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# 1.

See? Ritual pink zulued off his mask, and pink atomized through his vaseline eyelashes.

"Ain't we gonna quit soon?"

"What?"

"What?" he answered.

I shut the paintsprayer down, we eased our vapor masks off, *whew* I thought *humid in here*. Jesse said "I said ain't it time to quit. How long you wanna spray?"

I stared around the pink room, paint gobs were welling into labial clots. "Looks messed up," I grouched.

"Time to quit," Jesse decided. "We'll give it another coat tomorrow."

"Makes sense."

"What?"

"Whatever," I yawned. I stared around. Biopsy semigloss was dripping itself, scabbing over door arches, I ripped some masking off a window, everywhere looked worse.

"We'll sand all that tomorrow," I pointed. "Let's get out of here, these fumes are ridiculous."

Black Heron Press  
P.O. Box 95676  
Seattle, Washington 98145

ISBN 0-930773-04-7

All of the characters in this book are fictitious.  
Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

"Right, out."

Then we were, out. Jesse locked the door. "That's a lot of pink—the hall, stairwell, the foyer, all the trim—why's this guy want so much pink?"

"You won't believe me."

"Test me."

"No lie . . ."

"Right."

"He's a gynecologist," I smiled.

"No! For real?" Jesse laughed, newborn autumn slashing his pink misted lips, like some flamingo clown, "No! Seriously! Don't he see enough pink?"

"Guess not," I shrugged, then we were driving, Jesse flicking retinas over road, salami black tar smoothing gelato pupils, he asked "You going home?"

I saw some burgerland, rhino yellow bricks, *we joked through those doors once I remembered she was wearing some fuchsia corrupt babydoll lace.*

"Yo! Hey!" Jesse yelled.

"Huh?"

"I said do you wanna go home or what?"

"Nah. Drop me off at Teresa's."

"The black woman?"

"Yeah."

"She lives in Fremont, don't she? Near the bridge?"

"Ahhh, a little up, near 50th."

We drove along faces, turning, then over a bridge, mountains slopping off dual horizons, muting pearl belladonna creamed snow, or sun bleeding floral smogs, or cars, I shivered, I closed my window.

"She's the next left."

"Right."

Later we stopped, there, it was houses, TV peace boiled through windows.

"What does Joan think of all this?" Jesse asked.

"She doesn't," I smirked, I got out, he drove gone.

I knocked, her door opened, like red lilies slit with black sweat, her smile.

"Sean. Not tired of coming over yet?"

"No way." Then we kissed, like hands, traced, over wet radar lips.

"You take a shower," she kissed, "you've been dipped in paint. Pink?"

"Pink," I echoed, stripping into the shower, into zinc hot steam, where soap bubbled caviar froth, blending into muscles. I was tired.

"There's a good movie on TV tonight—" she yelled from somewhere, "you want to stay?"

"What?" I yelled back.

"Nevermind," she yelled, "I'll tell you out here."

I curved my spine through clear heat, spattering collagen steam drops wherever it hit, wet down my nape, hot, like delta orchids. I dried off.

"Lookit you . . ." Teresa murmured, I remember drawn curtains, "The kid's not here," she whispered, her dress crumpling to the carpet, a pool of bathed rayon, marbling TV blue, I reached and turned the sound off.

Litmus blue slurred from the mute TV, she kneeled to carpet, arching her back like one muscle, parting madonna black wet where I wrestled, in, melting TV skin, on, wherever heat traced thighs, smashing sapphire hairs where she yowled, grabbing my bicep, nails dunking in, murmuring spike red lines when I slammed, growling, into our wild slow heartquake, clamping hands onto chests, again, we slowed to a sweet spit come.

"Ooooo, let's drink this champagne I bought," Teresa beamed, chuckling nude to the kitchen. I slumped up onto

couch, watching the deaf TV, men pointed guns at each other, I flicked the sound back on.

"It's time you left Laredo," the sparkling cowboy drawled, then the other one looked funny at him.

"Try some of this," Teresa lilted, popping the champagne, it was cheap, we lazed on her couch, she looked fat again. Sometimes she didn't.

"Look, I gotta call home for a second," I belched.

"Want me to leave the room?" she teased, sly, like her teeth.

"It'll only take a second. Stay here," I sipped bubbly, toying with her muff hairs, dialing, Joan answered.

"What."

"It's me, Sean."

"What."

"I'll be home in awhile."

"Yeah."

"How you doing?" I fake asked.

"Yeah," Joan hissed, hanging up.

"Something wrong?" Teresa smiled.

"Never," I kissed, breasts then her neck, she drank and purred "mmmmm . . ." The room smelled like us, like burnt sun, lading through where she opened drapes, we watched TV, images waving sense data over our sleeping hands, later I woke, we hugged, I strode home. Houses glowed albumin streetlight, a halide yellow spray that burst through my shadow.

Night wore my mind like her garnet, walking, spearing stars through my retinal dreamscape, you could never sketch this, not where night pureed mauve over suburban swamp green, like trees where lizards rain, tinting eyes freon soft, maybe infra could talk it. I wondered where she was. I hoped she wasn't happy. I let her storm through my cortex, I saw more night, it chewed me like wind chews horizons, darker.

I cupped clouds in my hands, I forgot infra, I keyed the lock

and entered, lamps diffused kitchen bronze, Joan sat with her shadow, both drinking some pale wine.

"I don't want to hear about it," she talked, not looking at me.

"Hear about what."

"Exactly," she sneered, swinging her kimono ass away.

*Exactly* I smiled inside, drinking off the glass she left.

## 2.

*It's gonna happen again.*

*What is?*

*You wait.*

*You always say wait.*

*It always happens.*

## 3.

"Man, we need some coffee."

"Yeah." I threw a pink rag into a corner. "Yeah, why don't we take a break, get some from that Swedish bakery and go down to Madison beach?"

"It's ten," Jesse unmasked, "almost lunch time."

"We'll take a break then take lunch."

We drove past boutiques, to the bakery, Jesse ran there and got coffees, I idled the car, he hopped back in, running his tongue over styrofoam rim cream. "Those people are strange