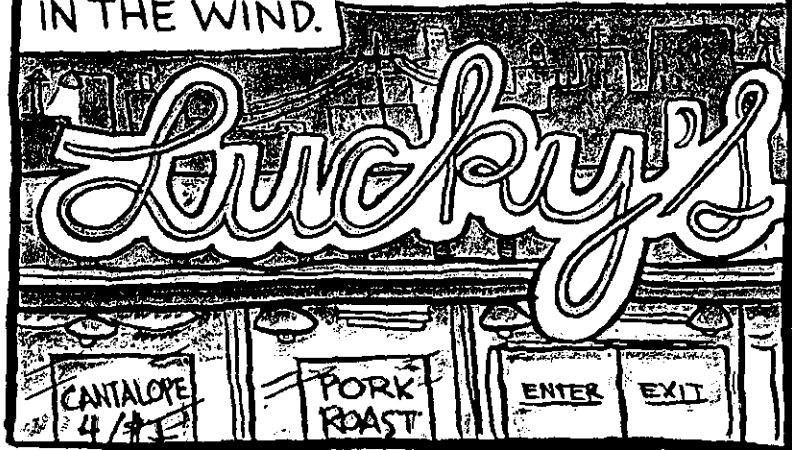
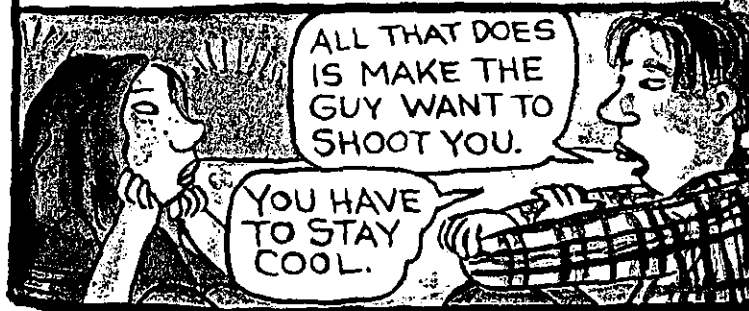




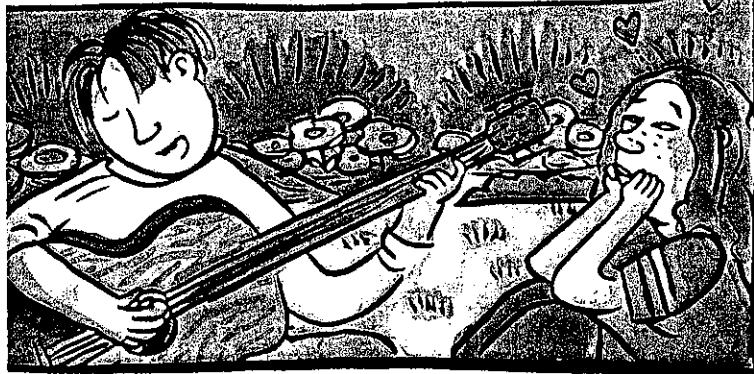
**L**UCKY'S FOODS WAS A GROCERY STORE WITH A PALE BLUE NEON SIGN THAT LOOKED GOOD IN THE RAIN. IT WAS IN A BAD PART OF TOWN WHERE POLICE SIRENS WERE OFTEN BLARING. A LOT OF TRASH ROLLED AROUND IN THE WIND.



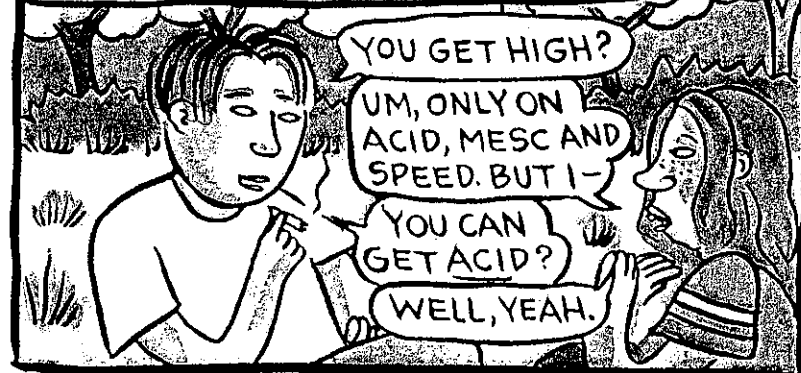
A KID I KNEW BAGGED GROCERIES THERE. HE SAID THE FIRST THREE HOLD-UPS FREAKED HIM BUT AFTER THAT HE'D JUST GO LAY ON THE FLOOR WITHOUT WORRY. THE WORST PART ABOUT IT WAS IF A CUSTOMER FREAKED OUT, CRYING BECAUSE SHE'D NEVER BEEN ROBBED BEFORE.



I WAS 16 AND COOLNESS WAS ON MY MIND ALL THE TIME. I DIDN'T HAVE ANY. THE BAG BOY HAD SO MUCH COOLNESS. HE SMOKED POT IN THE PARK BEFORE WORK. I BROUGHT MY GUITAR AND HE PLAYED "SUGAR MOUNTAIN". HE PLAYED "CINNAMON GIRL."



HE LIVED IN A PART OF TOWN I'D NEVER BEEN TO BUT HE WASN'T TALKING MUCH ABOUT IT. HIS DAD WAS A SLIGHTLY HIGH-UP PERSON IN THE MILITARY. DEAN HAD LIVED EVERYWHERE BUT HE SAID HE HADN'T SEEN ANYTHING UNTIL HE FIRST GOT HIGH.



HE HAD NEVER DROPPED ACID BUT REALLY WANTED TO. I DIDN'T TELL HIM MY DRUG-TAKING DAYS WERE SORT OF OVER AND I DIDN'T CONTRADICT HIM WHEN HE SAID I'D BE AN INCREDIBLE PERSON TO TRIP WITH, ALTHOUGH I KNEW IT WASN'T TRUE.



I WAS A PERSON WHO FREAKED OUT EASILY. I WAS A PERSON WHOSE MAIN QUALITY WAS NERVOUSNESS. I WAS ALSO A PERSON WHO WANTED INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCES AND AN INCREDIBLE BOYFRIEND. DROPPING ACID IN CHINATOWN. HOW BAD COULD IT BE?



JEAN HAD MOVED SO MANY TIMES  
IN HIS LIFE AND I'D LIVED IN THE  
SAME HOUSE FOREVER BUT WE HAD  
CERTAIN THINGS IN COMMON. WE  
EXPERIMENTED WITH IDENTITIES.  
WE WENT TO STRANGE PARTS OF  
TOWN. WE BOTH WERE LOOKING  
FOR SOMETHING, BUT WHAT  
WAS IT?

MY DAD 化台去住自  
GOES, "WE HAVE A SAFEWAY AND AN  
IGA RIGHT HERE. WHY WORK AT LUCKY'S?  
WHY TAKE TWO BUSES TO A JOB WHEN YOU  
DON'T HAVE TO?" HE DOESN'T GET LUCKY'S. HE SAYS IT'S A PIT.

FEEL ANYTHING YET? I DON'T.



I DIDN'T MENTION THE FACT THAT  
THE ACID WAS TWO YEARS OLD AND  
HAD SPENT TWO WINTERS WRAPPED  
IN TIN FOIL BEHIND A BRICK IN A  
GARAGE, ABANDONED DURING MY  
JESUS-FREAK PERIOD WHICH WAS  
AT LEAST SIX PERSONALITIES AGO.

A GUY AT WORK SAYS THERE'S  
LIKE A MILLION CHICKENS  
SOMEWHERE DOWN HERE,  
ALL IN BAMBOO CAGES.

YEAH. UP THAT WAY.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?



I DIDN'T TELL HIM I SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN CHINATOWN WHEN I WAS LITTLE, THAT MY RELATIVES HUNG OUT IN A FILIPINO RESTAURANT ON THE NEXT BLOCK, THAT MY UNCLE WAS CUTTING HAIR IN THE BARBER SHOP WE JUST PASSED, AND THAT MY MOTHER COULD BE RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER PARKING THE CAR.



I ALSO DIDN'T TELL HIM I WAS HOPING THE ACID WAS A BUST. IT WASN'T. IT HIT RIGHT AS WE CROSSED OUT OF CHINATOWN AND INTO WINO-VILLE, SAILOR-VILLE AND PEEP-SHOW-VILLE.



THE LAUGHING PHASE HIT US HARD. ALL OF THE GREENISH PHOTOS OF THE STRIPPERS WERE HILARIOUS. THE SPITTING BUM WAS HILARIOUS. A FLIPPED-OUT GUY IN PLAID PANTS DOING KUNG FU KICKS AND YELLING "THE STUD IS BACK! THE STUD IS ON FIRE, PEOPLE!" MADE US CRAMP-UP WITH LAUGHING.



BUT THE LAUGHING PHASE DOESN'T LAST. WHEN IT ENDED WE WERE UNDER THE VIADUCT WITH CARS RACING OVERHEAD AND WIND LITTER ALL AROUND. THE SMELL OF PEE WAS VIOLENT. BROKEN GLASS GLITTERED WITH NASTY EDGES. WE BOTH STARTED TO FREAK ON HOW HIGH WE WERE.



JUST ACROSS THE STREET  
WAS THE BAY. WE COULD SEE  
THE HEAVING WATER AND WE  
WANTED TO GET TO IT BUT  
THERE WERE SIX LANES OF  
TRAFFIC TO CROSS. VICIOUS  
BUG-EYED CARS WHIPPED UP  
FLYING SWIRLS OF TRASH.  
WOULD WE MAKE IT?



WE TURNED BACK, BUT THE AM  
FULNESS WAS EVERYWHERE  
DEAN SAID THINGS AND I SAID  
THINGS. OUR TEETH CHATTER  
AND OUR EYES WIGGLED. WE  
PICKED OUR WAY BACK SLOW  
TO CHINATOWN BUT TOOK  
A HUNDRED WRONG TURNS





WE WERE WALKING UP STEEP HILLS AND IT STARTED TO RAIN. WAS THAT WHAT MADE US FINALLY START COMING DOWN? WE HELD HANDS AND THE STREET WAS SHININGLY FAMILIAR. THE CAR HONKING ITS HORN WAS SOUNDINGLY FAMILIAR. THE HEAD OF THE DRIVER WAS SCREAMINGLY FAMILIAR.



DEAN TRIED TO SAY IT WASN'T MY MOM, HOW COULD IT BE MY MOM, THE LADY WASN'T EVEN SHOUTING IN ENGLISH. I JUST KEPT RUNNING. I COULD HANDLE A LOT OF THINGS ON ACID BUT MY MOTHER'S SCREAMING HEAD WASN'T ONE OF THEM.



WE WALKED THE ALLEYS ALL THE WAY TO LUCKY'S. I TOLD DEAN THINGS ABOUT MYSELF. ABOUT MY MOM. ABOUT CHINATOWN. ABOUT LIVING IN THE "INSANE PLACES" HE WAS ONLY VISITING. ABOUT FALLING IN LOVE WITH HIM. HE NODDED.

BUS STOP



HE NODDED AND SAID THE LUCKY'S SIGN LOOKED BEAUTIFUL IN THE RAIN BUT HE WAS QUITTING. AND THERE WAS THIS GIRL HE WAS IN LOVE WITH WHO HE TALKED ABOUT UNTIL HIS BUS FINALLY CAME. I SAT ON THE BENCH FOR A LONG TIME AFTERWARDS. I WAS COOL VERY COOL. IT WASN'T LIKE I HAD NEVER BEEN ROBBED BEFORE.

