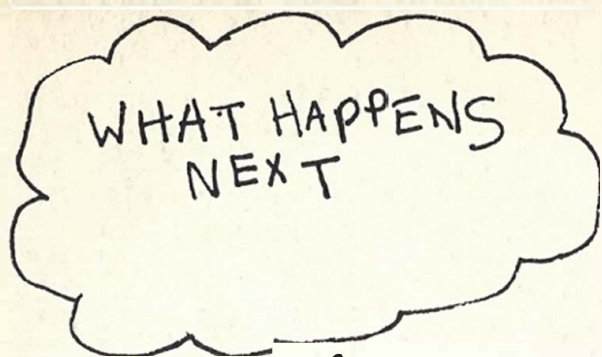






WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

P. INMAN

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Ex-Lover.

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LIFE WITH RIMBAUD

- 1) The mouth commits suicide by saying "Rimbaud" until it falls off. A deep plot takes shape at the breakfast table. A cup full of slums, moon that you squeeze like a pimple... Those who know you are predicting death. You audition for the part anyway.
- 2) There are lice in the thin layers of your breath. At night next to R.'s inert body you breathe in swarms of them. Holes of light appear in the dark... R.'s cunt of moronic air, feathers. Wounds stuffed with IOU's. R. wiping his ass off with your rent, smirking & smelling up your life with cheap toothpaste. You threaten to never come back. It is pointless. As soon as you leave blood starts spilling all over the coffee.
- 3) He holds your bruises in a canvas bag. He cuts his face out of it & wears it as a disguise. Fur in his eyes. No one guesses he is you... In another century you eat the rust off of knives & inertia, cloudy with lust, swims out & shatters the city's mannequins.

THOSE THINGS WE ALL LOVE TO REMEMBER

It began. I fucked your voice, that famous bubble.

I fucked your necklace or roaches, one for each day of the week & then the lovely faces of saints painted on their backs. I fucked your criminal record.

One day I was famous, the next I was nothing. A decimal in the mouth of a giant subway system. There is a story here. Did I say it was frightening? By now you know enough to tell when I'm joking.

I fucked your lousy carton of grapefruit juice in the refrigerator.

I fucked the crowd of Catholics in the mirror, right-hand corner where I crossed my arms & looked like a scarecrow with windows in it... Rumors, your claws, your ash of the perfect life.

I fucked your body, loaf of monastery bread.

We cut poems out of each other's hands. Those were weird rooms of light we lived in, I'm beginning to remember, counting the compartments that would show up toward the closing of the century, that huge sale of nations, crumbling & sliding off into the sea... The century was bound to be some kind of event, sore kidneys & all. In our latest bit of collective poetry the rooms were imagined to be beads of light, bar-

bituates you wore around your neck to keep the scorpions away.

It was morning. I turned over & fucked a discarded orange rind. The come mingled with the lipstick message you'd left on the outside of the rind. Your name, signature bled its own obsessive, tiny light.

The morning was cheerful, almost suburban as I stepped outside. New York was so lovely that day it had to be a forgery. I stared at all the ads with birds in them & watched the birds explode.

I fucked whenever the name of Garcia Lorca appeared.

Sometimes I fucked hopelessly. Other times it was like a kind of meditation where one by one the rooms' lights blinked off, where the alphabet of our common civilization nodded off into a void of textbook ink & orange rinds.

There was a scale of 1-to-6. Somewhere all of us fit in. If not our actual names (some of which were too long) then at least the idea of them. The chart was still on the wall next to the peeling Salvador Dali. The limp clock in particular, scarred with your various "experiments".

I look up at the photograph of 1-to-6 of you in your cardboard hats & graduation gowns hiding the various & inevitable goods. Your eyes are glassy,

metaphysical. You are wearing your Hopi beads from Taos. Your smile isnt for me. You've forgotten the details. Who. So far, examining the picture, the only one you've managed to eliminate is yourself.

Sometimes I fucked in a crowd. Other times these marginal notes seemed hardly necessary.

I closed my eyes & the blue ink inside the lids was electric with static. There was a fuzzy connection of old coffee in my head. My bladder ached.

That was when I liked to begin fucking.

I grew a beard.

I went to the beach, watched a beautiful Adonis drown & snickered into my Coca-Cola.

(Page 200. Julio Cortazar, either "62" or "Hopscotch". Because I need a sense of smell here & C. is very good at smell & hands.

Am I getting too autobiographical?)

I joined up with the rock band in Boston.

I fucked the beautiful voice in your bladder. The beautiful piss in your voice. Amber light on the edges of the mirror.

The absent chord of my genitals.

I fucked your sad days at graduate
school. Your guilt trip.

I made a list, but it's still in pre-
paration.

I got married, lived on the Island
& forgot about you.

3:11

It is 3:11 AM. Light draws me
to the refrigerator. The refrigerator
is alive with birds & numbers that
grind at my teeth or polish
them, I've forgotten to tell
the difference this time. The
electric clock throbs. An effigy
of my former self, this impossible
inertia of bones & lettuce... I've
gotten my nausea & an earache confused.
Wife, you were going to say something
but you left several years ago...
I sit down. Mirrors are the smooth
deathwishes of a face at 3:11
in the morning... I dont

think any more, just grow
buttons in my eyes. I must be
something's consolation prize.
That's the only answer.

LAST MINUTE SPEECH

Speech is like surgery when I
telephone myself into your hair.
A thread ties me to my shadow
your ears fill up with the embers
but dont burn, remain dyed-on
to accept another sentence, then
another. As when you accuse me
of always saying "again" &
you dont realize that a mountain
of ash is building irrevocably...
but this isnt what I was saying.
I was talking (lisp) about the way
the wires crisscrossed, the screen
they made about my face. It was
your hair flowing out of the telephone
booth & into the electric chair.
The mystery is all these periods.

ZEROES

There are no voices left in her shirt.
She thinks: "The moon will go stale
over 98th Street & I dream my dream of
lesbians." The moon goes neuter. The blood
moves quietly between the rocks she's
managed to memorize. No omens. No more
pelts. No more burnt dreams. All the
telephones out of here have lost their
place.

I must be wearing handcuffs the silence
is ringing so clearly inside my hair.

POEM

Maps grow under your hair.
Something smokes
my chest & its blue traffic.
It snows there &
in your thighs it dreams.

My footprints lose themselves.
My hands grow stranger every day...
On your right breast the moon
shudders in its flat sky.

COLLEGE LIFE

The searchlights are televised into our faces.
Their glare is an empty face but bright with
an invisible dawn, jammed with sick metropolitan
anger. Jammed with fires they're lighting
in Laos, Peru. In your closed mouth. &
then at midnight there is the calm music of stars
they shine like a flashlight up your asshole
mapping out what you've already told them.

Somewhere along the line you lose (they take)
your mouth or at least its contents & now
there are all these words you will never be
rid of. Flames of milk stream out of your
apartment window. You are about to be quarantined
& then the universities will certainly go on
forever without you & the legend you've been
preparing all these years will die abruptly.

They have the newest devices aimed at our
dreams. But dont worry Kyoko
your face will be on every postage stamp in
the asylum.

COLLEGE LIFE (2)

Urine swells the professors' mouths
to almost life-size. Their dark looks
enchant powerful governments. Their lives
cave-in whole floors of other lives.

They sit & listen to their fingernails grow.

THE INDIAN IN US

We eat fat.
It will make us Indian.
Ice grows at our backs like a wound
then snaps shut over our faces.
Through the scar we see
a rope of severed hands & ice
leave the sky. Nothing
is injured but our sleep.
Our necklaces ache.

We are both formal &
irregular totems. Light shines
at the bottom of the mud at our feet.
We package the mud, then fold
our skin over it. Now we have
bodies. Now we are tents.
Now we are pregnant with Earth's
soft fucking of hands, whispers.

(Make) a film of all
the torn letters we have thought
up or written. Their pieces meet
in our sleeves.

New letters. Communism.

We sleep but the pods
continue to explode inside
our eyes.

POEM

The murdered beaches are taped to
your skin. There is smooth
electricity there. Legends
loud as bone that husbands feed
their banknotes to like data.
In your hands a long nerve grows.
It is a nerve of light, of
blind hair.

You continue carrying your suit-
case full of squares anyway,
because they have told you to.

A VISIT WITH RILKE

Two hundred years of Chinese poetry
are rotting on the table
& no one even cares. They're
too busy roping their hair together &
dancing, their arms like vine
forever reaching for the ceiling.
I can feel their crimes
accumulating inside my chest.
Their lights burn like stale zodiacs.
The air glows.
A hole drills itself through
the roof of my head & the stars
pour into me like cereal.

Rilke, sitting in a bath full
of roses says: "What can I
do for you, prick?"

RILKE CONTINUED

Rilke sits in a bathtub full of roses
& says: "What can I do for you, prick?"

Rilke would very much like to have this dance.
His hands throb with bad jokes.
He plays the evil monk with his eyes.
There are carnations growing
out of the cracks in his shirt,
it is understood that he will hitch
across the country with stars attached to his back
& pull everything inside out.
Rilke says: "No more secrets in America.
Everything will be decided away at dawn."

Rilke does not like the way
the doors have minds of their own.
He does not like the way his hands are doors
with the keys cut out of them.
His crotch releases thousands of captive words
into the fixed galaxies of your silence
& you sit there stabbing the shadows
like clockwork. He hands you his ribs,
the soft coin of his stomach.
You faint.

Outside the snow is trite.
It glues our lips together,
sews messages into our sleeves.
Our arms get heavier & heavier.
We have decided to leave.

Rilke observes the jaded horizon,
squeezes the Catholic mud out of his thighs.
With his teeth hurting so bad
it is his way of giving us advice.
They (the teeth) are black piano keys
& later his eyes turn into glands,
technical moons.
His campaign promises are repeated on tape:
"wipe your ass on this checkbook",
"total dope eclipse", "grobe",
"stupid fingers".
The voice sounds like the end &
does not end.

Shove a sonnet up your ass.
Faint tinge of bone-irony,
maps of stale sex turn to ash.

It is difficult speaking
with all the smoke on my lips.
Rilke, we salute you.

GOODBYE TO ALL THAT
(for Susan)

Breasts are dawn when you dont
want to lose the racket of
fingerprints on the window
looking out onto your wonderful
downtown job at the factory.
Some future vista is thinking its way
out of your "necessity" right
now. It is wearing your lover's name
but "he" is its disguise. "i"
will expropriate the rest &
"you" will move into that sleep
on the other side of the door.
Metamorphosis. Dots swim in
the colored amulet of tomorrow.
You will listen & like it.
It is all predestined. You think
it up long ago. The sky
will be neutral. Part of a forgettable
past. You will freak beautifully,
like a somersault I later
make into apostrophes to quote
you with.

YOU FIRST

Gray grain of the dark that I take
like a tablet, my hands have gone mad.
Like Lear I've already lost the stairs
back down to the laundromat. It is
hard having the doors aimed at my back,
the wet letters in my eyes blinking out
one by one. It is Monday. & the corners
have been cut out of the bedroom. I
stare out through the holes & monitor
the technically obscene sky. I plug
my hair into the tape deck & repeat the
sentences the headphones pour into my
groin.

What I want die of is an operating
table not the bullet they sank into
Lorca's chest. But these hands... Mud
or mustard all over my face... There's
a strange hotel in my wrist. Now it's
knocking at the door.

AFTER TOO MUCH POETRY

the ankles burn in a slow daze. The hair
deepens into its most elegant trance.
Eskimos fuck & eat the words out of
your eyelids. Your thighs puke out the cold
stars your mother kept in her nipples.

When you leave you leave no fingerprints.
They've all been removed with a spoon
made out of Susan's thigh bones...
When you re-enter you're like a man
trapped all his life in mirrors. Ecstatic,
drawn to whatever available space.

POEM OF YOUR LIFE

You dream mouths. The knives are
going insane with insomnia, the old
gestures grow black as caked blood
beneath your fingernails.

The mirror's meat begins to decay
before your closed eyes. You dream
your dream of erased cities,
maps of smooth stone. It's serious.

The moths in your crotch swim
out to kiss the dust.

IN MEMORIAM BILL KNOTT

The best Sunday was yesterday which
wasnt Sunday we slit open the tables'
stomachs & listened to the ash there
heroin crushed every verb of you
I handed you the dead cunt/scumbag all
my dollar bills dry roasted freeze dried
non sequitir you & your film-star breast
stuttering like the 60-second vaginal
breath mint that you are
across the glacier more beloved than
the ancient asshole ashtray

Back in the home of the big RETARD
each one of those tongues has a
purple heart pinned to it
Well that relieves us of the job of
putting them where they belong.
They're all dead!

with Mike Sappol.

ODE

You pump blood into the
ocean, scenery into its
crumbling rooms. You enter
your dress like some kind
of ancestor worship. I
need my sleeves back. It
is so cold here that a
star dies like a nun,
or drowns in the coffee all
of us secretly carry around
in our ugly balls.

MORE CODE

Deck of cards in shirt pocket.
December's impotent! On the cash
register lay a bedroom, a pill,
a color: yellow. Yellow rings
my eyes. The color yellow swims
inside my thighs like the color life
swims out the invisible wavelength
of my bootstraps. I manage to
hang on. I end up attached to the
ceiling. Oh no, more code you
say.

"TERROR IS THE ESSENCE OF
ARCHITECTURE" (for Dave)

The small briefcases laid out on
the operating table swell with pain.
It is New Jersey. Heaven aches
with the doors they've cut out of it.
Each day the dossier grows.
I squeeze the traffic out of
all the windows. All the dead notes.
Fish rust in my eyes.

On a clear night you stand
on the bridge & can see
whole continents of businessmen
crumbling into the sea.
Whole islands of your anger
locked inside these buttons.
The moon boils. I am executed.

You are watching me from within
a dream of exquisite buildings.
It is snowing. Your arms
are growing out of themselves...
In the last window your face
the size of a pimple
looks out & smiles.

ESCAPE OF THE BODY

Susan you will be the poem of an empty
jail, the theory of an absence. I
watch you prepare to take flight
out of yourself. You fold your arms
across your breasts like wings, the death
of a lyric. Your eyes the color of coffee
pretend to be interested in the evening's
small talents but already the machinery's
stalled.

You arent sure whether this is the life
you're leaving or going to repeat.
Chaste as an assassination you forge
another impossible moment. Just before
the final kiss I disappear.

LETTER TO CESAR VALLEJO

They're frying Vallejo's heart in the pan
of my groin. I am public, executioner
& deserted square at once. I dont want to be.
I havent solved my case yet. I'm so full
of numbers I have to move a certain way-
Eastward- & of course it's well known how much
he, Vallejo, hates the East & how this last
betrayal will crucify him if the tenements
havent already done the work. Already, for
instance, he's dead. I have his skull, that
bell that never rings any more. I wear
the beautiful image of his sober hat.
The torture session continues. We all look
in at it through the keyhole of my breath.

MY HISTORY

The sperm on the back of the postage stamp is enough to kill a full-grown Maoist. This scarf full of bacteria could drown God & all his other two-bit assassins. Dont talk to me about insurance, friend.

Isnt it enough to show you the Kabbalah on the head of a toothpick?
Isnt it enough to say where the life was erased, out of which mouth? Here, I give you my most serious handshake. You must think I'm insane, to be so full of holes.

GOING TO WORK

The scissor poised above the head
about to cut another face out of
the morning newspaper, the moment's
hesitation or the name of some city
as irrevocable as last rites, about to
blow smoke off a clock's face.
The numbers pressed between your lips
like the door out into the erased night.
The ticker tape that comes out
slowly from between your thighs.

This day grinds erasers so dependably
& the bedsprings go on creaking
blood. It seems we're all making it inside
the head of an invisible watchworks...
Everything, observed thusly, stands
at attention. I shoot up & go to work.



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Dear Jill.

Life in Charlotte is such a gas. & amusing too. You've no idea- I don't mean to be insulting here- days are spent at the lake or at the club or watching some new, important movie; there are so many sedatives to choose from & none of them cost anything because of father's position at the infirmary... & guess what! Jack & I are expecting a third everything turned gay the bonfires the dark gauze it was too much & then there was the pall of all these weeks together the weeks with the breathless Smokies at our backs & our children the weeks I sad & monastic I tell you, but you don't believe it perhaps why everything everything turned gray the weeks You should have seen his eyes, Jill. But the wounds! They are hard to trace back & then Jack said that it depended on when Gustav came, if he came at all. How positively Beckett. You see first the threads snapped & then the cables, always tenuous, started to sway in the wind. Everyone vomited softly into their paper bags. Suddenly it was the most humiliating thing in the world to be naked...

P. Inman