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Home Movies

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HOME MOVIES

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HOME MOVIES

My first lover and I are lying like one extended body-- her feet to sofa's end, her back-of-head to my crotch, my head to sofa's other end--on the nubby brown couch in my parents' basement. It is older than I am. I could have been conceived on it. There's a hole from a cigarette burn on the left arm; my pinkie fits it perfectly. My hands are trying to decide whether to accidentally brush her nipples or not. I have taken a head rub southward, but not suddenly. Over the course of many headaches over the course of many weeks. My head has never hurt so much, and she hadn't had a headache a day in her life until she met me. We are standing the headache-sex axiom on its head. We have no idea what we are doing.

The title of this movie is *When the World Breaks Apart*.

I am standing in a place which could be anywhere. I am smelling hot and used oil, all the sorts of things which drip from cars. I am smelling disused items, misplaced items, anything my grandmother doesn't want up in the house anymore. I am smelling the intercourse of all of these items. Smelling their persistent devolution. I am smelling his cigar, even after. I am saying to myself *I'm really here, I'm really here*.

The title of this movie is *The Smell of Fear*.

I am standing by my car that I hit another car with, my junker which clipped the New York Mercedes which ran the stop sign into my right-of-way. I am taking my first lover to her night class at the college in the summer, the science requirement, three weeks and you're done. We are running late because her parents left the house for a few minutes and a few minutes have come to be all that we need. No one is hurt. The police come. Someone comes who takes her away, to her class at the college. I drive my car away leaking, go to my parents' house, close the drapes. The phone is ringing and stays ringing. I know it's my lover calling to make sure I am okay. The phone stops ringing and starts ringing. When it stops again minutes later I take it off the hook. I know she wants to talk to me. I know she's missing her class. I sit on my parents' upstairs sofa and listen to the phone not ring.

The title of this movie is *You Can't Find Me*.

My sister and I are waiting for my grandparents. My mother's been asked to work her day off; someone called in sick at the bank. I think it's tremendously exciting that my mother touches money all day long, counts it, smells it. We are waiting for my grandparents to come because we are too young to stay alone. They are going to take us to get peaches. My sister is waiting for my grandparents to come. I am hiding somewhere. I am so well hidden even I don't know where I am. My grandparents arrive and gather my sister and look for me. I cannot hear them looking. They look and look and then they leave. My grandparents take my sister, go for peaches.

The title of this movie is *Keep Away from Grandpop*.

My first lover is keeping herself from crying. We are sitting in my car on the edge of the campus of the college we both attend. Her brother, a cop, has asked her parents if they think something

fishy is going on between her and me and they have asked her and she said no. My lover is keeping herself from crying, it is what she has come to do best.

The title of this movie is *Something Fishy Is Going On*.

We are eating a Saturday supper of Spam and baked beans and raw fried potatoes which my father puts mustard on. We are watching the news on TV and the newscaster reads a story about Harvard or Yale. I say, full of nitrite bravado, that that's where I'm planning on going. My parents laugh, say I can't go there, it's only men who go there. My parents tell their friends and my relatives this story, laughing, implying my inability to stay away from the boys. Not implying that they wouldn't know that Harvard and Yale recently went coed because no one in my family's gone to college, no one's needed to know that kind of thing. Also not implying that I have at best a local-college confidence, because I'm still years away from that test.

The title of this movie is *Laughing When You Don't Get the Joke*.

My first lover and I are moving things along in my bedroom in my parents' house. My parents have gone to a viewing. I love whoever's died not for who they were but for their timing. My lover is raising my bra up the flagpole of my neck, she has no fingers for clasps. My lover is teaching me why women were given mouths. The front door is opening, is shutting. My clothes are coming on faster that they came off, like a funny video made funnier in reverse. I am greeting my parents halfway down the hall wearing my necklace of solid cotton comfort.

The title of this movie is *If You Didn't Laugh, You'd Cry*.

I am getting a cast put on my arm. The doctor tells me that it won't hurt a bit and then he wrenches the arm which hurts so much I don't notice its corrected slant. It hurts so much I don't feel a thing. He was right. I bet he went to Harvard or Yale. I am planning how I will get my sister back for breaking my arm by jumping off her Hoppity Horse onto me after I fell off mine after my grandmother told us not to jump on the Hoppity Horses with our feet but to hop on them like we're supposed to. I am planning how I will explain this. I am not thinking about my grandfather at all.

The title of this movie is *This Won't Hurt a Bit*.

My sister is coming home with her boyfriend. They're sleeping in separate rooms. When my first lover stays over because we're working on an assignment late or we're going somewhere early or she's forgotten the way to her own parents' house several miles away, she sleeps with me. We know how to do it quietly. We may know how to do it only quietly. My sister and her boyfriend go to a motel for a while and then come back to sleep apart.

The title of this movie is *It Pays To Be Invisible*.

My sister is two and I am four and we have a screen door that slams shut. My sister is behind me and I don't know it or my sister is behind me and I do know it but I don't care. I slam the screen door shut and with it my sister's finger, the pinkie, hanging from a thread. Blood does spurt. My sister is screaming and my mother is wrapping her hand in a towel and my father is starting the car. I go along to the hospital or I don't. There isn't time to drop me off with my grandparents. I have nowhere else to be.

The title of this movie is *I Didn't Mean To*.

I am sitting on my parents' upstairs sofa between my mother and my father. I am sobbing and am waiting to die soon from the pain of being left by my first lover for a woman who is married to a man. I am explaining to my parents about my sudden deconstruction. I am coming out. They are both sitting very close to me. My mother's looking stricken. My father's using his lowest voice, he's singing to me the number one song on the countdown: *Don't worry, be happy*.

The title of this movie is *Where the Strangest Things Happen*.

My second lover and I are in the living room of the apartment we share in a city neither of us belongs to. I am in the corner of the sofa her cat has clawed into shreds. Her cat is dead. Five months and I still look for fresh damage. My lover brought the sofa with her from a previous life. She paid a lot of money for it. My lover is coming towards me in slow motion but quickly, too. My lover is windmilling her arms like a rockstar or an exasperated cartoon character. My lover is telling me how much I want her to hit me, how it is all I really want, how it is all that will make me happy.

The title of this movie is *Sleeping in the Second Bedroom*.

I am visiting my parents in the house I mostly grew up in. It is in the suburbs, but an old enough one that there are trees older than I am. I enter the house, kiss my mother hello, kiss my father hello. I walk to the kitchen and open the cubbyhole they had built in when they redid the room last spring. I'm looking for something to eat, salty, sweet, doesn't matter. I have no idea when I ate last or whether I am hungry. I have no idea what the word *hungry* means. I need to get

something in my mouth, I need to get it swallowed. I can make a meal out of these potato chips, I can make an exception to vegetarianism for the lard that they're cooked in.

The title of this movie is *You Are What You Eat*.

My second lover and I are in my cold-in-winter hot-in-summer studio apartment. It's August and it's broiling. We are sitting inside the path the air's taking off the fan. We are laughing and sweating and doing something which makes us even hotter--the laundry, or fucking. And then eating Doritos at first for a snack and then, what the hell, for dinner. It's too hot to cook. It's good we fucked earlier because now we're too sick to, too full of belly-ache to do anything but moan. I am so happy to be with her here in this heat, to be moaning.

The title of this movie is *You Are What You Eat, The Sequel*.

My sister and I are celebrating New Year's Eve in my studio apartment. It's cold because I can't pay the heat; it's electric, I keep the thermostat way down. I convince her it's an adventure, New Year's Eve, pretend we're in Times Square. It's also my life. We have the TV turned on and the windows are high in the walls and the lights are off but a streetlamp shines in. We are bundled and bundled and I wish I could tell her what it feels like to live in my body, what sort of magic happens here. We are so cold that we shiver ourselves unconscious before the ball drops.

The title of this movie is *Not Minding The Cold*.

I am coming to the apartment I live in with my second lover in a city neither of us belongs to. I am returning from a conference I had to attend for the job she hates my having. My second lover is waiting rigid on the bed when I walk in. She is escaped into rigidity. She is too rigid to cry. I

am sitting down on the bed. She is telling me that she has read the journal I forgot to take with me. She is telling me she has read the journal I have left behind. I told it things I never told her. I told it things I told her but inside a very different light. She is crying and I am crying. She is melting. We partially make love. We have not made love for months in whole or in part. We are going to look for separate apartments when we finish almost making love.

The title of this movie is *I Meant It*.

I am at an extended-family picnic, my mother's side, the peasant part of my makeup. I am asking and asking what I never remember: who belongs to whom, whose sister this is, the birth order of the sixteen children in my grandmother's family and how they've descended into those who are here. Among them are the lesbians. My mother's cousin and my mother's other cousin, for sure, and who knows who else. I have my own suspicions. They are there like everybody else, loved and not loved. In families like ours you are connected by things much more important than love: you are connected by what you have survived and, having survived, how well you tell the story. We keep everybody who wants to be kept but whisper behind their backs just the same.

The title of this movie is *My Cousin, Myself*.

My third lover and I are in her apartment because it is bigger than mine. Also because she has two cats and I have none. My lover is sure that her cats love me best. I am trying to win the cats' affections. I have given up on trying to make dinner because my lover is the more graceful cook. While we eat she touches me with her bare foot, presses it into me, but like it's an accident, like I'm an apparition of a woman who used to visit her lover here a century ago. I want to take my

lover's foot and stick it inside me, enter her into my body backwards. When we go to bed my lover doesn't feel my tenderness, falls asleep with the news.

The title of this movie is *Now You See Her, Now You Don't*.

I am sitting within a circle of seven women who all have pens moving on paper. It's a writers' group, a space carved out of a month where words crack open like pumpkin seeds between our teeth and we chew the meat out. The women are queer and not-queer in every conceivable way. It is the most difficult place I have ever lived. We take our show on the road, read our work like a symphony in front of people we know and don't know. At the chain bookstore we have a mike which feeds us through the store and people come to stand on the fringes of the triangular clearing filled with seats between Sports and True Crime and Romance. Some listen, some leave, and some say they never knew this kind of thing existed.

The title of this movie is *Where You Least Expect It*.

I am leaving my third lover in my apartment in a city I don't belong to early in the morning to go to another city with my sister for the day and night. To go to New York to see a show and to hang out like we used to. My lover has gifted my body with a trail of bruises during a long night of sex with teeth. They are the first hickies I have ever received. I am driving to the bus station to meet my sister and planning how to explain it and feeling quite well fucked when I realize that my lover has sucked my skin raw because she doesn't believe that I am going to spend the weekend with my sister. My lover believes that I have lied to her and have a woman in every port. My lover believes this because she has a woman in every port and has just told or will soon tell me a version of the lie she suspects me of.

The title of this movie is *Taking the Early Bus Out*.

My father has been diagnosed with cancer in his throat. I am at my parents' house helping out. I am thinking how this is what we do, these people that I am from. I am thinking how this is what we do even when we are lesbians and we lie and we move away from the site of our lying. I am thinking about what starts a cancer growing: nitrites, tobacco, secrets, cheap beer, bad blood, genes. I am stopping myself from continuing the list because it's just too fucking depressing. I am staying in the room I lost my virginity in, I am on my hands and knees trying to find it. The walls are repapered and there's a carpet on the floor where there was none. My virginity has been remodeled. But I do find her who licked it from me peering down from the ceiling. Even if I have never been a virgin. Even if memory doesn't have that long a history.

The title of this movie is *The House of Mirrors*.

I am leaving my third lover. I am leaving my third lover in the momentarily-unoccupied office of the boss that we share. She is out to lunch. I am leaving my lover because she lives in a world where there is no such thing as what's true. I am leaving my lover because I will cease to exist if I don't. I am leaving my lover stone-faced and sucker-punched. I don't care who gets the last word. I am leaving my lover in our busy nonprofit workplace. I am taking my tenderness elsewhere.

The title of this movie is *Leaving Her Behind*.

I want to say something beyond these broken bones of stories. I want to say: Home is memory lounging in its unkept house. Home is the house you first cried in and it is the everything

surrounding the negative space when that house has been happily burned down. Home is the food your body craves even after you've decided that it's bad for you, even after you've american dreamed yourself into affording something different, the comfort it brought you then, brings you now. Home is needing that comfort. Home is the flesh and the shadow of every woman you've loved or will love. Home is the bell-ringing moment of anything true moving through the lesbian body. Home is the body which situates itself in a place of what-can-happen when women gather themselves together in a bed, in a house, on paper.

Home is where you keep your stuff.

I am an off-season rental living in the second house from the beach on an island deserted for the winter. I am alone on the street except for the man in the apartment upstairs, the owner of the house who is dying, slowly, but who isn't dead yet. I am here to forget about lovers. I am here to turn my lovers into poems. The apartment is full of his shipwrecked furniture; I pay a man in a town near the city I never belonged to forty dollars a month to lock my few belongings up tight. If I were given five minutes to look this place over, study everything, memorize the contents of the room and then were led away and asked to tell a stranger what was in here, I couldn't do it. Except that there is a clock on the wall of the kitchenette and its batteries wound down weeks ago. I live at three o'clock. I get up when I want to, write, walk on the beach, eat when I'm hungry, write, get plenty of fluids, stay in various stages of undress, write. I am also not dead yet.

Home Is Where You Are Still Alive.