
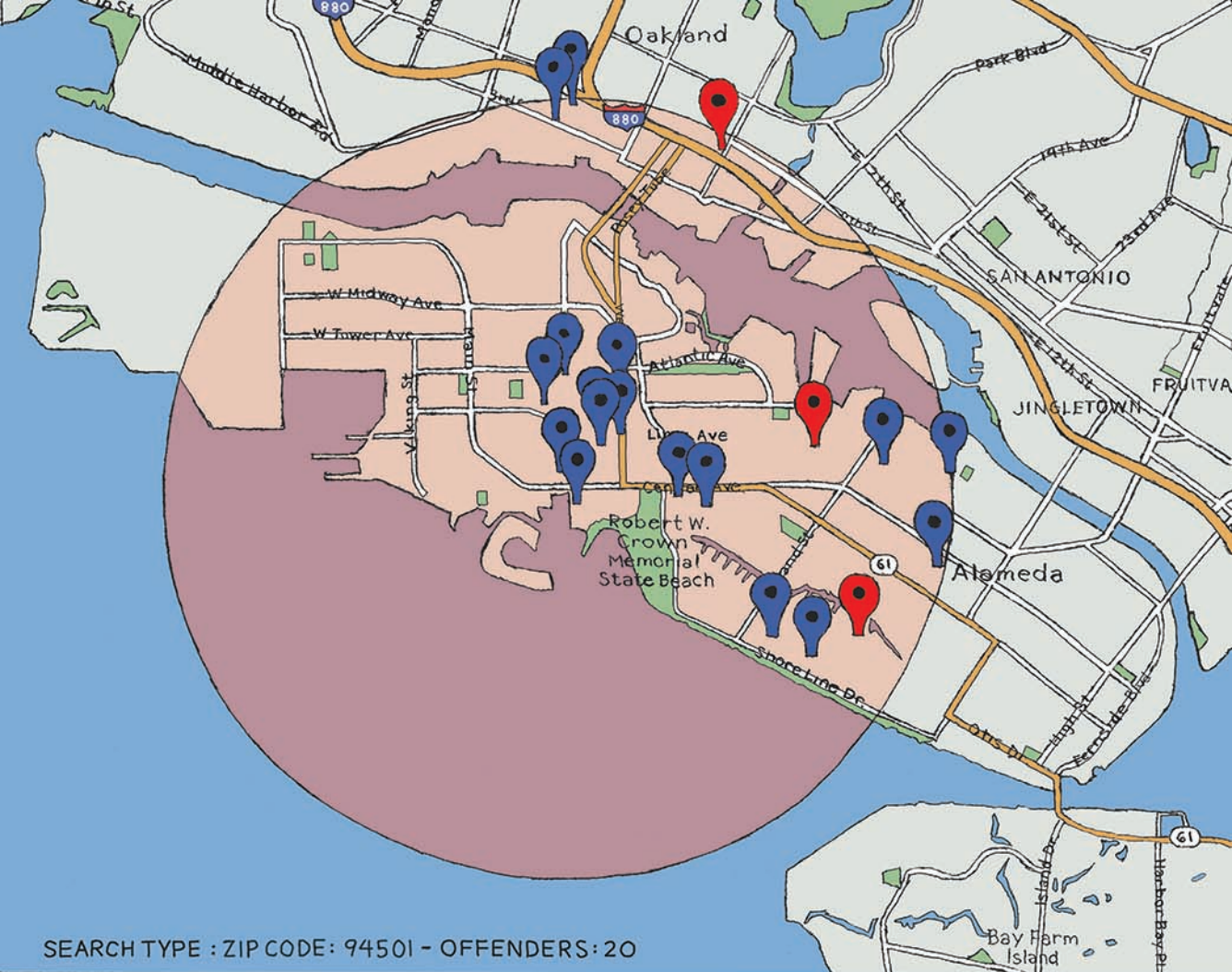


PREY PRAY



GOD, YOU
MUST BE
OLDER
THAN 16.

**STOKES
BRENNAN
LEI**



WE KNOW HOW GROOMING WORKS, DON'T WE? HOW IT MAKES VICTIMS FEEL SPECIAL AND LOVED AND CONFUSED ABOUT KEEPING THE SECRET. THE FEELINGS OF SHAME, GUILT AND RESPONSIBILITY CAN BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO SHED, AND THERE IS THE COMPLEX AND DESTRUCTIVE LEGACY OF THE ABUSE ON THE VICTIMS .

CHEAP HEAVEN COMICS

PREY PRAY

WRITTEN BY

DAVID STOKES

L. BRENNAN

ART AND ADAPTATION BY

P. LEI

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IT'S JUNE. I'M THIRTEEN AND I'VE CUT SCHOOL FOR THE FIRST TIME...

I'M IN THE SEVENTH GRADE. I'M A GOOD BOY. I'M A GOOD BOY. I DON'T CUT SCHOOL. I DON'T TALK BACK.

I DO MY HOMEWORK AND CLEAN THE CATBOX. MY ROOM SMELLS GOOD AND I USE HAIR GEL.

PREY PRAY VOL.1

WORDS -
DAVID STOKES
PICTURES -
P. LEI
ASSIST -
L. BRENNAN

BUT TODAY, I WILL LEAVE THIS PLACE.

THEY ALL NOTICE IT. THEY ALL NOTICE THAT SOMETHING'S DIFFERENT.

AND THEY POINT IT OUT, ALL THE TIME. ALL DAY, EVERY DAY, THEY POINT IT OUT.

EVEN THE ADULTS. THEY SEE IT TOO.

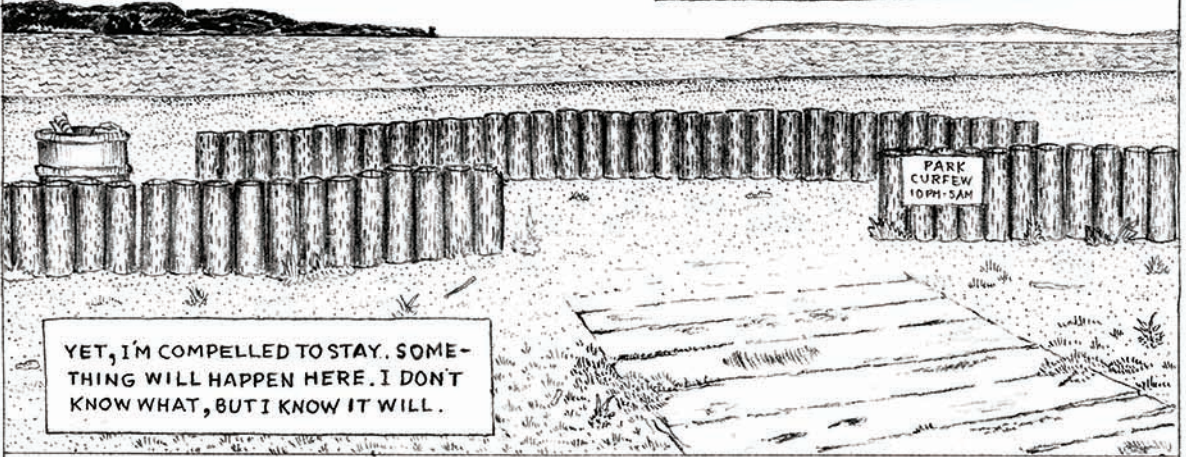
AND IT'S JUST GETTING WORSE. EVERY DAY IT GETS WORSE. FAG, PUNK, SISSY, BITCH..

THERE IS A STIRRING IN ME AND I THINK IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE...

I THINK ABOUT ADULT MEN AND WONDER. NEVER KIDS MY OWN AGE. ONLY ADULTS. AND I WONDER...

I LEAVE THIS SCHOOL AND FEEL
SOMEHOW LIBERATED. I WALK TO
THE BEACH AND I REACH THE RAMP.

WHY AM I HERE? I COULD GO BACK,
I SUDDENLY FEEL VERY BAD. I'M NOW
A BAD KID, ONE WHO CUTS SCHOOL.



YET, I'M COMPELLED TO STAY. SOME-
THING WILL HAPPEN HERE. I DON'T
KNOW WHAT, BUT I KNOW IT WILL.

THE WAVES ARE SMALL, BUT DARK AND RESTLESS.
THE WIND BLOWS, AND THE SKY IS GRAY. THE SAND
SEEMS DIRTY, AND I THINK IT TELLS LIES.



I SEE A MAN, JEAN JACKET AND A HAT.
I APPROACH HIM AND ASK THE TIME

HE SMILES AT ME AND SCANS MY
JUVENILE FORM. TOES TO HEAD,
HEAD TO TOES.

I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD BOW, OR SALUTE,
OR CURTSY, BUT I DO NONE OF THAT AND
JUST WALK AWAY.



BUT NOT FAR. I SIT CROSS-LEGGED, MAYBE 30 FEET AWAY. CLOSE, BUT NOT HORRIBLY CLOSE. MAYBE TOO CLOSE.



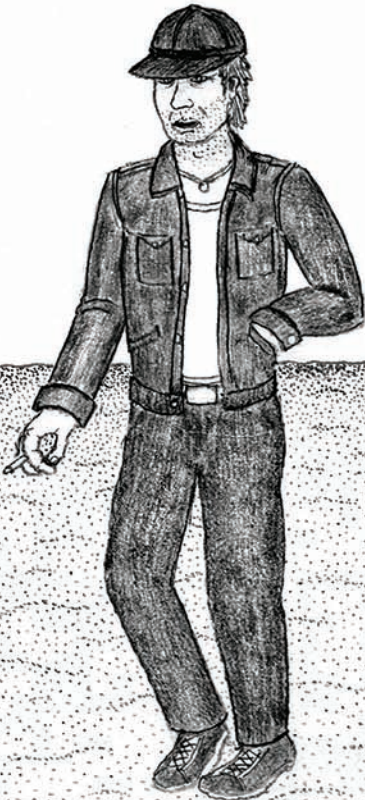
I CAN FEEL HIM LOOKING AT ME.

I GLANCE BACK. HE LOOKS AWAY, THEN BACK AGAIN. I LOOK AWAY, THEN BACK AGAIN.



I LOOK, AND HE LOOKS, AND WE BOTH LOOK. AND MY HEART STARTS TO PUMP AND I'M NOT SURE WHY.

HE STANDS, HE'S TALL AND THIN. A MAN. TALL AND THIN. IN JEAN JACKET AND HAT AND REEBOKS. BLACK ONES.



SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN TODAY. I CAN FEEL IT.

HE LEANS DOWN NEXT TO ME AND ASKS TO SIT. I FEEL DEFENSIVE BUT CURIOUS. I SAY SURE.



WHERE DO I LIVE? WHY AM I NOT AT SCHOOL? HOW OLD AM I? I LIE.

I'M 16.



IT JUST COMES OUT. 16. HE DOESN'T MAKE ME LAUGH OR TELL ME NICE THINGS. HE JUST WANTS DETAILS.

HAVE YOU HAD SEX WITH A GIRL YET?

I'M NOT STARTLED.

NO, NOT YET.

HAVE YOU HAD SEX WITH A GUY YET?

MY FACE AND MY HEAD AND MY EARS SUDDENLY CATCH FIRE, AND I BURN, A FURY AND A DEFEAT DEEP FROM MY GUTS.

AND HE KNOWS, AND THEY ALL KNOW, AND THERE'S NO ESCAPING IT, AND THERE'LL NEVER BE FREEDOM.

HE DOESN'T HESITATE. NOT AT ALL. MY DEFIANCE IS NOT CONVINCING BECAUSE HE KNOWS.

NO! AND I NEVER WILL!

STUPID KID, STUPID KID. ONLY 13, YOU STUPID, FUCKING KID!

DO YOU WANT TO HAVE SEX WITH ME?

I'M DEFEATED.

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?

HE LOOKS AROUND NERVOUSLY AND SCOTCHES ME UP TOWARDS THE BACK OF THE FENCE THAT SEPARATES THE SIDEWALK FROM THE BEACH.

I PUT MY 16 OR 13 YEAR OLD HAND DOWN HIS PANTS BUT FEEL NOTHING BUT HAIR.

NOW I FEEL HIS PENIS, BUT IT IS SOFT AND HE SEEMS MORE SCARED THAN I. HE PUTS HIS ARM AROUND MY BACK AND WHISPERS -

WE SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS HERE.

AND I DON'T WANT HIM TO LET GO. MY FURY IS GONE. MY DEFEAT HAS SUBSIDED.

AND HE MAKES ME FEEL SAFE WITH HIS ARM AROUND ME AND HIS WHISPER IN MY EAR...

COME, LET'S GO. I KNOW A PLACE.

WE BEGIN TO RUN, NOT HARD, MORE A JOG. AND IT STARTS TO RAIN.

WE APPROACH A BATHROOM STALL AT THE END OF THE BEACH.

I HEAR A BOWLING BALL STRIKE ACROSS THE STREET.

THE STALL IS LARGE AND DAMP AND SMELLS LIKE PEE AND BEACH. THE DOOR ROLLS SHUT AND THE RUSTY CHAIN IS LATCHED ON THE HOOK.

AND I UNDO HIS BUTTON, AND UNZIP HIS PANTS. I TAKE DOWN HIS UNDERWEAR AND WRAP MY MOUTH AROUND HIS PENIS.

GOD, YOU MUST BE OLDER THAN 16.

I HUG HIM HARD AND HE GUIDES ME DOWN WITH HIS HANDS ON MY SHOULDERS AND I SIT ON THE TOILET.

BUT I'M NOT. I'M 13. AND I AM ON A TOILET AND THE STALL IS DAMP AND SMELLS LIKE PEE AND BEACH. ANOTHER BALL STRIKES THE PINS ACROSS THE STREET.

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I WAS A DANCER. FOR HOURS AND HOURS I WOULD DANCE.



DANCING TO MUSIC UNTIL I FELT I HAD PERFECTED EACH MOVE, EACH STANCE, EACH STEP TO PERFECTION.

HOW BRILLIANT, I WOULD THINK, TO HOLD TIME TO RHYTHM AND GLIDE EFFORTLESSLY THROUGH SONG UNTIL I COULDN'T MOVE ANY LONGER.



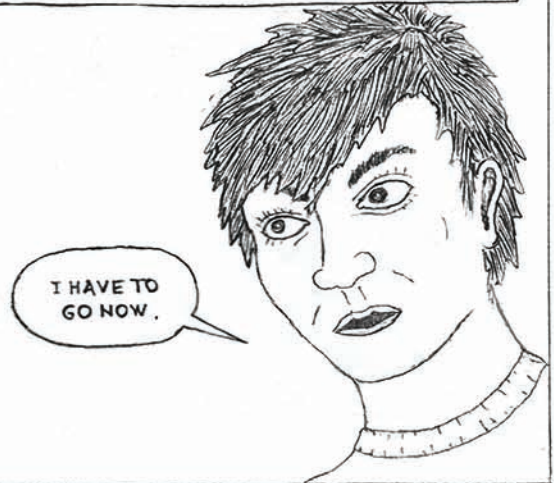
THAT WAS MY ESCAPE, AND ITS ALL I WANTED.

HIS HANDS MOVE BEHIND MY HEAD. AND HE MOANS. ARE YOU DANCING NOW, WITH HIS HANDS BEHIND YOUR HEAD? TELL ME, ARE YOU DANCING?



I DON'T THINK THIS IS HOW I PICTURED IT, NOT THE FIRST TIME. ON A TOILET.

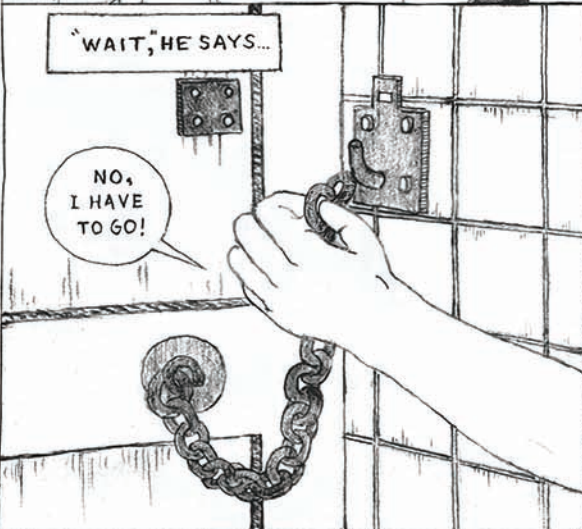
BUT THAT'S ALL I AM NOW. AND THIS IS ALL I AM. THIS IS ALL NOW. AND THIS IS ALL I AM. I PUSH HIM BACK AND STAND UP.



I HAVE TO GO NOW.

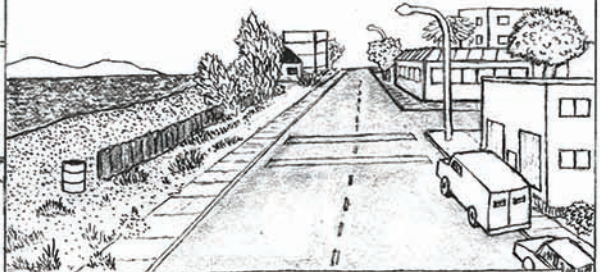
"WAIT," HE SAYS...

NO, I HAVE TO GO!



I UNLATCH THE DOOR, AND MY HEAD IS SPINNING

I RUN DOWN THE SIDEWALK. AND THE SKY IS STILL GRAY, AND THE WAVES ARE STILL RESTLESS, AND THE SAND STILL TELLS LIES, AND THE PAVEMENT IS HARD.



AND I CAN HEAR HIM CALLING AFTER ME AND MY EYES FILL WITH TEARS, AND I RUN HOME NOW, AND I RUN HOME NOW, AND I RUN AND I RUN, AND I RUN HOME NOW.

ALAMEDA, THE PERFECT
LITTLE TOWN...

NOT MUCH GOING ON FOR
THE LATCHKEY KIDS. FERAL
CHILDREN GLUED TO OUR
BIKES....

WE RODE UP AND DOWN THE
THE ISLAND LOOKING FOR
SOMETHING WE COULDN'T
NAME...

PREY PRAY

VOL. 2

WORDS - L. BRENNAN
PICTURES - P. LEI

THERE IS A LONELINESS WHEN
YOU ARE A GIRL TURNING 13. IT
WAS THE YEAR I REGISTERED
ON GROWN MEN'S RADAR.

IT WAS THE YEAR I LEARNED THE
WORDS LUST, SHAME AND NAUSEA.

HEY GIRLIE,
LET ME SMELL
YOUR BICYCLE
SEAT!



THERE IS NO MUSIC PLAYING. NO
ONE WATCHING, HELPING OR IN-
FLUENCING ME. I'M DEFINITELY
NOT HIGH. WHAT I AM WRITING IS
ONLY MYSELF.

NOBODY WILL READ THIS.
MAYBE I CAN FORGET, I KNOW
IT WILL BE OH-SO HARD.

EVER SINCE THAT TUESDAY,
I'VE NEEDED SO MUCH TO
TELL MY STORY

I DON'T WANT TO CHANGE. I
DON'T WANT TO BE PART OF
THE ELECTRODE AND COLD
STEEL ADULT SOCIETY.

AND SAVE ME FROM THIS COLD
FEMALE FAKE FACE MASK THAT
WILL TRY ITS BEST TO COVER
UP ME.



JUNE 4, 1978. THE SUN BLAZED BETTER THAN IT HAD IN WEEKS. THE RADIO BLASTED TOM PETTY AND THE WAVES RIPPLED BELOW US (HOW POETIC!)



ME AND CARLA SAT NOT NEEDING TO SPEAK, CONTEMPLATING ON LIFE AND ITS MANY FOLLIES. MY SHOULDERS WERE ALREADY BURNT. I KNEW WE WERE PROBABLY THINKING ABOUT THE SAME THING .WAS THERE REALLY ANYONE OUT THERE FOR US ?

I KNEW WHAT SEX WAS BUT ONLY TRIED IT WITH MY OTHER FRIEND LAURA . WE WOULD SPEND THE NIGHT AT EACH OTHERS HOUSE ...

I READ IN THE READERS DIGEST MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA THAT THIS WAS CALLED HOMOSEXUAL EXPERIMENTATION AND IT WAS OKAY AT OUR AGE TO TRY THINGS OUT ON EACH OTHER.



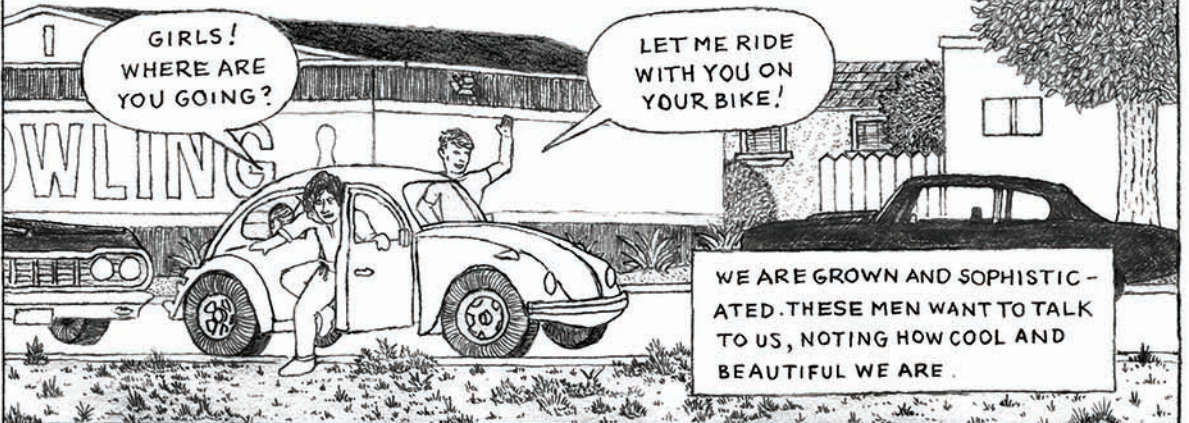
SHARING A BED AND "HUMP" EACH OTHER. I WANTED TO GO FARTHER THAN SHE DID.

I THINK SHE FELT A LOT OF SHAME ABOUT OUR ACTIVITIES. WE BOTH WENT TO CONFESSION .

A CAR PULLS UP 50 FEET FROM US AND ME AND CARLA CHUCKLE AS A BUNCH OF GUYS JUMP OUT, SAYING CRAZY THINGS TO US AND EACH OTHER .

GIRLS!
WHERE ARE
YOU GOING?

LET ME RIDE
WITH YOU ON
YOUR BIKE!



WE ARE GROWN AND SOPHISTICATED. THESE MEN WANT TO TALK TO US, NOTING HOW COOL AND BEAUTIFUL WE ARE .

TWO PROCEED TO SMILE AT US, THEN THE REST FLEETINGLY DEPART. THE ONES THAT STAY COME OVER.



THE TALLEST ONE TALKS TO US IN THE MOST SMOOTH, SOOTHING VOICE I HAD EVER HEARD.



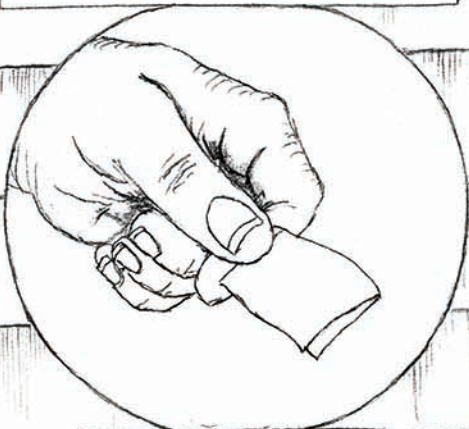
I'M LEFT SITTING ON THE BEACH WITH THIS MAN LIKE IT IS NORMAL.



IT ENDS UP ME AND IVAN GOING AT IT AND CARLA FALLING TO RITCHIE.



HE GIVES ME HIS PHONE NUMBER



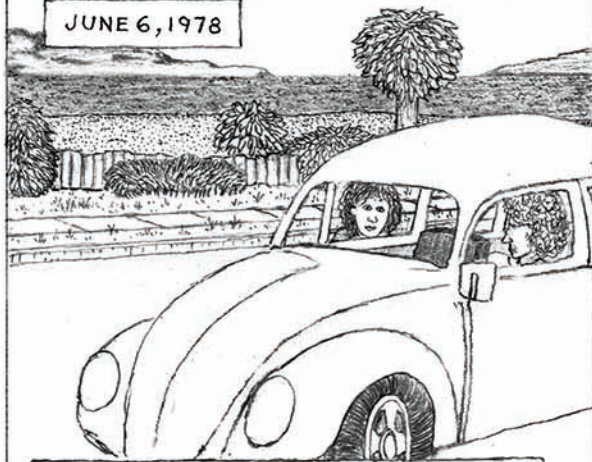
AND INSISTS I CALL

WHAT DO I THINK OF ALL WEEKEND BUT THIS CRAZY 25YR OLD MAN AND IT FEELS SO IMPORTANT TO CALL I TOOK MY -



STOP - I DON'T WANT TO SMALL TALK, MY FEELING BEGGING TO REACH OUT. I DON'T KNOW IF IT IS LOVE OR INFATUATION

JUNE 6, 1978

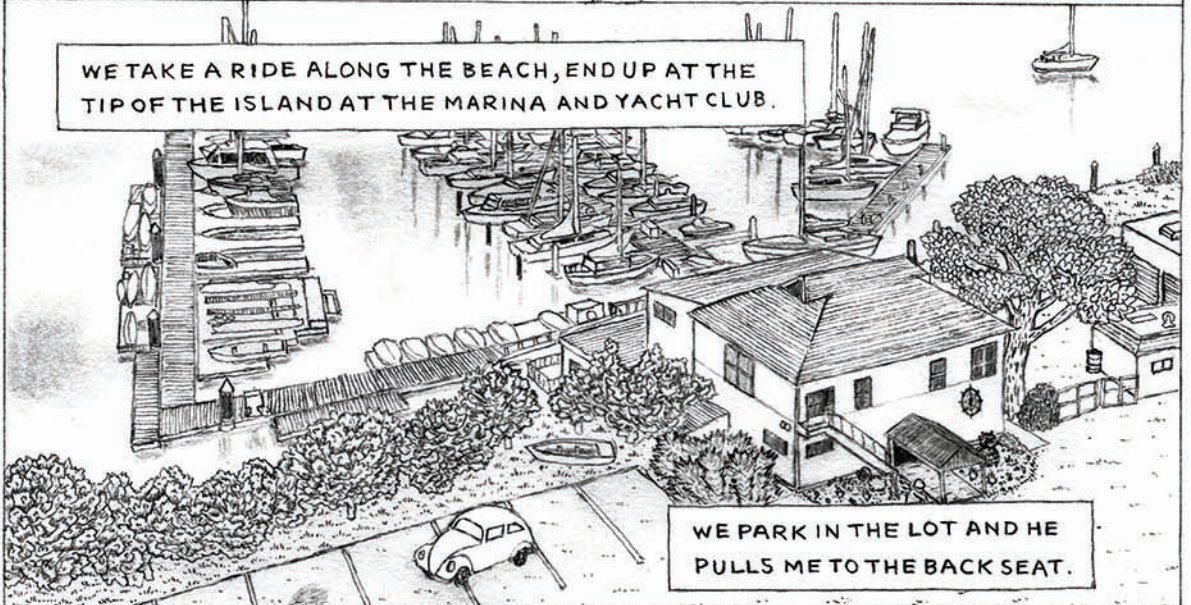


HE PICKS ME UP AT THE BEACH WHERE WE FIRST MET.

MY FIRST TIME IN A VW BUG. I SWOON.

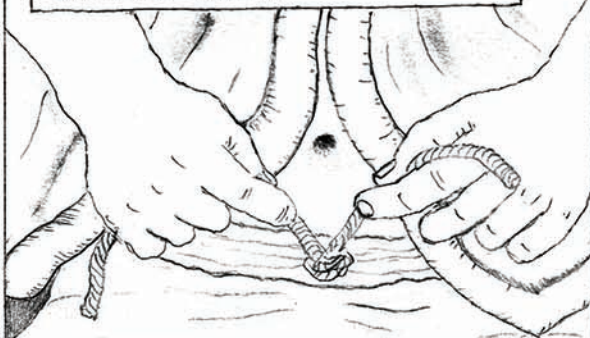


WE TAKE A RIDE ALONG THE BEACH, END UP AT THE TIP OF THE ISLAND AT THE MARINA AND YACHT CLUB.



WE PARK IN THE LOT AND HE PULLS ME TO THE BACK SEAT.

I TOOK IT IN AS THOUGH THIS WAS A NORMAL THING TO BE 13 ALONE IN THE BACKSEAT OF A VW.



WITH A MUCH OLDER MAN WHO WAS NOW TUGGING AT THE DRAWSTRINGS OF HIS PANTS

HERE IS A MAN, ME MERELY A CHILD.



HE TEACHES ME SO MUCH I WANT TO LEARN ABOUT.



HE KISSES ME.



HE PULLS OUT HIS HUGE DICK AND PUTS MY HAND ON IT...

MAKES ME STROKE IT UP AND DOWN



IT'S GROSS, HE ISN'T WEARING ANY UNDERWEAR.

IT BECOMES VERY HARD.



I'M NOT SCARED AT ALL. I GUESS THIS IS SEX, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT TO DO.

I FOCUS ON THE BOATS, THE TREES, THE SKY THROUGH THE WINDOW OF THE BUG.



HE CALLS ME LITTLE SWAN. HE SAYS HE COULD NEVER LOVE ME. IT HURTS.

AM I ONLY THERE TO KISS OR WHAT? I WISH I COULD KNOW.



HE FINALLY PUT HIS DICK IN HIS PANTS AGAIN. WE MOVE TO THE FRONT SEAT OF THE CAR.

THEN HE IS DROPPING ME OFF IN FRONT OF MY HOUSE LIKE WE'D BEEN ON A DATE .



I'M SCARED MY DAD WILL SEE ME GETTING OUT OF THIS GROWN MAN'S CAR BUT HE NEVER DOES .

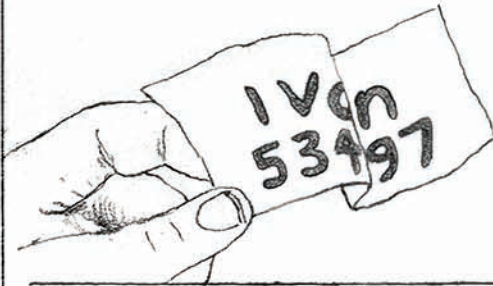
I AM EXCITED AND HAPPY THAT SOMEONE HAS PAID ATTENTION TO ME .



BUT KNOW NOT TO SAY ANYTHING TO MY MOM .

HE SAYS I CAN CALL HIM AGAIN BUT SOMEHOW I WONDER IF I EVER WILL . I WONDER IF HE THINKS ABOUT ME AT ALL .

HOW I PINE IN MY ROOM FOR AN OLDER MAN WHO HAS TAKEN A YOUNG GIRL TO A HIDDEN SPOT TO DO SOMETHING TO HER



I GUESS WITH IVAN HE IS TRYING TO BE A TEEN AGAIN AND I AM HIS STAIRWAY DOWN



THIS IS MY LAST DAY OF MOURNING . TOMORROW I WILL BEGIN THE QUEST AND REMEMBER IVAN AS A GOOD KISSER AND OLDER BROTHER

MAYBE THERE IS ANOTHER IVAN OUT THERE FOR ME .



THANK YOU, GOD, BUT PLEASE WOULD I BE ASKING TOO MUCH IF...

PREY PRAY

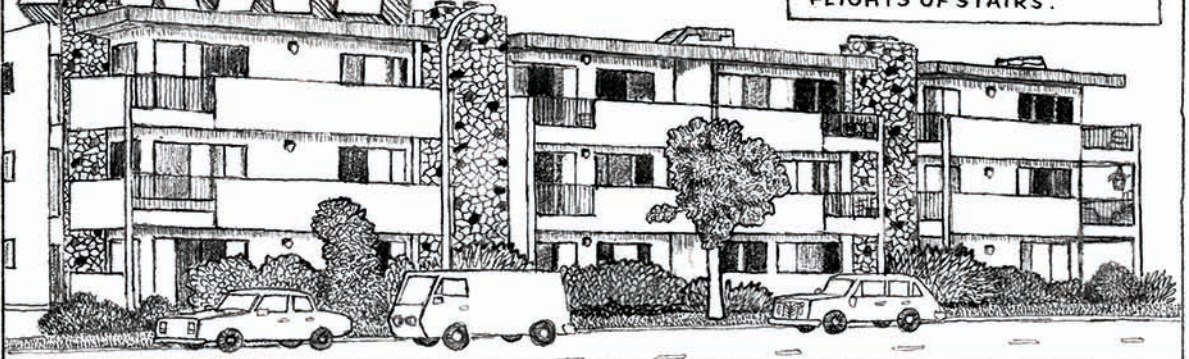
VOL. 3

WORDS - DAVID STOKES
PICTURES - P. LEI

SO, I RUN.

THE RAIN HAS STOPPED
AND I AM NUMB.

I TURN THE CORNER TO OUR
STREET AND BOLT UP THREE
FLIGHTS OF STAIRS.



MY BEST FRIEND JESSICA LIVES IN 301.

301

I NEED HER TO KNOW IT
ISN'T MY FAULT.

WHAT'S
WRONG?



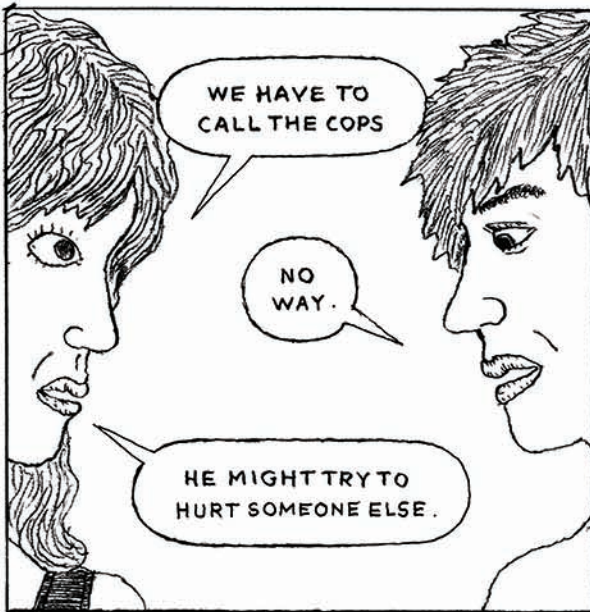
I DON'T THINK BEFORE I SPEAK.

THIS GUY ON
THE BEACH JUST
TRIED TO MAKE
ME SUCK HIS
DICK.

OH MY GOD! ARE YOU OKAY?

I DUNNO





WE HAVE TO CALL THE COPS

NO WAY.

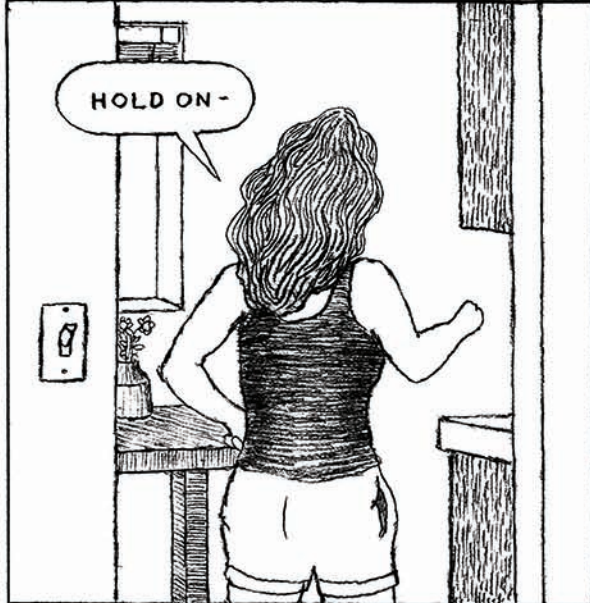
HE MIGHT TRY TO HURT SOMEONE ELSE.



LET'S JUST GO AND SEE IF HE'S STILL THERE.

IF HE IS, WE'LL CALL THE COPS.

OKAY, FINE.

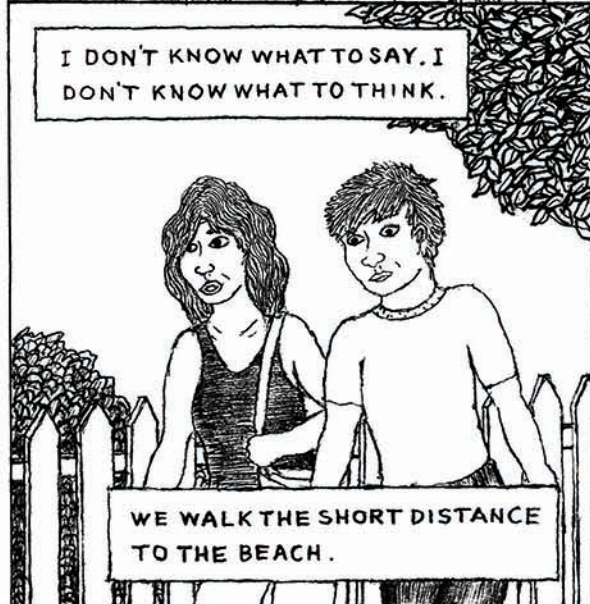


HOLD ON -



"WHAT'S THAT FOR?"

"JUST IN CASE HE TRIES ANYTHING."



I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK.

WE WALK THE SHORT DISTANCE TO THE BEACH.



SHE ASKS ME WHAT HAPPENED. SHE WANTS DETAILS.

BUT I ONLY TELL HER THAT THE GUY TRIED TO FORCE HIMSELF ON ME.

WE GET TO THE BEACH, BUT
SEE NO ONE.

IT'S GRAY AND WINDY EVEN
THOUGH IT'S EARLY JUNE.

LET'S GO

I DON'T WANT
TO BE HERE.

SWEAR YOU'RE NOT
GOING TO SAY A WORD
ABOUT THIS TO
ANYONE.

I
SWEAR

IT'S LIKE HOW SHE MADE ME PRO-
MISE NOT TO TELL ANYONE SHE'S
TAKING DIET PILLS.

EVERY DAY WE WALK TO SCHOOL AND
SHE STARTS OFF WITH A LIST...

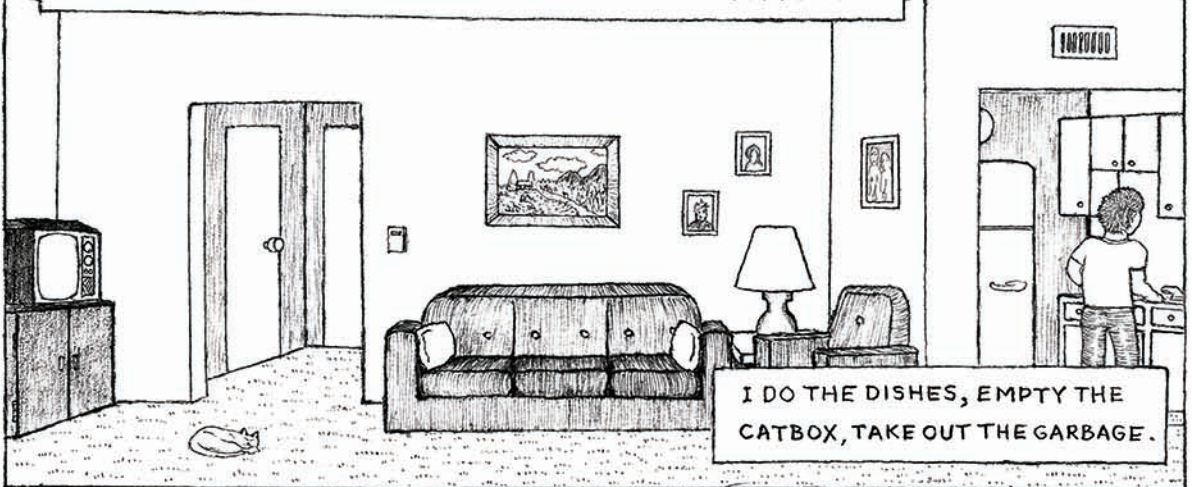
OF WHAT SHE ATE THE DAY BEFORE.

I HAD A HALF A BAGEL,
PLAIN, A CARROT, HALF
A CHIMICHANGA AND TEN
GLASSES OF WATER. DO
YOU THINK THAT'S
TOO MUCH?

I STRUGGLE WITH POSSIBLY
BEING GAY...

SHE STRUGGLES WITH DYING
TO BETHIN.

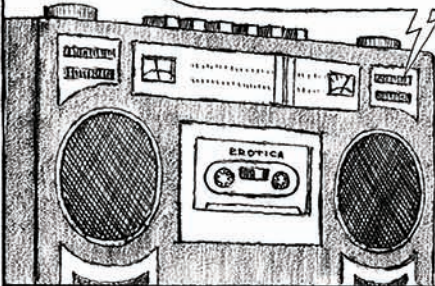
I LIVE IN 106, A SMALL TWO BEDROOM APARTMENT I SHARE WITH MY MOTHER AND THREE CATS WHO AREN'T NEUTERED.



I DO THE DISHES, EMPTY THE CATBOX, TAKE OUT THE GARBAGE.

I GO TO MY ROOM, PUT ON MY FAVORITE TAPE.

BAD GIRL DRUNK BY SIX... ♪
KISSING SOMEONE ELSE'S LIPS...
SMOKED TOO MANY CIGARETTES ♪
TODAY... I'M NOT HAPPY WHEN
I ACT THIS WAY... ♪

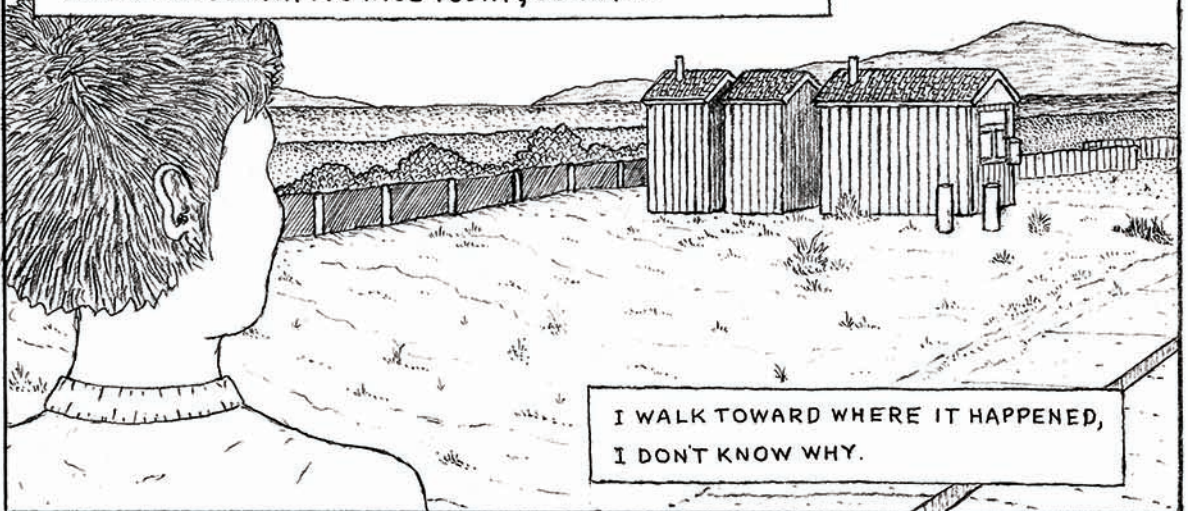


I TRY TO BE A NORMAL BOY...



BUT NORMAL BOYS DON'T GIVE BLOW-JOBS TO OLD MEN IN DIRTY BATHROOMS.

A FEW DAYS PASS. I WALK DOWN THE SIDEWALK THAT RUNS ALONG THE BEACH. IT'S NICE TODAY, SUNNY...



I WALK TOWARD WHERE IT HAPPENED, I DON'T KNOW WHY.

AND I SPOT A MAN SITTING BY THE RAMP. IT'S HIM.



HIS FACE IS IN THE SUN AND I REALIZE HE'S UGLY. I TURN TO WALK AWAY.

HEY WAIT!
WE NEED TO
TALK!



RIGHT THEN, A POLICE CAR DRIVES BY AND I WAVE IT DOWN.

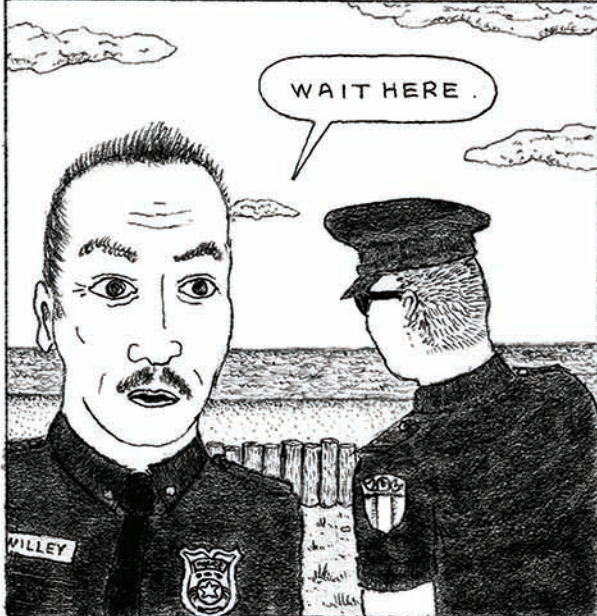


WHY I DO THIS I'LL NEVER KNOW.

THERE'S A MAN OVER
THERE MESSING WITH
LITTLE KIDS!



WAIT HERE.



ITS OVER NOW. EVERYTHING CAN GO BACK TO NORMAL. I GO HOME AND TELL MY MOTHER ABOUT IT.

MY HERO

A FEW HOURS LATER, THE POLICE DEPT. CALLS...

WHAT!

THEY ASK TO SPEAK TO ME. THEY TELL ME THE MAN SAYS I INITIATED IT AND HE DIDN'T KNOW HOW OLD I WAS.

THEY SAY THEY'LL BE IN TOUCH. I THOUGHT IT WAS OVER. THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.

BUT NOTHING HAPPENED...

MY LIFE IS OVER. EVERYONE WILL KNOW WHAT I DID.

MY MOM DEMANDS AN EXPLANATION.

SO WHAT? HE'S JUST MAKING IT UP?

YES, NOTHING HAPPENED.

YOU'RE A LIAR!

THE NEXT DAY AND NIGHT ARE A HAZE. SHE DOESN'T HARDLY SPEAK TO ME.

I TRY TO BE EXTRA QUIET.

♪... FEEL THE NEED TO HIDE MY...♪

I PLAY 'BAD GIRL' TO ALMOST A WHISPER, BARELY AUDIBLE, OVER AND OVER.

SATURDAY MORNING. MOM IS ON THE COUCH TALKING TO MY 20 YEAR OLD SISTER...

... WHO IS SCANNING THROUGH THE ALAMEDA TIMES-STAR.

HUH!

MOM, PLEASE!

THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN!

... would cease...
... and...
... for trial in May...
13-year-old boy sodomizes 45 year-old man in public restroom
Last th...
h...

THE NEXT DAY, I'M CALLED INTO THE POLICE STATION WITH MY MOTHER.

HI DAVID, I'M DET. BOWMAN. I NEED TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU.

YOU'RE NOT IN ANY TROUBLE, OK?

HE SEEMS LIKE HE'S TRYING TO REASSURE ME BUT HE HAS A KNOWING SMIRK, SAME WAY THEY ALL LOOK AT ME. I DON'T TRUST HIM.

I TELL A STORY. BUT NOT THE TRUTH.

I'M GOING TO TURN THE RECORDER ON NOW, OK?

THIS MAN APPROACHED ME, STARTED TALKING TO ME...

WHY WERE YOU AT THE BEACH?
WHAT WERE YOU DOING THERE?

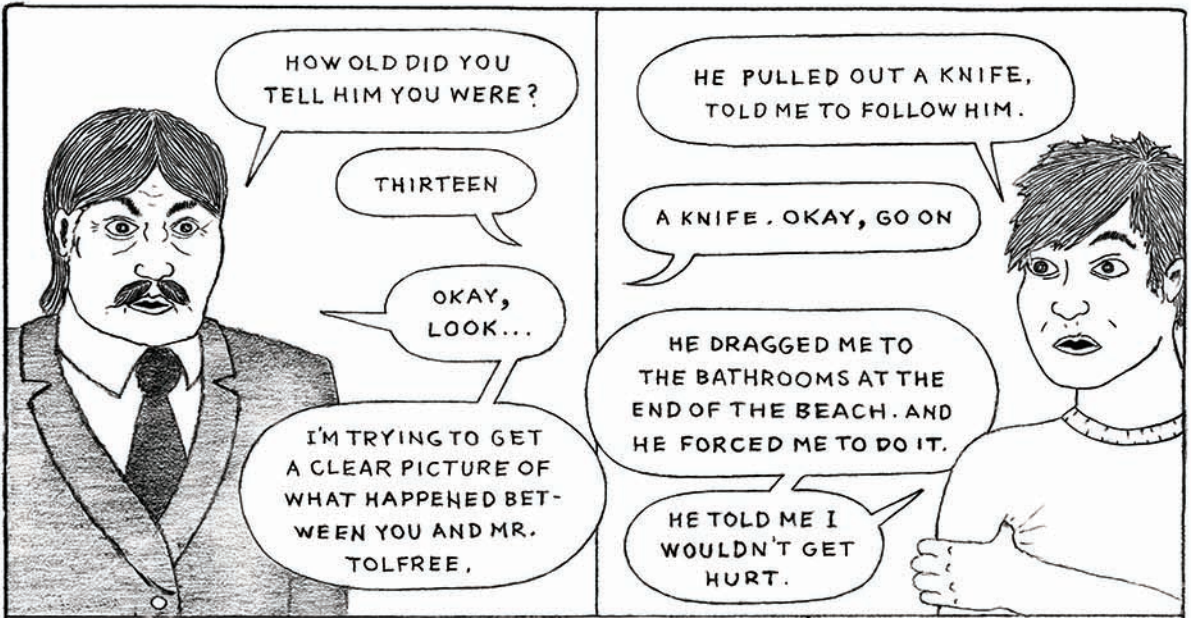
JUST GOING FOR A WALK.

OKAY, GO ON.

HE STARTED ASKING ME QUESTIONS.

WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS?

JUST LIKE, WHERE I LIVE, WHAT SCHOOL I GO TO, HOW OLD I AM.



HOW OLD DID YOU TELL HIM YOU WERE?

THIRTEEN

OKAY, LOOK...

I'M TRYING TO GET A CLEAR PICTURE OF WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN YOU AND MR. TOLFREE.

HE PULLED OUT A KNIFE, TOLD ME TO FOLLOW HIM.

A KNIFE. OKAY, GO ON

HE DRAGGED ME TO THE BATHROOMS AT THE END OF THE BEACH. AND HE FORCED ME TO DO IT.

HE TOLD ME I WOULDN'T GET HURT.



OKAY, LET'S BACK UP A LITTLE. HE FORCED YOU TO DO WHAT?

HE TRIED TO FORCE ME, BUT I GOT AWAY.

TRIED TO FORCE YOU TO DO WHAT?

I DON'T KNOW SOMETHING BAD,

AND HOW DID YOU GET AWAY?

I KICKED HIM AND RAN.



AND WHY DID YOU WAIT FOUR DAYS BEFORE TELLING THE POLICE?

I WAS SCARED.

OUTSIDE, MY MOM HOLLERS AT ME. SHE'S IRATE.

BECAUSE OF YOU, THAT POOR MAN IS IN JAIL.

HE ASKS ME A FEW MORE QUESTIONS, THEN TURNS OFF THE RECORDER.

HOW COULD YOU HAVE DONE SOMETHING LIKE THIS?

TWO DAYS LATER, WE RETURN TO THE POLICE STATION TO SIGN SOME PAPERS.

WE TALK WITH THE SAME DETECTIVE. THE RECORDERS ON AGAIN BUT HE'S NOT QUITE AS NICE AS BEFORE.

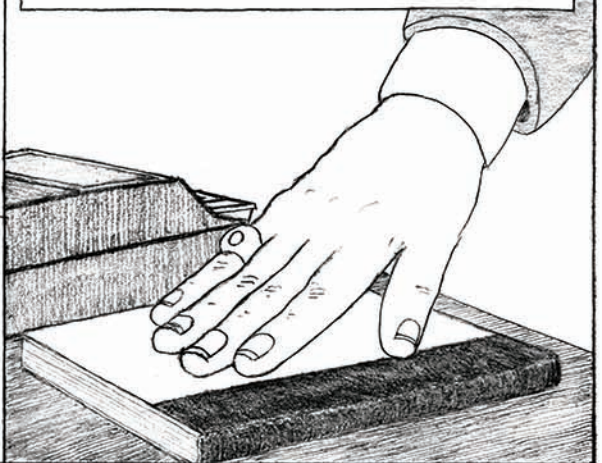


THERE ARE PARTS OF YOUR STORY THAT DON'T ADD UP.

I TRY AND STICK TO THE SAME STORY BUT HE KEEPS INTERRUPTING ME.

HE'S HOVERING OVER ME NOW AND I AM BEING MADE SMALLER AND SMALLER...

AND AS FAST AS IT HAD BEGUN, IT WAS OVER. HE STOPS THE RECORDER, CLOSES HIS NOTEBOOK.

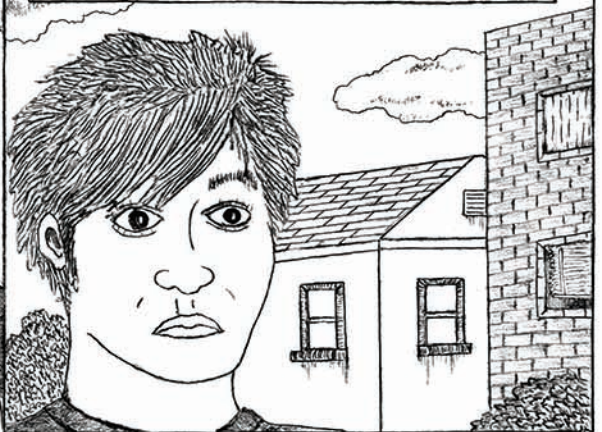


UNTIL THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF ME, AND I CRY, AND I TELL HIM THE TRUTH.

LATER ON, MY MOTHER TELLS ME MR. TOL-FREE ACCEPTED A PLEA DEAL.

I FINISH MY LAST DAY OF SEVENTH GRADE. I'M THIRTEEN. AND I'VE DIED.

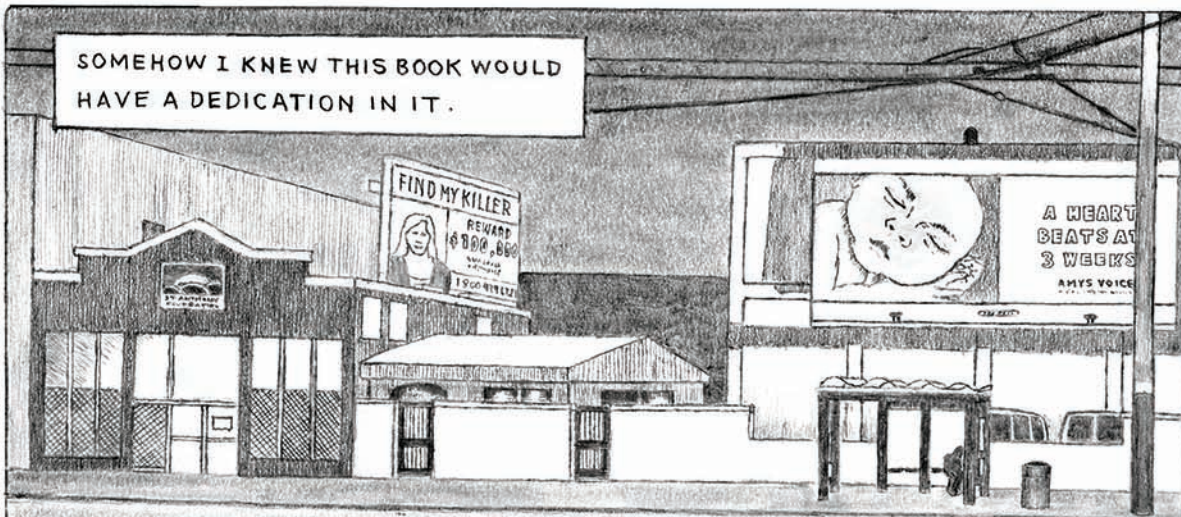
SIX MONTHS JAIL TIME AND THAT'S THAT.



IT DOESN'T MATTER. BOTH OUR LIVES ARE OVER NOW AND IT'S ALL MY FAULT.

AND SOMEBODY ELSE HAS JUST BEEN BORN.

SOMEHOW I KNEW THIS BOOK WOULD HAVE A DEDICATION IN IT.



YOU WOULD'VE BEEN MORTIFIED TO DIE IN THE STREET LIKE YOU DID.

THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU WAS IN THE ICU FOR ALCOHOL WITHDRAWAL.

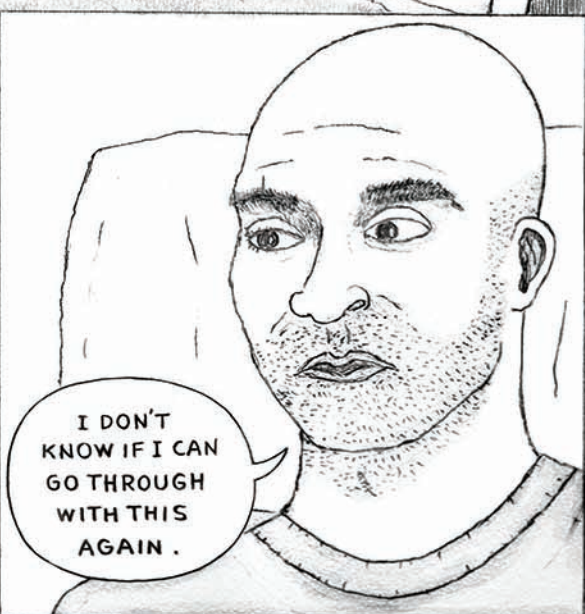
PREY PRAY VOL. 4

HOSPITAL'S DISCHARGING ME TO A DETOX.

IF I KNEW THIS WAS THE LAST TIME I WOULD SEE YOU, I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO MEAN TO YOU.



YOU'RE GOING, RIGHT?



I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN GO THROUGH WITH THIS AGAIN.

YOUR BODY LAY IN THE MORGUE FOR ALMOST A MONTH, WRACKING UP THOUSANDS IN STORAGE FEES.

I CALLED AND LEFT A DESPERATE MESSAGE ON THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S PHONE.



IF WE DIDN'T PAY, YOU'D BE INCINERATED AND SCATTERED WITH THE INDIGENT.

THE NEXT DAY, ALL FEES WERE WAIVED.

THERE WERE GOOD DAYS...
I THREW A PARTY FOR YOUR 39TH BIRTHDAY.



IT WAS THE SAME AGE YOUR DAD WAS WHEN HE DIED OF AN OVERDOSE.

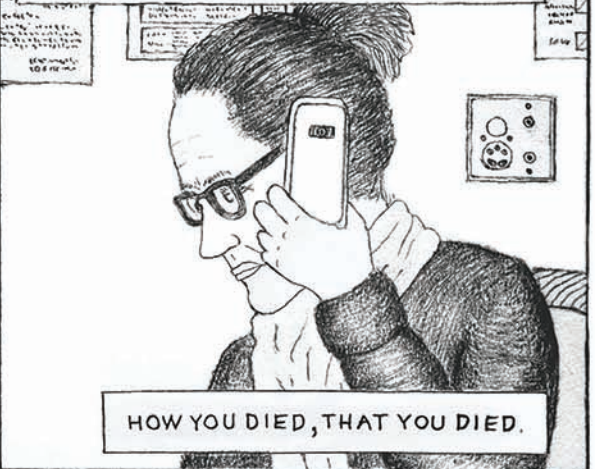


I GOT THE CALL WHILE I WAS AT WORK.



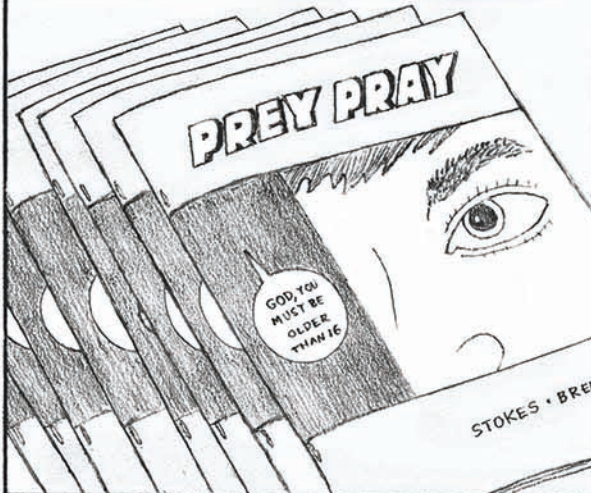
HELLO. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY PHONE CALL FROM THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO AND WE'RE TRYING TO CONTACT-

WHEN I CALLED BACK, THE MEDICAL EXAMINER WAS KIND AND SUCCINCT, BEARER OF TERRIBLE NEWS.



HOW YOU DIED, THAT YOU DIED.

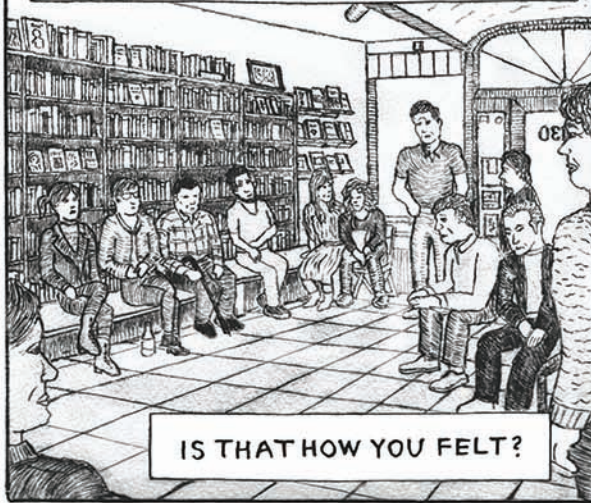
THINK OF HOW PROUD YOU WOULD'VE BEEN TO SEE OUR BOOK IN PRINT.



AND HOW YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN SURPRISED TO SEE YOUR BOSS WEEP...



... WHEN YOU'D WONDERED IF HE WAS EVEN YOUR FRIEND.



IS THAT HOW YOU FELT?

THAT YOU DIDN'T MATTER?



YOUR ENTIRE BODY FITS IN THAT SMALL CARDBOARD BOX, SURPRISINGLY HEAVY.

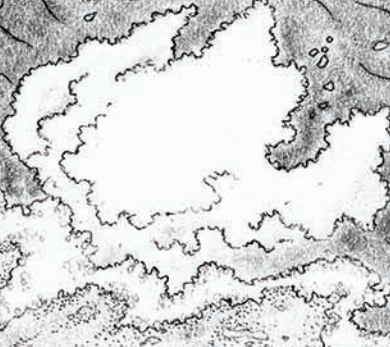


YOUR SISTER AND I SPREAD YOUR ASHES AT THE ALAMEDA BEACH.



DOWN THE ROAD FROM WHERE YOU HAD YOUR FIRST SEXUAL EXPERIENCE.

THE ASHES STUCK TO THE BEACH.



THE WAVES WOULDN'T TAKE THEM.



YOUR FRIEND MALAKAI TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR LAST CONVERSATION WITH HIM ...



THE DAY HE WENT OUT, AFTER I HELPED HIM MOVE INTO THE HOUSE WITH ME. HE DISAPPEARED AND CALLED ME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

MY BIRTHDAY, ALL THOSE PEOPLE, ALL THAT LOVE, IT'S BULLSHIT. I'M NOT WORTH IT.

THAT WAS THE DEMON MY BROTHER DAVID STOKES WAS TORMENTED BY.





WE CAN NOT GET THROUGH THIS LIFE



IF WE DO NOT LEARN TO LOVE OURSELVES



IF YOU CAN NOT FIND LOVE FOR YOURSELF, THEN PUT FAITH IN THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU WHO LOVE YOU

AND TRUST THERE IS A REASON THEY DO. LET THAT BE YOUR LOVE AT FIRST



TRUST IT BLINDLY. NURTURE IT.



IT MAY BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH



WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT YOUR FRIEND WHO DIED TOO SOON? WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAVED IF THE RIGHT PERSON HAD WALKED BY. HOW DO YOU SUM UP SOMEONE'S ENTIRE LIFE IN A SINGLE PARAGRAPH? HOW DO YOU RISE TO THE TASK OF SAYING THE LAST WORD? SO, I WON'T SAY THE LAST WORD OR PASS ON SOME OBVIOUSNESS ABOUT SOMEONE BEING FUNNY, SMART, SARCASTIC, GENEROUS. I WILL LET YOU LIVE WITH THE GOOD MEMORIES YOU MAY HAVE OF DAVID. HE'LL LIVE AS LONG AS ONE OF US STILL REMEMBERS HIM, RIGHT?

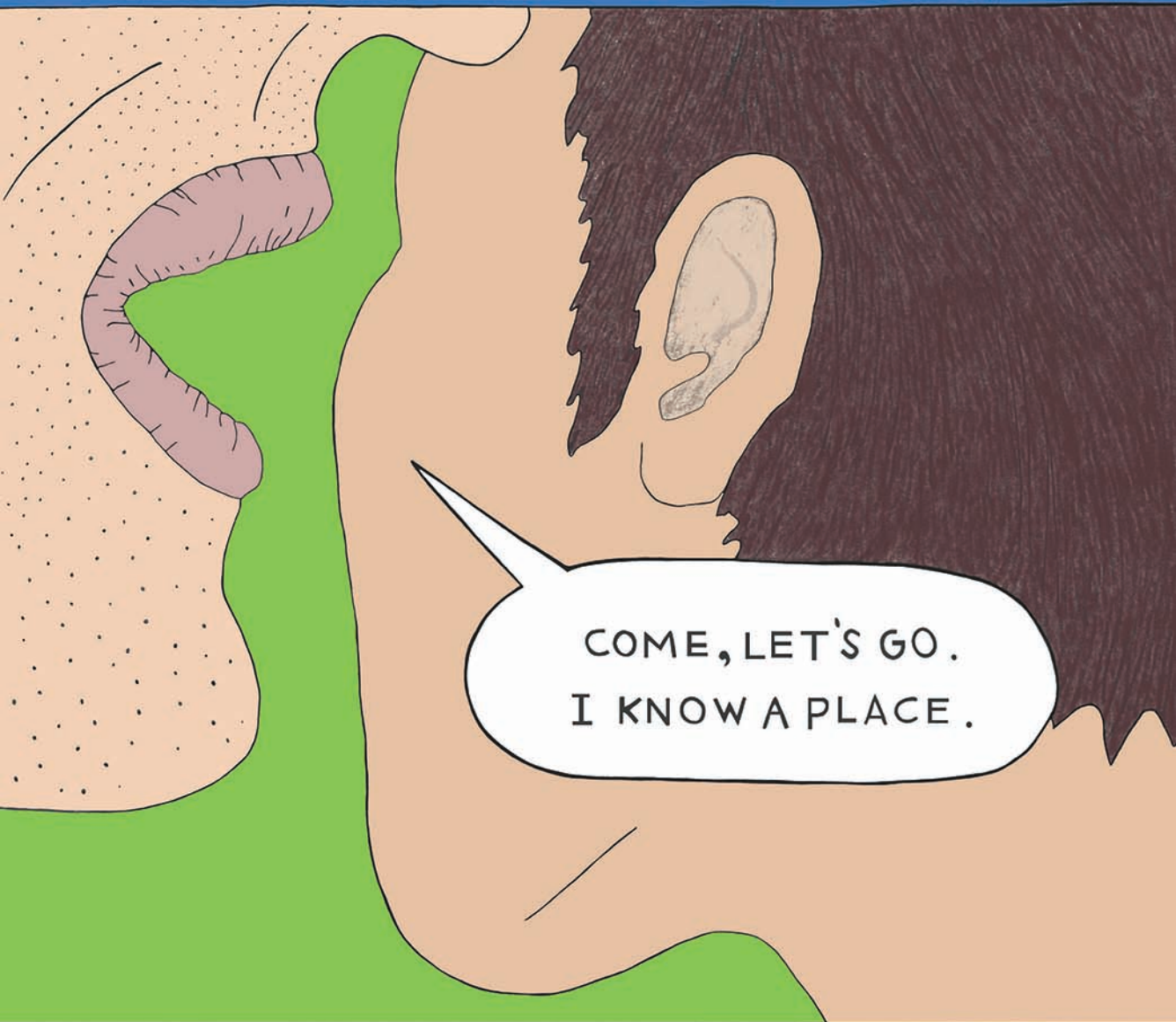
I WORK IN THE CIVIC CENTER AREA OF SAN FRANCISCO AND FREQUENTLY STOP TO HELP PEOPLE IN DISTRESS. ONE DAY, I SAW A MAN LYING ON THE GROUND. NOT BREATHING, HIS LIPS AND FACE TURNING BLUE. I CALLED 911. WHILE WAITING FOR THE PARAMEDICS, A WOMAN APPEARED NEXT TO US AND PULLED A NALOXONE INJECTION KIT OUT OF HER BACKPACK. SHE GAVE HIM AN INJECTION AND THE MAN OPENED HIS EYES AND STARTED BREATHING. THE WOMAN TOLD ME SHE HAD BEEN TRAINED TO USE NALOXONE BY A HARM REDUCTION PROGRAM IN S.F.

NALOXONE, ALSO KNOWN AS NARCAN®, IS A MEDICATION USED TO COUNTER THE EFFECTS OF AN OPIOID OVERDOSE. NALOXONE CAN BE ADMINISTERED BY MINIMALLY TRAINED LAY PEOPLE ON THE STREET, WHICH MAKES IT IDEAL FOR TREATING OVERDOSES FROM OPIOIDS SUCH AS HEROIN AND FENTANYL. THE DRUG OVERDOSE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION (DOPE) PROJECT IS A GROUP THAT TRAINS PEOPLE TO USE NALOXONE. THEY ALSO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT SAFER DRUG USE AND CONDUCT HUNDREDS OF OVERDOSE PREVENTION TRAININGS EACH YEAR. PEOPLE TRAINED BY THE DOPE PROJECT USED NALOXONE TO REVERSE APPROXIMATELY 2,600 OVERDOSES IN 2019.



PHOTO BY JEREMIAH GREGORY
PAINTING (OPPOSITE)
BY A. MALAKAI





COME, LET'S GO.
I KNOW A PLACE.

**PREY
PRAY**