



Nochita

Dia Felix



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City

Lights



CITY LIGHTS

SisterSpit

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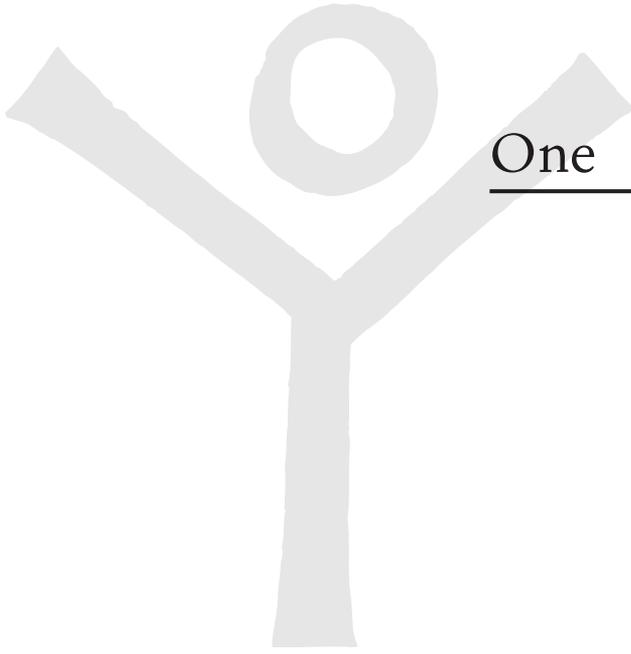
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One

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Awake

WIG PIG EGG RAINBOW scatter dog! Tongue eye jacket of feathers. Raisin morsel drawer open mouth fringe cup palm of grease. Only once has it happened totally totally. I knew I was dreaming because I was in a drugstore kind of like the actual family-owned, dusty-shelved drugstore called Cornette's in our neighborhood, but it wasn't Cornette's and every time I looked away and then looked back the stuff on the shelves had changed. At first there were piles of scarves, then when I looked again they had become shelves full of motorcycle helmets and bowls and then there were bottles of weird lotions and hair stuff and I said *Aha, I know what's going on here, I've been trained!*

So I took control. I magicked myself into a boat. I sailed under a stony gray bridge, and friendly nudging dolphins appeared beside me wearing shiny, rubbery red vests. Also in the boat was a basket with a tiny furry dog in it, smaller than my hand. And there was a lady passing us on a water-bicycle contraption, and I asked her to take off her wig and she did and she was perfectly bald! Then I asked her to take off her clothes and she *did*, and her breasts were lemons! I wanted to be underwater, and next thing I know I'm down there, looking through a curtain of seaweed, able to breathe the water in, the water is thick like frosting and cool like the inside walls of a fridge.

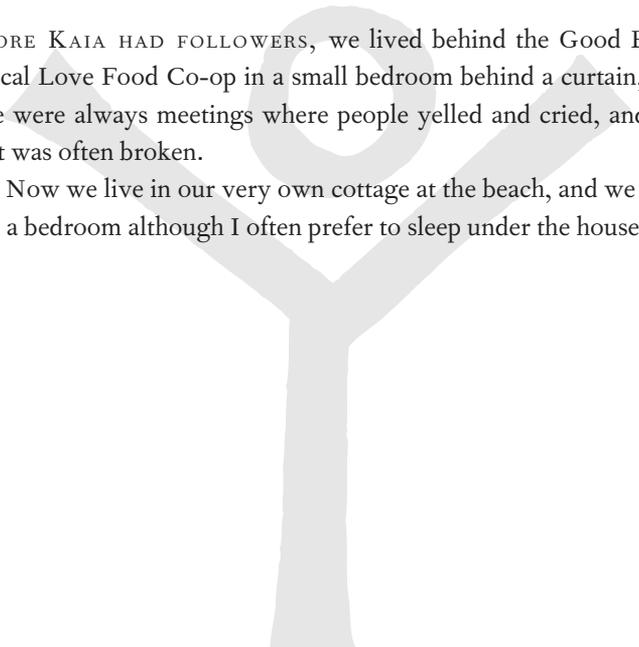
Beautiful, El. Good job. Now, if you can, visualize doing a similar thing, except that you're in everyday waking life. So, you're living life, but you have this knowledge about a world that's more real, a more lucid kind of world. Can you imagine that?

So life becomes a lucid dream?

Does it? I think so. That's illumination, El. That's what we're all after.

BEFORE KAIA HAD FOLLOWERS, we lived behind the Good Earth Radical Love Food Co-op in a small bedroom behind a curtain, and there were always meetings where people yelled and cried, and the toilet was often broken.

Now we live in our very own cottage at the beach, and we each have a bedroom although I often prefer to sleep under the house.



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The Thoughtline

EEEEEP!

Here's a quick tip.

When you're obsessed with all the things that are going wrong, think about the things that are going right.

When you are obsessed with the things that are going wrong, think about softly swaying reeds, shuffling together at dusk.

Every living thing is breathing in its own way. Breathe in your way.

When you are obsessed with how things are going wrong, think about your good body, the infinity of functions performed correctly, wordlessly, striving naturally toward vitality and optimumness, fulfilling its perfect, perfect nature.

When you are obsessed with the things that are going wrong, consider that there is not 'wrong.'

Soften to everything.

WHEN YOU ARE OBSESSED with the things that are going wrong, take a deep three-part breath. Feel the air coming into your bronchial tree, from the silvery tips of the leaves down to the black roots, the kiss of life, the one truth, one life. It is inside you. The beginning of the universe is inside you.

Moment Happening.

Welcome to here.

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By Heart

YESTERDAY AT THE BONFIRE at the beach, wood was burning in a big triangle. There was a man tending the fire and someone said that he had it down to a “fine art.” Why do grown-ups say these things? “Fine art.” And do you know the story “by heart?” You should know your home address “by heart.” I kept thinking of the words “fine art” forever in my mind. The fire clapped up into the sky.

Certain things were trying to push through the flames to appear. Things I saw included: the face of the Wizard of Oz from the movie, an ugly white shoe like a mean nurse would wear, a hand saying *stop*.

I FOLLOWED A STRING of seaweed along the beach, I followed and followed until I was far away from the party, it led me to something. It was a seal on the sand, dead, a dark mound, frozen with melted eyes. On its side. Its bottom tail-thing was breaking apart. I screamed and ran back fast.

A lady said, *What did the creature teach you?* And I said, *It showed me sadness.* I felt my heart being pinched in my chest from the sadness of the poor dead thing. I put my face into a towel, I let the heavy feelings go. In my imagination, the seal swam off happily with its family. There were some other kids there who heard me talking about it and wanted to see the dead seal too. I didn't want to show them. They could find it themselves if they need to see a dead seal so bad. Someone became upset because hot wax had spilled onto her new spiritual drum. Someone gave me a pair of their sweatpants to wear when the sun had set and it was cold, they bagged at my ankles. I was tired so I went to rest in the backseat of Little, our orange VW bug. I wanted to dream of riding on the back of seals as they swam, I asked for that dream, I kissed myself.

My Third Eye Is Metal

TEA IS MADE FROM water that does not boil, but makes an angry sound in the kettle to say that it wants to be removed from the flame. The tea is bright green, sings a green harp song, alien slurp food. Aliens might be real, they might not. You can never know a thing a hundred percent. Some people think they know things but they deceive themselves and they are more limited. Better to just live in mystery. My third eye is a question mark, I feel it coming and going like waves of the ocean. When I slow down I can feel it, the pulsing gray-blue mystery between my eyes like a slow, subtle heartbeat and *so can you*. I can feel my brain whoosh and shine like the purple inside of a giant seashell. When I *feel into it*. Kaia sips her tea from a round green cup with no handle, a big giant pea, she slurps. Sometimes she lets me have a little bit sweetened with maple syrup, it tastes like electricity plus vitamins, she calls it “kid-crack,” and usually I have to beg for it but today I don’t need any. Inside my brain are a million giant slides and everyone alive on the earth of all ages is sliding around on them. My heart is in my throat.

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Church

MY FAVORITE OUTFIT RIGHT now is the American flag bikini with the shiny blue cape. My favorite shoes are red rubber cowboy boots. They are technically rainboots but I can wear them when I want to wear them where I want to wear them. With my heels I shoot out magic forces behind me like water from invisible sprinklers. My cape was once a tablecloth, now it's tied around my neck with a string and some safety pins (I'm careful with those). It's fun because it's so light it has no weight.

Now I'm balancing on a plastic chair on a square of mangy red carpet with fraying edges. Chair, square. What. Balancing on one leg. Small chairs for the smaller people. But standing on it I am tall. Kids have wiped boogers and wads of gum under these chairs, kids have puked recently, I feel it. There is a thick smell in the air that reminds you that a lot is going on here. On the subject of smells, the liquor-store lady told me this morning that I smelled like a toilet but she's a judgmental asshole so forget her.

Balancing steady on the chair still, I am tree-trunk straight, a streak of light, a rock, trying not to fall, although I have fallen a number times and it ain't no big deal. Flexibility. I'm a Superhero, no training, born free. Look under the rock. Look under the carpet. Smells like play doh and nasty pee in here is what. Pee smells like honey a little bit. Nasty kids. Sucking on pennies. Now I will stop thinking about things and investigate things.

UNDER A SHELF IN the deep dusty darkness I find a shiny black paperback book with soft brown pages and I am moving it up to my nose and then pulling it away, making the glossy red mouth on the cover go in and out of focus.

Oh honey, that's a book for grown-ups! A lady in a pleated skirt snaps the book from my hands. I grab the book back from her witchy clamp. But she holds on tight and I hold on tight and the book floats tensely between us.

It's okay, Kaia softly commands to the woman. *She has a very old soul.*

The witch's face softens. We've blown her mind.

KAIA IS BENT OVER, her upside-down face floppy, froggy and very pink. She executes her favorite sequence of postures, a ring of followers do it with her, copying her. They're a ring and she's the diamond in the ring. Circle of silly clown butts, ice cream cones, ears of buttcorn. Ridiculous adults. They close their eyes as they roll their heads around on their necks like it feels so amazingly good. I am a natural animal crawling around, while they have wooden sticks for bones and have to be told what to do. They turn into round eggbabies, roll down a green buttery hill.

Bend over growling like a big mother cat. Root around like a pig. Root, root. A pig has pig nature. A pig obeys only pig law. Breathe tall, breathe wide. Feel your person-nature. Woman-nature. Man-nature. Mothering-nature. Everything about you is right.

THEN SHE PUTS ON the papery white robe with gaping armholes. It makes her look smaller, like a child dressing up in grown-up clothes. People are around her, tending her, she's keeping everyone cool. A coral-colored scarf is wrapped tight around her skull. I don't like that color, it gives me a bad reaction. One neat braid of hair lies against her back like a shining silver fish. One of her followers must've

braided it, since when she braids it herself it's so bad that I make her pull it out. There's a blanket of excitement hanging in the air. A woman with a million teeth pins a stiff lily to Kaia's robe, and then pins a tiny microphone beside the flower, her hands moving like hummingbirds.

Hey, don't upstage me with that flower! Kaia jokes, because the flower really is huge! Especially on her small frame. But it's beautiful, cloud-white with perfect flesh, swirling into itself. Oh, I want ice cream!

Are you ready, teacher? the flower pinner asks.

Kaia nods.

We follow the lady into the auditorium like a small parade, I bring up the rear, I'm the caboose. I spin in single revolutions.

HOLY LABORATORY OF THE lord upstage! This church is seriously vast! It rolls in a great wave upward from the stage, and every seat is filled with a human person, and there are people clustered at the back too, covering up the doors, a slippery, twitching sea. I am pretty sure this is the most famous we've ever been. Everyone is holding their breath, gummy quiet, giving me the squirmies, tappydancies. I do a down dog, visualize a hot air balloon tied to my body pulling my buttbone up with a string. If I had a tail it would be sticking right up. Now I am a thatched roof, a pyramid. Kaia's face bobs around on a huge screen, settling in—a billboard-sized video projection, a live feed so everyone can see her face as big as a house, even those pinched in the way way back. Little eyebrows, shiny pink skin, eyes *like open windows*.

Eyes, windows open. Heart, guiding lantern. Swing, gently, swing.

I can see the individual hairs of her eyebrows on the screen, the tiny black dots on her nose. It gets quiet, then the stir of applause.

No. No applause, Kaia says, gently holding up one hand like ‘stop.’ *We don’t need to fill up the space around us. Can you see how it’s already perfectly full? Those seconds moving past us.* Her onstage voice is darker, deeper than her mom voice and there’s a little whistle when she makes an S. I am considering eating my boogers.

I can hardly see you all! These lights are bright up here . . . they’re videotaping today. I’m a cel-eb-rit-ee. I think I like it.

IS EVERYBODY BREATHING?

The crowd happy-sighs, jelly balls, hands on bellies, plastered smiles. Totality, bliss bestowed, easy peasy.

To be fully present is easy to say and—easy to do. We are doing it now—together. This is it, kids, life. Mine, yours. Ours. What do we think? What is the sensation? Can we call it something? Could we call it—love?

Could we call it—family?

Can we live, for one moment, together, in a state of non-effort?

She puts her hands up like a mime against an invisible wall. Then puts her palms together like prayer. Some people in the audience copy her. Silence falls like feathers, like floaty fibers of dandelions, the vibe is crackly sacred, getting quieter, something sinking.

Kaia squints into the audience.

In the black coat, I see you. I remember you. Aren’t you hot in that?! And you, you came to my last talk, right? In Los Angeles? Yes, I thought so. I remember you. I can barely see you though.

When she talks to someone they flush pink and then glow like a candle.

Those who read my last book, Moment Happening, know that I've been hovering around this idea of the adult child. The truth of that. Of living that. Moving toward that freedom. I go where my heart leads me. My heart is my calculator. My heart leads me like a dog on a leash. I think I'm walking the dog, but then every once in a while I look down and say, goodness! This little dog is walking me!

EVERYONE'S A BEGINNER. HERE'S something silly, I bought myself a child's tea set at the Goodwill. The kind I had always wanted when I was a girl. I made tea in the little pot, black tea actually, and sweetened it with honey, and had tea with myself, sitting on the floor. I drank ten cups of tea, each cup held a few tablespoons. I really did this. Meanwhile, my seven-year-old is in the corner reading Camus.

A bit of laughter.

I'm kidding of course. She was reading Nietzsche.

Ha ha ha ha. This is kind of my cue, I feel.

I crawl in front of her, across the stage, to the darker side where a cluster of plants in giant clay pots loom unlit, where a basket of crayons and paper have been set out for me, and a meditation cushion. It's a jungle! Tiny wild pigs, spiderwebs, spiny stalks. I gnaw from a milky root to survive for days, use those good teeth. My favorite animal is the parrot. Marie Curie's favorite animal was a shark. I am feeling like an actual elephant. The dirt in the plant pots is dark and wet and smells of vitamins, magical tinyturds. I lick my finger and use it to pick up some black dirt and then drop it back, so now I am part of the plant, my particular chemicals.

My daughter. She is happiness. She is my best teacher.

Looking at me. I shake my butt a little.

We are born knowing how to live and then we forget. Diderot said,

'you all die at fifteen.' He was talking about women, and for us it's especially true, but it's true for everyone. Let's help each other remember how to live. To live fully.

She's looking at me still. They're all looking at me, they want to be delighted by me, the teacher-child. So I produce a magical blue fart cloud from my butt. I unscrew the lightbulbs with my mind and send them floating like a gang of ghosts toward the back doors. I feel the sharks inside my head, nudging their noses to get out. I drift out the window in a gravity-free bubble. I roll around, making a little show, a bug clawing at the air, cracking crayons under my back. If I grab my private area, they will laugh more, ha ha ha ha. I should not destroy crayons though, I should be respectful of the good crayons, they are so decent. My spine is stronger than a crayon spine.

Now I will copy a picture from the grown-up paperback book I found, with the shiny lady's lips on the cover. I'm good at *rendering*, I was an artist from the moment I came into this world, we are all artists, yes, but some of us are very in touch with our gifts and I am one of these lucky ducks. There are drawings inside the grown-up book and in one of them, a man is doing something between a woman's legs and the woman is happy, she has dark puffy hair like Wonder Woman and a big smile, a laughing smile. Even with crayons I can do good pictures but I prefer pencils.

You, in pink.

A pale woman with big brown glasses rises and bounces down toward the stage, her hand patting her chest.

Come oooooonnn doowwn! The price is right!, I say.

So wonderful to meet you, teacher!, the woman says, claspng Kaia's hand. *I've read all your books. I feel like I know you. When I read*

Moment Happening, *I had a feeling that you were writing the book directly to me. It was like a beam of light shining into the darkest corners of my depression. You helped me heal. I got off medication, I planted a garden . . . finally got rid of my husband's stuff . . . ex-husband . . . I had been divorced almost three years and his sweaters were still hanging there in the hall closet . . . I just could not accept . . . oh god, I can't believe I'm one of these people up here crying. This is exactly what I wasn't going to do!*

Yes, says Kaia. *Everyone, do you see her crying? Of course you mustn't credit me for healing you. Healing happens inside. But then you knew I would say that.*

The woman sobs now, then blows her nose right into the microphone. She tries to stop crying because she wants to talk more but she sobs and sobs and fans her face, and some people in the audience are laughing. Not cruel laughing, merry laughing, everyone loves everyone!

I PUSH OPEN THE heavy door and tumble into the warm stale sun. Squares of new glittery peachy concrete roll out forever, a sparkling desert. I touch every corner with the toes of my boots. Everyone is inside, so this church courtyard area is deserted. Commence my flying exercises.

I feel something coming into my bones, a low rumbling, what is the message? I get so quiet, I can hear my own heartbeat. A tribe of skateboarders drops from glass branches, ghost monkeys attacking the air with shooting and scraping, flying whizzing planks, shouts and grunts, bad words, globs of spit. Their ape hands hang low. I put up my energy shield.

Cool outfit!, one of the boys says to me.

Are you a superhero? asks another.

A sore on his face, freckles. I know they could take me or kill me, and this excites me in some of my chakras (like driving fast down a hill), but they shoot right through me, they don't touch me. I listen closely until their roar fades into nothing, until I hear just the shifting of leaves on the giant tree like papery coins, and the happy spitty splatter of the fountain. I relax under the shady tree until sound is a chandelier, the bright sun a grid of twisting snails under my eyelids.

Well, it's not easy to take off the cowboy boots because I'm not wearing socks and they rubberly stick to my baby sasquatch feet. Ultimately I do eek them off and walk into the fountain, lady of diamonds, diamonds dripping from my fingers. Water comes to my knees. Cool glass. I am careful because it's very slippery, it's not made for people to go in, I remember that from last time we were here. There are coins in the fountain, including quarters, and I leave them alone, I make that decision. I have to pee and I do not pee in the fountain, I make that decision. I will pee into the toilet standing up, I am getting good at that, so much better, I don't get pee on my legs or all over the place, but even if I do, pee is sterile. I remember this from when we lived at the Good Earth Radical Love Food Co-op and there was a big deal made when a man tended to pee in the kitchen sink and that was what he said to defend his behavior, that it was sterile. He was actually cleaning the sink by peeing in it, he said.

I love the bathroom at this church so much because there is a bed in it. The wallpaper, which I also really love so much, is shiny silver with yellow drawings of a fist holding flowers printed over and over forever. In the bathroom mirror there is one me—finger coils of dark hair, light brown skin, poochum tummy, strong legs, the monkey feet, coffee bean eyes. I take off my bikini top by pulling the string

back there, reveal! Chocolate chip nipples! Baby shrimpy toes. Adults have horrible smashed wreckage toes, thick sticks for toenails. My toes will never look ugly like that, I vow. I vow today. I make a decision. I do all kinds of poses—elegance, strength, mystery. Elephants are always naked.

I put up my shield, two crossed fists, up! *Ready!*

My name is Ele-phant! My name is Ele-phunky! My name is hun-ky hunky!

There is a thin green bedspread covering the bed very tidily. I wonder if anyone ever died here, or had a baby? Must be. I lie down on it and cover up with my cape. Act sleepy.

Dream of what? I'd like to go to the moon this time, break off a little chunk, taste it. It would taste like sweet-tarts. This is what I try for, but the skateboarding boys swill back to mind without invitation, their big floppy shoes with holes, rough elbows, animal haircuts. Dangerous. Then another dream chapter, Kaia's in a white bikini, sunbathing on a rectangle of silver foil. Grass surrounds her infinitely in all directions. It feels like a memory, something from real life. From before me, maybe. She does like to sunbathe, or she used to, slathering up her skin with coconut oil until it gleams like jewelry. The pursuit of beauty is ancient and natural and does not mean that a person is vain, just as a person who seeks good health is not vain because health and beauty are in fact two sides of one coin! And the sun is not as bad for you as everyone says, it gives you vitamins, it gives everything life! The sun is not the enemy. There is no enemy. The sun is not a source of alternative energy it is the only energy, it makes green things green, it makes everything go. The sun made me. When I sucked on my mother I was sucking on the sun, the sun is my blood. . . .

Kaia's talk is over and the courtyard bounces quickly to life. The happy followers buy books, get in line to get them signed by the Guru, sip from paper cups of blessed herbal tisane. It does not matter if your teeth are not white, if your pearls are fake, if your car broke because you did not change the oil or if you have a wart on your finger. You are exactly perfect, Kaia says so, *in spite of the imperfections your mind may allege*, and today the smiles are real, and for everyone. Still naked except for my cape. I go back into the fountain and I think somebody might stop me but nobody stops me, and someone takes pictures.

City Lights

The Total Book

HERE'S HOW WE'RE GOING to start, we think, the Total Book of Totality Coloring Book for Kids, Adults, and Everyone Else:

Every breath is a brand-new world.

If we aspire to totality, we aspire to know this, to live this.

I illustrated the layers of consciousness as layers in a cake. She'd asked for a universal metaphor, as this kind of information should not only be for the erudite pathsniffers. So far there is the layer of 'everyday living,' 'pleasure, as in love of cake and ice cream and trashy magazines,' and 'the unembraceable: fear, disease, decay.'

Somewhere in the book Kaia wants:

Scientists may not like my language, but they know what I mean.

Everything is the first thing, the only thing, the last thing, and the same thing.

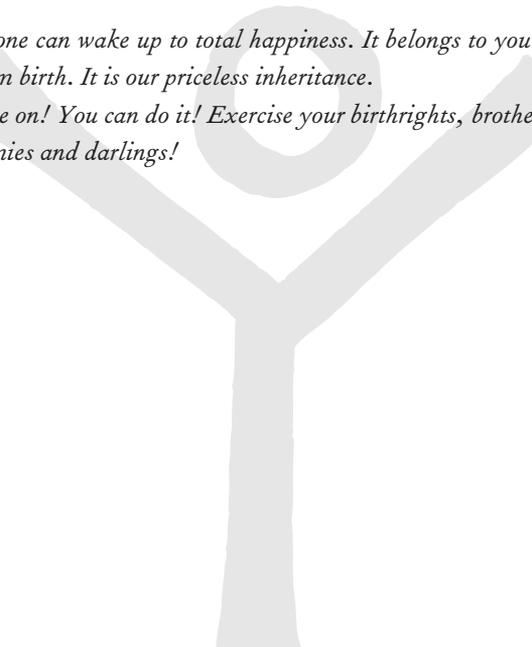
Everyone is twins.

I am content to be my own living proof.

Personal truth is the Truest.

You are the scientist.

I'm planning to draw the scientist with seagulls flapping around his head, and the ocean wrapping around his feet like a blanket. His heart may be outside of his body, may be up among the clouds, may be hybridized with a car engine, although I don't know how to draw that. Personal truth is the COOLEST. Maybe I will just draw a pair of glasses, but that wouldn't be much fun to color. Maybe a bunch of glasses all smashed together in a swarm. Or big glasses with a magic castle painted over the lenses.



Anyone can wake up to total happiness. It belongs to you and every person from birth. It is our priceless inheritance.

Come on! You can do it! Exercise your birthrights, brothers and sisters! Enemies and darlings!

City Lights

Flame

I'M SLEEPY AND FEEL like a baby and I want her to tell me my favorite story, the near-death experience. I put myself under the blanket on the couch, and she obliges, because she can say yes or no and she says usually yes.

You had the prettiest, shiniest head of black hair. You were a dear little friend, a little squirmy piglet, so teeny! So alive! Already you knew how to live, you were born an expert live-er. You said HI! to everyone and everything, to cops, traffic lights, coffee cups. You were born with your heart wide open, grateful, delighted, in love with life. You're still that way, right? The cruel world hasn't beaten it out of you yet, has it?

I open my rib cage and show her my shiny golden heart, turning slowly like a chicken on a rotisserie. She is touching my head with her fingernails, playing with my curls, making tiny circles that hypnotize me into eyes-closed.

It was at night, correct? I want to get to the good part. I arrange the blanket so it covers both of our feet now.

Yes, she says, it was. It was the very first night you slept outside our bed, in your own little crib. Your father had put your crib in the living room because it was warmer there, it's where the heater vent was.

Was that the same year it snowed on the Hollywood sign?

No no, that's another story. That happened when I was a kid. This was in the mobile home park right above the beach, in Capistrano.

Capistrano. That's my favorite word. She continues,

But it was a chilly evening. And it was strange lying down without you next to me, not hearing your little breaths, it felt wrong. I couldn't sleep, couldn't even get close to sleep, I kept getting up to check on you. You were fine every time, wrapped up in your blankie, peacefully sleeping. Finally I relaxed and slept a little, and I dreamt—I still remember this dream—that I was in the woods, lost, and a family of big angry bears

were there, dancing a spooky dance, jumping and shaking the earth. I woke up scared, and the real world was shaking, shaking for real! The bed was hopping around, the pictures on the walls were swinging. The whole world was completely out of control. I've never known such terror. I lunged out of bed, leapt to the living room to find you. Our mobile home was tiny, a shoebox, but it took an eternity to get to you. All my books had fallen from the shelf and I'm kicking them out of the way and finally I get to the living room and there are little blue flames along the bottom of the wall. Your crib is gone. Gone. The absence of your crib, that empty space . . . the fear . . . I can't even put it into words, it was animal-fear. You'd disappeared. I pat around, the kitchen table is a little bit on fire, on the bottom. Your crib is next to it, finally I see it, it's on fire too, fingers of flames creeping up the legs. I pulled you up and out, your body was still and cool, your little teeny torso, you were so small, just this big.

She makes a shape with her hands, her fingers all touching.

I ran with you outside, so I could see you under the streetlights—

You're not supposed to go outside in an earthquake!, I say.

Well, I was panicked. I thought you were gone.

Dead!?

Yes, I was afraid. I was just about to scream, I had this lungful of air to scream, when your eyes popped open, your shoulder kind of twitched and you just said, HI!

I was okay!?

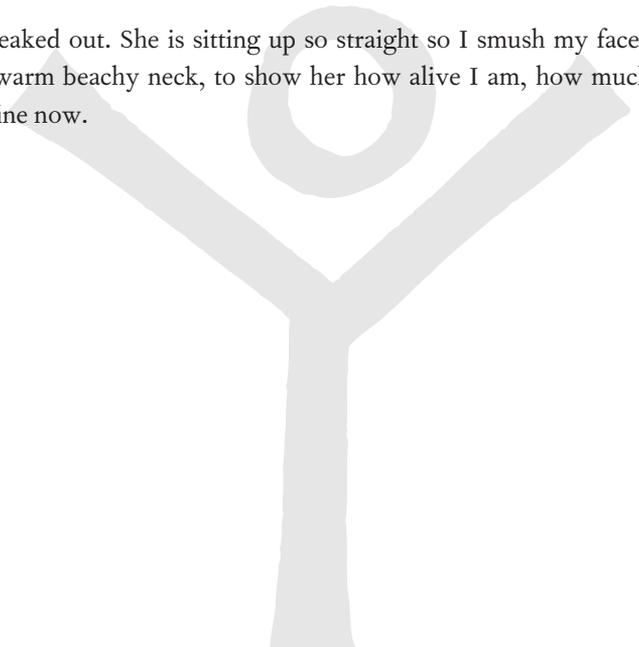
You were completely fine! You had slept through the whole thing! You weren't even scared. You were happy . . . like you were always happy when you woke up.

Did my dad put out the fire?

He did.

She likes telling this story usually but this time she seems kind

of freaked out. She is sitting up so straight so I smush my face into her warm beachy neck, to show her how alive I am, how much we are fine now.



City Lights

Connection Comics

EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD is made of the same thing.

When you hurt someone you are hurting yourself.

So be nice to others and to yourself.

One man comes upon a large rock in the woods and sees a rock.
Another man comes upon the rock and knows an ancient connection
with that rock and sees, and feels his own heartbeat pulsing inside the
rock too.

Matter matters.

Our hearts have eyes. Do not put dark sunglasses on your
heart's eyes!

When you die it is like changing your clothes. When you die it
is like changing your panties.

Everything has hands.

City
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Underworld

IT'S WET DOWN HERE and smells of slugs and mushrooms. It's early and cold but the surfers are already arriving, I can hear them opening and shutting car doors, untying surfboards, changing into wetsuits. They are my alarm clock. Something weird's in my mouth, I chuck it out, it's a piece of gum all hard now. My hair is damp, heavy sandy clumplocks, sand sticks to one side of my face. I get up, rinse off with the hose at soft pressure, closing one eye then the other. I wash my mouth. The water is so cold but I can deal with it. I enjoy goose-bumps. I shake my head like a dog. The sky is fresh, ripped-open gray. I like this part of morning, new and minty, before everything. I am tender. My fingers are cold, my belly is empty. When I was littler I remember I filled my mouth with sand as an experiment, and it was a bummer. Our small front yard is all dried up, but it has some fun things in it like two shiny red mushrooms, a flamingo, a gnome, and two yellow-and-orange pinwheels stuck in crooked and turning around mellow-style. I'm cold!

Once upon a time we had a real door, I remember it. Green glass, smeared as if by fingertips, so the outside world looked like a crazy watercolor version of itself. Cars smeared by. Dogs, joggers, homeless guys with shopping carts smeared greenly by. It got broken and now we have a screen door that doesn't lock, and then a beaded curtain with a big red heart beaded into it. I walk through this curtain, entering the house with arms out in front of me like a mummy, strings of wooden beads clacking together behind me. Kaia is up, in the kitchen, pouring dark green slime from the blender into a tall glass. She has the blender all the way upside down but there is still slime in it so she bang, bang, bangs it out. I turn on the electric heater and crouch beside it.

Slept under the house?

Perhaps, I say, chattering.
Rich dreams. Gift of dreams. You like it down there, close to the earth. Her warm hand on my shoulder, squeezing me toward her. She kisses me on the hair.

I don't like you to sleep with wet hair.

I just got it wet!

She takes a big drink of her green slime, it leaves a mossy moustache.

Superb superslime?

Super good, she says. Want some?

Barfo.

Want some hijiki? She holds the plate out to me, a pile of black quivering worms which smell like deep-sea.

Barfsville.

What I want is sugar (always). I put on my flipflops and Kaia's giant white sweater and go to the liquor store, where I settle on the semi-usual, a king-size bag of peanut M&Ms and a roll of Smarties.

Bath day today? says the liquor store lady, seething with black hair, but then she gives me a Dumdum for free. She is an unenlightened being always saying some shit.

I love YOU!, I chirp as I leave. I want to fart for punctuation but it doesn't come out, I might poop.

Lights

In the Pines

THE SUN IS A blazing orange fist hovering, magnetized over the ocean. A circle of women is moving inside another circle of women, a slow dance where each woman looks into the other woman's face and says, *yes I see you, yes I love you*, then steps over and says it to the next woman in the line until everyone has said it to everyone. One woman has braces even though she is old.

I don't want to do it and I don't have to, I can say no.

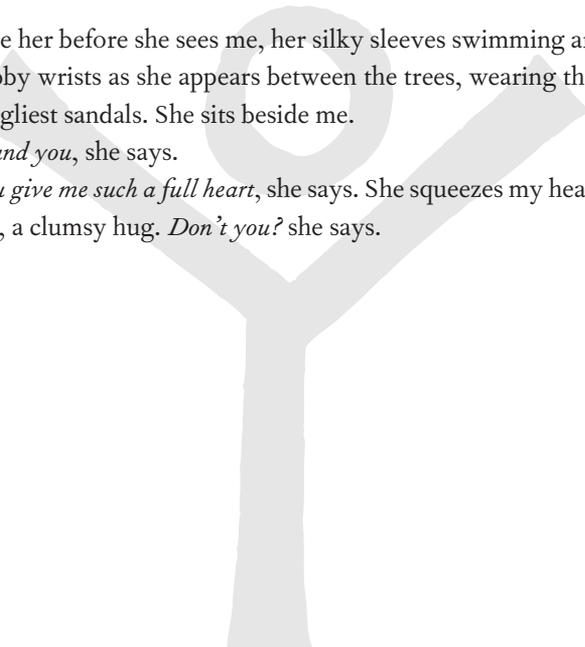
I walk into the woods instead, it's instantly darker and cooler under the old tall pines. I don't know anything about trees like the name of a tree but these are obviously pines. Dirt gets inside my jelly shoes, slowing me down. (*When something is not going well, say Hello, and then ask, What are you trying to teach me? Soften to everything.*) The dirt feels good in my shoes, actually.

I find a big smooth rock and sit on it like a million other people have. The ocean is softly crashing. Over and over it falls. The forest is sweet, perfumed, dusty. Dry doves collect and scatter peacefully in the sky, the scene relaxes my skeleton.

Recently I found his old driver's license. My dad's. He did not look particularly handsome or ugly to me, just a macho guy with a thick crown of black hair and a cop-like mustache. But Kaia tells me that he was breathtaking, like a hush fell over a room when he entered. Kaia understood the thing *tall dark and handsome* when she saw my father.

That's where you get your height, says Kaia.

I picture him in an orchard, on a ladder, picking oranges. I want to see his face. I move in, but all I can conjure is the hovering cutout of his thick inky black hair and moustache, paper cutouts composited onto an empty brown face. He offers an orange out to me, wobbly.



I see her before she sees me, her silky sleeves swimming around her knobby wrists as she appears between the trees, wearing the universe's ugliest sandals. She sits beside me.

Found you, she says.

You give me such a full heart, she says. She squeezes my head into her neck, a clumsy hug. *Don't you?* she says.

City Lights

Roberta

WITH HER SHIRT UNTUCKED I can see the beginnings of Roberta's soft belly, and the blurry darkness of the tattoo under her belly button. It's a bull's head, tilted down angrily with eyes looking up hard, bubbly clouds blowing from his nose. The horns represent Roberta's fallopian tubes, but we mustn't call them fallopian tubes because that's the name given to them by some man who claims to have discovered them, the same infantile patriarchal possessive spirit in which Columbus 'discovered' America, which we should also call something else, and California too. Roberta also has twin snakes coiled around each ankle, hissing at each other at the back, and a few more decorations, and always many silver earrings hanging from both ears and bells on her sandals, as she is a 'funky fairy.' She always wants to 'connect' with me but I don't always want to 'connect' with her. She does not smile. She wants me to finish the Gandhi comic I started so they can put it in the new book in the section called 'change your mind change your life.' If I finish it I'll get paid five hundred bucks but I don't know if I will finish, we'll see. Five hundred bucks, that's a very fancy bike (beach cruiser) and many many very fancy beads made of real crystal, but still I don't know. I am not feeling that *connected* to Gandhi like I was before.

Roberta sets down a thick pile of papers, the latest manuscript.

Wow, says Kaia. *That's a whole lotta words.*

It's pretty much verbatim from your talks, Roberta says. *I just tried to give it some structure.*

ROBERTA PEELS AN ORANGE like a machine, one long peel is produced which I reassemble back into the orange shape and then smash it with my fist. Kaia is leafing through the pages of her manuscript, she

is feeling shy about all this. Roberta inserts film into her camera, they need a new photo of Kaia for press.

Maybe it's better if your Gandhi comic isn't in the book anyway, Roberta says. *Cos Gandhi was a little bit of a misogynist. I mean, that doesn't lessen the coolness of his accomplishments or anything. And I'm totally sensitive to the cultural context. I'm just saying.*

Kaia wants me in the photo but Roberta says no. Sometimes we need to *concede to convention*. She positions Kaia on the couch and fixes her clothes. Kaia does her guru face, her small mouth in an impish smile, her eyes intense, her chin a little bit down. Roberta holds the camera up to her face then pulls it down again and looks at Kaia with her naked eye and some serious vibrations.

What? Kaia says through her smile. *Take the picture.*

You're getting smaller, aren't you? Roberta says. *You've lost more weight, haven't you?*

City Lights