

MOWING
DEAD
LAWNS
1

by

Ashes Galore

CW:

TALK OF
SUICIDE



INTRO

Me and my sweetheart were waiting to order drinks in the small, peninsular town of Port Townsend, WA when the much older bartender approached us and took our ID's. She lingered over mine, studying my middle name, Pauline. "Pauline... Pauline... Johnny hit and run Pauline!" She watched me for a moment while I caught up to her. X, the band. Their crazed song about, ahem, date rape, *Johnny Hit and Run Paulene*. "Yeah," I said, "X! Exene Cervenka, John Doe. Love them." She beamed, told me about all the X shows she's seen over the years, and we talked about punk staples like Germs, Fear, and Alice Bag for a while. It was a cute little interaction.

I haven't been clocked as punk for a long time. For the most part, I stopped wearing my torn and faded band shirts about ten years ago, cut my "crust dreads" out even earlier, and lasered off my knuckle tats for a job I stopped pursuing long ago. The punk uniform no longer fit my self-image, so I slowly began phasing it out. Sure, I kept the skinny jeans, the Doc Martens, the sparse rough tattoos, but those are the only visual clues of a punk past. Now I have big, hip glasses to correct my vision, black lines of glamour on my eyes, and a closet full of cutesy dresses. I don't look the same anymore.

The change in my appearance is nothing compared to the transition I made from my exciting and wind-swept days as a young train hopper, hitch-hiker, and weed grower, to the confusingly disabled

and solitary life that I live now. This season of life is slower and more introspective than any other before, and that scares me a little. Isn't that supposed to come later? When I'm old? How old is old? I'm in my mid-thirties—that's punk old. Fair enough. If punk is a youth culture, then it by definition delays the onset of adulthood for as long as you fully participate in it. In my experience, it's all or nothing. It's punk rock all the way, or not at all. I never found a balance, so I shrugged off punk and left it for the weekends, for playlists and Saturday shows and boxes of old letters, for my memories.



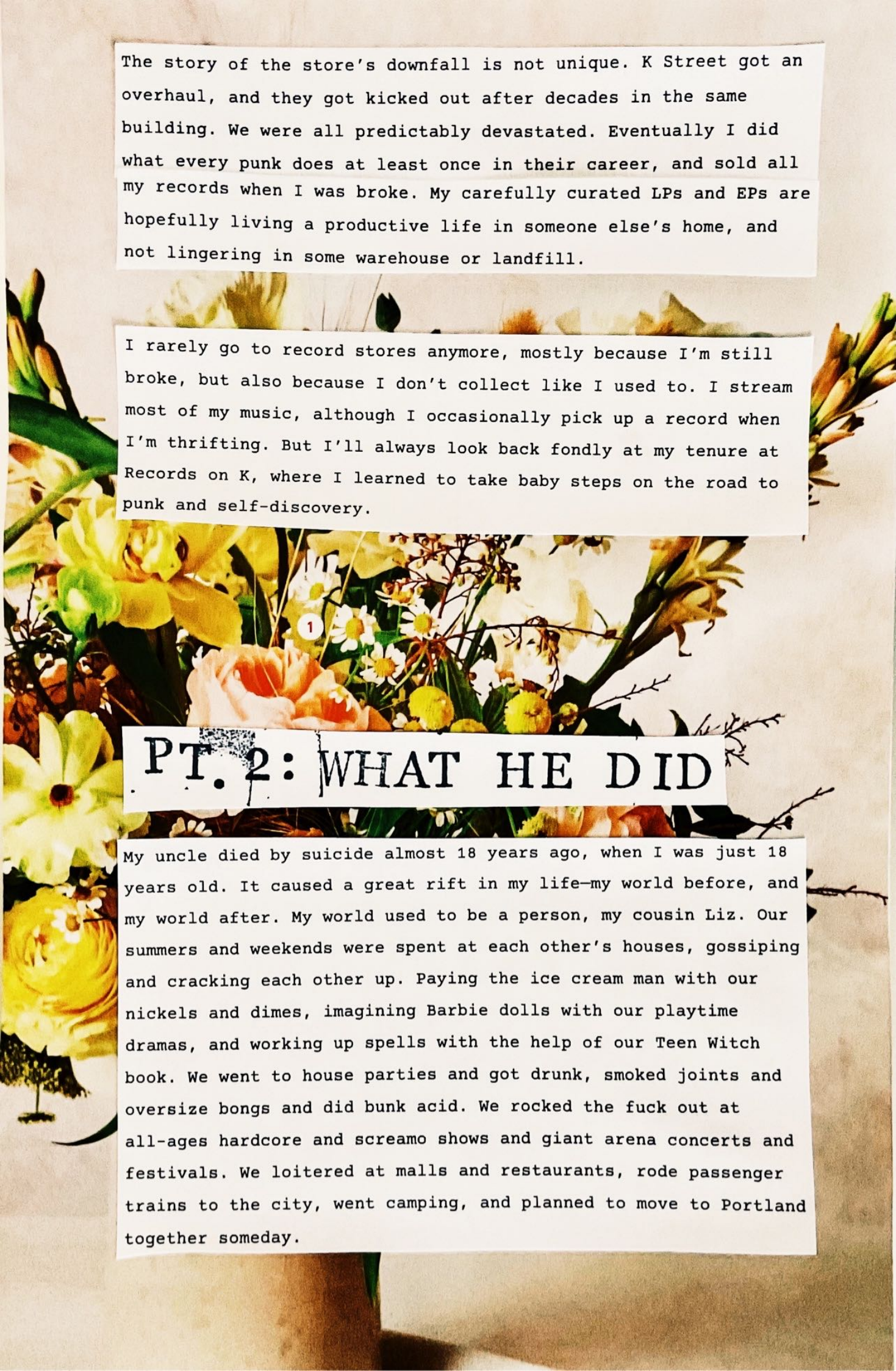
Mowing Dead Lawns is a winding run through my formative punk years, through deaths and adventures. Consider these stories the floss-threaded patches of my youth, sewn with care and sun-faded with time. My hope is that you read my take on punk in good faith, and know that my version of punk is not a prescription for yours. We all live it differently, and this is just my story. Thank you for reading.

Sincerely,
Ashes



pt. 1: RRRECORDSSS

Records on K was my refuge. I'd skip high school a couple of times a week to post up on the floor of the shop while they spun underground sixties psychedelic music. I'd research bands on their slow dial-up behind the counter, talking music for hours as I absorbed the unspoken rules: the nu metal I had previously listened to was garbage, the punk I listened to (Dead Kennedys, Black Flag, Misfits) was pedestrian, and the punk I really needed was French, was Dutch, was lost to time. Names like Hubble Bubble, Ivy Green, Gizmos, The Doll, The Proletariat. I studied punk, goth, and new wave like I was writing a thesis. I was a punk apprentice. I learned early blues, bluegrass, and folk. I learned that real hip-hop and oldies were the only things that I had gotten right, having grown up on the good shit. I collected posters dug up from the basement, which was reserved for insiders and Japanese collectors that would drop thousands at a time. I brought my younger siblings to the shop, hoping to plant the seeds of punk in them, showing them the boys I flirted with, my picture on the wall, my proud knowledge of the esoteric and underground. I loitered so much that customers thought I worked there, and then when I was 18, the owner started giving me shifts, for \$6 an hour, under the table. I sold new copies of ICP records to the black-and-white painted faces of young Juggalos. I filled in the awe-inspired newbies with fun trivia, like how the store logo was made by R. Crumb, or how the basement was haunted. I lived and breathed that music, lived and died by that record store. I even tried to impress my now-partner with the casual reference that he could find me on Mondays slinging records to cool kids downtown.

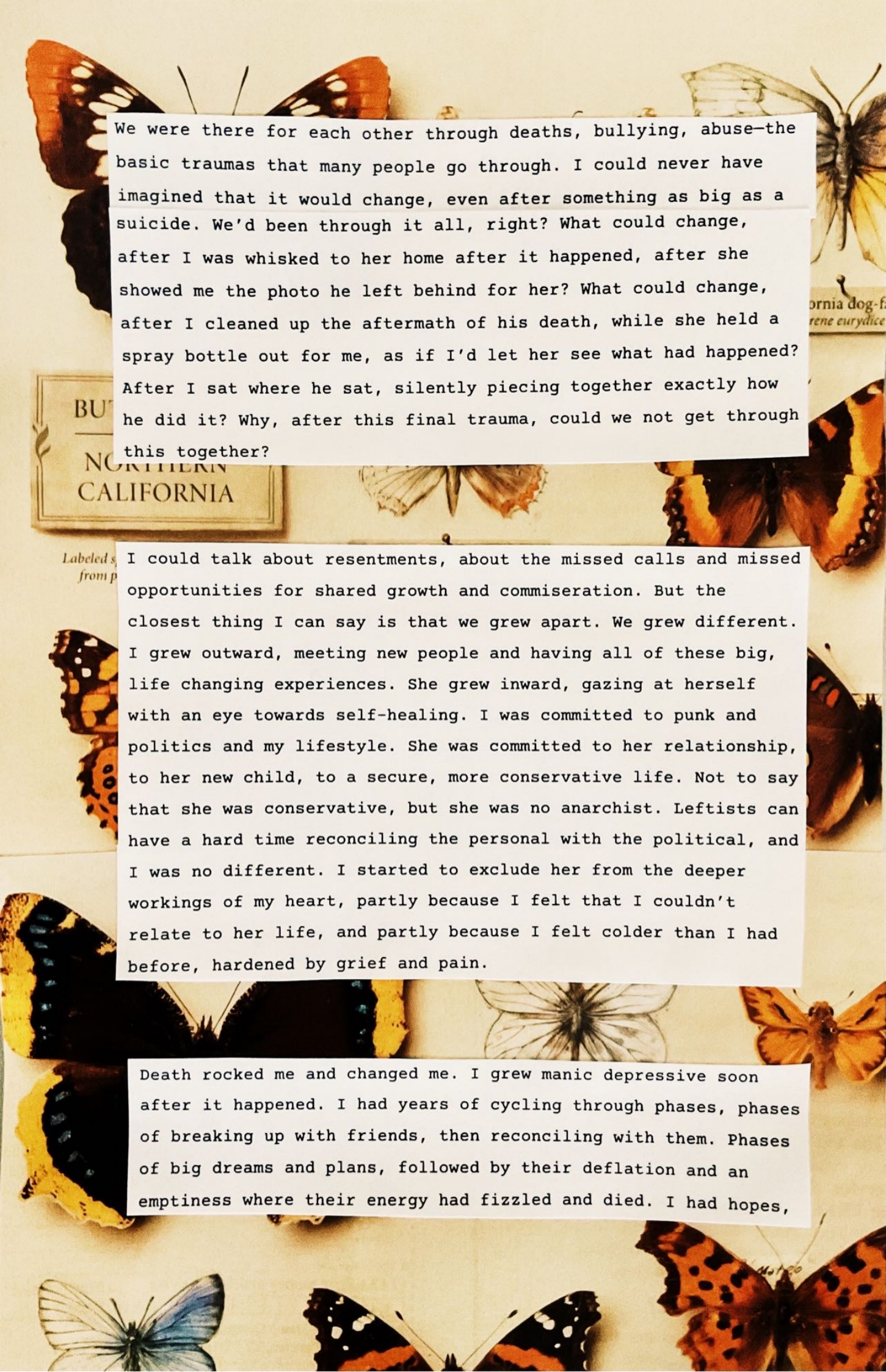


The story of the store's downfall is not unique. K Street got an overhaul, and they got kicked out after decades in the same building. We were all predictably devastated. Eventually I did what every punk does at least once in their career, and sold all my records when I was broke. My carefully curated LPs and EPs are hopefully living a productive life in someone else's home, and not lingering in some warehouse or landfill.

I rarely go to record stores anymore, mostly because I'm still broke, but also because I don't collect like I used to. I stream most of my music, although I occasionally pick up a record when I'm thrifting. But I'll always look back fondly at my tenure at Records on K, where I learned to take baby steps on the road to punk and self-discovery.

PT. 2: WHAT HE DID

My uncle died by suicide almost 18 years ago, when I was just 18 years old. It caused a great rift in my life—my world before, and my world after. My world used to be a person, my cousin Liz. Our summers and weekends were spent at each other's houses, gossiping and cracking each other up. Paying the ice cream man with our nickels and dimes, imagining Barbie dolls with our playtime dramas, and working up spells with the help of our Teen Witch book. We went to house parties and got drunk, smoked joints and oversize bongos and did bunk acid. We rocked the fuck out at all-ages hardcore and screamo shows and giant arena concerts and festivals. We loitered at malls and restaurants, rode passenger trains to the city, went camping, and planned to move to Portland together someday.



We were there for each other through deaths, bullying, abuse—the basic traumas that many people go through. I could never have imagined that it would change, even after something as big as a suicide. We'd been through it all, right? What could change, after I was whisked to her home after it happened, after she showed me the photo he left behind for her? What could change, after I cleaned up the aftermath of his death, while she held a spray bottle out for me, as if I'd let her see what had happened? After I sat where he sat, silently piecing together exactly how he did it? Why, after this final trauma, could we not get through this together?

Labeled s
from p

I could talk about resentments, about the missed calls and missed opportunities for shared growth and commiseration. But the closest thing I can say is that we grew apart. We grew different. I grew outward, meeting new people and having all of these big, life changing experiences. She grew inward, gazing at herself with an eye towards self-healing. I was committed to punk and politics and my lifestyle. She was committed to her relationship, to her new child, to a secure, more conservative life. Not to say that she was conservative, but she was no anarchist. Leftists can have a hard time reconciling the personal with the political, and I was no different. I started to exclude her from the deeper workings of my heart, partly because I felt that I couldn't relate to her life, and partly because I felt colder than I had before, hardened by grief and pain.

Death rocked me and changed me. I grew manic depressive soon after it happened. I had years of cycling through phases, phases of breaking up with friends, then reconciling with them. Phases of big dreams and plans, followed by their deflation and an emptiness where their energy had fizzled and died. I had hopes,

so many hopes, and each time I cycled through them, I lost my sense of capability and self-worth. When I let Liz in, she was there for me, but I still wanted distance. She reminded me of what I lost, my childhood innocence and sense of stability. I used to be solid, now I was wavering and erratic, and triggered by things as brittle as song melodies. She saw me with steady eyes, and I had to look away.



Things are different now. We see each other when we can. I hang out with her children and her husband. We both love coffee shops and music. I make her playlists. We make plans. I apologize for every time I get manic and say the wrong things, such wrong things. She forgives me every time. I get better. She stays the same, constant and strong. We love each other in our respective ways, and it gets easier to heal the things we did to each other.

PT. 3: LOVE & SHOOTS

When I was about 20 I lived at this house in Sacramento that I really loved. It was an old craftsman with a big porch in a "punk" neighborhood. There was this indie kid/hobby bird watcher across the street, and he would earnestly show me drawings of birds he would spot in the neighborhood. Our next door neighbor had been in a couple of legendary punk bands in the nineties, and now was a cook that held these fancy multi-course dinners in his home. He turned me on to Klaus Nomi, for which I am eternally grateful. Another house across the street was infamous for its

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 wild crust shows and housing people with names like Vomit. I had a friend that was poached by those punks to go scamming places like Macy's and resell their stolen merch. She was later kicked out of that same house for getting drunk and smashing a bottle on one of the kids' heads. My contributions to the "scene" were mostly just dumpstered bagels or stolen soy milk from the coffee shop I worked at or changing bike flats. Also, I was apparently known as an obnoxious vegan at the time, because on one occasion, I found a dead rat on our porch with "Animal Liberation Front" written on a note beside it. Funny. Once, a very nice Vietnamese woman who would harvest bamboo shoots from our backyard brought me the typical beer she would exchange for the shoots, and as she walked away she turned around and said, "I love you!". I knew what she meant, and it was very sweet.

Problems

time-independent

We were all just young punks trying to figure ourselves out, and always, always trying to appear tougher and more punk than the next kid. My roommate once did a "cop watch" from the porch with a camcorder, scrambling back inside and closing the curtains once the cops noticed what he was doing. That same roommate once stole a bunch of boxes of soda (soda!) from the nearest Rite Aid, and he made us peel out of the parking lot yelling "go! go! go!" because he actually had no chill when it came to stealing. Mostly, we were piling into vans on the weekends to go to punk and indie shows and endless dance parties around town or getting drunk off of two buck chuck on our lazy days.

mathical

$E \in \mathcal{A}(\mathbb{H})$ - other base dynamics

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then $\begin{pmatrix} u(n) \\ u(n-1) \end{pmatrix} = A^n \begin{pmatrix} u(0) \\ u(1) \end{pmatrix}$

$A \cdot O \rightarrow SL(2, \mathbb{R})$

My time at that house didn't last too long. One of my roommates didn't like me and another roommate, so she pretended that we were all getting evicted (including typing up fake eviction notices and putting them on our doors). Those "in the know" know exactly how I exacted my revenge once I learned the truth, but that's a story for another time. Suffice it to say, I started a new house around the corner from that one, buckled up and banged out my last zine, and the rest is ancient history.

PT. 4: TYLER FOOTE RD

I used to trim and grow weed for a living, back before weed farms had websites and weed shops graced open storefronts with armed guards standing watch. I told most people that I worked on an organic farm, and that was entirely true. I just left out the specifics, because things were still a little bit scary at the time. Recreational weed was still illegal, and cops would still fly helicopters above our heads while we sweated in the sun, and they would raid our neighbors just a mile down the road on starlit nights up on the mountain.

I worked for a percentage of the profits of the crop one year. I would water the beds, carefully pull brown leaves, tie up heavy flower-laden branches, and tend to small clones bought legally at medical clinics in the valley. I would study any bugs I would find on the plants and mix foul-smelling natural pesticides in horse troughs. I woke early with the sun and slept at nightfall. I played plaintive country songs and crooning soul music while I worked, believing that the melodies would boost our yields. I invited my younger sibling to come trim totes full of branches of buds, our fingers getting sticky as we formed big balls of hash

and laughed so loudly my boyfriend could hear us on an adjacent parcel of land.

The culture of the little town that I lived in was so different from where I grew up. I was from a vibrant yet run-down part of Sacramento, where houses were often decrepit, where gangs ruled the blocks, where drugs and violence were commonplace. This new place, this tiny town up the mountain, was home to elven-dressed and squirrel-tailed hippies. These hippies would fly signs that showed a pair of scissors and would get lucrative gigs making \$250 per pound of weed trimmed. They would aggressively vibe my boyfriend for wearing Satanic metal shirts, and would have names like Starlight Compost. We once house-sat for a man that did workshops for men on releasing their "dragon force". The corner store, far from selling 40's and swisher sweets, actually had trimming scissors, organic fertilizers, and hippie foods like maca and cacao nibs. When I asked my employer, the single woman that owned the farm that I lived at and worked on, what sort of protection we had on the land, she looked me dead in the eye and said, "Four charged and strategically-placed crystals buried around the farm." This couldn't be any more different than the block that I was raised on.

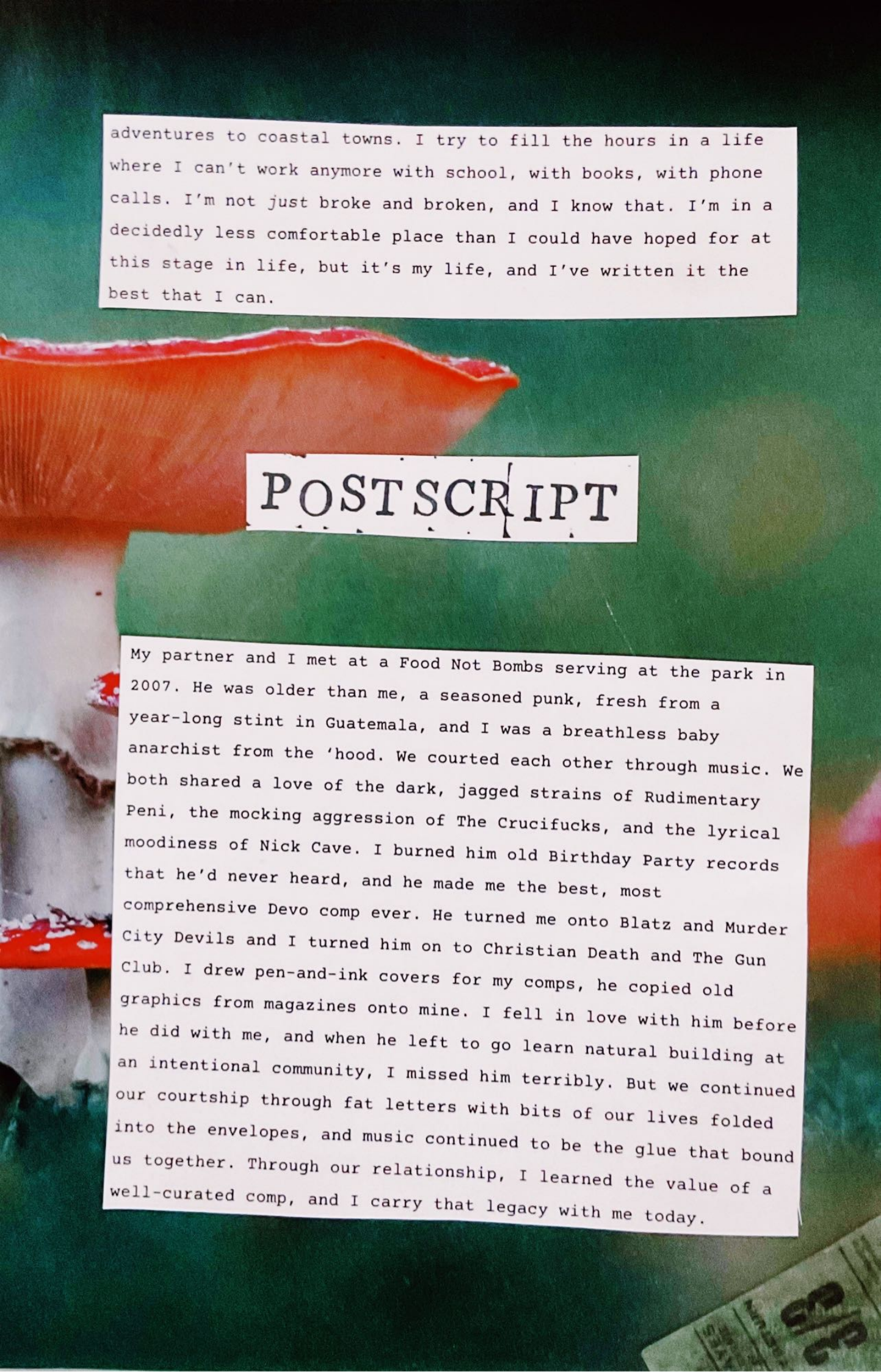
I really enjoyed my time on that farm. The money was easy and so was my life. My days were quiet and relaxed, and I had plenty of downtime for making tortillas, writing letters, making mix cds, journaling, and gardening. I lived with my lover, my future partner, in a tiny one-person RV right by the gardens, and we

took showers outdoors and stargazed and rode scooters around the twisty side roads. It was dreamy.

That job ended because the money started to dry up. Weed was legalizing, and with that, the prices started going down. Most of the farms that survived the integration into the legal economy had a lot more money than any that we worked on. I ended up moving to Portland soon after leaving my farm job, and so began another chapter in my life. I would return every year for a couple more years to trim weed, but the amount I made by the pound went down and down, until eventually it became hourly, and not worth my while. My lover sold the farm that he owned, and joined me in Portland a couple of years later. Now our time on the weed farms is a distant, but sweet, memory.

PT. 5: WHAT ABOUT NOW ?

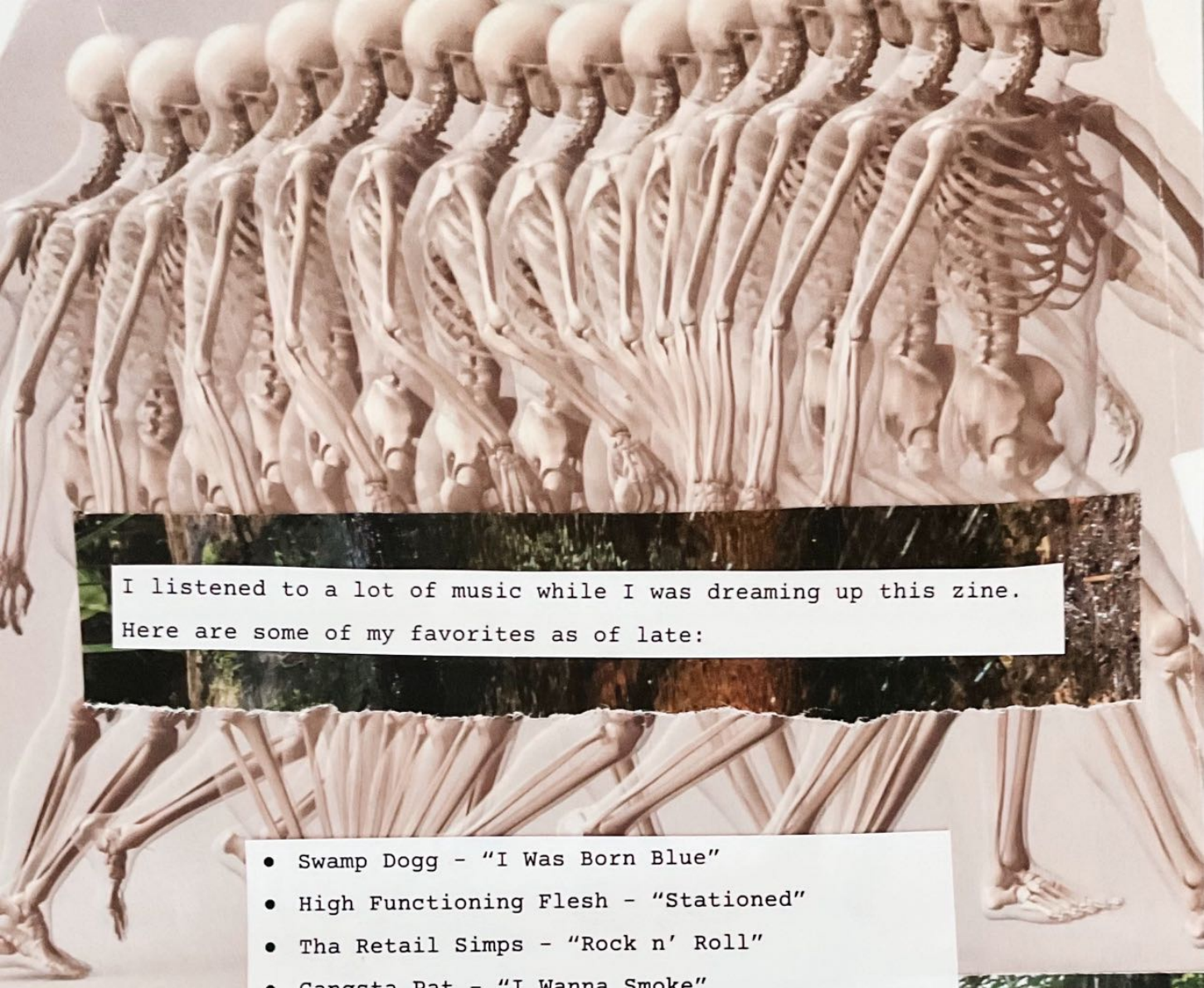
I sometimes self-identify as "broke and broken". A nearly empty bank account and a mysteriously ailing body can temporarily make me forget everything that makes my life good, and certainly worth living. Yet I'm very lucky, and somewhat privileged. I'm well cared for by a loyal and devoted partner who I love and adore. I have a small group of profound friendships with people scattered across the West Coast, and the family I choose to have in my life is close and caring. My gritty and unloved city is actually filled with deep forests and clear waters and gentle giants beneath narrow bridges. I shyly make my way into punk and metal shows. I drink good coffee and eat well. I style my life with thrifted and worn clothes and books and furniture. I go on small



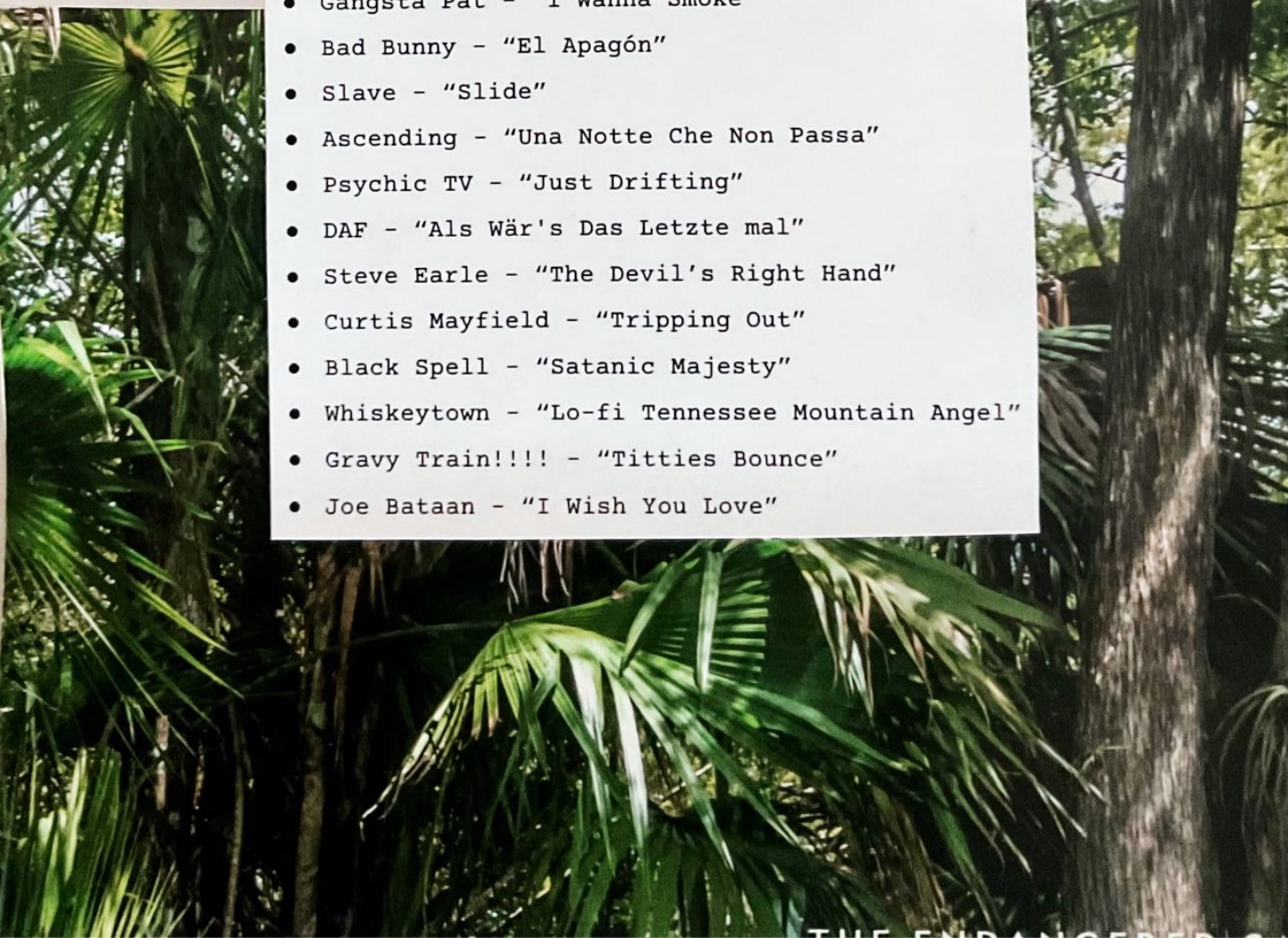
adventures to coastal towns. I try to fill the hours in a life where I can't work anymore with school, with books, with phone calls. I'm not just broke and broken, and I know that. I'm in a decidedly less comfortable place than I could have hoped for at this stage in life, but it's my life, and I've written it the best that I can.

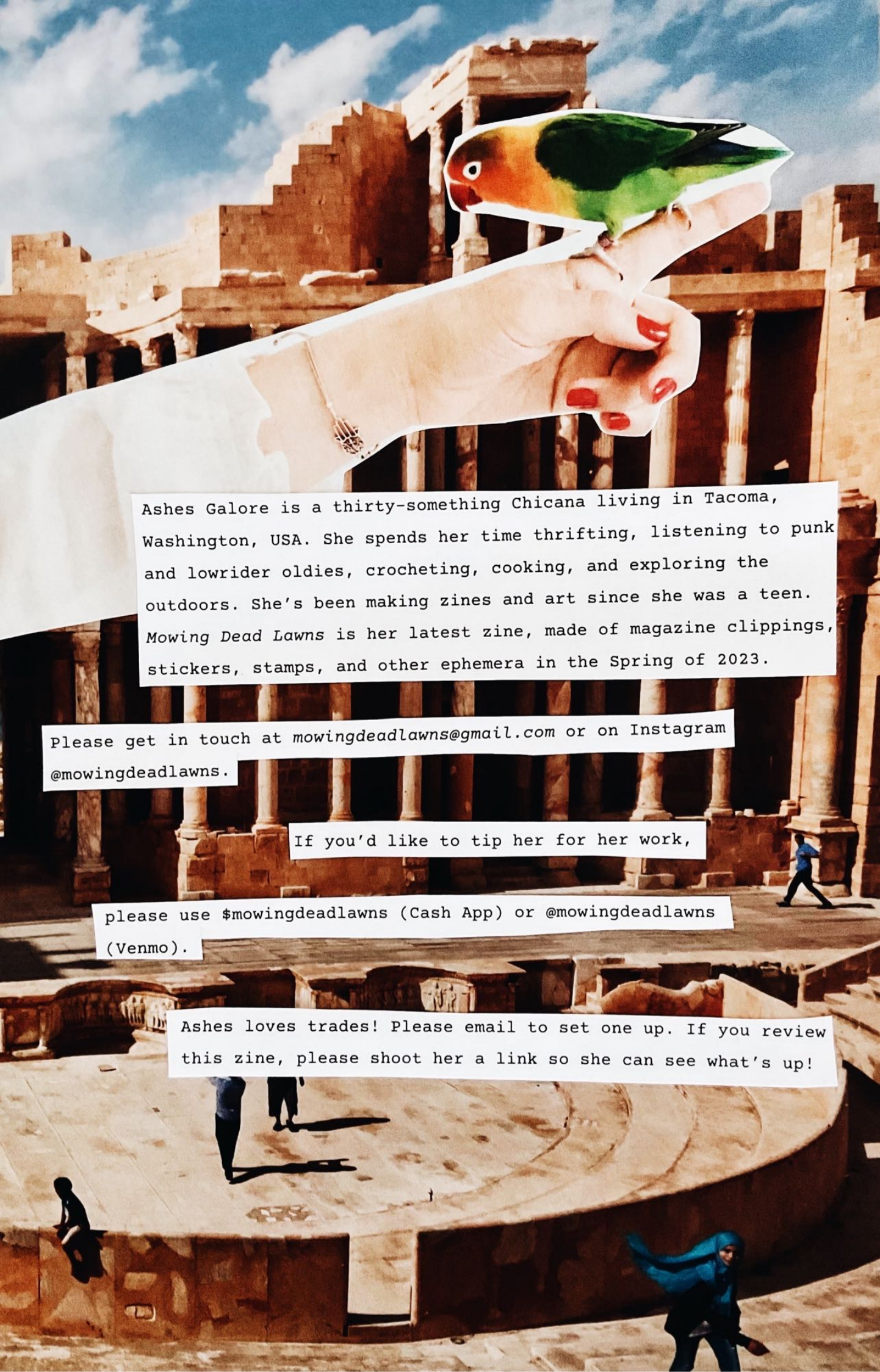
POSTSCRIPT

My partner and I met at a Food Not Bombs serving at the park in 2007. He was older than me, a seasoned punk, fresh from a year-long stint in Guatemala, and I was a breathless baby anarchist from the 'hood. We courted each other through music. We both shared a love of the dark, jagged strains of Rudimentary Peni, the mocking aggression of The Crucifucks, and the lyrical moodiness of Nick Cave. I burned him old Birthday Party records that he'd never heard, and he made me the best, most comprehensive Devo comp ever. He turned me onto Blatz and Murder City Devils and I turned him on to Christian Death and The Gun Club. I drew pen-and-ink covers for my comps, he copied old graphics from magazines onto mine. I fell in love with him before he did with me, and when he left to go learn natural building at an intentional community, I missed him terribly. But we continued our courtship through fat letters with bits of our lives folded into the envelopes, and music continued to be the glue that bound us together. Through our relationship, I learned the value of a well-curated comp, and I carry that legacy with me today.



I listened to a lot of music while I was dreaming up this zine.
Here are some of my favorites as of late:

- Swamp Dogg - "I Was Born Blue"
 - High Functioning Flesh - "Stationed"
 - Tha Retail Simps - "Rock n' Roll"
 - Gangsta Pat - "I Wanna Smoke"
 - Bad Bunny - "El Apagón"
 - Slave - "Slide"
 - Ascending - "Una Notte Che Non Passa"
 - Psychic TV - "Just Drifting"
 - DAF - "Als Wäre's Das Letzte mal"
 - Steve Earle - "The Devil's Right Hand"
 - Curtis Mayfield - "Tripping Out"
 - Black Spell - "Satanic Majesty"
 - Whiskeytown - "Lo-fi Tennessee Mountain Angel"
 - Gravy Train!!!! - "Titties Bounce"
 - Joe Bataan - "I Wish You Love"
- 

A hand with red-painted nails holds a vibrant parrot with green, yellow, and orange feathers. The background is a large, ancient stone structure with many columns, possibly a temple or palace, under a blue sky with white clouds. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Ashes Galore is a thirty-something Chicana living in Tacoma, Washington, USA. She spends her time thrifting, listening to punk and lowrider oldies, crocheting, cooking, and exploring the outdoors. She's been making zines and art since she was a teen. *Mowing Dead Lawns* is her latest zine, made of magazine clippings, stickers, stamps, and other ephemera in the Spring of 2023.

Please get in touch at mowingdeadlawns@gmail.com or on Instagram [@mowingdeadlawns](https://www.instagram.com/mowingdeadlawns).

If you'd like to tip her for her work,

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Ashes loves trades! Please email to set one up. If you review this zine, please shoot her a link so she can see what's up!