

HENRY  
ROLLINS

BLACK  
COFFEE  
BLUES





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# BLACK COFFEE BLUES

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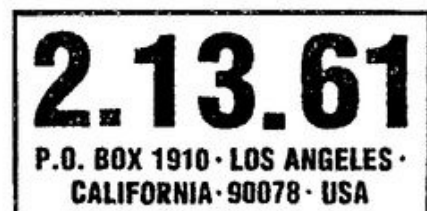
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## PREFACE

I started work on *Black Coffee Blues* in the late eighties. I wanted to make a book that would be great to have along with you on a long trip. If you were stuck in some moving vehicle, far away from familiar surroundings, this book would come to your rescue.

I am fascinated by the effect exhaustion has on me. Ever since I started touring in 1981, sleep has been an elusive and much sought after quantity. I wanted to collect writing from the ends of tours when I was hammered by fatigue. When I am exhausted and overworked, I tend to drop my defenses and let it rip. I thought that other people might find themselves at this point too, no matter where they might be, and that this book would do the trick.

Living on the road can be a hollowing experience. The scenery is constantly moving and loneliness can be a hell hound on your trail. Alienation and isolation have followed me my whole life. I can't think I am the only one out there that feels this way.

Writing, music and speaking are for the most part the way I communicate with people. It is through the written word that I can speak to you with the most clarity and unguarded honesty. It is this medium I prefer over the rest. In my opinion, it is silent communication and unspoken acknowledgment that is best. Like when two people at a record store are both looking through the John Coltrane section and they nod and smile at each other. If that instance could be a language, it would be the one I try to speak every time I write.

This book and *Do I Come Here Often? (Black Coffee Blues Part II)*, are my attempts to do for you what Henry Miller's *Black Spring* did for me ever since I first read it many years ago. I rarely went on the road without one of Miller's books in my backpack. A man I never met kept me company and became my traveling companion and friend.

In my mind I am always moving. When I am sitting on an airplane I am thinking about a place I have not been for a while. When in the farthest reaches, I think of the streets I grew up on.

For me, this book is like the letter you write to someone that you regret sending seconds after it falls into the post box because it is so honest and revealing that you are mortified by the thought of having it read. Even though you mean every word of it, sometimes you can mean it too much. It is the conversations you have with yourself about how you would deal with having the person who dropped the letter walk into the room at that moment. It's walking late at night in the summer, listening to the insect choir and smelling the trees. These are the voices that I hope speak to you in this book.

**HENRY ROLLINS**  
*Los Angeles 1997*



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## 124 WORLDS

**#1:** I got a letter from a girl today. She told me how she had talked to me at a show and that I was really nice to her. She said that she was really let down. She was hoping that I would be a mean son of a bitch. Next time I see her I'll kick her ass so she'll cheer up.

**#2:** I got three letters today telling me that I'm God. Why can't I pay the rent?

**#3:** He wrote me. He's doing twenty-seven to life. He wants to know if I can send him something to read so he can pass the time.

**#4:** She wants to fuck me. She knows I get letters like this all the time. She knows what she wants. I want her and she wants me to hurry up and get to her town.

**#5:** She wants to kill herself. She wants to tell me all about it. She has been considering a few different methods and would like to know what I think of them. She likes my work and respects my opinion. She wants me to select the method I find the most fitting and she'll go for it that way. She says that it would be an honor to be dispatched by me. I told her to go die... of old age.

**#6:** He doesn't get along with anyone. He doesn't fit in anywhere. I mean nowhere. Everybody hates him. Maybe everybody in the whole world. For a kid from the Midwest, he sure gets around.

**#7:** She hates guys. She says they have their brains in their cocks. She says that she can tell that I am different. I'm going over to her house tonight to sell her the Brooklyn Bridge.

**#8:** His name on the streets is "Crazy B". He's wanted on charges in connection with a homicide case in which five people were shot in the head execution style. He is considered armed and dangerous.

**#9:** He went to work. His boss got in his face because he was late—third time this week. One more time and he would be fired. He pulled out a gun and put five shots into his boss' guts. He walked out the backdoor and into the sunlight. It was going to be a great day.

**#10:** She was a junkie. She told her friends that she was going to get out of it soon. One night she went home and took too much. She died on her kitchen floor.

**#11:** She had a lot going against her. She was old. She lived alone in a high crime area. She kept a gun that her late husband had given her and taught her how to use as he was gone a lot on business. One night a man broke into her house and came into her room. She shot the man three times in the chest. She called the police. They came an hour later and took her name. They told her that she was a good shot. An ambulance came and took the stiff away.

**#12:** He came home from work and shot himself in the head.

**#13:** For years she wanted to die. She never told anybody. It seemed like anything she said prompted her husband to hit her. She had three kids. One of them was retarded. One of the other children tried to fix its face by burning its cheek with a screwdriver held over the stove. Her husband rarely worked. She had to bring home the family's money. One day she was walking to work and got hit by a car.

**#14:** She couldn't handle her parents. Her father used to feel her up. She lost count of how many times he had grabbed her breasts. As the years went by, he grew more bold. It was impossible for her to have any kind of relationship with a boy. Whenever it got too far along, she would see her father in the boy's face and start to cry. She couldn't tell anyone. Like anybody really wants to hear about how your father licks your throat while he rubs his fingers between your legs. Like some guy wants to hear that when he's trying to do the same thing. She graduated from high school and left her parents. You should have seen her leave them. It was magnificent, stunning. Outstanding in every way. Her father couldn't believe it. She told them that she was never going to see them again. Her father yelled at her as she walked down the driveway that she would be back. She never came back. She moved to a big city, made a shitload of money, had a great life and never saw her parents again.

**#15:** He was from the Midwest. He got drafted in 1968. He was shot and killed in the jungles of Vietnam.

**#16:** He was from a middle class home. He was an average student. He graduated and got an average job in the same place that his father worked. He got married to a girl that he went to school with. Together they had two children that looked like two children. He lived the average life of the average middle American.

**#17:** She has been off heroin for three months. Every day that goes by is a special day for her. It's

day that she hasn't taken drugs. Another day that she was clean. Another day away from the needles. That's all she thinks about—the fact that she's no longer addicted. After work, she comes home and makes herself dinner—always the same thing, soup and a sandwich. She has to keep it together. The less she thinks, the better. At the grocery store, she buys two weeks worth of soup. The checkout man thinks she's crazy. She thinks it's good to be regular now that she's no longer addicted. It's not easy. Sometimes she feels bad and it's all she can do to hold on. Sometimes she sits on her bed and repeats “I don't need you. I don't need you. I don't need you.”

**#18:** He goes to the same job every day. He comes home to his wife every night. They rarely touch. They're not attracted to each other anymore. Neither makes a big deal about it. A few years ago, they would fight and swear that they were going to leave each other, but then they found that when it really came down to it, neither one had the courage to go out and meet someone else. They don't hate each other. They are roommates waiting for death.

**#19:** He fights a lot. He gets his ass kicked a lot. Two reasons for this. First off, he fights when he's drunk. Second, he isn't all that good. He always mouths off to some large, mean motherfucker somewhere who's always glad to pound the snot out of him. He does this a lot. He hates life. He hates the world. He thinks the whole place is a screaming shithole full of freaks. He sees himself as one of the only real ones out there. He reckons that they are all trying to get him, and all he can do is fight, drink, take things as they come and wait for death like a marked man waits for death.

**#20:** He was raised on hate. At age six, he has quite an understanding of things. He's in fear all the time and likes to stay in his room. He doesn't smile much. There isn't anything to smile about. It's the fear and hate that he understands the best. They make sense to him and never lie. His parents lie. They lie and fight and drink and beat the shit out of everything. He figures that's the way it is. For now, his room is his friend.

**#21:** At age sixteen he wanted to kill himself all the time. He felt alienated at school. He would see the others and he felt nothing in common. They were so mean to him, it would make your teeth ache. He would make you want to hack off one of their arms and beat the rest of them to death with it. He thought that in death he might find a home. Perhaps find some kind of friendship. Maybe he wouldn't be so lonely and full of sadness. He was tired of the way he was feeling. Every day was torture. One day he went home after school and shot himself in the head with his father's revolver. He left no note.

**#22:** She had taken all the grief that she was going to from her skinny dick piece of shit boss. All the shit that came out of that fat fuck's mouth, all that shit about how she could make a lot of money in this place if she did the right things and how lucky she was to have the job in the first place and that she shouldn't miss a chance for career advancement. Right. Like she was going to go for that. What kind of woman do you think that we are dealing with here? I'll tell you what kind. She got her last

paycheck, walked into his office, shot him three times and walked out. No one called the pigs and she never got caught. She cashed that check and laughs like hell every time she tells the story.

**#23:** He is retarded. There are things that he understands. He can get along on his own ok. The doctors say that his condition is deteriorating rapidly. Last year he understood this, now it isn't clear. He has never touched a woman. He knows that he never will. He eagerly awaits the day when he no longer feels the attraction for them. As it is right now, it hurts so much, so deeply, that he cries and loses control of himself. He has caused many embarrassing moments for his family. They don't know what his problem is, why all of a sudden he'll cry and start to scream. They can't take him out anymore. He is smart enough to know that he's not like the rest of them. He waits for this deep pain to end.

**#24:** She is a blues singer. She goes to work and sings to herself. She goes home and sings to herself. She lives alone. She sings herself to sleep at night. No one knows. No one hears her sing. At her work the other employees avoid her. She works alone on the end of the line. No one ever hears her sing. She makes up songs about everything you can imagine. She wishes she was invisible. She says, "They can't see me. They can't hurt me. They don't know me. They will never touch me. They will never burn me. There's not much to life."

**#25:** He's from a small town. He has the same first name as his father. Two years have passed since his father took a shotgun and blew his head all over the side of the garage. No one ever found out who he did it. He seemed fine at breakfast. Now that his father is gone, he lives in the house with his mother. He drives his father's car. A week after his father shot himself, he opened the glove compartment, looking for a map and found a receipt for the shotgun shells and a note reminding his son to take good care of the car and not to let it get too low on oil. He never showed it to his mother. She doesn't talk much anymore. She spends a lot of time sitting in the kitchen staring at the stove.

**#26:** School made him sick to his stomach because he had to fight all the time. He never ran away from fights. He got beat up a lot but he did win some. It seemed like every time he turned around there was someone in his face trying to start something with him. He used to get up hours before school because his guts would be on fire getting ready to face them. One great day he punched this guy just right. A broken nose is a many splendored thing. This guy's face just exploded. It was like a rainbow—but all the colors were red.

**#27:** Earlier that day, he got pulled out of his car and punched in the stomach by an irate cab driver whom he had accidentally cut off in traffic. The incident upset him so much that he had to go to the executive washroom and vomit. Now he looks at himself in the mirror. He always thought that he looked rather bad in that kind of light. His face always looked bluish like he was dead. He looks at his face and all he can think is that he's a coward. He hates himself.

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#28: PCP #1: They have strange pets in this neighborhood. Part cat, part lizard, part snake, part rat. They coil and snap on the front porches. Some of them go to work, they kill lost children. They skin them and hang them like trophies on the wall. They bury the bones in the back yard. There might be some in mine. I'll go check when I get the guts to walk out there. So far I can't face it. Last time I went out, one of the animals came at me, teeth first, shining like a stolen moment under the crime scene lights. If I wanted to, I could kill all the fuckers with my thoughts—no really, I could. I could bad-trip them, make them slaughter themselves during commercial breaks when they get up to feed. At some point, I will kill you. You know that.

#29: We walk down the street debating. Should we take a cab, bus, or should we walk to the graveyard? I say that I don't mind walking. She says she doesn't think I'm up to it and hails a cab.

We get to the graveyard and walk through the gate. I feel hesitant. Not because I have a problem with walking past a bunch of stiffs, but because I think that some kind of custodian or cop is going to come out of the little shack at the front and give us shit about what the hell we were planning on doing in there. I could see it plain as day, some fat piece of shit pig,

“What do you think you're going to do in here? You're looking for a place to screw, aren't you? Yeah, I figured as much... you little sluts. You think you're going to go into one of those mausoleums and screw your little goddamn brains out don't you? Well you're not. You get the hell out of here before I kick your shit all the way down to the station. I see you looking at me fella. Go on, tell me something. I want you to. I'll hit you so hard your mamma will get a black eye. Get the hell out of here you little shits.” Something like that. We go past the gates, no one comes out. We walk down the uneven, cracked pathway.

Whole families lined up in rows. Some stones just say “BABY”. Small stones with numbers are all over. These are plots for sale. I think of a man walking down the path with the caretaker after they have had a cup of coffee and a few laughs. The man looks down at a stone and says to the caretaker,

“Here, this is the place. Is this taken? I want my body put right here. Still open? Great. How much? Oh, great. Yes, I like the way the sun catches it. Not near any trees, good. I don't want any birds getting my stone dirty, not that I'll know anything about it. That's a joke. Yes, I believe that you've heard it all before, but yes, I'll take it.”

If I were going to pick a place where my body was going to rest for eternity, I would want to be really sure of the place. I mean really sure. I would set up a tent and camp out at the spot for a few days. I know that it would look a bit strange, like if there was a funeral nearby and all these mourners filed past my bright orange tent. I'd smile and wave as I tended to my franks and beans cooking on the sterno stove. I would stick out without question, but at the end, I would know for sure. I would walk up to that caretaker and with a steady eye and a voice that defined conviction.

“Yes sir, that's the grave for me, you betcha. Where do I sign?”

I would mean it and he would know it.

I suggest that this place would be a great golf course. It has a pond and everything. It would take a mighty golfer to be able to get through the course, what with all the stones in the way, a re



challenge. I mean come on, pro golfers must get bored of these tournaments. These big ass fields every once in awhile an alligator or something. Imagine the fun these guys would have playing through a mausoleum. What if a golfer's ball landed on his long lost uncle's grave?

Ok, my dad used to walk his dogs on this golf course on the weekends. The course was huge. The dogs ran around and had a great time. The dogs were faithful and good. They would see those balls flying through the air. They would retrieve them and place them like a little pile of quail eggs at my father's feet. From hundreds of yards away, I could see golfers shaking their fists. Although the distance was great, I could still hear what they were saying. A lot of shit about, "Godammit, shit dogs...my ball!" My dad would laugh his ass off. At times like these, he was almost human.

We walk over to a mausoleum all decked out in iron and granite. The room inside is bigger than a lot of apartments I've lived in. She thinks that there might be passages underneath it. I ask her what she thinks a bunch of dead guys are going to do with secret passageways. I can see them all down the hallway laughing,

"Haw, haw, our wives still think we're dead! Hey Moe, pass that over here. Haw haw...."

You never know, so I go over and put my ear to the door and listen for sound, the sound of a stereo, the sound of bowling pins.... Nothing, not a sound.

We keep walking. I trip over a wreath and knock it over. I pick it up and put it back on its stand. I read the name on the stone.

"Sorry John, I mean, Mr. Garland."

I walk away and look back. The wreath has fallen over again. I know that if there really is a hell, I'm going to be there and old John Garland will be pissing on my head from a cloud on high.

We have walked all the way around and we're close to the gate again. I look over and I see what looks like a television antenna poking out from behind a stone. I walk over there and check it out, it's just a wreath stand turned over. That would be great, to see a pair of rabbit ears clipped onto a stone. I see a repair guy hooking the grave up for cable. "Hey, we got big screen TV, grab a shovel and come on in."

There's every type of stone you can think of in here. I point out one that looks like a big ebony dice. She looks at me and starts laughing. I suggest that some of these people should have gotten their loved ones to put some fancy custom neon work on their stones, that would really stand out amongst all the gray and black.

We get to the gate. I hear some voices. I look over and see three guys in workman uniforms leaning up against a truck. They are passing a joint between them. I tell her that David Lee Roth's grave will have a full bar and a merchandising booth. We leave the graveyard.

**#30:** He had the day off. He sat in the room. That's what he did when he wasn't at the job. The job made him hate, made him hate endlessly. Made him punch the wall. Made him keep his fucking mouth shut. It felt good to grind his teeth. He would walk home from the shift, hoping that someone would fuck with him so he could use his fists.

It was the day before Christmas. Like many Christmases past, he didn't send nor receive presents or cards. To him, Christmas was another day. Just another day to be followed by another one. He knew

they were full of shit because they needed a day of the year where they could be nice to each other. They couldn't just be that way. They needed an occasion to come out of their holes and be human beings. What rotten shits they were. He knew this. It always boiled down to money for them. There was no escape. Life was waiting for the next shift to start.

He remembered the Christmases of his youth. He was living with his mother. She would get him some presents and never let him forget for a minute that he was a pain in her ass. She would pull out the plastic Christmas tree from the closet and put it up with the same lights from the year before. It was a sad ritual. He remembered how she always had a cigarette hanging out of her mouth and she would tell him that he had better appreciate this shit. She put "Goddamn" before everything she said. Goddamn presents, goddamn toys, etc.

He wanted to tell her that he didn't care about the tree and the presents and could she not be so nasty all the time, that she was scaring him and he hadn't done a thing to deserve it. He didn't make up Christmas.

Opening the presents was a drag. He knew that she really couldn't afford the presents and buying them made her angrier than usual.

"You better enjoy that one. I paid a lot of goddamn money for that."

She would light up a cigarette and watch him like a hawk. He did his best to look happy when he opened the presents. In truth he had no interest in them. All he wanted to do was kill her. He could tell by the things that she got for him that she didn't know anything about him. It was like having a crazy woman paying your rent and buying you shit and telling you that she wished you didn't exist.

At Christmas time, his mother's mother would call. Grand-mother was a drunk. He met her a few times and she was always fucked up, slurring her words, make-up on all crooked, falling over chairs laughing. They would get on the phone and his mother would start screaming, her cigarette ash falling all over the floor. Finally, his mother would slam the phone down and start breaking things in the kitchen. He would run to his room and hide.

A few days later he would be sent over to his father's house to visit and collect presents that had been bought for him. Sometimes there was a Christmas tree but most times there wasn't and that was a big relief. His presents were always in the closet next to his father's boots. The presents were never wrapped. He could tell that his father didn't know him at all. His mother would give him a box of cigars to take over to his father for a present. Father would look at them and put them on a shelf and not say anything. His father would watch some sports game and fall asleep in front of the television with a lit cigar in his hand. He would watch his father sleep, debating if he should let the cigar burn in his father's hand. At the last minute he would gently remove the cigar and put it in the ashtray.

Later on there was the overcooked dinner served up by his stepmother, a terrifying and unpleasant bitch. She would never use sugar. She put artificial sweetener in everything. The meal was dry and neglected, a hateful heap of shitty food. He would get a sharp poke in the ribs from his father signifying that it was time for him to say something nice about the meal.

"Real good ma'am."

His father would look at him and nod. She made it clear that he was a pain in her ass. He couldn't wait to leave. She scared the shit out of him.

He would go back to his mother's house with all the presents from his father. His mother would put it all out and look it over, muttering as she went through the lot. "Goddamn, he really is a goddamn slob isn't he? How do you work this goddamn thing..." She would force a moving part on one of the toys, breaking it. "See? This goddamn stuff is cheap. You see what a cheap bastard he is... Christ."

He would pull the presents into his room and put them in a pile in the corner. He rarely played with the things that they bought him. He was scared to break them. She would hit him. Call him ungrateful and threaten to have the police come and take him to jail forever.

"I'm thinking about calling the police and having them take you away. How would you like that?"

*Whack.*

"How," *whack*, "Would," *whack*, \*"*You,*" *whack*, "Like," *whack*, "That?"

He sat and thought out loud.

"I should have let you burn your whole fucking house down Dad, just what you needed."

Another Christmas was going by. He sat and watched the snow fall by the window. Nice view from where he was—another apartment building. He could see a few Christmas tree lights blinking. The occasional head pass by. The heater was making small rattling sounds like it was shivering.

"Yeah you and me both pal, ha ha."

Tomorrow was another day off. Another day to wait until the shift started again. The shift would always start again. Any time away from the job was just the spaces in its big teeth—little gaps in which you were allowed to breathe, lie to yourself and make yourself think that you were alive. They had you coming and going. They had you. There was nothing but the shift and the apartment. The work and the wait. He spent his off-time resting, soaking his feet in hot water to keep the swelling down. The wait was endless. The room was poorly lit. There were three sockets in the ceiling, but he never replaced the bulbs after they burned out. He was now down to one. Darkness came. The snow kept falling. He sat and waited for the shift to start.

**#31:** He said that he was free. He told us that he was the freest man there ever was. We shook our heads and made humorous asides as we waited for the official papers to be handed to the secretary. Then we could read his death sentence right to his face. Let him tell us all about his freedom then. When he heard the verdict, he didn't even flinch. In fact, and you can check me on this, his eyes opened wide and a great smile broke across his face. "Such is total freedom," he said and closed his eyes.

**#32:** It was her third black eye in one year. She didn't freak out. She did shoot him in the back of the head while he was watching television.

**#33:** The doctor asked her why she would look out the window and never look at him when she spoke. She turned and looked at him.

"In my garden, I am free. You can't touch me. The trees are blue and gold. It's all blue and gold."

doesn't matter where you put me. I will always see the colors. You will die because you're obsessed with death. You reek of death. This office—death. You have death in your eyes. You have a death ray coming out of your forehead. You must be angry if I can see it. I used to be one of you. That's how I know your disease. You will kill almost everything. Of course, you won't kill me because I know how to deal with human garbage like you."

She turned and looked out the window.

**#34:** He watched a lot of television. He didn't care what was on, he was picking up information. It was all re-con. Every hour that he watched, the more he knew about them, about how they worked—their patterns. The more he knew, the easier it was going to be to take action when it was time. He was on a mission that was classified. Protocol demanded that all details of the operation be kept out of general circulation. This was, after all, a matter of national security.

At work, all his fellow employees thought that he was crazy, but they liked him because they knew that it wasn't every day that a top agent used a dish packing company as a cover. This was fine with him. He used this to work inside without raising his profile. Easier to get into their lives and see how they ticked. The more information, the better.

Back at the house, he watched the television nonstop. He had the notebook open and took notes furiously. The woman in the shampoo ad would scratch her ear the same way every time. In fact, her movements and speech patterns were so precise that he could swear it was the same ad every time. He made a note to get all possible information on life-like robots. That was another thing he knew about her—about them all.

"They lack any kind of style, definitely a cult of personality. It's easy to see that they are used to lying and getting lied to. In fact, from my estimation, they use lies as their primary means to exchange information. When dealing with them, use lies to befriend them. Employ the truth to confuse and debilitate them... must get more information."

Years went by. People at work would ask, "How's the mission going Larry?" He would tell them that he knew of no such mission, that even if he did have any knowledge of any so-called mission, that he wouldn't be at liberty to disclose the details of such a mission, even if it did exist. The piles of notebooks grew higher.

He found a new and fantastic place to pick up information, the library. They were always whispering in there. They must be exchanging secret lies. He would go into the library and pretend to look through the books. He even went as far as to get himself a library card. Every once in awhile, he would take out books to make them think that he was a fan of literature. He usually selected books that he had already read so he would be able to answer questions in case the librarian attempted to spot quiz him. Keeping all the bases covered is a principle detail in top security work. You have to be sharp and at your best at all times.

**#35:** The guy turned on his barstool and faced him. He told him that in no uncertain terms, he could kick his ass one-handed. The two of them went outside. The man who made the boast took out a handgun and shot the other man in the chest twice.

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#36: They were on the couch watching television. He had his arm draped over her shoulder. They watched a program about a group of young lawyers full of compassion and human values battle for the rights of society's underprivileged. A young man had been accused of raping a woman. He was in court now, trying to plead his case. The girl on the couch said, "He's guilty."

He asked her how she knew, thinking that perhaps she had already seen this episode.

"I know he did it, a woman can always tell. We know how men are. Yes, he definitely did it."

He looked at her

"What a load. I know how women are. They say that they want it but if they don't like it or they get pregnant, they yell rape, and the guy goes to jail. It's a pile of shit, I think. If they didn't want me coming up and trying to get next to them, then why do they wear the clothes that they do? It's a messed up game if you ask me. Women have men by the balls and sometimes the weaker of them lose control after getting their dicks teased through the roof."

She looked back at him like he had just dumped a bucket of llama shit on her head and asked for a dollar.

"You think it's ok for some guy to do what he wants to a woman? That the clothes she wears are an invitation for gratuitous sex? If that's your attitude, I'm leaving right now. Men are pigs!"

"No!" he shot back. "That's not what I meant at all. I don't think some guy can do what he wants to a woman. Come on, what do I look like? Damn."

"Ok," she said, "I know what you mean about the teasing thing. I hate to say this, but me and my friends used to do it when we were younger and not as classy as we are now. We used to get guys all hot and bothered and see how far we could go before it got too heavy, and then we would leave. It was fun for awhile but I can see how it would drive a man wild."

He reached down and cupped her breast. She looked at him and smiled. He kissed her and worked his hand into her shirt. He got his hand into her bra and outlined her nipple with his finger. With his other hand he went up her skirt. He had his hand in her panties now and was running it through her pubic hair. She slowly removed his hand from her shirt and held it. She took his index finger into her mouth and ran her tongue around its tip and looked into his eyes. She took her other hand and placed it on the bulge in his pants. A commercial came on. An ad for milk.

A beautiful girl drank a glass of milk, licked her lips and said, "Ummm, yummy."

The beautiful girl smiled and the ad went off. She squeezed the bulge and said, "Ummm, yummy."

She started unbuttoning his shirt, kissing the places where the buttons had been. She dug her tongue into his navel as she undid his belt. She pulled his cock out and started talking to it.

"Hello handsome, you look so good I could eat you like candy. I bet you taste so good. You're so big and strong. What's a poor girl to do? I can't control myself!"

He could feel her breath on his cock. She looked up at him and smiled. He closed his eyes and let out a long sigh. This was going to be great. She gave his cock a slight tug and laughed as she got up.

"That's the kind of stuff that we used to do. God, weren't we mean? Those poor guys must have

hated our guts! Well look, I've got to go. Me and the girls are going to go down and see that new J Cole film. Have you ever seen him? He is so hot. All my friends want to rip his clothes off! If any of them call here looking for me, tell them I am on my way. Bye!"

**#37:** It was a Thursday night. He went into the 7-Eleven to get some coffee. He got his cup and put cream in it. He stood behind this Filipino looking guy who was pouring himself a cup. He checked the guy out, he had an earring. "What a fag," he thought to himself. The guy moved so he could get to the coffee. He was reaching for the pot, but the guy stopped again to get one of those stirrer things. The nerve of this guy, he thought to himself. Like he had all the time in the world.

"Hey come on, let's go," he said to the guy.

The guy turned around and stared right through him like he wasn't there and slowly moved to the cash register. Our boy reached for the pot and found it empty. The Filipino guy turned around and gave him a winning smile as he walked out the door.

He didn't feel like waiting for the next pot to be made and he was mad too, so he decided to leave. He walked past a VW and saw a cup of coffee sitting on its roof. He figured it must be that asshole's car. Someone tapped him on the shoulder. He turned and got punched squarely in the mouth. It was the Filipino. His friend was there too. Before he knew what was going on, he was hit again. He tried to back up and was leveled by a kick to the head. The guy's friend was roaring with laughter.

"How you like that, John Wayne?" he said as he laughed his ass off.

Our boy got up and was met by another fist to the face. He felt teeth break.

He thought to himself, "I'm getting my ass kicked in the parking lot of a 7-11 for nothing. Fuck bullshit. Oh Christ."

The Filipino looking guy merrily punched the shit out of our boy until he vomited and passed out in the parking lot—another night.

**#38:** He wasn't stupid. He didn't get off the truck yesterday. He saw all things, perhaps more clearly than you might think. He used to do the "angry young man" thing when he was younger, but he was no longer young and he felt no need to play that shit. He went up to the roof of his apartment and threw himself off. Like I said, he wasn't born yesterday. He knew full well that he was not a bird. He knew that he would fall like a stone and splatter on the ground. He knew all this.

**#39:** I walk the straight lines. I walk through the summer nights. I walk the silver rope of dreams. I walk through dawns of dawns. There's not a lot that isn't dying. I see people parading in front of each other like insects in a killing jar, watching each other die. I walk the straight lines through the Christmas machines. Through the eyes of the throwaway people. Through the wards and the shores and the cracks in the skulls of the sidewalks. Through love's howling vacancy. I am the freedom soil. I dig my own grave. I resurrect myself every night. I am all things to myself. I walk the straight lines. I walk through the spider's jailhouse. I walk the think line, the thin line, the white line and all the lines in between. I walk

I could trade in my eyes.

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**#40:** It was near two in the morning. The old man was crossing Sunset Blvd. His name was Cedric and he drank wine. Earlier that evening, he had offered to park a car for a yuppie couple on their way into a restaurant. The yuppie male wanted to punch good old Cedric's lights out for even talking to him. The yuppie female cooled him out. The male gave Cedric a five dollar bill to show her how he was in control of his macho shithead emotions he was. He would use this as a bargaining ploy to get up her skirt later on that night. She knew it and thought that it was a cute gesture. Just so you know, it worked.

Anyway, good old Cedric was crossing the street and a car turning left crossed in front of him. Cedric noticed that the car's lights were off and he yelled at the driver to turn his lights on, he could cause an accident. Cedric was very observant about things like this. At that moment, a young boy popped up in the back seat. He couldn't have been more than fifteen years old. The boy fired two .25 slugs into Cedric's stomach. Cedric folded silently onto the intersection of Sunset and Maltman. The car drove off. Just be glad it wasn't you. Now shut the fuck up and watch some MTV.

**#41:** He was my hero so I watched him closely. Yeah, he said all the things that I wished I had said. The things I wished I had the guts to say. I knew it was all the truth, but damn. I couldn't just come out and say it like he did. He was driven by hate, he was absolutely fueled by hatred. I liked to hear them try to turn him around. They would come on with all this soft sell crap. He would just flatten them with his resolve. Their rose-colored glasses cracked right into their eyes. They would try to run guilt trips on him, telling him what his problem was. What did they know? They never even left the houses. I would never say a word one way or the other. I just watched and listened. It was great to see all their bullshit fall to the ground in front of him. He wasn't going to go their way. I didn't always agree with him. Some of the things he said were too extreme for me, but I liked knowing that he was around. Yeah, he made no bones about how he felt. It's not the kind of language I like to use, but the best way to put it was, he didn't give a fuck about what they thought and what they thought about him. I wish I could say that. I still think of him.

**#42:** They were parked in the lot in front of the Frontier Market. It was Friday night and this was the second time they had gone out. The first time was a few nights ago and she had reckoned that he was an ok guy and that was it. She hadn't thought about him at all until he had called her again tonight and asked her if she wanted to go hang out. She had said yes. So there they were parked in the lot and she was getting ready to give him the rap to cool him out because she didn't want to get into the shit with this guy. She didn't want to get into it with anyone in a parking lot. They sat there. Finally, she asked him what the fuck they were doing. He told her that they were hanging out.

From the outside it looked like they were waiting for something. Looking straight out the window without expression. Hell, maybe they were waiting for death. That shit happens. People get it into their heads that it's time to check out and they buddy up and do it together in a car. Happens at shopping malls all the time. You think I'm kidding you? Slap your mother if you think I'm kidding.

Right. She gets all uptight because it occurs to her that her time is getting wasted here. She tells him to take her home, she doesn't have time for this shit. The guy starts to freak out. Tells her that he really wants to talk to her. She asks him what he wants to talk about. He looks out the window. He doesn't know, he just wants to talk, to make contact. When was the last time you wanted to say it all to the right person? To have it all come out right, to surprise yourself at how together you could be. When was the last time you ever met someone who made you want to give it all to them? I mean give yourself to them, where you couldn't express yourself enough—like you wanted to cut off one of your arms to be understood. That's it—you would cut your head off to have someone understand you. You know how pointless that one is. You know how many times you've smashed yourself to bits on the rocks.

Did you hear about the man who met the wonderful girl? She kissed him and he felt alive again. Yeah, he was burned out on women. Burned out on any kind of dealings with humans. They made him sick. He had become so cynical over the last few years that he had it in his mind that he would never meet anyone who could ever matter to him. Do you know what happened to that guy? He met this girl and she made him see that he was wrong. After he spent a short time with her, he felt all those old feelings come back. She brought him back to life. But anyway, back to these two in the parking lot.

The guy is sweating now because he wants to tell her everything—whatever that is. A man walks over to the car.

“Do one of you have a light?”

They both reply no. The man takes out a pistol and shoots them in the face and legs. He runs out the parking lot, onto Hollywood Blvd. and disappears.

Have you ever been in love? I mean real love. Love where you forget everything and make an idiot out of yourself and not care? Do you have an idea of what the inside of that car looked like after the guy ripped up those two? A lot of blood. A lot of hair on the back seat. California sucks. Someone should just drop a bomb on the place and give it back to the roaches. Before I fuck your mother, I'm going to break her arm.

**#43:** He sat at the end of the bar alone and listened to the traffic outside.

*What a bunch of animals out there... shit. You have to get loaded to have the guts to make the way home, the way these people act these days.*

How many drinks had he already had? On a night like this he didn't count. The guy behind the bar had the radio turned to some shitty station where all the music sounded like you were days away from dying. You know that dead music that comes on. You can't believe anyone could make music like that, let alone listen to it.

His mind wandered as it always did, to all the things that he had tried to do over the years and fucked up. He had great capacity for regret and self-pity. He had no idea that he was like a lot of people. He had been told before that he was pathetic for the way he dragged himself down. Women would give him a lot of shit, telling him to just get up and “be a man.” When he heard things like that he would straighten up for a time. Some woman telling him to be a man, right. Like a woman could know anything about being a man. What a crock of shit. Someone should have told him that everybody



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