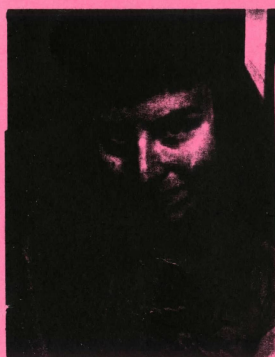


matilda

stories and comics



spring
2001

The many faces of



matilda*

Well, it's been raining for three days straight, so I guess this really is the spring issue, despite the fact that it's being put out in June. Before I forget, I must give you all the answers to the "where are matilda's hats?" challenge that appeared in the winter issue. Of course no one except Dan The Persnickity actually complained about the answers not being given right away. For Dan and anyone else who desperately wanted to know but was too shy to ask, Scott had my brown Value Village toque, my room-mate and her friend Cami shared the blame for absconding with the black toque that I got in Toronto, and Lucy gratefully accepted the grey "old lady" hat that I handed her when I realized she was hatless.

Spring is not always the best time for me, but I always forget that until the season is actually upon me, spinning everything into chaos. Sure wish I could remember to give myself a bit of a warning. This year, fortunately, it has been good chaos, but chaos nonetheless. I've just finally quit my job at the healthfood store, which is quite a relief. As of late, my love/hate relationship with that job was veering sharply into the "hate" zone. I was tired of dealing with nutty new age bosses, constantly rotating staff, and obnoxious, ignorant customers. I was also tired of working from 2 PM until 10 PM every night. Since I quit there's been a whole lot of walking around thinking, Wow. This is what five PM looks like! I get to see sunsets and go to movies and all sorts of interesting things.

So the best part of leaving one job is that I got two extra great ones to take its place. I've got four shifts a week now at an awesome home daycare that is fifteen minutes away from my house. I'm just crazy enough to love working in a room full of children under the age of five. You know you're meant for a certain job when getting peed on and bitten doesn't ruin your day. The woman who runs the place is an organic-food-lovin' feminist who likes to involve me in non-judgemental discussions about sex toys while we're preparing morning snack.

And now, thanks to the lovely and aforementioned Dan, I'm employed part-time at the legendary Octopus Books. I'm going to be doing community outreach for the store, so I don't even have to deal with customers. Today I got paid to paint my desk and mull things over while listening to Bikini Kill in the store's attic. What could be better? This is, incidentally, the fifth place where Dan and I have worked together during the course of our eight year friendship. We've suffered indignities for lousey wages while treeplanting, slinging coffee, pretending to sell over priced used clothing, and hocking healthfood. This job promises to be the best on our list and we're already planning long gossip sessions by the water cooler which happens to be about two feet from my desk. A lot of things are two feet from my desk. It's a pretty small office.

The band has been doing great, thanks for asking. We've played a few shows lately and garnered the odd adoring fan (often they're adoring Missy or Nina, but Natasha and I try not to get jealous). Scott just joined Slow Parker, the band that Natasha and Missy's sweeties play in, so I guess our bands are officially married now in a horrible but fascinating sitcom-esque way. I'll be movin' on in with that boy as of August, and I'll be getting me a post office box address around that time for ease of zining, so I have to be a big dork for this issue and just give you all my fe-mail address. Sit tight, and you'll get the PB address soon, I promise. Thanks to everyone who wrote me amazing letters after you read the review in Broken Pencil. I was one happy lady, getting all that mail. Write some more! I am waiting. Until we meet again, everyone take care.

♡xo M.

elephants



The Breeders are covering the Beatles on borrowed headphones as the wheels of the bus make revolutions below me, the rhythm of rubber scraping pavement pushing me closer to home. With one foot wedged between the seat in front of me and the window frame, I am reclining, thinking of a walk home from work not long ago. My feet and Paul's beside me were making their own rhythms on ice and concrete. I have been spending a lot of time with Paul, but not because our relationship is a romantic one. In fact, thankfully, it's quite the opposite. It is the kind of un-romance that allows for clarity of thought and deed. We can spit out plans to travel to Winnipeg together and in the same breath share plots for very individual revolutions.

As we walk, Paul is telling me about elephants. He is telling me that someone has discovered that elephants can understand human music and that this knowledge has led to the formation of an elephant band. When he first says band I think only of a loosely knit group, like a band of thieves, but then I realize that he means band as is a real band, a musical band, a rock band. This means more. A band of elephants.

"They understand rhythm," he tells me, "That's the main thing, but melody too. They play instruments and they know when to come in."

I wonder quickly how it is that Paul can find poetry in science experiments.

Two days later in the kitchen at work, Rachel, the new girl, asks me if I've heard of the man who is on the cover of the magazine she is holding. It is an old magazine, but one I have never looked at. When I asked Ryan to describe Rachel to me a few days earlier, he said that she was just like me. I am paying close attention to her now, trying to see my own reflection and wondering, what does it take for one thing to be just like something else? Can one person be only a cover version of another?

The man on the cover of the magazine has come up with what sounds to me like a difficult version of science. He wants people to examine why certain things happen that can not be explained by human intelligence. Sure, we may be able to hammer out some logical reasons behind the ability of elephants to play recognizable music, but how do we explain, say, a dog who always knows when his owner is coming home?

"But it's true, they do know," Rachel insists, sitting with her hands folded in her lap, "A dog knows when his owner is coming home. You'll see him go to the window or the door and wait. It could be vibrations, rhythms, something that we can't feel or quantify with science. But it's real for the dog. So it's real. Period."



I borrowed the headphones from Scott, the only person in my urban life with a dog. Our relationship is romantic and hence feels unscientific at the best of times. Clarity is not an option. I am forced to run on unexplained faith. The dog is named Jakob, a handsome rottweiler rescued from a junkyard, fiercely loyal, always waiting at the window.

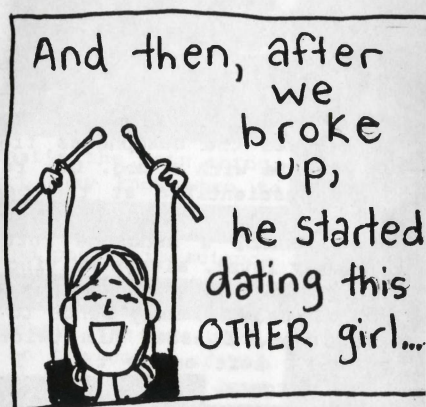
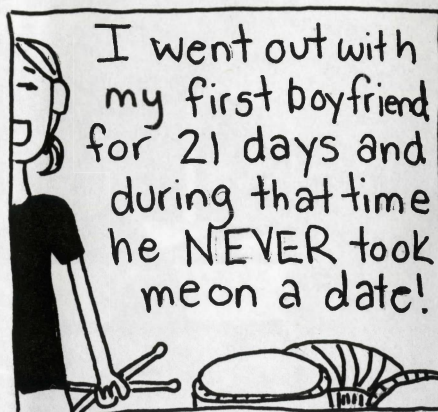
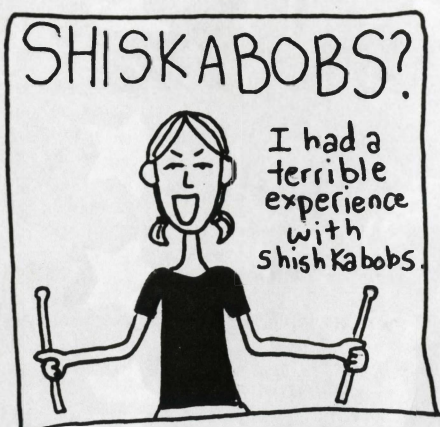
Scott is in too many bands to count. In most of them, he plays the drums. I asked him twice to bring the headphones to me before I left on my trip. I should have only asked once. He never forgets.

It is hard to leave your home and the people who you love or don't love. It gets harder to break yourself away from the vibrations of one place and accustom yourself to the beat of another. I have been visiting a place where I used to live and am happy to be coming back to the place that feels like home these days.

Can Jakob hear the rhythms that pulse within these borrowed headphones as the wheels move me a little bit closer to home with each passing beat? And are these the same rhythms that flow through the veins in Scott's almost transparent arms telling his hands what to do with the drumsticks as they crash and snap on stage? And why does it seem so improbable that elephants can play music, when it's a simple truth that each elephant has a beating heart that's bigger than any two human hearts put together?

It is so easy to be a creature here today on this bus. A creature like any other with a rhythm inside of me. Pushing me forwards. Driving me home.

Six panel Misse



oh yes!

my mom

CBC radio

loud guitar

the butchies "3"

valencia by michelle tea

thee headcoatees "punk girls"

sesame st.

nineteenseventyeight

Mr. Lady records

sophomore level psychology

punk planet

baklava

soy ice cream

radical cheerleaders

mary jane shoes

my first real trip to Montreal
(thanks, Paul)

victoria's ladyfest travel diary!!!
(get it: sixtringrrrl@gurlmail.com)

green drinks

quilt making

oh no.

police

lack of decent day care

Elgin Street Goons

minimum wage

lawns

high tech crap

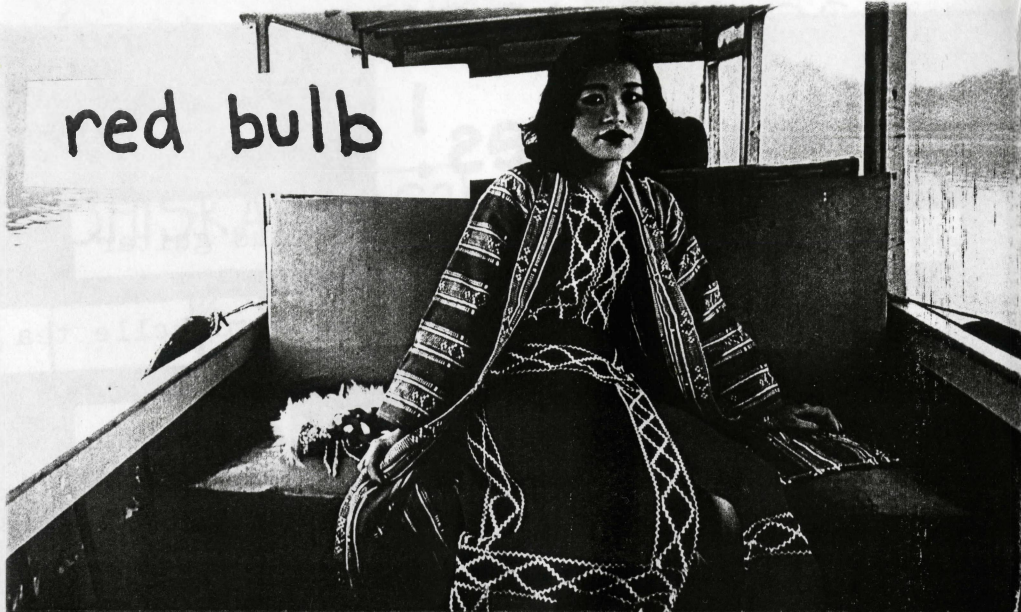
car exhaust

nazi graffiti

whoever slashed my bike tires

skyrocketing rents

red bulb



There is something frightening about a red light bulb. Even in a place like this, an underground club where I'm bound to know everyone present by at most three degrees of separation. And there aren't just red light bulbs, there are some yellow ones too. The yellow ones are not frightening. Red is a warning colour, the colour of blood and human mouths, and once I saw a woman doing a performance art piece about being abducted while she swung a red light on a cord around her head. The rest of the room was in darkness and the revolving light gave the effect of driving at night passing streetlight after streetlight as you move farther away from your starting point. A red light bulb is what would be screwed into the ceiling of the attic hideaway of a horror movie psychokiller.

Fear is like hunger: hard to ignore and it only gets worse. Once, not too long ago, I was standing at the bus stop waiting to go to Scott's. It was late, and hardly anyone was around. It certainly FELT deserted anyway, in spite of the police station sitting about fifty feet away. This is, incidentally, the police station in front of which sits the cruiser whose license plate bears the numbers 666. I'm not making this up. I try to just ignore cops, but it's hard. I know they're just expecting me to get attacked. It's what happens to women. Hunted. Why, when I am stronger and faster and heavier than my boyfriend am I more afraid to walk around after dark than he is?

This is why; because when I was standing there at the bus stop this guy was reaching his arm out towards me when I wasn't looking. And when I turned around to ask him what time it was, he looked scared and ran away without answering. And I looked around, moved my back against the brick wall behind me, and just kept waiting for the bus. There's nothing else to do in situations like these. If I stopped what I was doing every time something scary happened, I would never leave my house.

So tonight in this club while the red lights are scaring me I'm still enjoying myself and breathing deeply 'cause we're smoke free in here, and I'm sitting beside my friend who I came with and she's smiling at all the people she knows and talking about her new striped socks and drinking chocolate soy milk. And maybe it's the red light bulb that's bringing these thoughts into the front of my brain, but for some reason I start telling the story about what I thought of her before I met her when all I knew was that something really bad had happened to her, one of those things that I'm prepared for when I'm standing at the bus stop, imagining the worst.

And you don't need to know what it was. You've probably imagined every disaster that can happen to anyone, so you've probably imagined what happened to her. In ancient greek theatre they let all the worst tragedies happen off stage, And someone told me about a movie with a gang rape where you just saw the door to a room swinging open, swinging closed. What we imagine is often worse than what happens. Or sometimes, it's perfectly accurate.

I tell my friend that I thought she'd be tough in an inaccessible way, rather than in the friendly way that she actually is. Before I can stop myself, I bring up that bad thing in her past. I tell her that I'd heard about it before I met her, and it helped me form my opinion. Her face changes, almost imperceptibly, but I can see it changing. I do my part and change the subject. Soon, the band comes on and we are freed of the responsibilities of conversation.



So why did I bring it up? Why does the fear that has been planted inside of me make me dwell on things that are better left in the past? All I can think, as I sit there, trying to look tranquil and watch the music, is that by pointing out that it happened to her, I am also pointing out that it didn't happen to me. It makes me feel terrible, like a bad and selfish person.

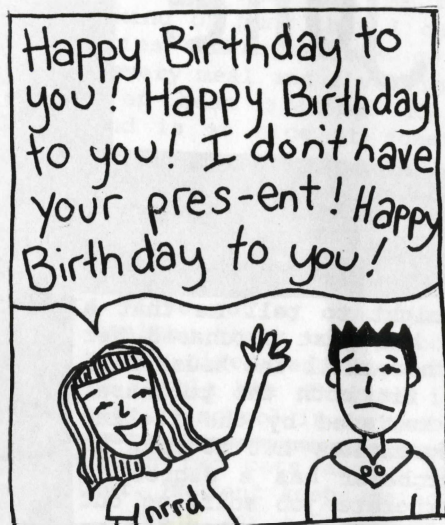
In front of me is a girl sitting in a wheelchair. I am excited to see her, excited to know that this room is accessible and to know that she is able to come in and enjoy herself like everyone else. But when I look for a little bit longer I recognize her as the girl who was standing at the concession stand beside me just a few minutes earlier. And I look at the people who are sitting with her at the table and notice that one is sitting in a barber's chair and the other in a dentist's. These chairs, and the wheelchair, are just cast offs, found by the club owners and put in the centre of the floor for quiet shows like these ones where the wooden benches overflow with resting bodies. I horrify myself again by thinking that I would feel weird sitting in a wheelchair because I do not need to use one. Why do I have this desire to separate myself from the challenging or painful experiences of others?

And where is the line between something actually happening to you and the acknowledgement that it could happen? I hate it when people think that a woman being attacked is something that just happens, a law of nature or science, the sadness of the weaker sex. But I also hate myself for being so quick to point out that it hasn't happened to me. Yet. It seems that there's nothing to do except choose to, as Kathleen Hanna says, "be scared and fight back". I will be scared when the dangerous creeps of the world reach out their hands for me at the bus stop. I will fight back if they touch me. And I will live my life with the belief that when something like that happens, to me or anyone else, it is not an inevitability, it is an injustice.

For the record, my friend was scared, she fought back and she saved herself. She says it is a miracle that she is alive and happy today. It may be a miracle, but it's also just the way things ought to be.

4 reasons why I'm dorky

march/april 2001



① I got Scott all excited about a book I ordered for his birthday, but I ordered it from the wrong place and it never came.



② I was a whole half-hour late meeting Paul + Iva for brunch because it was daylight savings time and I forgot.



③ While my friends were out partying on a Saturday night I stayed home and watched the ENTIRE 'Temptation Island' series (on tape!) while quilting.



④ I somehow managed to dump an entire glass of water over my own head while walking down the stairs at work (don't ask.)



julie

**Q. How can you overcome this
"emotional" perspiration?**

My mother called me the other night to tell me that a family friend- same age as me- had just purchased her first house. My mom joked about how small the house was, (would it, at 800 square feet, fit both the purchaser and her boyfriend?) and I was relieved by the feeling that the call was to convey information, not to make me feel inadequate. This house purchaser has a degree in environmental science and a corporate job sniffing out loopholes for a Canadian oil giant. When I asked her on the phone at Christmas if she'd made lots of friends out there in Calgary, she said "Well, the company has this great mentorship program where you can go out for lunch with people who are higher up than you are."

The thing is, while I may think that some of her choices are ludicrous, I do honestly believe that she is happy. I doubt she would be happy in the life I'm leading, no matter how great I think it is. So I'm sure that when her mom calls to tell her that I'm moving into a semi-detached rental on the wrong side of town she'll scoff and feel self-satisfied just as I did when that call came from my mother.

But all this got me thinking along very simple lines. Self-satisfied? Hell, yeah! For the first time in years, I feel like I'm living the life that I want. It may sound nuts to the oil company employees and house-buyers of the world, but right now I can't think of why I wouldn't want to be here, in front of my computer in a second-hand dress, with the Weakerthans on vinyl spinning round and round on the turntable.

Sure there are things to complain about, I won't even trivialize horrid global injustices by tossing them down here in a token sentence to show you how aware I am. I am more interested in talking about the fact that the things that I am (for the most part) in control of, are finally, peacefully under control. Counting my blessings instead of sheep, as Rosemary Clooney would say.

I know what to yell back when men yell at me from cars. I've got a bike and a skateboard and a good pair of legs. No car. A job where I get to hang out with children under the age of six. When I go to the record store there are things put aside for me, and I run into people I know who want me to recommend "a girl band that's kind of punk that I can dance to". I am invited to parties and sometimes go. I eat organic food at almost every meal and I've finally figured out the finer points of bean soaking. My bed is comfortable, my boyfriend is so nice it sometimes confuses me, and my friends appear out of nowhere downtown on sunny days like this one.

I make music with a bunch of girls who rock like Gibraltor, make zines that get good reviews in magazines that I like, and make vegan cakes that thrill my co-workers. I've got my own room where I can sew quilts, and a healthy stack of records by the window. I'm not sick, rarely tired, and I get three days off every week. I have a little bit of money in my savings account. I'm going back to school in September.

I live with two cats and a room-mate and we all like each other. My rent keeps going down because I live in a co-op. I went on a vacation last summer that will inspire me for years to come. I get mail almost every day from people I've met and people I haven't. I just unpacked all my summer clothes and hung them in my closet. I'm washing my sheets and towels because a friend is coming to stay with me this weekend. There's a May Day celebration on Saturday and a big bowl of chili on the stove.

And this is my life. I made it this way. It will get harder in the future I'm sure, but it will also get easier. Whatever happens, I have a feeling that I'll be okay, because I've figured out what "the good life" is for me. And the best part is, I figured it out for myself. The knowledge is there, stuck in my head and making me happier than anything money could buy.

Even a house.



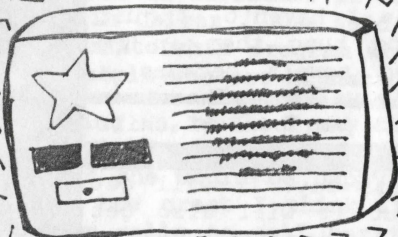
before I go insane...

Something
great happened
while I was on
my cash
shift at work
today...

there I was - bored to tears -
writing anti-retail punk
anthems in my head...

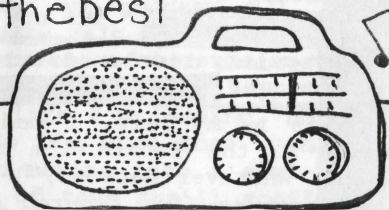


when on came the
intercom.



beep! hissssss...

At the other end
the radio in the
office was playing
the best



Crappy job anthem EVER!

"TWENNY
TWENNY
TWENNY
fowah hours,
ta go-o-o"



"... I wanna
be
SEDATED..."





Matilda is
between
addresses
but you
can reach
her c/o
matilda
@

BUST.com

send a
message
and I'll
send you
a current
address for
REAL MAIL!

Oh, how
I LOVE
real
mail!

UPPER CANADA VILLAGES
OF ONTARIO'S NORTH
SEAWAY VALLEY TOURIST REGION

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