

S P R S U M  
I n G m e R  
A U T W I N  
U M t e R

time zones and state lines

Hi, this is alan

I write the zine Pressed Between the Pages. I used to write fiction — the patched-elbow-jacket-wearing-author kind — and then I was handed a zine. This is a split with Alex Wacke, who writes Brainscan, which is one of the best zines I've been handed.

Alex and I had the idea to write this while corresponding through e-mail and phone. She's from Portland and I'm from the Chicago-Land area. It's called Timezones & Statelines. It has a nice feel of symmetry that two kids who live so far apart, meeting for the first time, are writing about being so far apart, while in the same room.

It's Halloween today, we were planning on passing out candy to all the little trick-or-treaters, but Ⓐ her train was late, and Ⓑ we really didn't have any trick-or-treaters stop by.

We finally dressed up in our Halloween costumes around midnight, while taking camera phone pictures of each other. She showed me all the clip-art she brought to make this zine with, one of her journals, some other fun stuff. And, I learned how to use....

rub on letters

# summer

She couldn't turn her head to look at me.  
Physically her muscles were capable, and  
the doctors hadn't restrained her in any way.

But still, she couldn't.

A tear cut through her dirty cheek, like running  
mascara, only, she never wore make-up. She  
whispered, past blackened lips and a plastic tube,

"I'm sorry."

She squeezed my palm tighter and  
turned her head further away.

"You're Alan, right?" He stopped in front of my desk  
holding three wads of paper towel to his chest.

"Yeah?" I looked around the office, confused.

# WINTER

"Anne thought you might want these," he gently set  
whatever were wrapped up in the paper towels down  
between my opened monthly planner and stapler. He  
stood there for a second, then turned and walked out  
as I reached for one of the 'gifts.'

# SPRING

"You ever notice how they skip every other parking spot, man," he chuckles through a raspy throat, "like their cars are claustrophobic or something."

How does he know that word?

I pulled into one of the open spots, leaving an empty space between me and the next car. He was right.



# AUTUMN

She hadn't seen me cry up to that point and, staring at the opposite wall, she wouldn't see me cry this time either.

"Do you still love me?"

"I'm on Raynor Ave..." "I don't know what happened..." my lungs kept me from finishing any sentence I managed to start, grasping for air as I was only seven blocks from her house. "I don't know... her dad called... said I needed to come over and ride.... with him up to the hospital."

"Something's happened... she did something."

### summer

I hadn't seen Anne in over two years. We were, once, engaged to be married and living together.

I heard through our mutual friend, Paul, that she was reengaged. It was two months ago; Paul invited us both to his annual Halloween bash and warned me she might bring 'him.' Paul's Halloween parties were legendary throughout high school.

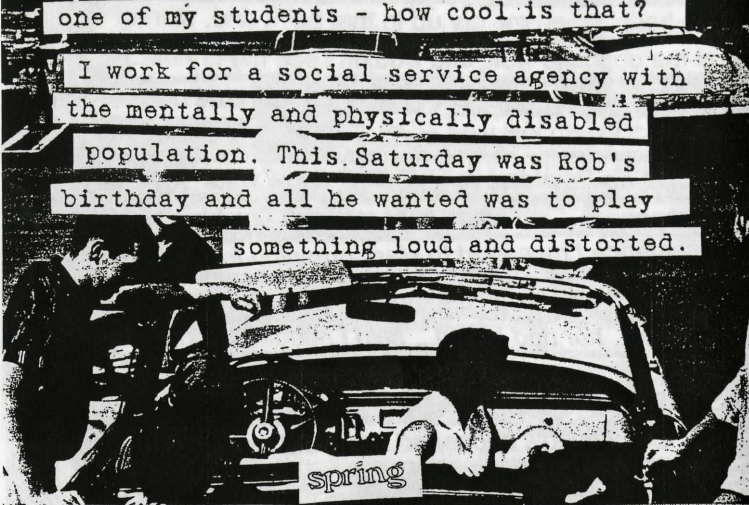
### winter

We always ended up watching The Warlock, or Halloween on Laserdisc while his mom made German pizza and grotesque prosthetics. She was into latex.

When you walk in to his family room, a life-sized butler, made out of this latex mold stuff his mom used, would greet you. It wore a full tuxedo, carried a silver serving tray and sported a dangling bloodied eye – he had it all.

we were at Brandonlino's, a local guitar shop. I was on the clock and about to go play in a guitar shop with one of my students - how cool is that?

I work for a social service agency with the mentally and physically disabled population. This Saturday was Rob's birthday and all he wanted was to play something loud and distorted.



spring

She handed me her diary.

It was cold from sitting in her bag on the passenger side floor. The binding used to be black, but the years had added stickers and gel pens, and, is that...?

Yeah, housepaint. It was so hard to see in the muted streetlamp shining through the windshield.

autumn

*"I thought she was doing better Sir, she isn't hanging out with Candice anymore, she isn't drinking anymore,*

*and*

*she..."*

*SHE WAS DRINKING ?!*

*"Well, not a lot but... she would... you know, have a drink every now and then at a party or something."*

*Her dad looked both ways as the van paused at an intersection. He looked disappointed. How could I have just said that?*

*summer*

And this wasn't just for the last week of October, no, he stood there year round. I remember him wearing a Santa hat right above that dangling eyeball one year.

Anne and I spent every Halloween at Paul's during our relationship. Playing with antique swords in the backyard, daring each other to break into the church bell tower down the road, starting one-night goth bands with Paul's brother.

But after the split, neither of us went back to Paul's Halloween parties, for the real fear of running into each other with 'him' there. After unwrapping one of the paper-toweled presents, I knew that that had been her new fiancé standing awkwardly in front of my desk moments ago.

Rob didn't have any of his disabilities before the accident. His motorcycle flipped, with him on it, due to poor riding skills and a ton of LSD.

"How long have you been playing, son?"

"He doesn't." I answered.

For the next 20 minutes, Rob filled the store with random notes, not quite equaling a chord, but not soloing either. Basically it was a mess. An amplified mess. But Rob couldn't stop spring smiling.

I flipped through quickly – stapled bookmarks and envelope halves – she files quotes too; I've been guilty of that since forever.

"I want you to write the ending."

I got to the last page and glanced over to confirm. She nodded and moved towards me in her seat, the cushion groaned in the cold.

autumn

"It was diphenoxylate." The doctor used the word as if we all understood. Her parents both being medical professionals probably did, and I didn't care to at the moment, so he just continued. "We've done what we can to make her comfortable, she's going to be

I guess 'okay' is relative.

okay."

She didn't tell me about the possible pregnancy until long after she had been processed and released from the hospital. Maybe the possibility was one of the reasons for what she did. She didn't want to talk about it. And things weren't the same after that.

summer

He had dropped off three ceramic Christmas tree ornaments.

During the last few months of our relationship, she started taking classes at the community college. She took a nursing class, which lead to my blood pressure being routinely taken whenever she felt the need to practice, she posed for one of the life drawing classes, which lead to some silent slivers of jealousy and she took a ceramics class, which lead to the ornaments now sitting on my desk.

We ended up staying after-school one evening. I went to pick her up and met her in class. We made three ceramic ornaments together to decorate our first Christmas tree with.

winter

Back in the car I told him it was time  
to actually get to work. We were  
supposed to be returning applications,  
applying for a handful of positions he  
found last week.



He tried to complain a little, but was  
still too excited from rockin' out.

He popped open my glove compartment to  
grab his pens and papers.

spring

I dug a pen out of my pocket, clicking it  
open as she grabbed my wrist.

"Not in front of me!"

The lit-up orange and teal controls from  
the dashboard reflected in her dark nail  
polish, where her nails weren't chewed  
down. She pulled away. Reaching for  
under the dashboard, she gently set her  
diary in my glove compartment.

autumn

We still took our trips to Bloomington. But drove instead of taking the train. And we were heading down there for weddings and reunions – not to break into her aunt's house and borrow the bed for a few hours before heading to the coffee/hot cocoa shop.

She sat and listened to the new songs I had written, but stopped tapping her foot.

I still volunteered my arm every time she needed to practice taking blood pressure for class – but she no longer ran her fingers down my arm while pumping the hand piece.

summer

The uneven ornaments were beautiful; the pain in my stomach was brilliant. I quickly balled-up the paper towels around them and exited to the employee parking lot. It had been snowing most of the morning. The white pavement was unscuffed save for my hurried footprints.

I cried into the cold

passenger seat of my car

for about two minutes.

A week later – Rachael must have had a bad day at work. She slammed the front door, knocking around our wreath and spent a good hour in the kitchen alone before saying anything.

winter

"What's this, man?"

He pulled out a notebook covered in stickers and gel pens, and housepaint.

"Somebody really fucked this diary up."

He chuckled again, tossing the notebook back in, and closed the glove compartment.

I had almost forgotten about it. Rachel gave it to me before I left. I was supposed to write the ending, but hadn't even read it yet.

spri

"When you get in from Chicago you can give it back." her voice cracked on the last word, but she refused to clear her throat and acknowledge it.

"And I want a proper ending, not one of those, 'and I realized, as I sat up in bed, it was all just a horrible nightmare' endings."

She let out a nervous giggle.

And so did I, I think.

One Wednesday, our regular day off together, she picked me up to head out and see a movie. Most Wednesdays we either went to hang out at the bookstore, or to see a budget movie, or stayed at home and give 'hump day' its name.

But this Wednesday, she stopped short of the mall in a near-by parking lot. She slid her engagement ring off her finger and set it on the dashboard.

I don't remember anymore what she said just then. I don't remember what I said, or how long it took for her to start the car again and drive us back to our house. I remember it was cold.

summer

"Al, are you busy?" She broke the silence. "Can you open one of your presents?"

We decided about a week ago that her and I were celebrating Christmas alone next weekend as we both have family in the area to visit, so I thought it was weird she wanted me out by the tree.

"Just open the small one, it would make me feel so much better."

winter

I pawed at the folded and taped corners of the oddly shaped and weighted gift. I found a few layers of tissue paper inside protecting a little glass ornament.

"Watch your language, Rob."

"Sorry, man."

She had filled the whole journal save  
for the last two pages. Those were mine,  
and I had done nothing with them.

Nothing with her, since leaving.

I should give her a call. After work.

What time would it be there? Oh, same  
timezone, different state though  
spring.

I am so bad at good-bye's.

I looked past her for a moment,  
through her front porch window,  
to the pink, yellow and green twinkling  
stars on her living room Christmas tree –  
it was always up by Halloween.

They were the only colors puncturing  
the gray winternight blanket that  
surrounded us outside.

autumn

I remember calling my mom and asking her if I could stay the night with her and my step-dad, John.

I remember Anne coming into the bedroom and lying next to me on the bed.

She said she was sorry.

She said she never meant for any of this.

She said a lot of things,

before she said good-bye.

summer

"Now you'll still have one, even when we run out."

It was a glass, sparkly can of Coca-Cola ornament.

"And you can put away those other ones too."

"There," she said, a hundred tiny blue lights illuminating the whole room, "now I feel better."

She was referring to the three ornaments Anne's new fiancé had kindly dropped off at my office last week. I came home that afternoon and stuck them on mine and Rachael's tree. I carefully pulled them off and set them in the kitchen garbage can. Then hung my new ornament alone on the tree.



It was one of those dreams where you don't want to wake up. You want to see what happens. So he tried to let the dream flow in his conscious mind. Paul and I escaped the aliens and got to our ships where we flew to the desert in Utah and met up with other Salt Lake punk kids with cool fighter pilot names. He was "Maxx Dig Slacky" others were "Luke Ludicrous", "Steve Fox", and "Pogo Mike".

I GUESS WE EVENTUALLY SAVED THE WORLD AND STUFF, BUT IT LEFT ME NEEDING A COOL FIGHTER PILOT NAME.

Hopefully she'll recognize my voice,  
or the area code.

I don't want to have to tell her who  
I am. She wouldn't forget, would she?

I forgot. Why couldn't she? Well,  
forgot about her journal, but not  
about her.

Rob points to the next strip mall..

"I think this is the stop, man."

spring

She leaned over and I met her kiss.

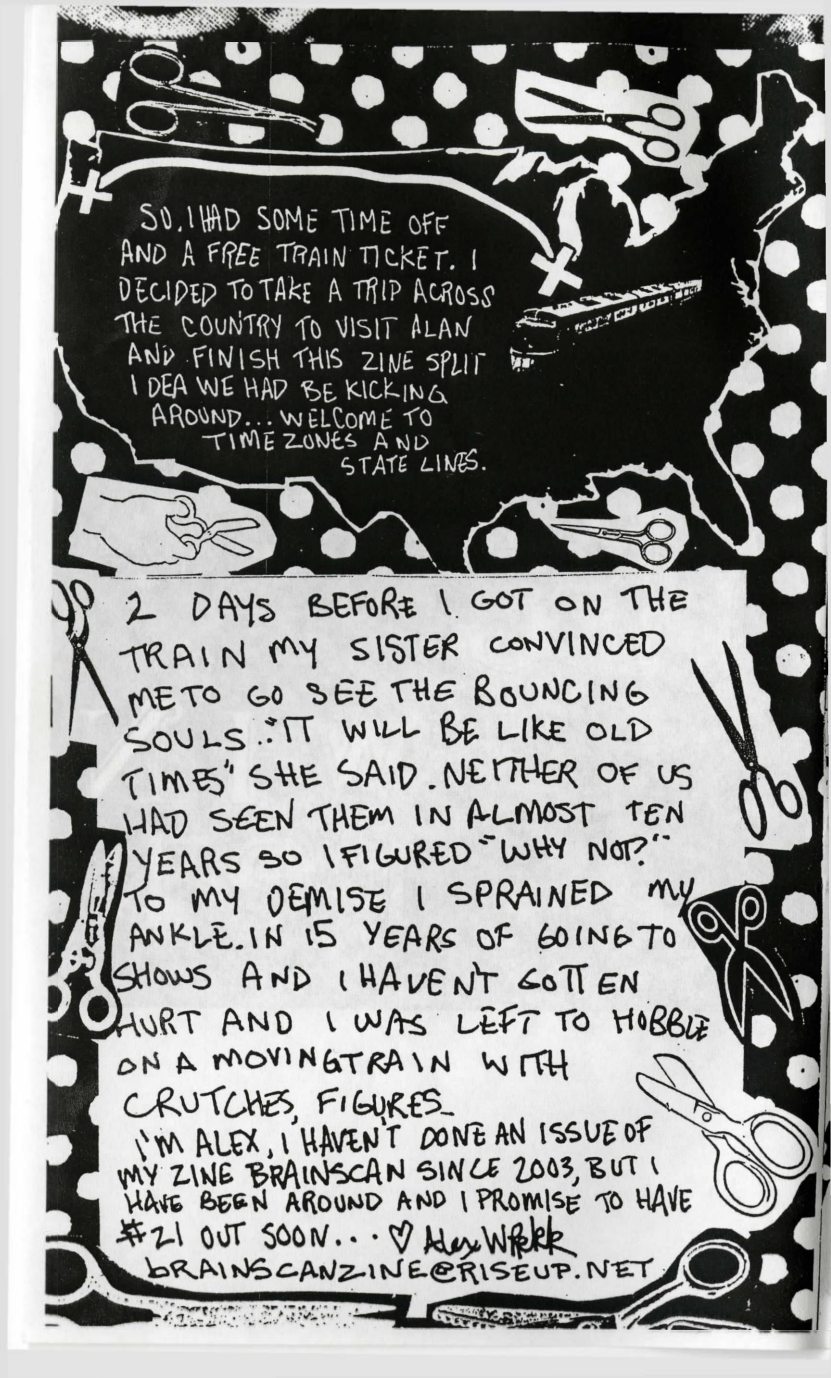
Even before our lips were done, she had  
her bag in one hand and the door handle  
in the other. With one motion the car  
door opened, closed, and then muffled  
the sounds of her shoes crunching the  
snow up the walk.

The twinkling stars went out some time  
before I had pulled away.

autumn

state lines and time zones

S P R S U M  
I n G m e R  
A U T W I N  
U M t e R



SO, I HAD SOME TIME OFF  
AND A FREE TRAIN TICKET. I  
DECIDED TO TAKE A TRIP ACROSS  
THE COUNTRY TO VISIT ALAN  
AND FINISH THIS ZINE SPLIT  
IDEA WE HAD BE KICKING  
AROUND... WELCOME TO  
TIME ZONES AND  
STATE LINES.

2 DAYS BEFORE I GOT ON THE  
TRAIN MY SISTER CONVINCED  
ME TO GO SEE THE BOUNCING  
SOULS. "IT WILL BE LIKE OLD  
TIMES" SHE SAID. NEITHER OF US  
HAD SEEN THEM IN ALMOST TEN  
YEARS SO I FIGURED "WHY NOT?"  
TO MY DEMISE I SPRAINED MY  
ANKLE. IN 15 YEARS OF GOING TO  
SHOWS AND I HAVEN'T GOTTEN  
HURT AND I WAS LEFT TO HOBBLE  
ON A MOVING TRAIN WITH  
CRUTCHES, FIGURES.

I'M ALEX, I HAVEN'T DONE AN ISSUE OF  
MY ZINE BRAINSCAN SINCE 2003, BUT I  
HAVE BEEN AROUND AND I PROMISE TO HAVE  
#21 OUT SOON... ♡ Alex Wrrkk  
BRAINSCANZINE@RISEUP.NET



**DECEMBER 1998**

Two drinks in as many hours was nothing really, but I had never driven after drinking anything before.

**I had to leave**

**Too much was out of context**

**winter**

**MARCH 1997**

**HIS ROOM WAS LIT BY A  
75 WATT BULBED LAMP  
THAT SAT ON A STICKER  
ENCRUSTED FOOTLOCKER  
BY THE BED...**

spring

**OCTOBER 1997**

**'what should my name be?'** I asked Paul  
as I kicked a rock  
through my college parking lot.

**'I think you should use your middle  
initial in it'** he said, as he watched the rock  
slide to a stop.

**'I like the name 'Alex' for a girl'** I said.

autumn

*a single line from a song*

*freezes me in time...*

I picture myself stuck  
in the summer of 97  
with a choppy purple  
and orange A-line made  
by putting all my hair in  
a ponytail at the base of  
my neck and cutting the  
rest off.



summer

**Too much you out of character**

So I rescued the rest of my six pack from the fridge and hopped in my car. I sat there for a few seconds staring out at the winter street from my frosty car windows. I watched my visible heavy breath leave my body and hover in front of my face as I contemplated the scene in the kitchen I had just witnessed.

I started up the car and turned up the stereo to the fast music only to drive slowly down back streets. It was the same mixtape that had been there hours before, but the songs had now taken on new meaning as I lumbered 20 blocks through cold vancant streets back to my apartment.

winter

Actually, it was just a mattress and box springs on the floor. The shade that softened the light was graffitied in jr. high boredom, decorated in blue and black Sharpie marker with names of bands that played on KJQ, the alternative radio station we both grew up listening to, bands like: the Flying Lizards, Jane's Addiction, and Depeche Mode.

spring

I had been thinking about names all day long and scribbling the possibilities in my notebook through class like some sort of crushed out high school girl adding a boy's last name to hers.

**'What about WRECK for a last name?'**

Paul asked.

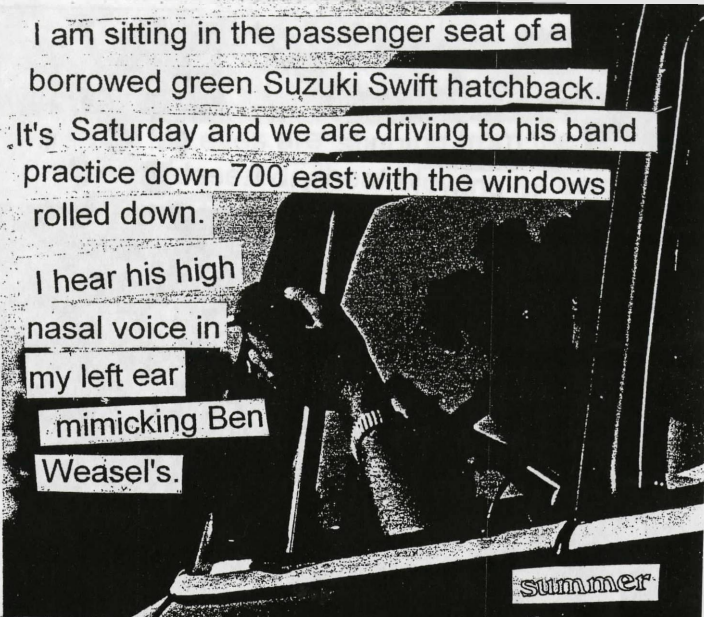
**ALEX WRECK? I like that but it reminds me of Fat Wreck Chords'**

**'You could spell it with two K's'**

ammmmm

I am sitting in the passenger seat of a borrowed green Suzuki Swift hatchback. It's Saturday and we are driving to his band practice down 700 east with the windows rolled down.

I hear his high nasal voice in my left ear mimicking Ben Weasel's.

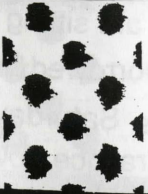


summer

I secluded myself in my apartment with my slightly off key voice and buried my head in music that would give me the strength to put you out of my life. We had been in a holding pattern of arms length distance when it came to our feelings, I needed more.


I was surprised to hear your knock at my window. I didn't expect distress in your voice through the screen as you asked if you could come in.

winter

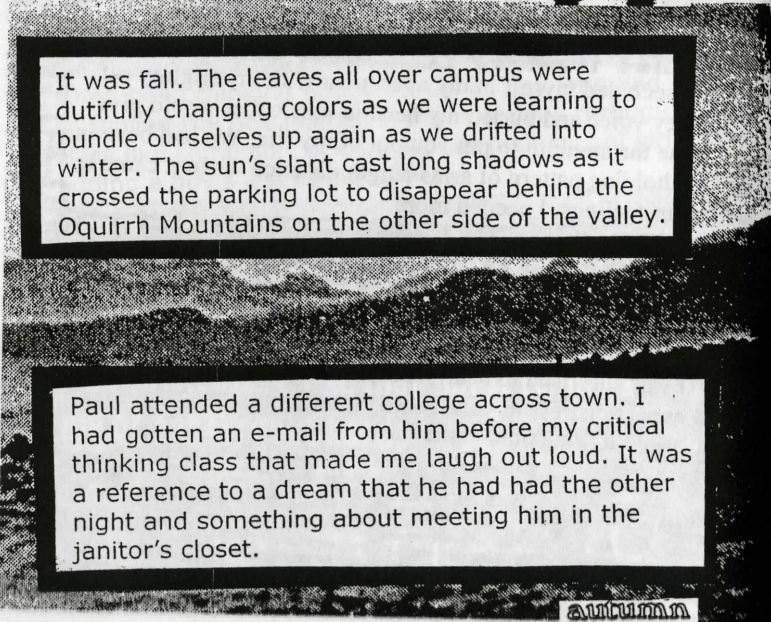


He was lying lengthwise on the bed with his back propped up by his pillow against the wall. I sat perpendicular to him across his stomach, my back against the other wall with my knees uneasily bent over his body in the testing-our-physical-boundaries-with-a-person-on-that-first-night sort of way.

spring

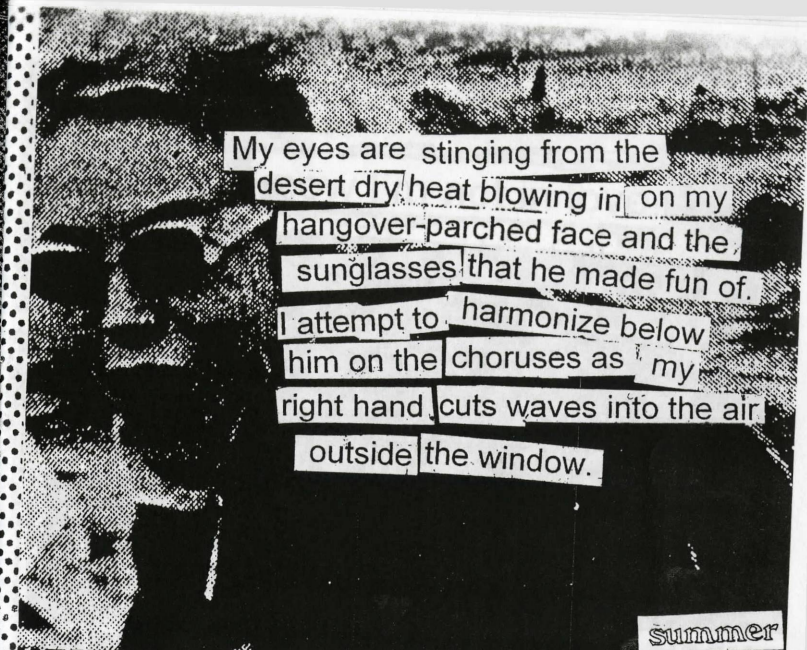


It was fall. The leaves all over campus were dutifully changing colors as we were learning to bundle ourselves up again as we drifted into winter. The sun's slant cast long shadows as it crossed the parking lot to disappear behind the Oquirrh Mountains on the other side of the valley.



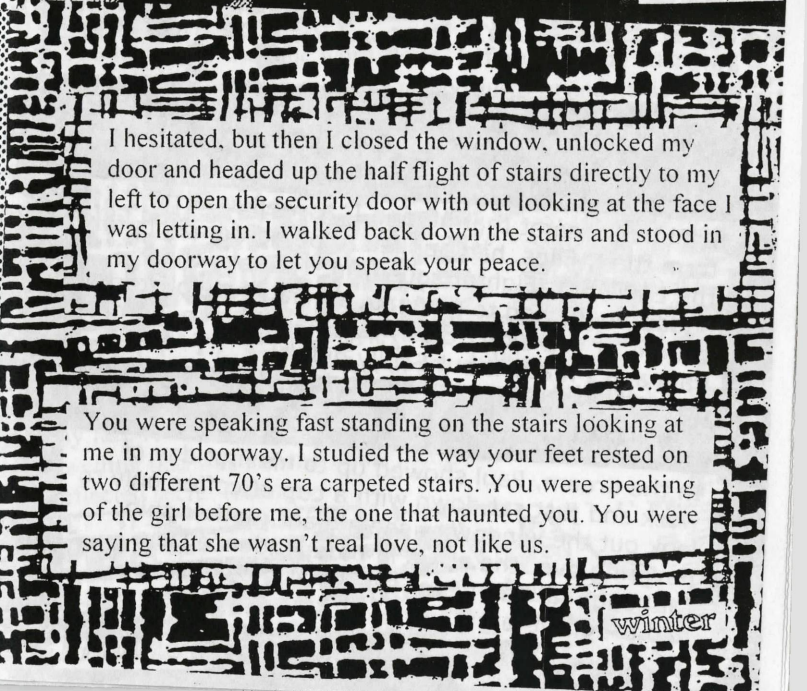
Paul attended a different college across town. I had gotten an e-mail from him before my critical thinking class that made me laugh out loud. It was a reference to a dream that he had had the other night and something about meeting him in the janitor's closet.

autumn



My eyes are stinging from the  
desert dry heat blowing in on my  
hangover-parched face and the  
sunglasses that he made fun of.  
I attempt to harmonize below  
him on the choruses as my  
right hand cuts waves into the air  
outside the window.

summer



I hesitated, but then I closed the window, unlocked my door and headed up the half flight of stairs directly to my left to open the security door with out looking at the face I was letting in. I walked back down the stairs and stood in my doorway to let you speak your peace.

You were speaking fast standing on the stairs looking at me in my doorway. I studied the way your feet rested on two different 70's era carpeted stairs. You were speaking of the girl before me, the one that haunted you. You were saying that she wasn't real love, not like us.

winter

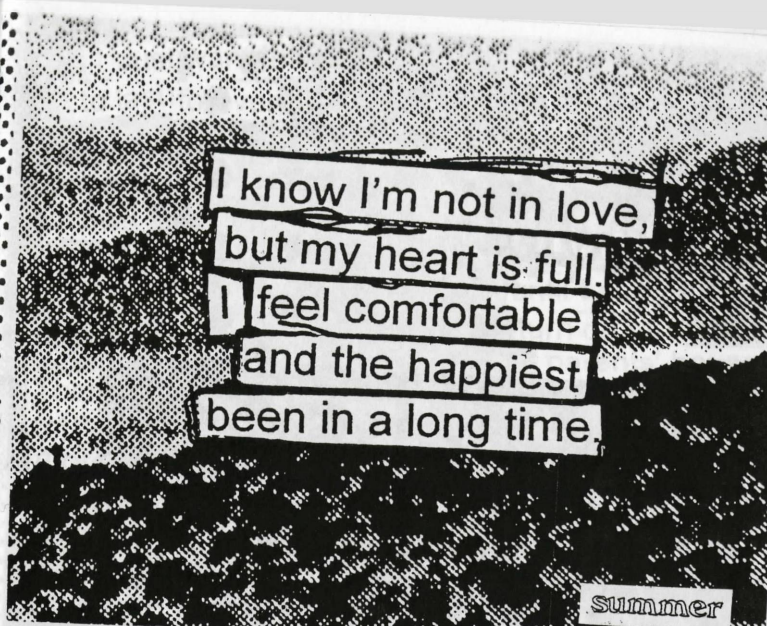
We discussed the fliers that served as wallpaper to his room, we talked about all the years that me and my friends had just referred to him as "pub boy" because of the jacket he used to wear that said "Pub" on the back. We talked about all the shows that we had both been at as we sat on his bed listening to a Frank Sinatra record on this late night in early spring.

spring

Paul had dreamt that he and I, as well as Scully from the X-Files, had applied to be fighter pilots for the LAPD Star Fighter squadron. To make the squadron we had to navigate an elaborate obstacle course. If you didn't crash you made the squadron. Paul and I made it but Scully didn't.

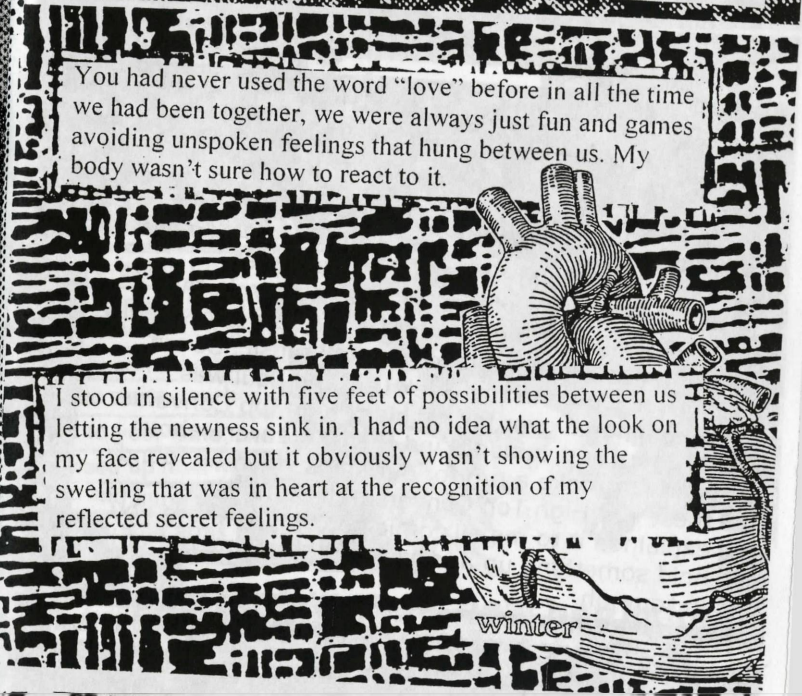
In the dream, Paul showed up to his first day of work and just sat down with a cup of coffee only to look out the window to see a giant mother ship hovering over the city a la Independence Day (although he had never seen that movie and we had to rent it later).

autumn



I know I'm not in love,  
but my heart is full.  
I feel comfortable  
and the happiest  
been in a long time.

summer



You had never used the word "love" before in all the time we had been together, we were always just fun and games avoiding unspoken feelings that hung between us. My body wasn't sure how to react to it.

I stood in silence with five feet of possibilities between us letting the newness sink in. I had no idea what the look on my face revealed but it obviously wasn't showing the swelling that was in heart at the recognition of my reflected secret feelings.

winter




2:00 AM

I noticed the time as he turned on his clock radio and I was greeted by the familiar voice of Art Bell. I was surprised that I was not the only punk that listened to Coast to Coast AM on my way to Dream Land. I relaxed a little more.

spring

Somehow he and I escaped into a secret underground lair of our friend Ben who, in the dream, was "Ben geek metal" because of his geeky computer skills and love of metal music. So we were holed up in the Geek Lair and Paul was searching all over for his black high top Converse All Stars and couldn't find them. We were about ready to make a run for our ships when he found these red High Top Converse All Stars. He explained it to me all comic book style where you hold something up and rays of light shine out of it in triumph.

autumn



I Just want this  
to last forever,

going to  
shows,

staying up  
until the sprinklers  
turn on at my  
parents' house.

Then leaving  
in the early  
morning,

driving back down 7<sup>th</sup>  
east in the calm summer  
night clutching his hand on  
the stick shift

summer

Defeatedly you said

**I love you**

, took one last look at me and turned to make  
your way back up the stairs.

Again, I hesitated with my reaction. Tears were welling in  
my eyes but I didn't have  
any words for them.

At the very last second

I stepped to the bottom  
of the stairs, reached

out to your hand, and

climbed up next to  
you and into

your arms.

winter

**This was a new beginning**

This boy that I had been seeing around for so many years didn't turn out to be as conceited as I thought he was.

**I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE  
GOING HOME  
THAT NIGHT...**

spring

So, there we were, standing side by side at the cargo bay doors about ready to open the doors and make a run for our LAPD Star Fighter ships.

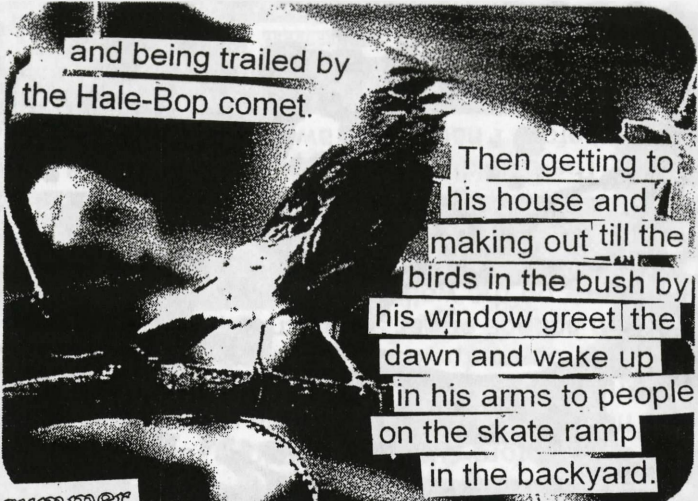
The cargo bay doors open and we see a host of aliens ready to annihilate us.

I look at Paul  
and Paul looks at me  
and I say,

'after you...'

AND THEN HE WOKE UP.

uturnn



and being trailed by  
the Hale-Bop comet.

Then getting to  
his house and  
making out till the  
birds in the bush by  
his window greet the  
dawn and wake up  
in his arms to people  
on the skate ramp  
in the backyard.

summer

## OUTRO

THANKS TO ALAN FOR LETTING  
ME COME TO HIS HOME AND LEAVE  
PAPER SCRAPS ALL OVER THE  
FLOOR.

AND THANKS TO PAUL FOR ETERNALLY  
BEING MY MUSE... AND FOR  
MOPPING THE FLOOR.

NO THANKS TO MY BUSTED ANKLE.

**ALEX WREKK**

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