr the reader in deep. As a poet, Cometbus does not fail to deliver, even in this unfamiliar form.

st Supper is yet another one of Cometbus's love letters. This time it's to the city of New York, his oft home over years of living an extraordinarily nomadic life. But instead of picking a concert venue community or telling the history of a beloved restaurant, Cometbus gives the reader an elegant tour of New York that most visitors never get to see. It's his odes to dusty, unseen used bookstores mistaken for porno shops and love shops for merchants crammed under bridges that offer the unexpected passerby greets on an assortment of nothing but socks. It's the characters he's adopted with names like Fly and Greyhound that give you the sense that somewhere deep in the overgrown metropolis, someone could actually have a home that is humble and dece

What is most striking about this collection is that for the first time Cometbus really begins to tackle ageing. Though punk rock and DIY culture have endured, not all of its fiercest participants have. But Cometbus has continually contributed, despite now worrying about losing his teeth as he fears in "Teeth" or dying before he kisses a hundred girls as he quickly trembles in "100 Punks Rule". This feeling of impermanence is captured significantly in the third part of the book titled "The City Disappears". Here Cometbus not only grapples with his own morality, but the changing landscape of New York. In "I Love The Freaks" he celebrates the weirdoes and outcasts but also cries out sick of talk about last week's New Yorker piece. About your job. About the same book everybody reads." The facade of New York is quickly becoming the reality. But things change there may be some hope. Horrified to find his favorite, all night Jamaican restaurant closed in "Christie's Jamaican Patties", as he turns away from the dark refront he sees the angry owner working in a food truck at the end of the block.

You live anywhere long enough, you become comfortable with your life there, but it also becomes a part of you. And you start to hate it at the same time. Nothing stays the way you want it to. People come and go, buildings fall and new ones rise in their place. Spaces you feel comfortable inhabiting seem to vanish overnight. *Last Supper* is a story, and while it may be Cometbus's own personal tale about a specific city, like his work, he makes his readers feel like it could belong to them.

RL I KISSED ONCE

alized today, driving my scooter to the grocery store to pick up lunch on my break. One of the most meaningful and intimate relationships I ever had was with a person I've never had sex with. Somewhere after my last year of college, a year that found me in a relationship with a girlfriend I wasn't with long enough to understand why we broke up. I had a semester of full on work, jamming 20 credit hours into 16 weeks of school so I could graduate on time, I ended up working full time at the Moto Photo I had quit the previous March. It was a different store, but the same owner. The job, the store, the customers, the other employees were a goddamn nightmare. Of all the shitty jobs I've had, which is pretty much every job I've had, this one was particularly bad. I came to work drunk a lot, fuck, I drank at work a lot. I had an air conditioning unit empty its contents all over me while helping a customer. I was caught in a chemical fire. I made \$8.25 an hour and spent most of my time stealing film and doing fuck all. It was there that I met Mika.

Mika was a lesbian. I note this in the context of our story because it is important to remember what we think about and how society tells us to use labels often fails to capture the experience of the individual. Her stated and my assumed sexual and gender identities are important because it helps contextualize the dynamic of our very complicated, short and beautiful relationship. I was 22, heartbroken, working a shitty job, missing my best friend who was living on the other side of the world, listening to many hours of shitty, sappy songs about lost love and Midwest romance. I was a white boy from the suburbs, over-educated, under employed and without much direction. Our romantic connection was a far-fetched, rejected screenplay at best.

Another important note is that this isn't some kind of *Chasing Amy* scenario. I wasn't trying to change her, I respected her identity and accepted our relationship for what it was. She did most of the talking about the complex elements of her identity, feelings and our connection. The dynamics were much harder on her than they were on me. I think the reason none of the issues she had impacted my perspective or feelings. I was pathetic of course, but I only offered support, never advice. The time we spent together was all that mattered and what ever she was willing or able to give was enough. I didn't need more of her than what she offered.

Mika was a lesbian. She made that clear one night as we sat in her car, parked atop a parking garage near our work. She wasn't going to sleep with me, no matter what. She wasn't interested in dick she said. For some reason none of this bothered me, not even in a firm and blunt manner in which she delivered the proclamation. I didn't argue anything. I didn't feel a need to. I didn't want to. Sex didn't matter. What mattered was what she wanted before all that. She loved me. She said it didn't matter that I was a man; she wasn't going to let that stop her from feeling the way that she felt. She could be herself around me; not needing to feel guarded or threatened. She trusted me. Those words mattered as I leaned against her side and she gently brushed my hair with her fingers. I rested my head on the dashboard and felt at total peace. I breathed in deeply, staring at the digital clock. She stroked my face, gently and lovingly.

At the time, Mika lived with her girlfriend whose name I no longer remember. She was very jealous. I can't say I blamed her and I felt terrible for her. At that age, I couldn't really articulate or communicate or even knew that I had to negotiate a relationship with people. Since we weren't sleeping together, I didn't see how our relationship



was threatening. Also, I wasn't a woman, identified as a man, presented as only male, so the relationship Mika and I had couldn't be anything other than a friendship. She often accuse Mika of cheating on her, sometimes with me, sometimes with other women in their lives and only accepted my presence begrudgingly. At first Mika just made excuses about all the time we spent together, saying we were just good friends. But not long after that night at

parking lot, we were at their house, watching a movie when the girlfriend came home and a fight erupted. I mostly only remember Mika storming out of a side room saying, "I'm not fucking him! Ask him!" and her girlfriend, fuming walked in between television and me and growled, "Don't lie to me." If she believed my startled and honest answer, I'll never know. Mika pulled me off the couch in tears down the stairs and into her car.

That night we spent sitting on the floor of my bathroom in my parent's house. They had often used to Mika's presence but were too nice to share their concerns and confused about what was going on between us. She didn't stay over night; she was often gone the time they got up the next day. They accepted my dodgy answers when they discovered up the gusto to inquire about it. That evening we just held onto each other, Mika and I, listening to Elliott Smith and talked about the kinds of everything and nothing that only late nights on bathroom floors can inspire. Through her red eyes andasperated disposition, she looked up at me, grabbed my head and kissed me as the player buzzed nearly as loud as Smith's melancholy songs. It was the only time we ever did express our feelings physically.

The weeks after, things got more tumultuous. Mika would disappear for days at a time, her girlfriend showing up at the Photoshop, pissed off and accusatory. Sometimes, Mika would knock on my bedroom window, crawling into my bed and laying in my arms without saying a word. Some days would be normal, she'd come to work, would hang out and laugh and play and then grab dinner. I didn't ask her a lot of questions, she didn't offer much explanation. The summer was winding down; I found another job that only worked weekends at Moto Photo. We talked about moving in together. She started looking for houses near the Metro. She quit working at Moto Photo. She moved

of her house, broke up with her girlfriend, she was harder and harder to connect to. She stopped coming by my house.

The last time I talked to her, I was standing on the platform of the Metro at the station we were supposed to meet at. I started hearing some terrible stories about her, ones that didn't seem reasonable based on things from her past she had disclosed from me, but nevertheless saddening. She was late picking me up, real late. I didn't have a ride, so I called my mom. She told me that Mika had called looking for me; she had left a phone number. I dug out another quarter and punched the digits into the pay phone keypad. A deep, masculine voice answered the phone. I asked for Mika and the voice questioned me. I told him, irritated, that she had called me. Hyper and crazy sounding, Mika got on the phone. She apologized for not being there yet, that she was on her way. Then she started apologizing for other things she had done, things I didn't even know about. I told her she didn't have to feel sorry about. She started crying. "I just want to be close with you. Everything will be okay then. I swear I won't do this to you." I just said that it would be okay. I told her that my mom was coming to pick me up since it was too late to go look at the house. She sobbed and got angry, first at me and then at herself. She started apologizing again. I told her it would be okay. I said she should call me tomorrow. She said she would. She never did.

Most a year later I went back to the Moto Photo to visit. Allen, the manager had told me that Mika stopped by looking for me. He told her I had quit not too long ago and was working in Arlington, that he only saw me occasionally now, which was sort of true. She told me he gave her my phone number, hoped I didn't mind. The way she asked made me feel a bit uneasy and he didn't want to let her down. I told him it was okay. I never heard from her. She never called back. I didn't think much of it.

She was a member almost every moment we shared together. The trips and adventures we went on. How easy it was to share myself with her and how I never felt any discomfort around her, even in the midst of all the craziness that seemed to surround our relationship. And I never doubted her affections or feelings for me. All the disruption and chaos that surrounded us only proved to me how much our time together meant to me. I was an island of calm, an oasis she could escape to. We accepted each other as we were. I accepted what our connection was, without definition, without labels, without defining our sexual orientation, gender identity and self-understanding. We were two people that got to love each other without putting construct around it. It was beautiful.

I never "counted" my relationship with Mika as a romance until now, never included her in lists of "girlfriends" I've had or discussed our relationship to new lovers during that obligatory time when you talk about your past relationships. I never really knew what she was, but I've always defined who a lover was in my life based on the sexual relationships I had with them. Sex was the defining quality of intimacy and thus of romanticization. But I recognize now, that's not true. She was just as important and deeper as any other that I had. The lack of sexual and physical affection doesn't take away how loving, safe and intimate we were with each other or how much that relationship defined me. And despite everything else, it was the easiest love affair that I ever had, because I never had the anxiety of sex hanging over me. I recognize now that that day she told me we were never going to have sex that my discomfort about that relationship, about negotiating that dynamic happily slipped away. I could just be close to her and she close to me.

I live in a world that tries to define our relationships for us. In order to love someone as to meet a certain standard and contain certain elements to be seen as legitimate, I fall for it every time, and that's often our folly. Had I understood that Mika and I had a love affair, that we expressed it outwardly for all to see, that it was obvious, I might have treated the whole thing differently. I certainly would have treated her girlfriend with more directness, but I didn't have the vocabulary to articulate the reality of the situation; we were lovers; our relationship existed in a space of love, romance and confidence. Instead, I defaulted to hetero-normative models, easily pacifying myself with the idea that we couldn't be in love because she was gay, I was straight and we never had sex. What I didn't understand that night she told me we would never have sex, was that she was dealing with issues about her identity that conflicted with her feelings for me. I didn't know then that sex wasn't something I needed in a relationship, but for her it was and this conflict she had inside was tearing her apart. I would have had sex with her; expressing my emotional being in a physical way is something special for me. It wasn't that easy for her, and while I accepted it, I wasn't truly sympathetic. I didn't know how to be. What made my life and feelings easier made her's much more complicated and difficult.

My acceptance of our relationship as a romantic one has informed my narrative differently now that I have the perspective of age, of my own identity and the complexities of human relationships and affection. Mika is now one of the people I think about in the context of love affairs in my life and our relationship stands as an important informant in how I construct and think about relationships. I want parts of how we worked and stood together to serve as context for all future relationships I might have. In doing so, I have also changed the rules, changed the definition of what intimacy is. Erasing boundaries and expanding possibilities is freeing as I look forward, but the depth of our relationship, pain and struggle that I caused in my past is now a little deeper, an experience that I can only reconcile with time.



WELCOME TO THE INSIDE BACK COVER OF KYS#8 — NEVER FALL IN LOVE, NEVER BE A WITNESS

Stories written herein were actually started probably sometime in 2013 or 2014 shortly after KYS #7 was printed and published. This zine took many forms with other stories added and omitted over time. The three you find in here were the only ones the author found to be of quality. The book review was included as it was intended for publication in *The Alibi*, Albuquerque, New Mexico's "alt-weekly", but it got lost in the art's editors desk as the publisher was "reorganizing" the paper and she was eventually let go from their position and she has resumed editorial control and essentially ruined the paper. Thanks Lisa for publishing at you did. I appreciate it. The review finds its home here, though the quality of the writer's work is questionable.

Once again, like all issues of KYS, the 12 pages of text sat in their cyber hell that is the writer's Google Drive account. Attempts were made to turn this into an audio zine for exclusive release on Billy the Bunny's audio zine site <https://bunneyears.bandcamp.com/> but those never materialized to the author's satisfaction. They may make another attempt at that. Billy should really get more people to read for his site. It's brilliant. The author and editors of this zine commend *Dead Air*, *Blank Text* and *The Sisterhood of the Living Dead* by Maggie Grimason (you should write or at least hook up the editors of this zine with more zines because she's really great). Also you should check out *Neckmonster #9* by Cheyene Neckmonster. Hey, Neckmonster, what's up!

Anyway, on August 13th, while considering what to do with a story written about tour, the author decided to edit one of the stories (*Girl I Kissed Once*) for the final time and put together the final zine as KYS#8. It is now intended to be released in conjunction with KYS#9 – *Punk Rock is Killing Us All*. Hopefully that is true.

This represents one of the shorter zines I've done in this series. Life has been a series of challenges, successes, failures, adventures and stories. How they emerge on the page, what they tell, what they say just beyond my experiences, though mostly always framed that way, is always a mystery. I hope the essence outweighs the failure to elaborate more. These stories feature. That's what they have in common. That's perhaps why they stayed collected together while others fell into neglected folders stored on a server somewhere far from where they were typed, and further still from where they were typed.

Thank you for reading as always. You are too kind. You should know that.

KORRUPT YOUR SELF #8

NEVER FALL IN LOVE, NEVER BE A WITNESS.



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