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FOUNTAIN SPRAY

Fountain Spray

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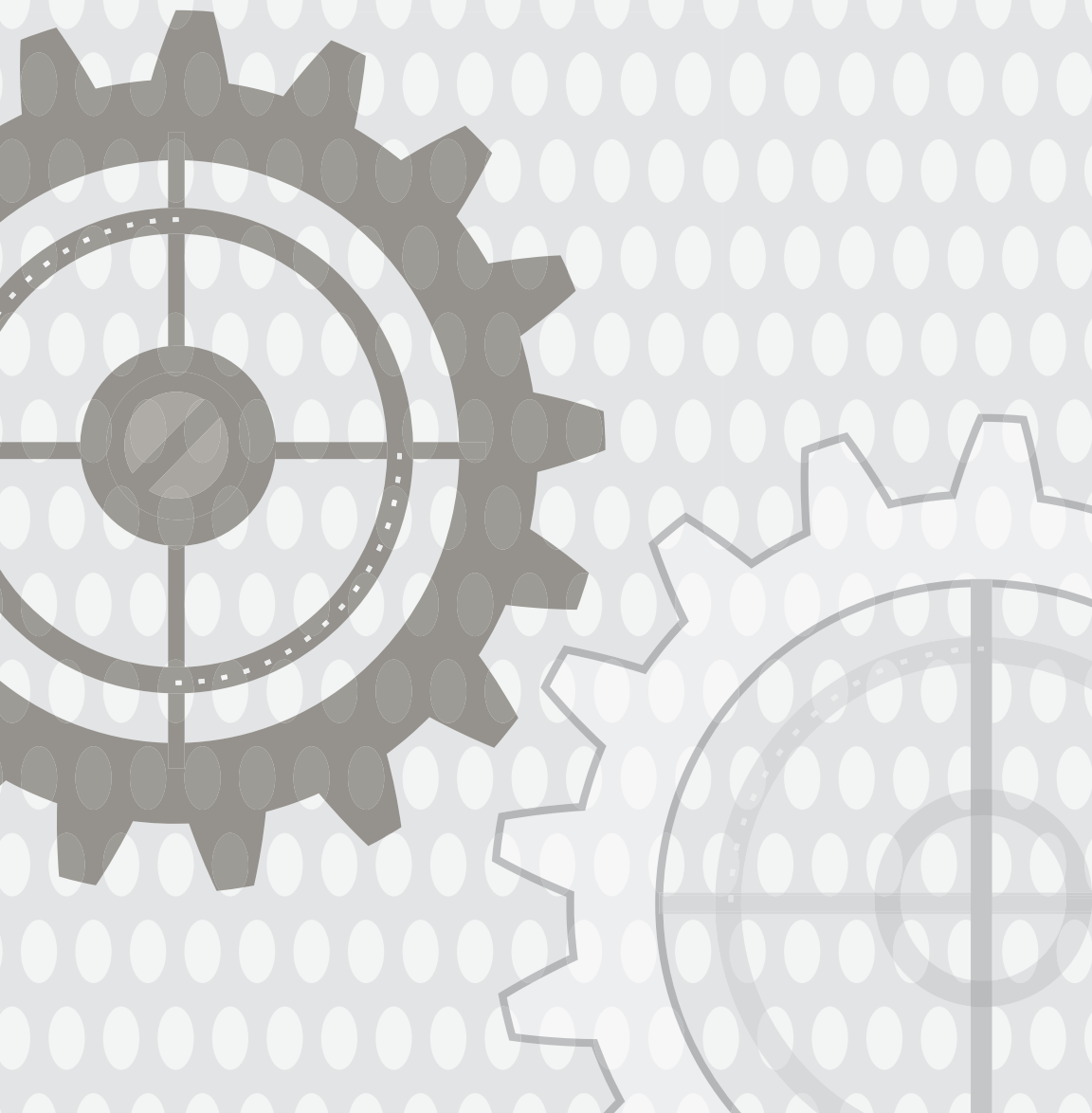


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An Imperfect Me in an Imperfect World

I was crying.. But by appearance alone, crying would not have been the first guess because of the rain. I remained completely stagnant in the middle of the road and waited for a sign, the sign I wished to come, but at the same time, knowing that disappointment was inevitable. In the back of my head I was thinking about how stupid I was to believe in fairytales when reality was so much in my face that it had created a roadblock between me and the other side, the other side being the rest of the world.

As much as the rain was drenching every inch of me, I could not bring myself to walk away. With taking that first step, I would be stepping away from this paradise that I somehow concocted in my subconscious. I was not ready to face the foreseeable discontent and disillusionment that was in my future. I was, however, ready to risk everything that I had, though it was not much, so that somehow, someway, it would all be okay in the end.

The rain kept falling and I kept standing in the gap of expectation and the undeniable fact that I was wrong. I was always wrong. I was wrong that day when the sun was shining so bright that it blinded my eyes and marked my scarred skin. I was wrong to believe that that particular someone would come rescue me like they promised. Promises are meant to be broken though. Promises are somehow always broken no matter what. Promises create the illusion of false hope and no matter how hard I try, I always fall victim to such disappointment, but not this time.

I lifted my shoe off the water-infested pavement, ready to walk away from the rain and the empty road in front of my eyes. But I saw the lights. I saw the hope. I saw that small piece of my soul come back to life. I heard the noise filling the silence and I knew that maybe, just maybe, the end just might be okay.

My Hand and Pen

Perfect Union

My hand holds its spouse in a gentle experienced embrace. Her long graceful black body fits so perfectly within my fingers. She was meant for my hand as my hand was meant for her. I had chosen her out of so many others. My fingers knew when they first embraced she was the one. And now once again they are together as they were meant to be. My hand poises her above a fresh smooth white sheet. From here they shall move as one and birth letters and words. Flowing up and down in smooth lines and arcs they create. Their creation dances across the page bringing it to life before my eyes and brings a smile to my lips as any child would. This is a beautiful happy union. But even a perfect union must come to an end and it shall when she births her last. But death will not claim her for I shall revive her svelte shell with a new soul and once again they shall be together and birth my mind onto paper.

Brianna Cregle

Video Game Love

Video game love

Welcome to my game,

r u able to handle my effects?

Can u pick ur best player to win my heart?

Could u consider jumping over these challenges
to go to the new challenges?

I can press Y to find out how I feel about u

and press X to find the X that marks the spot of my heart;

kick and punch ur opponent before they move away from ur goal.

Can u try to get K.O. before the opponent does

and if it is the opposite will u give up the challenge or

will u try and try again to go to the next challenge?

Will u give all of your lives for me, or r u going to save them for some
other game?

Now that u r at the last challenge will u continue to the

second saga of the game

or r u going to jump on some easier game?

Was my game very hard for u or did u need a better challenge and
if so, can u deal with my challenge????

GAME OVER... :-) guess not...try again.

Asiah Dent

The Ocean of My Heart

I want to run away to the sound of waves
With the multi-color lawn chair sitting on the isle of blue sparkles
Beach, so tan, so hot
As it kissed my skin burned me with a sensation of sweet embers
 flowing through my blood
Is mell hefr esha ir, s mellof s eas alte nteringm yl ungsa ndit fe elsl ike
 home
As I walk down from the big Victorian house looking out to sea

My heart is in the depth of the deep with pearls and crystals shining
 on the rustic underground of the coral ocean bottom
When will you come back my love?
Ready to be unearthed.
Ready to be released.
Ready to be at peace.
Are you out there?

Held in the arms, swallowed by the ocean
In the embrace of God.
Every day is an uneasy course, obstacles thrown in your way.
Navigate around.
Save yourself from the undertow and swim to shore.
Let the towel wrap you.
Dry the droplets, the tears.
Let the sun caress your being with heat syncing from your head to
 your toes
Remember that night you left?
I miss you

Pulling at your heart with the heat of love
You hear the seagulls cawing as the sun sinks down
Are you coming home?
You said you would the last time we talked. Do you miss me?
Because I miss you
As I'm watching the sunset, picking up seashells on the beach...
Missing you.

Our hearts wrapped together in seaweed, charms and coral entwined
 played to the sound of the harp with the memories from our life
Come home my love. Come home.
Sit by me on the beach and watch the sunset, the two of us holding
 hands.
Then it won't be the sun shooting embers through my blood but you
 my love, but you.

Samantha Sinclair



Having to Forget

I am an expert at forgetting.
I forget appointments.
I forget to return countless phone calls.
I forget my school work.
I forget my obligations.
I forget my key when I leave my dorm.
But I cannot forget that he is dying.

I am confused, and hurt, and scared,
And every passing moment makes it worse.
Yet the chaos in my heart must not be known.
I must smile for the world today.
Who has time to listen to me grieve?
If I admitted my distress, they would be shocked and silent, all.
So I pretend he isn't dying.

The world will not stop turning,
Though mortality, the end, is now so real.
But I cannot collapse beneath the weight of this revelation.
I cannot cease to live for fear of death and loss,
For there are due dates and exams.
I have no time to spend on grief.
I must forget that he is dying.

I have to make myself stop crying,
Find some convenient distraction.
I must not think of what it will be like to sing at his funeral.
We were in the choir –
No, I mustn't think of that.
I must find another thing to think.
But I just can't forget that he is dying.

I must scrub my tears away now.
I have to blow my nose and stand up straight.
I can fill my mind with other things,
Like the essay due tomorrow.
Or the Christmas shopping I still have to do.
But such mundane things cannot replace the thought
That I am losing a dear friend.

And I don't want to forget that he is dying.

This Is Where I Live

When I wake up in the morning,

I hear the rooster

Noises of merchants of bread and cookies

The sound of angry men and women

And the cries of little children

This is where I live

At noon, I hear the loud gospel music of my neighbor

Outside a bright sun shine like the stars in a sky of summer

The wilted flowers and dry leaves of the trees

The barking dogs and the meowing cats of Mrs. Jarees

This is where I live

Down the road, a beautiful church where my friends and I go

Madame Atela's little house

My neighbor's house which resembles my great grandmother's house

Not too far, is my aunt's yellow house that looks like a mango

Then, my house surrounds with flowers

This is where I live

You can listen to the quietness of the neighborhood at night

The smell of the frying potatoes

And the fresh air of the nature

All together make it a beautiful neighborhood.

Vianna & Roux



Oil Painting

Lorelle Shea

Sunset



Photography

Iveliz Crespo



Wolf in the Morning



Photography

Samantha Phillips

Lovely Bird



Watercolor Painting

Elizabeth Wutkowski

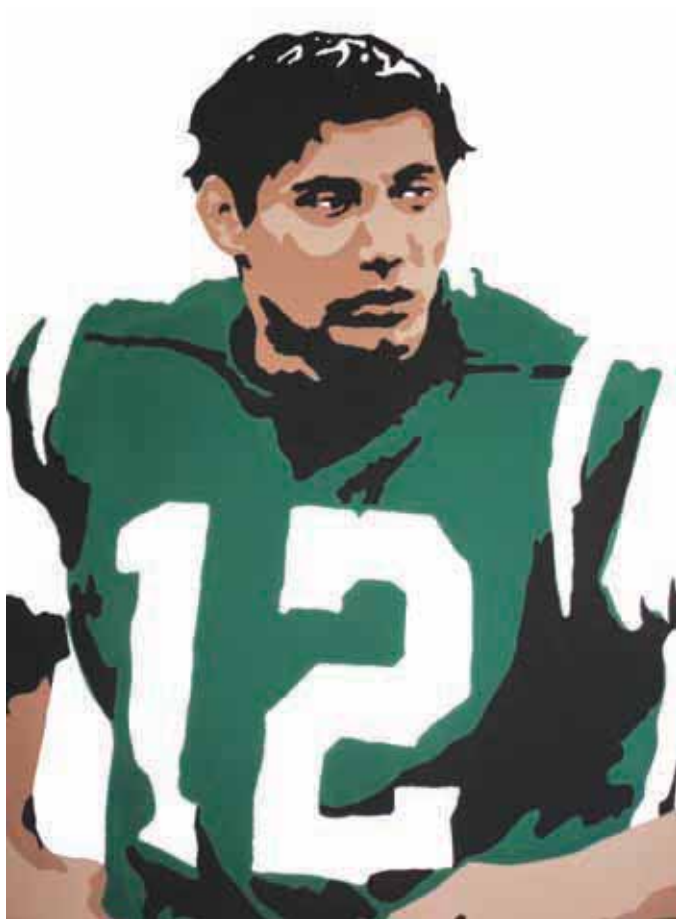




Screen Print

Marisa Alvarado

Joe Namath



Screen Print

Dave Majowicz



Mushrooms



Photography

Frances Borho

Boats



Watercolor Painting

Kelsey Cutler



Rainbow



Photography

Amanda MacPhee

Rubber Blondes



Graphic Design

Samantha Phillips

Reflections



Pencil Drawing

Lorelle Shea

Books



Cross Hatching with Ink

Ryan Mitchell

Ode to Frost



Watercolor Painting

Ashley Gawolik

Our Beautiful Sunken Memories



Photography

Clarissa DeLuca

Covenant

A rose can fill me, one rose. Here I stand
empty and waiting, so it seems, until
kind hands bring to my quiet blue the spring
in lilies, or in burning bittersweet
the fall. Thus is the myth enacted, year
by destined year. I too am kind; I hold
their proffered flowers, docile till they fade
and leave me peaceful, total. No one knows
that deeper than the eye can see, I hold,
invisibly, a rose.

Sister Maria Cordis, R.S.M.

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Review*

Much to Ponder

5:10 AM

There is much to ponder in a new day's birth.

The minutes, hours, years of all our yesterdays

were lived, and loved, and led

to this new sun.

A day is so much more than mere allotted time,

or moments guarded chaste and clean.

A day is infinite with potency and dreams

and all the uttered longings wishes hold.

Sister Patricia Geary, GNSH

You Said You Loved Me

Drowning in tears
My mind is full of old dreams.
Cemeteries filled with false hopes
Burying me further and further into an abyss of hell.
My heart is cluttered with thoughts of you.
You destroyed my life and took parts of me that I can never get back.
You broke me into pieces
And you said you loved me.
I cannot eat, I cannot sleep, I cannot concentrate on anything.
I feel as though I'm not even a person.
You damaged me,
Destroyed me until there was nothing left.
Until I lost myself.
How could you do it? Betray my trust in such a way?
And you said you loved me.
All the things we did together, all the times we had,
I was there for you through everything
Through all of your biggest regrets.
You helped me see myself as valuable
You showed me the way, how to have fun, how to love life.
I was happy, something I hadn't felt in a long time.
I was flying through the sky, feeling brave and dangerous,
I was living my dreams.
I was energetic, outgoing, beautiful.
And then it happened.
You hurt me unforgivably.
I can never take back what was lost,
What you took from me.
I cried myself to sleep for months
I couldn't move, couldn't speak,
I lost my voice.
You plunged the dagger through my back
Took me by surprise.
And you said you loved me.
I was a broken mess, all sorrow and hurt
What you've done to me I'll never forget
I'll never get over it
I'll be changed forever.
Old when I'm still young
The hurt will not subside
You killed my spirit
So that I fell on the ground and couldn't get back up.
I went crazy with grief over you and what you did to me

Til I wanted to die
And you said you loved me.
And even after all of that
I still cannot completely hate you
Because you picked me up when I was in pieces
You gave me a life I wanted but could never have.
Yet I can never forgive you for what you did to me
You threatened and took action
Yet somehow I still love you
Even though you clearly don't care.
You pushed me off the highest mountain
And watched me, laughing, as I fell into the sharp rocks of my life
Never to return again unscathed
My soul forever scarred by your ruthless words
And the lies you told me.
You took from me what you envied
My youth,
What you wish you had.
I was a victim of your lies
So young
So innocent
So impressionable
And you took what you had given me
Until there was nothing left inside of my soul
And I crawled back
Only to be plunged and drowned by your hate.
Yet now I am older
I am wiser
Not so innocent or impressionable anymore
Because of you.
I have escaped from your endless torture
And your mind games.
I am whole again
But still a victim of your mistakes.
You opened up a door
And shut it in my face.
And although I am succeeding
Despite your hoping I would fail,
I still sometimes look back and wonder
Why you said you loved me
And how I could have been the last to know
That you were lying.

The White Flag

He walked through his front door, tossing the keys to his home on the old kitchen table, discarding them as if they were a souvenir from a vacation best forgotten. His neck and back ached from the hours he'd spent working at the construction site, a job he'd grown to view as his saving grace. He began to relish the long hours working with his hands, finding the physical labor to be an escape from his memories, thoughts and regrets. He read the clock on the stove. It was 12:15, far later than he told her to expect him. He'd stopped at the local bar, Callahan's, after work. It was a frequent stop and allowed him to procrastinate from returning home to the inevitable. Somewhere, in his heart, he couldn't help but admit that his long hours away were exacerbating the already enormous rift between Julie and himself, causing it to become deeper than ever before. There was no disputing it was entirely his fault. He had caused an emotional break in their once loving, stable relationship that would take years to repair, if it ever even could be. They'd had so much promise in the beginning, back when he could still call her his best friend. He longed for the days when they could watch *Sopranos* DVD's together, her in his old Nirvana t-shirt, laughing and sharing Chinese take-out, and be completely content with only one another.

Shaking the formerly pleasant memories from his head, he walked towards their bedroom. He could hear the heavy percussion of Modest Mouse blaring from her iPod deck as he approached the bedroom door. *"Alright, don't worry. Even if things end up a bit too heavy, we'll all float on, alright..."*

"You're home late," Julie declared, without once looking up at him from her book. She couldn't bring herself to look him in the eyes anymore, although she longed to. The deep brown eyes that were once like home to her now felt lonely and alien. "I made dinner tonight, there's some in the fridge for you." A peace offering.

"Why won't you look at me? Listen Julie, I love you. I've always loved you..." He begged.

Julie finally found the courage to look up from her book and stared defiantly into his alien eyes. "I know. You tell me all the time now. It's not that simple anymore. Every time you open your mouth

I wonder if it's going to be the same lines you fed to her!" As the word "her" was expelled from her mouth she noticed how filled with accusation and hatred it was. How could she blame herself? The anger welled up inside as flashbacks of seeing them together came rushing back to her.

"That's not fair, Julie! It was the worst mistake of my life. Why can't you understand that?" As he changed and climbed into bed beside his wife he was able to perceive, perhaps for the first time, how exhausted she truly was.

"I can't do this anymore. I don't have the energy left in me to fight with you. You drained me!" Without giving him a chance to respond she tossed her book and glasses on the nightstand and turned off her iPod, and finally the light. For once in her life, she didn't care if her hair was disheveled in a messy ponytail or if her face would soon show the inevitable tear stains. She had long given up and the evidence was clear in this moment.

"I know I screwed everything up. I do. You told me you wanted to make this work, that you didn't want to give up on us. Julie, if that's ever going to happen you're going to have to forgive me. You can't condemn me forever." He was out of words. He and Julie fought the same war every night for six months, and he was exhausted. Looking over at Julie, he could see her back turned towards him and noticed her shoulders shaking with sobs. It destroyed him to see her like this, and knowing he caused her pain made it unbearable. As he inched closer on the bed he could see her tears subside to a slow steady rhythm. From behind her, he affectionately smoothed away the tear-soaked strands of hair from her face. With one last shudder, Julie reached up and took his hand in hers and pulled it around her waist, without once letting it go. The two emotional refugees laid like that together the entire night. Hand in hand, side by side, one body against another, until the bright rays of sunlight broke through the bedroom window ushering in the new day ahead.

With Hands Held High

I really didn't wanna touch the Oreos. They were no longer in their queues. Upturned, broken, halved cookies sat in the packaging as if they were just dropped there. And if I had any, I'd be forced to wash it down with what they were passing off as coffee. Behind me, I could hear the speaker testing the mic. People milled about, some talking in clusters, others watching other people. I noticed nervous tics on people: hands, eyes, necks. I kinda knew what they were going thru, but probably not to the extent that I assumed I knew *exactly* what they were going thru. But they were here. That was the important thing. And I was here. Not so much for myself, but for Ria, who was slouched in a folding chair, hood up, chewing the life out of her fingernails. I grabbed a couple of coffees and cookies.

"Happy Birthday," I said, offering her a paper plate piled with dilapidated Oreos. She looked up and grabbed the plate of cookies and one of the coffees.

"Thanks." As soon as I sat down, I knew the chair was going to be uncomfortable for the entire meeting. Almost everyone there smelled of cigarettes. Us included.

"How are ya?" I asked. Without looking at me, Ria gave the hint of a shrug while nibbling the end of a cookie. I had added so much cream and sugar to my coffee that it tasted like sweet dairy about to turn bad. And it was room-temperature which just kinda added to its offensiveness.

A few more people fiddled with the mic. It was a tripod mic on a six-foot fold-out table. Three cushioned folding chairs were already placed at it. Feedback sent eyes squinting and faces scrunching. I already knew that the acoustics were gonna be horrible. After all, we weren't in a hall or a club. We were in a private school's gym which, evidenced by the stage in the back of the room, doubled as an auditorium. I'd put nickels to beignets that the school productions here sounded as if they were acted underwater in a giant rusty tank. Up above the basketball keys on the floor, hoop-&-backboard arrays had been mechanically winched up against the ceiling. The odor of physically over-taxed children hung in the air, and mixed with those here and now perspiring, detoxing, stressing. But covering it all was the pervasive smell of burnt coffee.

Chocolate dust gathered in the corner of Ria's lips. It was her birthday, for real. A monumental one at that. I looked around at everyone, trying not to judge them at first glance. And for a good

and Heads Slung Low

measure of seconds, I wrestled with the notion that no one was here for anyone but themselves...which I found both noble and repulsive. Then, admirable and sad. I couldn't reconcile the facets of one side to the other, couldn't wrap my brain around it. I shook my head and wondered whether I did had time for another cigarette. The mic check was full of bass. And the room gave off way too much reverb.


"Are you...?" I started saying to Ria, but stopped when I saw her jawbone muscle pulsating. People were filling up the seats. The room echoed the sounds of rubber-tipped chair legs skidding across varnished planks.

"Thank you," came thru the speakers. "Everyone. If we could just. Thank you, yes. Welcome, everyone..." With forced airiness, stragglers over by the snack and coffee table made their way to seats, walking like they wanted to be seen. As if they were somehow special, differed in some past experiential way than those here who would, no, never ever understand what they went thru – as if the way they got here was far superior than everyone else's. Hence, they would take their sweet old time getting to their seats. Someone from behind the dais went out front to collect the smokers for the meeting.

It was Ria's 21st birthday. It was her stance of aiming toward recovery that partially inspired me to quit. And here she was, finally of legal age to do so. Instead of being out celebrating, she was here. She was so curled up on the folding chair that she looked like a fetus. We smelled the smokers come back inside. More rubber on varnish as they took their seats and the meeting got underway.

The sun was still out afterward, but it was hiding somewhere behind the buildings down the street. Ria and I sat on the stone steps leading up to the gymatorium. We quietly lit our own smokes.

"See? This is what makes me wanna drink." In the meeting, after the designated speakers said their thing and added what I believed to be a bit of over-indulgent pride to their recollections, there was a call to the room. If anyone was having trouble right then, please, raise their hand and share. It was Ria's 21st birthday which, she weakly and unconvincingly rationalized, should be spent getting all stupid kinds of super-trashed. Like, since when should a 21st birthday be spent at an A.A. meeting?



She had put her hand up in the meeting. She'd had that "burning desire," as they called it, to go out and get blitzed. But, no one had called on her to share. I had noticed that the people that were getting called on were either friends of those up at the speakers' table or actually did not have that so-called burning desire to drink, but just wanted to publicly congratulate, offer kudos, give props to those up on the dais, on their bravery, courage, strength, gumption, etc., etc., ad infinitum. Which I thought was kinda bunk because right there, Ria's emotions and resolve were going bug-nuts.

I listened as she talked, as her voice let loose a few cracks. We lit cigarettes off the finished ends of others'. The tears eventually came. A girl from the meeting came over and asked what was wrong. Ria, trying to paste a smile on her mood, offered the girl just a skeleton of what was wrong. This girl, smoking also and making a dramatic show of exhaling to the side, pointed out the annoying obviousness that at least we all have our arms and legs and fingers and toes and eyes and teeth and organs still intact.

Without any sobs, tears streamed down Ria's face, she admitted, "That's not really doin' it for me right now." The other girl just shrugged and walked away.

We got up and walked back down the block, decided to walk back to the East Village instead of taking a taxi. We wound up at a little falafel shop and silently scarfed down hummus and stuffed grape leaves. And the evening found us clutching huge to-go cups of coffee on her rooftop as the city's ambient light blocked out all the stars. Three stories down, people came out of bodegas and restaurants and bars and brownstones and apartment complexes. Music piped in from all over the city.

Eric Grodberg