

22/50

AUG '25

...where light goes



# listen here!

this is the 100 zine #2.

i hope that you, reader,  
can read ~~avvisive~~, thankfully  
the rest of this "publicly  
contributed novel," whatever  
that is, is in normal type.  
good for all of us because  
my ~~avvisive~~ is not too good...

but to the point: this is a  
zine of **TRUE stories** i've been  
told from friends, family,  
~~acquaintances~~, and the like.  
things stories i kept thinking  
about after they were told  
and stories i requested from  
people i knew had good stories.  
for each, the teller's name is on  
the left, and the story to ~~the~~  
the right. any drawings are  
drawn by the tellers.

MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE  
FOTOS, DRAWINGS,  
GRAPHICS, STUFF

you too can tell a damn  
good story, ~~me~~ write me:  
MILESELLISOR @ GMAIL.COM



IOWA  
Aug 11



ALERT THE AUTHOR  
ON THE SUBJECT

"ALERT THE AUTHOR

said story-tellers include:

- #1 PAOLA FERNANDEZ CHIU, ON THE TOPIC OF ROCKS
- #2 SILAS BARRETT, <sup>YES</sup> PROFESSING LOVE
- #3 WILLIAM SIMS, PUNCHING, KICKING
- #4 KATE KOBLEGARDE, TALKING TO THE POWER OF BREAD 'N' BUTTER
- #5 MAX ANDERSEN, IN STODIC TONE WITH GREAT PASSION
- #6 RAFER GARDNER, <sup>AND WHAT HAPPENED DURING CODE RED</sup>
- #7 MICHELLE ELLISOR, AKA MISS HIGHLANDS
- #8 JILLIAN ABREU, WATCHING ALIEN PORN, MATTRESS AD, ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION AD
- #9 ALEX CHUEH, AND THE PROJECT.

###ERR OR, ~~DO MORE~~ THAT'S ALL FOLKS!

CLASS HALF  
READY CLASS FULL

also this zine is risograph-printed,  
my first zine printed in such a way!  
thank you ~~you~~, ~~wren~~, SVA, braeden,  
and all my sweet friends and ~~their~~  
their pets. and seriously — send  
me stories for this zine!

HOPE YOU  
ENJOY THE  
ZINE! ▽



## ON A "SET OF STAIRS" "INVOLVING SOME CRAZY SHIT ON A VERY TALL SET OF STAIRS"

Okay, so basically, it was one of the prettier days of the year, right when it started to get to 60 degrees and you could be outside without feeling like your face was gonna freeze off. I had taken a short hiatus from skateboarding because of the weather and decided that I couldn't waste this absolutely beautiful day by sitting inside. I decided to grab my board and meet up with my friend Rapha at Blue Park in Brooklyn.

I was already running super late (as per usual) so I decided not to look for my knee brace. I had a prior injury on my knee from about 5 years ago. I had a tear in my MCL that healed wrong, causing my knee to crack and creak in ways that it totally shouldn't. It was a not-so-great knee day but I didn't have time to scour the room for my brace. I ran out of the house, of course, getting a smoothie right about when I told him I was 10 minutes away. I was still a 30 minutes trip away and hadn't even left. Finally, I DOWNED my smoothie and took the L to the park.

I got there, out of breath, and asked Rapha where he had put his backpack. He pointed to a table in the back and I saw his brightly colored backpack sitting on the tabletop. To get there, I had to skate through the park, skillfully avoiding the other skaters zooming by. I drop my board down, jump on it, and start to push. I had my heavy bag on one shoulder, so I kind of lost my balance a little. In order to not fall off my board and make an absolute fool of myself, I exaggerated the lean in the other direction and attempted to push. BIG mistake. I felt a pop in my knee and I fell to the floor, smack dab in the middle of the skatepark.

I grabbed my knee in pain and realized that something was totally off. My kneecap was on the outermost part of my knee and not in its usual place. I screamed out and laid on my side in complete and

utter pain. I called out for Rapha, screaming "SOMETHING IS SERIOUSLY WRONG, MY KNEE IS IN THE WRONG PLACE". He kind of chuckled, thinking I was being dramatic. Him and two other guys helped sit me up and looked at my leg, seeing even through my jeans that there was a drastic difference between my two knees. Every time I moved it felt like my leg was being set on fire while simultaneously being hit by a very large and hard hammer.

Finally, one of the guys put a rock under my foot to keep it in the only position that didn't make me want to die. Rapha called 911 and called my boyfriend, Rhoads, to come rushing to the park. He ran over, slightly thinking I was exaggerating a little bit but also with the urgency of someone whose girlfriend was screaming at them over the phone. He shows up 10 minutes later, relieving Rapha of his caretaker duties and leaving him to continue skating.

The ambulance then arrives, 30 MINUTES LATER, thank you American healthcare. The two paramedics show up, with zero urgency. They walk over to me with the stretcher and I realize that they're going to have to put me on that stretcher and wheel me out. They tell me they have to cut my pants to inspect my knee. I tell them I love these pants. One of them asks me (let's call him Mark), with an attitude might I add, if I would rather pull my pants up. I say no. They cut my pants. Then I tell them that it's very embarrassing to get stretched out of the skatepark. The same paramedic asks me, with attitude again, if I would rather stand up, walk over, and climb onto the stretcher. Once again, I say no. They grab me and lift me onto the stretcher. It was EXTREMELY painful. I felt as though the gravity was ripping the bottom part of my leg off. They grab my rock and put it back under my foot. They were extremely impressed by my rock.

They then put me into the ambulance. As they're putting me into the ambulance, the other paramedic (let's call him David, he gave me David vibes), reached over me and his walkie talkie hits me in

the knee. He apologized and we laughed. Then they warn me that it's going to be a very bumpy road and that it's probably going to be very painful. Great. They put a box of gloves under my knee to hold it up and sit there asking one another what they should do. Then they ask me if I want them to pop my knee back into place in the ambulance or if I wanted to wait for the hospital. I told them that there was no way in hell that they were touching my knee.

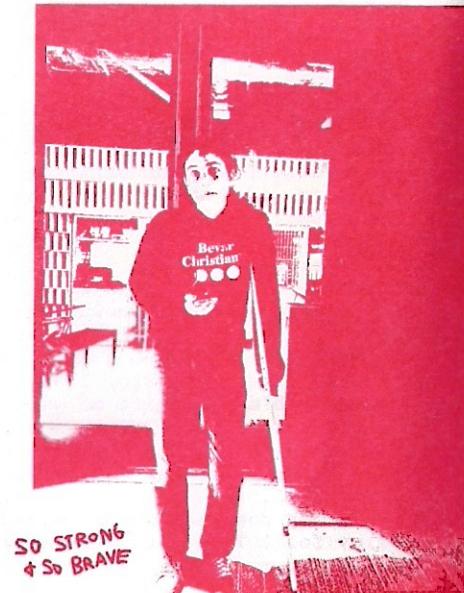
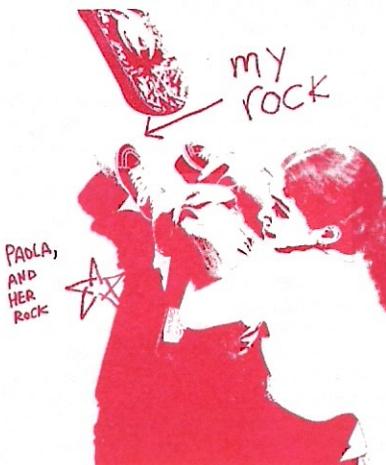
Mark gets in the driver's seat and my boyfriend and David sit in the back with me. David offers me a cold pack and when he goes to pop it, it explodes all over me. He apologizes again and hands me a napkin. I ask him if it's bad for that to touch my skin. He says I should be fine as long as I didn't ingest it but he didn't sound too sure of his answer. Rhoads, David, and I begin talking about paramedic salary and David tells us it pays more to work at McDonalds. We joke that he should get tips. Our conversation ends and we move onto another conversation. He then grabs his iPad and starts typing something in and he goes, "I'm just gonna give you this, select either 20%, 25%, or 30%." He then turns the iPad around and he says, "Just kidding, please put in your phone number, social security number, and some other information." Insane thing for a paramedic to do but honestly for a few minutes I forgot about how excruciating the pain was.

It was indeed a bumpy ride but finally we made it to the hospital. They took me out and wheeled me into the hospital. Another paramedic started walking with us (let's call him Hubert), and I assume he was there because he had brought someone else in. He then goes, "Yup! That's a dislocation." He starts inspecting my knee and tells us this is the most interesting thing he's seen all day. He also said he liked my rock. All the paramedics were very impressed with my rock and told me that it was a solid piece of granite. I tell him that I'm glad he's having a good time because I'm in a lot of pain. He told me that he's seen a lot worse and even

offered to show me pictures. I thanked him for his offer but politely declined.

The nurses then wheeled me into a hallway and left me there with Mark, David, Rhoads, and two doctors. They told me they had to pop my knee back and I asked them for 5 more minutes. Our new friend, Hubert, peeked his head through the door and said, "You're welcome to say no, but can I watch them pop it back in." I said fuck it and so we added a new member to our group. I relaxed a little, thinking I still had 5 more minutes. The doctor turned to Rhoads, unbeknownst to me, and told him to hold me down. Rhoads stands over me and is telling me that I'm going to be okay and then pins my arms down. I screamed and felt the doctor pushing my kneecap inwards and the other doctor pulling my leg. I felt a crack and felt my kneecap slide back into place. Then all of my paramedics and doctors left, the nurses handed me an ibuprofen and slapped a brace on my knee, and everyone was gone except Rhoads and I. I later told another doctor the story and she was shocked that they didn't give me any pain medicine.

I am so embarrassed that I dislocated my knee that way that I made up a story of how it happened to tell people when they ask. So, if anybody asks you, I was doing some crazy shit on a very tall set of stairs. And yes, I made my boyfriend carry my rock home with us.



SILAS BARRETT  
Good WHO  
FRIEND STAYED AT  
ONCE STAYED AT  
ON ROCKAWAY  
+ ON BEACH FOR A WHOLE  
WEEKEND BY HIMSELF.  
FIRST, ARE STORIES  
ABOUT THE BEACH. (MAY125)

SECOND  
SILAS  
STORY  
THAT  
HAPPENED  
LAST  
YEAR  
THAT  
HAPPENED

WORLD  
SILAS  
ENTERED  
THE  
BEACH  
SO  
MUCH  
THAT  
DIDN'T  
HAPPEN.

## "MAN'S BEST FRIEND IS THE BEACH"

a story about the beach

Waiting for ya down at the atlantic writing yr name in the sand the oldest hound is herding cattle in the mist that nobody sees sailed with a seabird thru the sea swells told me he was here when the sea fell the dead are laughing with the waves and searching for sea shells i ask and the sea tells Feeding frenzy pelicans fall from the sky eagle talons spinning spirals down feathers fall in fives scrape the salt from your wings my darling and we just might fly scratch the sand from yr eyes as you turn them to me Vacant the fish are screaming swarming plucking feathers from my teeth yr wings crumbling burning as you're circling me with the laughing gulls one drops from the sky rots at my feet turning to ash bones crumbling dust as he screams out his last And He Goes...Waves barrel me down to the floor plum island waves i knew every secret of each of the seagulls i met that summer but i was scared of the horseflies terrified let them chase me up and down the sand my mother and my brother and my brother stared from the hill watching me run The cold bites in november northeaster winds sink their teeth into each inch of me and i like it slip from my socks as i scatter this ash at my feet missing the son like my mother missing my brother joining the waves watching me run the sun rose red that morning over the infinite horizon ash in my mouth waves and floating feathers blowing south came upon a pair of crumbling wings flew a seabird's journey home soared here and there breeze in my feathers circling over all of my life lost final furious pestilent tsunami of a wave crashes ashore each and every corpse beneath the sand is born anew Seabird seabird screaming a song at three in the morning can't you see i'm itching for a little shut eye here in the sand shake the sleep off my bones and trace the source of the sound to where the water meets the sand he's lying at my feet his wings are by his side flightless helpless he

asks me would i just fold them to his chest allow him a more comfortable rest of course i oblige and he's floating away now he's joining the waves but each time he just floats away for a while floats until i forget him then he floats right on back to where the water meets the sand singing the same old song flightless at my feet five songs about the beach

pt1"the oldest hound" or "sand sketches"

1Waiting for ya down at the atlantic writing yr name in the sand the oldest hound is herding cattle in the mist that nobody sees sailed with a seabird thru the sea swells told me he was here when the sea fell the dead are laughing with the waves and searching for sea shells i ask and the sea tells

pt2"one laughing gull died at my feet and i heard his final song"

2Feeding frenzy pelicans fall from the sky eagle talons spinning spirals down feathers fall in fives scrape the salt from your wings my darling and we just might fly scratch the sand from yr eyes as you turn them to me Vacant the fish are screaming swarming plucking feathers from my teeth yr wings crumbling burning as you're circling me with the laughing gulls one drops from the sky rots at my feet turning to ash bones crumbling dust as he screams out his last And He Goes ...

pt3"summer, or grief, or ash in plum island sand at midnight in november."

3Waves barrel me down to the floor plum island waves i knew every secret of each of the seagulls i met that summer but i was scared of the horseflies terrified let them chase me up and down the sand my mother and my brother and my brother stared from the hill watching me run The cold bites in november northeaster winds sink their teeth into each inch of me and i like it slip from my socks as i scatter this ash at my feet missing the son like my mother missing my brother joining the waves watching me run

pt4"my red face that morning was the first face that saw the sunrise" or "spring"

4the sun rose red that morning over the infinite horizon ash in my mouth waves and floating feathers blowing south came upon a pair of crumbling wings flew a seabird's journey home soared here and there breeze in my feathers circling over all of my life lost final furious pestilent tsunami of a wave crashes ashore each and every corpse beneath the sand is born anew

pt5"seabird let me sleep"

5Seabird seabird screaming a song at three in the morning can't you see i'm itching for a little shut eye here in the sand shake the sleep off my bones and trace the source of the sound to where the water meets the sand he's lying at my feet his wings are by his side flightless helpless he asks me would i just fold them to his chest allow him a more comfortable rest of course i oblige and he's floating away now he's joining the waves but each time he just floats away for a while floats until i forget him then he floats right on back to where the water meets the sand singing the same old song flightless at my feet

Silas: This is tough because I don't even know how to start it or contextualize it. I'm trying to think about the best order of things. Well it was three in the morning, and I was outside of Brittany Hall (Editor's note: this happened during our freshman year of college). We were trying to decide what the move was and a bunch of loud noises happened at the same time, and then I kind of just lost consciousness, I had a seizure. It felt like I was swimming through the universe and seeing everything, seeing my whole life through a bird's eye, third-person view. And then I woke up, and I thought, "Why did that happen?" Earlier, I took mushrooms and got really high, smoked a lot of weed and smoked a ton of cigarettes and didn't sleep and didn't eat and didn't drink any water. The seizure wound up really bad for me, health wise, but to be honest, it's the best thing that's ever happened in my life, because after that day, the grass was actually green and the trees were actually alive, and I looked in the mirror and I was actually alive. So I'm really thankful for having a seizure outside of Brittany Hall at three in the morning. I think I snapped out of the very long period of dissociation when that happened. I was only passed out for maybe 15 seconds, but I guess I was seizing, convulsing. But in my head, it felt like I was taking a nap and exploring.

Miles: What did it look like?

S: I don't know what it looked like, because I don't think visually.

Marisol: What number was it?

S: It felt it was definitely an odd number, and it felt like swimming through the whole universe. It felt like I was the universe. Maybe I don't even know, but it was lit because I was really dissociated before that happened, because of a bunch of sad things that had happened to me in Seattle (Editor's note: Silas is from Seattle) that made me kind of leave the real world. And it was really awesome, because that was the only thing that was able to bring me back. And

I think I would still be out of the real world if it weren't for that experience, which I'm very happy for. Afterward, I started drinking a ton of water, giving other people water, started smiling more, and started being nice to everyone. Not that I wasn't nice before, but I got a lot nicer, I think because I was being nicer to myself. I meant to say this earlier but after I woke up, I eventually made it back to my dorm, and I couldn't sleep because I was so scared. So I was just staring at the ceiling and the ceiling was kind of rippling and I was watching all these funky patterns on the ceiling, but then it felt like I came to a clearing. It felt like I came to a clearing in the woods and a bunch of angels popped out and saw me and talked to me, and they told me that I should be nicer to myself. And they were right. I started being really nice to myself, and it made me really nice to everyone else automatically. Your interior is projected.

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\*\*\*\*  
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This morning, 08/01/25, Silas and I met in Tompkins to have one last goodbye before we'd be apart for 5 months, we are both traveling. He brought me this story on index cards scrawled in official-blue pen ink. I transcribed all of them here. " - - - " means we are going on to the next card. I thought it might be relief from those nasty proper paragraphs...

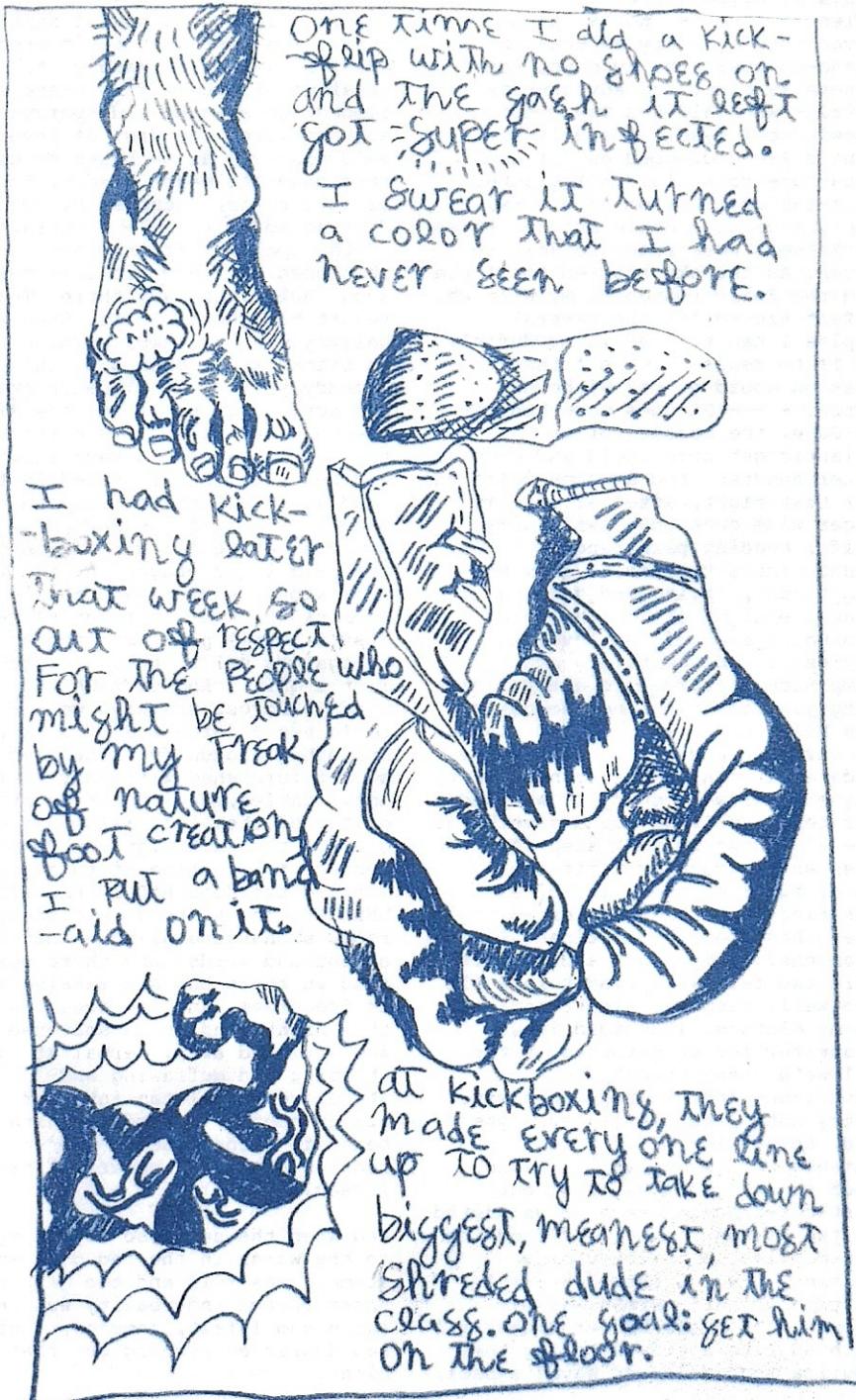
Chasing discomfort, Hunt and I were stuffing duffels half an hour before the Ferry, checking weather (not carefully enough), debating apples, protein bars, etc, etc... our friend had roped us into a photoshoot at Fort Tilden on Sunday, the idea being to show that this brand's clothes could be "lived in." So what better idea, Hunt and I decided, than to trot out to the Atlantic a few days early and make it to Sunday in one piece?! My co-conspirator was cut from our master plan by the memory that she had agreed to go see Mission Impossible

that night. Oh, how social pressure thwarts the most daring of ideas. My comrades for the mission of all missions, - - - it turned out, would be Wayne and Jet. School friends of sorts, not as tightly woven into my story as Hunt, but stand-up guys, the type you can generally count on. Adventurous spirits with all the Boy Scout knowledge I myself woefully lacked. Hunt's faced drooped as our hour of departure drew closer; I grabbed a half-tab of LSD from an otherwise-empty Adderall bottle and the three musketeers were ready to join the waves. As the sky started to ripple and the Ferry roared in my stomach, I felt around for the several apples I had stuffed in my duffel, as if to reassure myself that this mission would go off without a hitch. - - - Hitches were had. Even in June, the beaches of the Atlantic get awful cold and damp after sundown. And at some point on our first night, after slicing my finger wide open on a swiss army knife, evading park rangers, fashioning a tourniquet from my right sock, trying and failing to draw the night sky in the sand, and consuming each of the several apples, I, and certainly my companions, started to get a little hungry. Some grumbling around in the hole in the sand we had claimed as our own, and a plan took shape. A careful plan, a master hunt. Jet, Wayne and I were going to walk down the beach until we found something. - - - And so we took step after step as the moonlight hit each wave, ignoring the time, often ignoring each other, ignoring everything but the emptiness in our stomachs. To my right and my left were two fellows I didn't know all too well, outfitted almost entirely in my clothes. I decided it was beautiful for my garments, after all we'd been through, to experience another body than mine. I try not to be the jealous type. And, acid aside, I felt this immense bond with Jet and Wayne, each of us a long way from our West-coast homes, each of us united in the common interest of food in our bellies. With everything melting away out there, - - - I just knew their warmth was my warmth, and their hunger mine. As I grinned like a kid, watching the Nautica logo dance on Wayne's back,

a building took shape down the beach. Its function we knew not, but to our hunters' instincts, it felt right. Our steps picked up and we made out one window emitting a dim red light in a sea of dark rooms. The door next to it stood open, blowing with each gust, creaking all the way to where we limped, gobsmacked & desperate. A sign of life, the first of several we'd discover as we began to canvas this desolate beach resort, LARPing as navy seals, occupied by food but distracted by the - - - character of the space, certainly not abandoned entirely but seemingly about 90% of the way there. This resort had ghosts in it. Down every hallway was one lamp, burning half as bright as it once did, throwing a muddy yellow on alligator statues and action figures lining the side. The pool sat collecting dirt; half the doors were padlocked; shovels and beach balls sat unused in the sand as if all the children had been sucked into the sky just moments before our arrival. And that red light stayed on, and that door kept creaking, and the American flag to its right shone just a little pink, and the alligators below it even caught a little glint. And through the windows across the way, we - - - could see a cafeteria of sorts, the space big enough for a hundred or so but furnished with only four small tables, the chairs overturned on top of them, all illuminated only by the exit sign. Only out of respect for routine at this point, I tried the door AND IT WAS FUCKIN UNLOCKED. We tiptoed into the red room, exchanging glances that held a thousand words. And there was no food in there but six massive vats of ice cream. And ice cream we had that night, and as we snatched them and sprinted away, verbal at last, whooping and guffawing and shoveling Neapolitan into our greedy mouths, the moon behind us began to shine a deep - - - reddish orange. A beautiful harvest indeed.

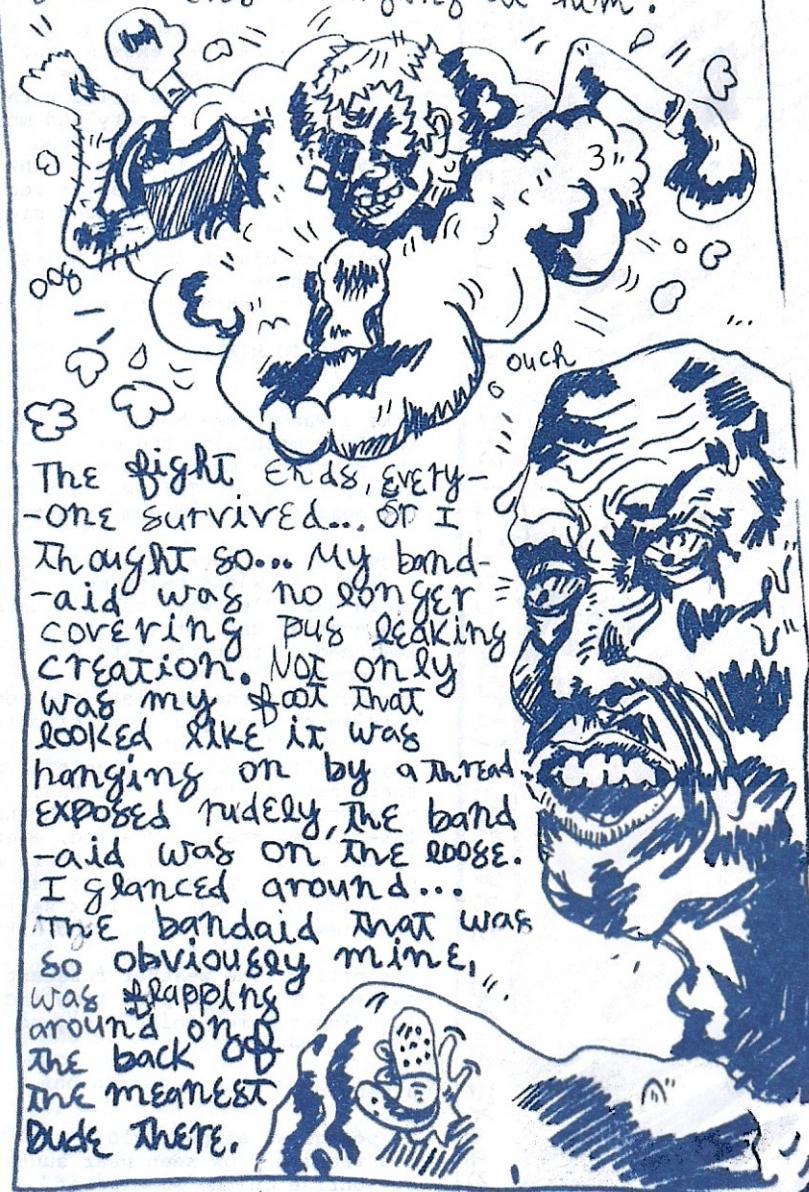
And when the sun rose I gave myself to the water in the red dawn and my stomach was full and the gash on my finger opened and reality was real again and I felt, somehow, that I had figured everything out that night.

# Diary of a "Willy" wimpy kid

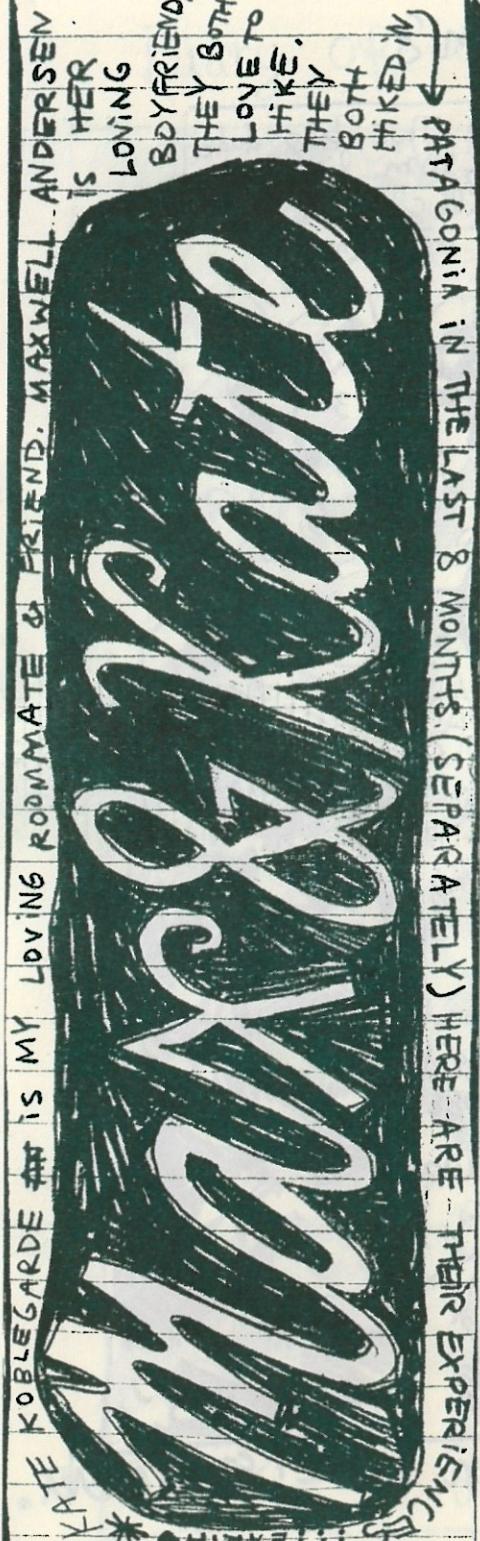


By: William Sims  
©nakedandgo

It was finally my turn. The big dude was all worn out from little kids biting his ankles and brace face teens charging at him.



MORTIFIED was an understatement.



HIKING STORIES  
MOUNTAINS, MOUNTAINS, LOVE  
WALK EM, CRY OR DIE OR DON'T"

Chaltén, Argentina - This is the story of how I hiked for two days straight in Patagonia with nearly no food and had a blast.

The Patagonia clothing logo is a mountain range that exists, and I really wanted to see it. The Patagonian region was filled with more energy than any city and more magic than any fairytale. Upon arrival I saw a wild llama drinking out of a bright blue glacier fed lake, which felt like a good sign.

Hike 1: Evening hike, 4.5 miles before dinner

Hike 2: Out and back to a lake, 5 miles during the day

Hike 3: BIG HIKE, 16 miles, 12 hour hike.

Hike 3 was to see Mount Fitz Roy, the logo mountain, the main event, the star, the moon, the sun, the dream, the goal. This was a very big deal to me. A dream come true.

I got the top bunk, a Swedish girl I didn't know was below me, and our cabin was filled with other hikers and a stray cat. Other hikers reminded me that the Fitz Roy hike is dependent on weather: if the clouds are gonna be clear the next morning at 6am, you start climbing at 12 am. If it won't be clear that day, don't go up. The glaciers up there have a microclimate that generates its own clouds with the lake and mountains. Meaning, even if the wind is strong and there are no clouds as far as the eye can see, you might have no luck seeing the view. I met 4 people who hiked 12 hours only to have no visibility. The weather forecast called for an 11pm prep time and a 12am leave time, which was good news to me.

alpenglow

noun

al·pen·glow 'al-pen-glō  
: a reddish glow seen near sunset or sunrise on the summits of mountains (NOT GUARANTEED)

I'm pretty sure an alpenglow will

change your life. I think it could turn any investment banker city loving loafer wearing to give a damn about the natural world.

Some hiker guys, wearing thousands of dollars of brand new gear, were telling me, in my patched up jacket, running leggings, and \$3 bodega gloves, that the trek up was pretty tough and that I would need more gear if I hadn't been training. Yeah. Whatever. I play outside all the time, I'll be fine.

Hike 1 was delightful, I could see the mountain range from afar and I ran into some enormous buff cows and I caught the sunset.

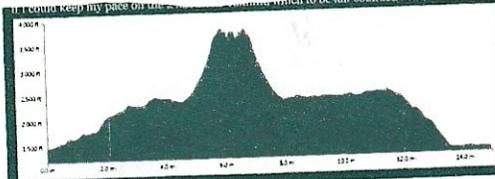
Hike 2 was supposed to be a chill walk just to spend time outside before the BIG hike. But once I started walking I didn't want to go back to sit in the cabin so I decided to go around the lake, and out further, and further, then turn around, and go around the city. I ended up accidentally walking about 10 hours and getting back around dinner time. Groceries were expensive so I wasn't eating much. I mainly ate bread, butter, and canned beans.

I needed to get all my food and gear organized and get some rest before big hike #3, and my goal was to sleep from 8-11pm, but it was already 6 and I wasn't tired. I ate some beans and laid in bed, in the dark, and refused to let myself move. I NEEDED TO SLEEP. Adrenaline disagreed and I never closed my eyes and at 11pm I got up and fueled for the hike -gummy worms and bread with butter.

Chaltén has no light pollution, making all the stars in the sky bright and visible. I hiked in my glasses (since I'm scared of contacts) and for the first four hours of the hike, I was mainly alone. Just me and the brightest stars and so much adrenaline, mate, and peace. Maybe it was the lack of sleep and nutrition and sore muscles, but I entered a type of trance. I was half aimless in a pitch black forest with a headlamp, and I was having a blast!

I was the youngest on the trail and had the smallest amount of gear,

one hiking pole and a small backpack. The hikers around me had rucksacks full of food and water, the fanciest newest hiking boots, jackets, weather proof pants. It seemed like they were scared of the elements or were planning to be out here for days. One man laughed at me and said it would be funny to see if I could keep my pace on the 2 kilometer summit, which to be fair sounded hellish.



DISTANCE AND ELEVATION  
I'm taking a wild guess that the risograph won't be able to pick up the tiny text on the graph but the elevation ranges from 1500 to 4000 ft over the course of 15 miles (Wow!)

On the summit, the train ended and it was just rocks. I think it would have been ideal to be a mountain goat in this situation but the sun was starting to rise and an alpenglow usually only lasts a few minutes, so I pushed through. I ended up passing all the people with heavy gear and eventually I was leading the pack. The stars had gone away to rest but there was a long snake of headlamp lights from town to high up on the trail that shimmered like a constellation.

When I came over the top of the hike, and saw the tip of Fitz Roy, tears were begging me to cry. I had seen the range from town for two days and there was no way for me to imagine how it would look and feel. I cried. And smiled. And drank more mate. There were barely any clouds and they were slowly going away as the sun rose.

I sat and stared and prayed for an alpenglow. For three minutes, the whole range was bright orange, a beautiful color from the sunrise but not alpenglow. I was happy enough. It got brighter and the light show seemed over but a flash of new sun came and painted the range neon pink like the scene from a barbie movie.

It was hard to believe that it was real. Naturally, I cried again.

I need to bring every important person in my life here. I need to get married here. I need to take my future kids here. I need to come back yet I hadn't even left.

The pink faded and clouds rolled in. It got dark and cold and I needed to head down to better weather. Below the summit it was sunny and clear, and I hiked to two other lakes before getting home at 12 pm.

At this point I was delusional, I had been awake for around 30 hours and actively hiking for 22 of them, and only bread and butter. I got back to my cabin, had a beer, and went for another walk before bed.

Nature can energize you in a very unnatural way and I feel naturally drawn to that.

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Yahapaccha (5460m): June 5, 2025  
Cordillera Blanca, Peru

We left our moraine camp at 2 a.m. for a summit push, aiming to climb while the mountain was coldest and most stable. Yanapaccha is a classic acclimatization peak in the Blanca, moderately technical, with neve and ice up to 70°, and generally safe. We used it to prepare for Chopicalqui (6354m), our main objective.

This was my second lead at extreme altitude (~18,000 ft), with far better conditions than my first. I felt more confident, and was fortunate to climb alongside Francisco, a veteran Peruvian alpinist and my guide. The ascent was smooth, uneventful and beautiful. We topped out just before sunrise, greeted by sweeping views and -5°F temps that quickly froze ropes, gear, and our faces. The warmth of the rising sun was a welcome gift. We lingered on the summit for nearly an hour, soaking in one of the best views in the range.

The descent began with two 70m rappels and a steep downclimb into the glacier. We roped up to protect

ourselves from the crevasses dangerous albeit familiar terrain which we'd assessed and crossed on the way up. The glacier had been stable for days, with no signs of shedding. It was supposed to be a mindless walk back.

Yet the mountains are always in control.

As we crossed the heart of the glacier beneath hanging seracs, I heard a gut wrenching crack. A bungalow sized serac, roughly 150 meters above, broke loose. I locked eyes with Francisco. Fear. Pure and visceral. I yelled, run.

We darted up a snow slope to our left, encumbered by gear and breathless in the thin air. The serac crashed down, triggering a D4 avalanche, roaring past within 30 meters. When we looked up, more seracs loomed overhead. We waited, helpless. But they held.

Shaken, we gathered our gear and moved fast, escaping to moraine camp for some much desired Coca tea.

Reflection: July 5, 2025

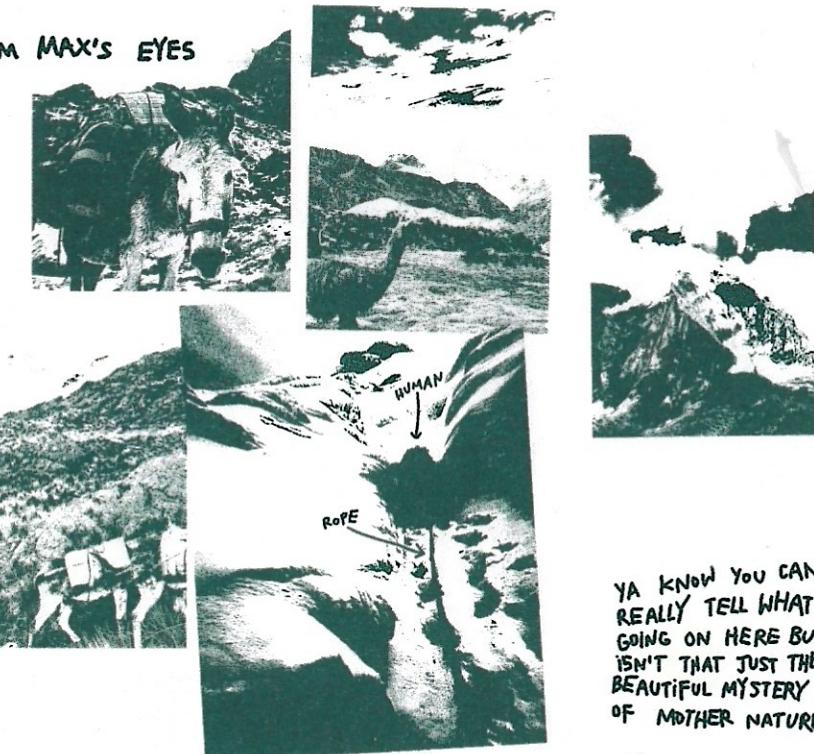
We ultimately abandoned our summit attempt of Chopicalqui due to conditions. This was one of the best decisions of my life. Since I arrived in the range on May 26, nine climbers have died in the Cordillera Blanca, an unusually high number. Most were killed by avalanches similar to the one we narrowly escaped.

The range is unstable this year, likely due to the accelerating effects of climate change.

We were lucky. I'm grateful to still be here. My relationship with the mountains has changed significantly following my three weeks in Peru. I view a return to this range as inevitable; however, it will take significant internal discourse to justify the risk one assumes, and the burden friends and loved ones bear when climbing in these high ranges.

-Max Andersen, 21

## FROM MAX'S EYES



YA KNOW YOU CAN'T  
REALLY TELL WHAT'S  
GOING ON HERE BUT  
ISN'T THAT JUST THE  
BEAUTIFUL MYSTERY  
OF MOTHER NATURE?

## FROM KATE'S



"TEAM SPORTS CHANGED  
MY LIFE & IT CAN  
CHANGE YOURS TOO" WILL

Miles: I am sitting with Rafer Gardner. We're at Prospect Park.

Rafer: Yep. First time. First time in Prospect Park.

M: It's freaking beautiful. We were just throwing a little football ball around. We were talking about sports and playing on sports teams growing up. Today we're gonna get two stories: one about great triumph and one about great defeat. Do you wanna start with triumph or defeat?

R: Let's start with triumph. So I have never been athletic, like never. I've never had an athletic bone in my body in my entire life, but I've always had dreams. In middle school and high school, we had required sports. So I always had to play something and I fell in love with basketball 'cause my best friend Oz was really into it. But pretty much, my dream and my goal was to be able to dunk a basketball, which I never got to do, but it's still one of my main goals and something I'm gonna work very hard to achieve, starting this summer (Editor's note: It's July 31st right now and I don't know if he's dunked yet, but summer is not over till September 22nd motherfucker).

R: This is all to say I always wanted to be good at a sport 'cause I was at a school where everyone was a star athlete and I was a Minecraft gamer. So in middle school, I started practicing basketball a lot. I saw a trainer. I would practice my threes. I was doing everything but I always had bad stamina, which honestly I think might be attributed to me having nutritional deficiency from having celiac my whole upbringing and never knowing. You know you don't absorb nutrients when you have celiac.

M: Whoa. What?

R: Yeah dude I could have been 6'4 (Editor's note: He's 6'0 haha)

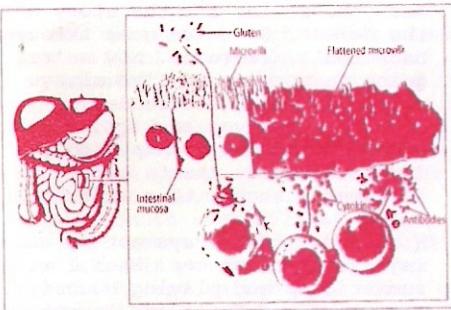
M: Wait, you can't absorb nutrients at all? Nothing?

R: It blocks your nutrient receptors.

M: So how do you fucking survive?

R: Well, there were things I was eating that didn't have gluten. But it suppresses them, it doesn't totally block them.

(Editor's note: More on Celiac from Mayo Clinic: "Celiac disease is an autoimmune condition where the immune system reacts to gluten, sometimes causing damage to the small intestine. Gluten is a protein found in foods containing wheat, barley or rye. If you have celiac disease, eating gluten triggers an immune response to the gluten protein in your small intestine. Over time, this reaction can damage your small intestine's lining and prevent it from absorbing nutrients. This condition is called malabsorption. The intestinal damage often causes symptoms such as diarrhea, fatigue, weight loss, bloating or anemia. It also can lead to serious complications if it is not managed or treated. In children, malabsorption can affect growth and development in addition to gastrointestinal symptoms. There's no definite cure for celiac disease.")



TO SUPPLEMENT YR LEARNING

R: Yeah. I probably should have been 4'1 or something. Anyway, I was doing all this in middle school. Then finally I got to high school. We were a really competitive sports school, like we would recruit people from the UK to come play basketball on our teams. One of my friends on varsity, his dad was in the NBA.

R: Anyway, in high school I also started taking music a bit more seriously. I'm a jazz saxophonist at heart, so I was always excelling in the jazz combo. I was the only freshman in the jazz combo 'cause there weren't that many musicians at my school. But I still had to do sports, so I did cross country. Absolutely hated it. I would always have practice around this time (Editor's note: this was around 2-3pm) and fear it. I feared the practice 'cause of how slow I would be. I always came in second to last in every race I ran. And this guy that came in last every time was this guy who would openly watch hentai in the fucking dining hall. But I always hated running 'cause my legs were just on fire all the time. And I realized that I just had chronic shin splints 'cause I have really flat feet. I remember halfway through the season, my coach came up to me. He said, "Rafer, we're just kind of worried about you 'cause we're not really seeing any improvement."

M: Damn!!!!

R: But enough with cross country. My freshman year I played thirds basketball and the way it worked was: varsity, junior varsity, and thirds-which was no cut. Side note I loved required sports 'cause I became friends with damn near everyone in that 400.person school by the end. But anyway, our thirds team was fucking stacked. One of my good friends Sean was 6'9 freshman year of high school. And this guy was a sharp shooter center. We had another friend, Nick and he was 6'5. I was the same height I am now. We also had one of Stephen King's grandchildren, shoutout Aiden. He did not know how to play basketball at all, but he was so funny. So our team was stacked and we had such amazing chemistry.

R: For thirds basketball, the coaches would pin us up against the really good eighth graders. And we were just a year older than them and had a 6'9 behemoth on our team. And it was awesome. We had the best record of any sports team at the school that season. I think we went undefeated, um, against the eighth graders. Yeah. They were like 5'2 though.

We had this one game and I was on fire. I think I hit five threes in the whole game. I feel like I'm a very good one-on-one basketball player, but I always have trouble getting in my rhythm playing five-on-five. Long story short, it was awesome. I just couldn't miss and I had that feeling of being in the zone during the game. I remember right before the game ended, I caught the ball in the corner out of bounds and their coach was yelling, "He's a shooter! He's a shooter!!! Cover him!!!!" As he was screaming that, I just drained a three right in his face, right in their bench's face. And it was the most cold-blooded sports moment I had. I think I finished the game with 17 points, which isn't crazy, but for me it was, it was my greatest.



R: The next year I made JV, and I had some shots, but I didn't have any star moments like I did in thirds. But at the end of the season, we went around the locker room and our coach gave us each a compliment, right? And mind you, my coach was also my English teacher and he was my dorm parent. Mr. Robertson was his name and Mr. Robertson also played trombone in the school jazz band. Our music program was so lackluster that we didn't have enough players to fill all the roles in the big band. So we had a bunch of teachers that would just play instruments with us. Mr. Robertson was pretty ass trombone, I must say. But he was giving out compliments. He'd say, "Oz, you're the greatest playmaker. Veer, you're a great spot up shooter." And then he got to me and he said, "Rafer, you're really good at the saxophone." And he was so serious about it. He was deadass, he had nothing to say about me

playing basketball. That one stung. That one stung a little bit. I don't think he realized what he was doing 'cause yeah, I was pretty fucking good at saxophone. I think he was just trying to hype me up for what I was good at. But I didn't like him. But that's pretty much my story of triumph. I cashed threes in front of all my friends and put a group of eighth graders to shame.

R: Well actually here's another story of triumph. I played lacrosse and I was pretty good at lacrosse too because I was bigger than a lot of people in middle school. I made JV my freshman year. But the thirds team for lacrosse was empty. They never had enough people. So they would ask people from JV if we wanted to go down and just play practice games. And I would always say yes. And dude, it was the most fun I ever had playing sports 'cause I was as I am now size wise, but a freshman in high school. And we would be playing like 4'10 kids who had never picked up a lacrosse ball before. And I just got to absolutely destroy them dude.

M: They totally hated y'all.

R: There was one time I played defense and I went up and just scored a goal 'cause they couldn't stop me, dude. I was an unmovable force on the thirds lacrosse field. Alright, so now for the story of the defeat. So we've gone through basketball, lacrosse. Now we're going to soccer. So I've always sucked at and hated soccer.

M: But you played on Bigfoot Fan Club and you did a damn good job (Editor's note: that's our intramural soccer team at school).

R: I did. I've always got my worst injuries from soccer. When I was at summer camp and playing soccer, I was playing defense and I went to kick the ball away from a striker and I just kicked his cleat and I permanently fucked up my toe for seven years after. It has this click to it and just hurts all the time. Years and years and years after. So I hated soccer.

R: Anyways in high school, I had to play soccer because it was required, but I was with all my

friends, so it was a fun time. On the thirds soccer team, our two coaches were the two oldest history professors. One of them was Mr. Nelson, who was my advisor, who had these huge buck teeth and super small glasses and was always wearing KEEN loafers and these brown suede pants. And he had this one little tuft of hair that was the only thing between him being bald and not bald. And he just kept it, it was just a little pube spot on the top of the very top of his skull.



M: Was it a little curl?

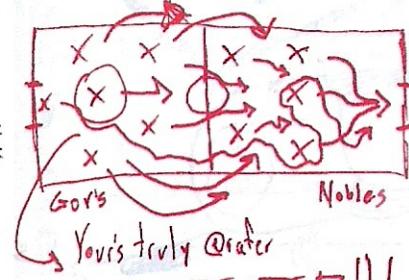
R: Yeah. And this dude is one of those white savior motherfuckers where he did a mission trip in Ghana once. And now he has like 30 namaste signs in his classroom. But he was the goat, and he was so funny. His favorite animal was the rhinoceros. At the end of the year he brought in his whole rhinoceros stuffed animal collection. It was actually like 200 rhino stuffed animals.

R: For advisement meetings, he had this old Volkswagen bus that had legitimately one seat in it, and it was the driver's seat. And the back was just a broken fridge and space on the floor. And he took his whole advisement group, which was me and seven other guys, on trips to Dunkin Donuts every Friday during our advisement meetings. We would just all sit on the floor with no seat belts and he drove 60 miles an hour down this super busy two-way highway. And yeah, he was the man, Mr. Nelson. Shout out Mr. Nelson.

R: So he was one of our coaches. And we had two plays for the entire year. One was Code Blue, which meant that everyone, including our strikers, went back on defense to try to stop the ball. The other was Code Red, which is when everyone, including the goalie, went on

offense to try and score.

R: During this one game, we were at Noble's Academy near Boston, right off the Charles River. And we must have been down in this game, but pretty much, coach called a Code Red for the first time in the entire season. Everyone ran up. I was playing defense. The goalie ran up ahead of me, which should have never happened. I don't know how it happened, but I was the last man back and as I was about to cross half field, someone on the other team kicked the ball over everyone's heads and it was rolling right at the goal. It was just me and the ball. All I had to do was stop the ball, there was no one else around. All I had to do was tap it in any direction or influence it in any way, and it probably would not have gone in. But as I was running back, I went to kick it and I absolutely Charlie Brown'd the motherfucker. I slipped and fell and didn't even touch the ball at all. I completely missed it. I think the bottom of my foot might've actually scraped it, so I gave it more momentum to go straight and it just rolled in. I fucking curled up and fell and ate shit and was just in the dirt as it slowly rolled into the goal and we lost the game. And I felt pretty humiliated, but it was funny.



## "MISS HIGHLANDS, HAILING FROM THE GREAT STATE OF TEXAS!"

Miles (gonna go by "Me" in this interview): All right, Rhonda Michelle Moffett. We're at a beach bonfire in Seaside, Santa Rosa Beach, Seagrove, Grayton, all of the above. We just had s'mores. And this story is the nicest thing her brothers ever did for her.

Michelle Ellisor (gonna go by "Her" in this interview): So in elementary school I picked up tetherball during PE and during recess. And I got really good at it and I really wanted one to have at home. I would come home with the underside of my wrist all bruised up because the blood vessels would bust because I would keep hitting it over and over and over.

Me: Did you play boys and girls?

Her: Yeah. But I was like one of the best girls. Oh yeah. But I wanted a tetherball pole. I don't know how, but one day I came home from school and my brothers said, "Go look in the backyard..." And they had gone to my school and stolen the tether ball pole, which was cemented into an old tire. It was really, really tall and our backyard fences were short, so the tetherball pole stuck way above the fence line. If any of the neighbors went into their backyards, they could see the honking tetherball pole sticking up.

Me: How'd they get it there?

Her: I have no idea-how this happened or why they even did it. I'm sure they used my dad's truck. Just one day they went and stole it. It was probably just like, "Let's get this tetherball pole!!" And they're probably like, "Oh yeah, my sister likes to play tetherball!!!!"

Me: They're like Beavis And Butt-Head. What happened in the end? Did they have to take it back?

Her: No, of course not. It just stayed in the backyard and I had nobody to play with. But another

story about my brothers: So I lived in a really small town.

Me: Where? I know, but for the record.

Her: In Highlands, Texas. It's a suburb East of Houston off I-10, on the way to Beaumont. Anyway I was going into my ear surgery when I was in college, and my mom and dad were there.

Me: Why did you have ear surgery?

Her: Because I couldn't hear, and because when I was little, I had busted my eardrum. And when they did the surgery, it didn't heal right. And so then I kept having infections and I couldn't hear. Just repeated ear infections and it finally just busted. So I went in and they were saying, "Oh, we need to do surgery!" When I was recovering afterward, my dad was telling me stories and he told me that one time when Ronnie Mack and Kevin (Editor's note: Ronnie Mack and Kevin are her brothers) were younger, they stole one of the cars from the dealership in the middle of the night, drove it around town, and then took it and drove it off the cliff into a bunch of water.

Me: How'd they even? Did they just let it go and jump out?

Her: I guess! I don't know the details about it.

Me: Did they get arrested for any of this shit?

Her: Not for that. But when Ronnie Mack was 16, they were all in some old house that was abandoned. I guess they had torches, I'm not really sure, but the darn thing caught on fire and it burnt down and he got in trouble for that because he was the oldest. And who even knows if that was the truth because my mama always protected him, saying he did no wrong. I remember one time I got in trouble in elementary school and this is when we still got whoopings or paddles. I don't even remember what I did. It had to be a mistake because I was very much a rule follower. It probably had something to do with talking and I didn't know they told me to be quiet 'cause I can't hear

shit. And we had to go to the office and they were gonna give us licks with the paddles and I was scared to death, but they didn't give 'em to us.

Me: You got off easy that time. Didn't you do FFA in high school?

Her: Yes. We raised really crappy steers and pigs. But it was fun. I was an officer. I did chapter conducting where you run a business meeting. I was the president.

Me: Yeah, you were.

Her: And I would say, "The meeting will come to order. We are now holding a meeting at the Baytown Sterling FFA Chapter. Madam Vice president are all officers at their stations? I shall call the roll of officers and determine if they are at their stations. Madam President, the secretary, blah blah." We practiced it so many times. We almost went to state and when we were competing, I lost my voice. But what you would do is you'd go into the room and they have a piece of paper and you turn it over and it's for a meeting and you have to figure out how to use the rules, the parliamentary procedure, to conduct this meeting. They'll ask, "Oh, the county wants to give us six bales of hay but we need to add into account that they're gonna throw in 20 pounds of crawfish." I don't know! It's just stuff you've never seen. And you gotta figure it out but you can't talk to one another! You get five minutes to read over it and figure out what kind of rules and things you're gonna say.

Something like, "The county proposes to pass the law," and you have to use the rules and certain words within the rules. So you just have to have all this stuff memorized. It was mostly me and Robin running it 'cause we knew what to do. It's really cool. It was fun. (Editor's note: Robin was her childhood best friend)

Me: How'd you get involved with that?

Her: FFA does competitions and that was one of 'em-chapter conducting. Our Ag (agriculture) teachers just told us we were doing it. And then there's public speaking, there's

dairy judging, there's livestock judging. All of these things are for FFA, and you go to district, area, state. But we almost went to state. Also, all the while you have a set of judges listening to you and watching, and if you say things wrong or you miss a word, they take off points. We had to wear our FFA jackets. But what was cool was they had a chapter sweetheart and you got voted into chapter sweetheart and you get a white jacket.

Me: Did you ever do that?

Her: I won chapter sweetheart in my chapter and I got a white FFA jacket! Somehow it disappeared. It was really pretty though. It was white corduroy and then it had our patches on it.

Me: Didn't you also participate in the talent show or beauty pageant?

Her: I did a talent show in middle school, and yes, I did a pageant. I was Miss Highlands. For the talent show, me and my best friend, Robin, and our friend Lori, we did a dance to "I'm So Excited" by The Pointer Sisters. We were dressed up like old ladies, and we were like, "Oh yeah, I remember we used to kill it out there!" And we were all sitting in chairs and knitting and somebody was putting on lipstick. Then the music came on and we all pretended to be shocked, and the one girl pulled lipstick across her face. Then we got up, we had our canes, and we danced around as old ladies. We made up a dance for that. That song says, "Tonight's the night we're going to make it happen." It's literally talking about having sex hahaha.

Me: And you were Miss Highlands.

Her: Yeah, I was Miss Highlands my sophomore year in high school in 1991. I remember wanting to do this when I was a little girl. I said, "I'm gonna do that one day." Anyway, my mom decided I was gonna do sign language as my talent because I'm half deaf.

Me: Wait, do you still know sign language?

Her: No. I kept my steers at the

Pearson's barn. The lady that lived there taught sign language at school for kids. I don't know, but for some reason, she did sign language. So she taught me the words to "Proud to Be an American." (Editor's Note: aka "God Bless the USA" by Lee Greenwood). So we did that. But I remember we had weekend interviews with the judges and we were at somebody's house that was running the contest. The judges were asking me something and my friend Crystal was also running. She cut in and said, "Oh, she's just an old cowgirl. She just raises these pigs and chickens." It really made her look bad.



Me: What'd you wear?

Her: For our opening dance, we had to wear a leotard and a skirt. And then for my talent, my mom sewed me this outfit that looked like, what's his name? Captain Sam? Or what's his name?

Me: Uncle Sam?

Her: Uncle Sam! And it had a humongous hat that she made. Then when we tried it on dress rehearsal, we were like, "Ooh, we gotta take that off." But it was a little tux with tails and it was all red, white, blue and stars. And so I was doing the sign language performance, and my brother had just come in from Desert Storm. And I said, "I dedicate this song to my brother, blah, blah, blah." Then all of a sudden, "And I'm proud—" started playing and I started walking to the front of the stage. Everybody was screaming, "Woooo!!! Woohoo!!! Yeah!!!!" It was just emotional 'cause the song.

Me: And how old was he? How old were you?

Her: I was what, 16 or 17. 16. Well, Kevin is six years older than me, so 22 or 23.

Me: Why did Kevin go to the Army?

Her: Because my brother and him got in a big fight and he ran off and joined the army. He had just graduated. He was at a crossroad. He didn't know what to do. Of course, all his friends are losers. But I don't know what they were fighting about. But he and Ronnie Mack got in a fight in the house and my dad was trying to break them up and they busted a ginormous hole right by the front door in the sheet rock. And then Kevin ran off with no shoes. I bet it was over a girl. But I think he was thinking, "I'm never going to go anywhere or do anything if I don't get out of here." Which he's right.

Me: How long was he there?

Her: Well, he retired. So however long that is.

Gabe: I would say 25 years.

Me: Totally other note, can you talk about the legend of Timmie Jean Lindsey?

Her: Timmie Jean Lindsey is my grandmother, my mom's mom. She went to the doctor to get some rose tattoos taken off her breasts, and they approached her for an experimental surgery, which was breast augmentation, and she took it. So she is the first woman in the world to have breast implants. She's been in magazines, on little news shows, and on the front page of Houston Chronicle newspapers. They made a movie about the doctors. It's called Boob Men and it has David Schwimmer, doesn't it? (Editor's Note: It's called Breast Men (1997) and it does have David Schwimmer in it)

(Editor's note: we changed subjects here...)

Her: When I graduated high school, I went to a junior college in town. First it was Lee College. Then I transferred to Blinn College in

College Station. I transferred there for one semester and then I transferred into A&M for education. During school, I was driving buses and I was also a trainer and taught people how to drive buses. I also worked at Cavender's Boot City.

Me: How did you get into driving buses?

Her: Because I was riding a bus to school one day and they had a sign inside asking for drivers, and me and my friend were like, "Let's go do it." So we went and did it.

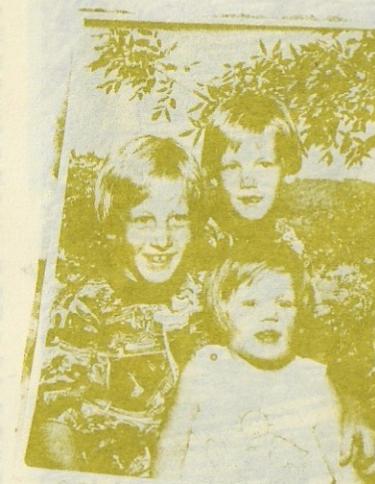
Me: Didn't you drive like Bill Clinton or something?

Her: I drove President Clinton's presidential motorcade, during the grand opening of George Bush's presidential library, and I met him and Hillary and shook his hand. Afterward, my daddy asked me if he touched me, and I was like, "...Yes." Anyway. Tired. I can't talk anymore.

Me: Okay. Any last words?

Her: I love you.

Me: Love you too.



## 'ISMALL (FUTURISTIC) ~~COSTUME~~ UNDERWEAR'

There's a pair of tits on the TV at Gabes. It's a soft core porno and I can't pay attention to the girl across from me who I am sharing a drink with because there's a pair of tits on the TV, at Gabes, which is not a perverted guy's name. It's a bar. A perverted bar, I guess, now that I can't seem to listen to a drunk 20ish with hiccups who resists all offers of water slur that the breakup was amicable and it's actually really a good decision because (hic) we are both probably gay (hic) anyways and we really just traumabonded over grow (hic) ing up in the Midwest with shit families (hic) without seeing a pair of tits on the TV.

I'm trying to think of something to say that encourages her to be independent and find herself, but the guy on screen is also naked, except for some small costume underwear that are supposed to look futuristic. I give up and fill my mouth with watered down Gin and Tonic.

In the porno, they are in space. It's a science-fiction plot-line that seems a bit like Star Trek if Kirk was a girl with big, perfect, perky tits and hard nipples the color of bubblegum. And if Kirk liked to wear spandex suits that cut high on the hips made of cheap stretch fabric, thin gullets on the panties that you see everything through and in between. How people like it.

By the point I have successfully gotten the girl that is wedged between me and the gin and the tonic and the space porn to drink water and recited that I can relate to her experiences with co-dependency, underwear guy has peeled off an alien's spandex and started to fuck her. We don't see much other than his body between her legs and her boobs. Alien-girl has similar boobs to girl-Kirk, but hers are light blue, and she has long, pointed ears that have white wisps of hair growing out, like horns. She looks quite beautiful.

I'm thinking about how in all the sci-fi movies (non-erotic) I have seen, I have never seen special effects or character design quite like hers, milky blue wisps for horns and pretty eyes, ones so dark you could never find her iris, even against the light-when the man, who is nearly done with his fucking, is blocked by the tall silhouette of my drunk friend's boyfriend. Ex boyfriend. They're still friends. I don't know. Past his censoring frame, I imagine they've closed up on the wide blue of her stomach, something that feels too tender and intimate for them to film. He leans in, his cologne and anxious sweat kissing the air, and yells. I don't bother trying to understand him against the music. I just nod, finding the blurred silhouette of his face against the screen's pale blue halo. The communal glass is empty, other than ice and a weirdly squeezed lemon. He knows that his girlfriend/exgirlfriend/bestfriend and I are too young to order our own drinks. When he goes to order us a glass of whatever he's ordering himself, another pair of tits is on the TV.

This girl is laying on her back on the control panels, and the same lucky underwear guy is not wearing underwear anymore. It's tasteful, really, because they position the camera so we can't see his ass. We just know, from the futuristic costume underwear next to the girl's face and the small amount of upper butt we see, that he's a free man, unchained from shiny metallic limitations of futuristic costume underwear, and he is meeting god in alien cunt in a wooden spaceship, in a warehouse six hours east of north hollywood and will get a 400 dollar paycheck a week after his final pretend-ejaculation.

She is archiving the feeling of bare skin and sweat against a laminate counter like adhesive, feeling shame for forgetting to feed the cat back at the apartment. It's only while he humps her I notice just how cheap the set is. The counter he fucks her on is coming undone and I wonder if they even hired a carpenter or just rammed nails into it.

At some point, she comes to peace

with the hungry cat back home and swans her neck up, reaches to the gaffer and his perfect heaven light, sweat, she's glowing, finds the eyes of lucky-coming-humping-alien-fucking-futuristic-costume-underwear-toyota-corolla-driving-coworker-guy between her legs, kisses him gently like he is her old highschool boyfriend, and wonders absently what he ate for lunch that day.

It's interrupted by an ad for mattresses, and then another for Erectile Dysfunction, right as we are brought our drinks.



ART BY KIMIA NUBAN  
@CERULEANCHAMELEON

## "THE BEST DECISION I EVER MADE!"

When my college years ended with a remote-learning whimper, one question haunted me:

*Did I miss my chance to be social?*

Let's play three truths and no lie: my parents enrolled me in social-skills classes at six, I refused to read my writing aloud at school unless no one applauded, birthday parties were forbidden.

Despite this behavior, I was an insatiably curious child, tumbling down a new rabbit hole every year, from hurricane seasons to music charts. Reading Wikipedia came naturally to me; connecting with people didn't.

So I kept my head down in high school, leaving right at the bell every day; college was a similar story, as I shuttled between lectures, dining halls, and libraries. When I turned my tassel I still hadn't gone to a bar or taken an Uber off campus. As a newly minted adult, meeting people was ten times as daunting because events seemed like the only option; anything held more appeal than feigning enthusiasm for a run club or kickball team. I yearned to recreate the spontaneous conversation of first-grade playground buddies. So I started meeting strangers.

For almost 1,000 days, I've done just that — talked to someone new every single day. As this adventure has evolved from halting chats with retail workers to hourslong heart-to-hearts at coffee shops, I've kept wondering what's the catch? Clear majorities of people I ask to chat open up to me — yep, even the ones with AirPods in. It's a cheat code; at any public place I stroll into, a new best friend could be around the corner.

After a year of conversations around my hometown of Cambridge, Mass., I grew hungry to meet people in complete-opposite corners of America. I wrote my own bildungsroman in the form of a six-

week road trip through Appalachian coalfields and Deep South cities. Last fall I romped across the rural Midwest, whose impossibly earnest strangers gave me a trap shooting lesson and a corn harvesting ridealong.

I owe most of my close friendships today to the project. Many come from walks of life I never imagined knowing people in; as a teenager, my friends were almost exclusively fellow sports fans. Yet now I can go to a concert and see my friend on stage; walk past a building my friend designed, and attend an art show my friend curated.

I split nearly every aspect of my life into pre- and post-project — that's how immense its impact has been. Pre-project travel was about ticking landmarks off a wishlist; on my trips now, the sole agenda item is meeting locals. Conversations used to center on things in common; now they're all about learning things I don't know.

The project has given me skills more useful than any I learned in school. I've fine-tuned my ability to ask questions that elicit excitement and insight. I'm far more comfortable around people vastly different from me, both demographically and stylistically. If there were an Active Listening Championship, I think I'd win.

Above all, I've learned what I want to prioritize in life: feeling close to people and expressing myself. Feeling closer to more people is my wellspring of purpose.

So, to my younger self: no, you didn't miss your chance. And now you have the best hobby in the world.

ALEX HAS A SUBSTACK  
ON THE SUBJECT:  
"ALEXANDERAD" OR ALEX  
CHUEH

MAYBE THIS INSPIRED  
YOU TO TALK TO  
STRANGERS — IT SURE  
DID 4 ME!

IF YOU GO CHAT-  
CHATTING WITH  
STRANGERS AFTER  
THIS, RECORD YR  
EXPERIENCES +  
WHAT YOU LEARNED  
BELOW!

ALSO, WE ARE  
AT THE END  
OF THE ZINE.  
I HOPE YOU  
ENJOYED, KEEP  
TALKING + TELLING  
STORIES + DON'T

LET THE FUCK  
HEADS IN THE  
WHITE HOUSE  
GET YOU DOWN.  
DON'T BE  
SILENT, DON'T  
GIVE EM WHAT  
THEY WANT

FUCK ICE +  
FREE PALESTINE

YOU

what do we say in times of departure?  
a fist bump  
that turns into a small snowman?  
a turkey?  
or a handshake  
or a ~~big~~ hug  
to a kid and  
that is hard on  
paper... so just  
get outta here  
already!

WHAT  
WHAT  
WHAT

chasing discomfort, Hunt and I were stuffing duffels half an hour before the Ferry, checking weather (not carefully enough), debating apple protein bars, etc., etc... our friend had roped us into a photoshoot at Fort Tilden on Sunday, the idea being to show that this brand's clothes could be "lived in." So what better idea, Hunt and I decided, than to boot out to the Atlantic a few days early and make it to Sunday in one piece? My co-conspirator was cut from our master plan by the memory that she had agreed to go see Mission Impossible that night. Oh, how social pressure ~~pushed~~ thwarts the most daring of ideas. My comrades for the mission of a Mission.

And so we took step after step as the moonlight hit each wave, ignoring the time, often ignoring each other, ignoring everything but the emptiness in our stomachs. To my right and my left were two fellows; I didn't know all too well, outfitted almost entirely in my clothes. I decided it was beautiful for my garments, after all we'd been through, to experience another body than mine. I try not to be the jealous type. And, as it were, I felt this immense bond with Jet and Wayne, each of us a long way from our west-coast homes, each of us united in the common interest of food in our bellies. With everything melting away out there,

could see a cafeteria of sorts, the place big enough for a hundred or so but furnished with only four small tables, the chairs overturned on top of them, all illuminated only by the exit sign. Only out of respect for routine at this point, I tried the door. AND IT WAS FUCKIN UNLOCKED we tiptoed into the red room, exchanging gloves that held a thousand words. And there was no food in there but ~~or~~ six massive vats of ice cream. And ice cream we had that night, and as we sprinted away, verbal at last, whooping and guttawing and shoveling repositely into our greedy mouths, the moon behind us began to glint a deep

SILAS'S  
STORY THE WAY  
IT WAS INTENDED

INDEX CARDS!!!

it turned out, would be Wayne and not as tightly woven into my story as Hunt, but stand-up guys, the type you can generally count on. Adventurous spirits with myself woefully lacked. Hunt's tone drew closer; I grabbed a half-lab of LID from an otherwise empty athletic bottle and the three Musketeers were ready to start to ripple and the Ferry around for the several apples I'd reassure myself that this mission

I just knew their warmth was ~~that~~ as I grinned like a kid clutching the Nautica logo dance on Wayne's back, a building took function ~~as~~ we knew not, but our hunters' instincts, it felt right, and one window in a sea of light. The door went to it stood shining all the way to where we were of life. The First of canvas this desolate beach resort by food but distracted by the

red orange. A beautiful barren indeed.

And when the sun rose I gave myself to the water in the red day and my stomach was full and the gash on my finger open and reality was real again and I felt, somehow that I had it all everything out that night.

best times

Hitches were bad. Even in June, the beaches of the Atlantic set awful cold and damp after sunrise. And at some point on our first night, after slicing my finger wide open on a nail in an old tarp, I was fumbling, fashioning a tourniquet from my right sock, trying and failing to draw the right tarp in the sand and consuming each of the several apples, I, and certainly my companions, started to get a little hungry. Some grumbling around the hole in the sand we had claimed as our own, and a plan took shape. A careful plan as master hunt. Jet, Wayne and I were going to wait down the beach until we found something of the space, certainly not abandoned entirely but seemingly about 90% of the way there. This resort had ~~blocks~~ in it. Down every hallway was one lamp, burning last as bright as it once did, hoarding a muddy yellow on alligator statues and action figures lining the side. The pool sat collecting dirt; half the doors were prodded. Shells and beach balls sat mused in the sand as if all the children had been sucked into the sky just moments before our arrival. And that red light stayed on, and that door kept cracking, and the American flag to its right shone just a little pink, and the alligator statue even caught a little glint, and through the windows across the way we

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