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**Gabriel Athens**



# Make Us Laugh

*October 24, 1998*

do you remember  
when we stayed at the hotel  
and you took a picture  
of me while I was jumping on the bed  
you gave me one of the pictures  
I'm sure you still have one of those too

remember when we'd go to a bar  
and pick a drink,  
"the drink of choice"  
and we'd order the same drink  
but just because we had a different  
kind of drink it made us laugh  
it gave us something to  
talk about

there are certain people  
you might know them well,  
but sometimes you can't feel  
comfortable in front of them

that's what most friendships are like





remember when you and a friend  
were waiting in the line of the cash station  
a cop got in line right behind you,  
and the friend said, "Maybe the cop wants cash"  
I think you almost fell over laughing  
when he said that

there are a ton of stories like that  
we had a knack for making stupid jokes  
and laughing and laughing about them

Does that mean I'm supposed to have the right  
attitude  
well, I'm just me  
and that should work out  
just fine





# Make Things Better

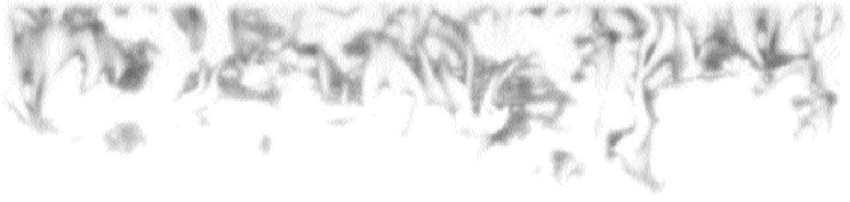
*October 13, 1998*

you can be the one that is expected to give bad news  
maybe you need help in dealing with this,  
maybe just need to be held  
because you don't know what else to do  
you don't understand what they feel  
and they don't understand what you feel

we can't know everything  
and understand at the snap of our fingers

other people have pain too  
maybe their pain could be completely different  
maybe they'll appreciate the effort you make  
to try to make things better





# **Men Are Dogs Is True**

*December 31, 1998*

It was nice that you made the effort  
for such a short term  
if I didn't know any better  
I would have fallen for it





# **Making Sense Out Of The Insane**

*December 23, 1998*

I can't see the silver lining around the clouds  
I see the dripping blood from poorly cut wounds  
they haven't healed, I tell you

that's modern life, there is no happy ending  
look and look, but you can't find it

making sense out of the insane is pointless  
the insane starts to make sense  
bottle up all the hate to understand

change all the goals in life  
change them all  
after a while that has an effect on you  
after a while you start to feel like a prisoner  
with the life kicked out of you  
by a bunch of other prisoners  
while the guards are paid to look away  
it's funny how the prisoners get the coin  
to pay all the good guys off

When you start to see that  
And when you start to feel like that  
the line between sanity and insanity is blurred





# **My Height Any Longer**

*November 19, 1998*

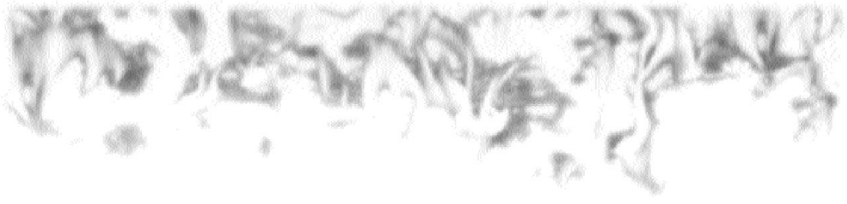
I won't make this an essay about how men look at women's hooters first  
and how men think women are stupid because, well, they're girls

well, I'm smarter than you  
whether or not you choose to believe it

but I've been told more than once from men that I can't be tall  
may they think that because I'm a girl

but I am taller  
so just find me a tall man  
and let's not talk about my height any longer





# prepared for the worst

*October 13, 1998*

I was fully prepared for the worst when I thought it was going to happen. I had to be the strong one, I had to show everyone that they could count on me.

but I never thought about someone close to me dying, someone I just thought would always be around, someone that would live to their old age.

were you that close to me in the first place? did i think of what it would mean to me if you were out of MY life forever? no, i had to be there for others right now.

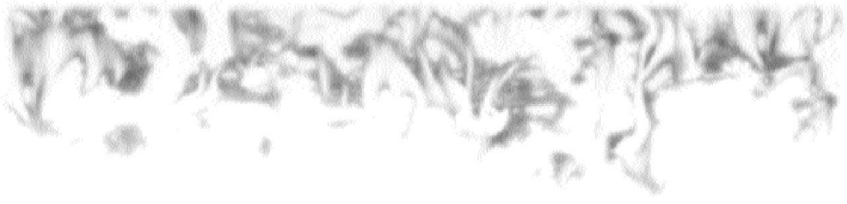
I planned on sticking around, I proved myself to all the doctors and the nurses and all the technicians, and even the cardiologists. they don't remember me now, why would they.

I wondered if I would even get the chance to see the corpse, depending on when we got to the hospital. But I'm usually not at the hospital while death is happening.

But I knew I'd have to be ready for this and I might have to be prepared for this, in case it happened.  
people never learn how to stop drinking, did they







never learn how to solve their own problems or did they  
never want to deal with a problem. How do you prepare yourself  
for all this? I was busy preparing myself for the worst,

so I wouldn't fall apart when the bad news came

am I supposed to be the strong one and be prepared?  
this was something I had to do and I'd deal with death personally,  
maybe today, maybe later

I got there and there was no bad news, no one was  
dead or dying, and everything was normal.  
normal in a hospital. I visited people and talked a little in the

hospital, and everyone wanted me to talk to prove  
to everyone that I was normal and I was fine.  
"And this could happen to you," I said,

"And you have to want to be and make yourself better."  
I didn't know what else I was supposed to say. but somehow  
I was temporarily prepared. just in case.





# Not Getting Better

*October 24, 1998*

everyone thinks I'm getting better

but no one knows what it's like  
the pain I still go through  
I've been fighting but I don't see the signs  
that anything is getting better

I still have to wait  
it's already past due

I still can't see  
I come up with a way in my  
head to make it better  
no one can see the difference.  
but i still feel it





# Pressure On Me Again

*November 28, 1998*

Man, you put a lot of pressure on me  
I'm so sick of not being in control of everything  
I'm tired of defining how everything goes

I define my own life  
how do I make all the changes  
I'm all alone on this one  
and have to do these things myself

I have to define my own life  
I need to take a magic marker  
a big black bold marker  
and create the path that defines who I am

I need to make my own choices  
and color them in  
and make sure that I don't go past the lines  
so it looks like I did a bad job  
because no one can put that pressure on me again





## **short-term advice**

*October 13, 1998*

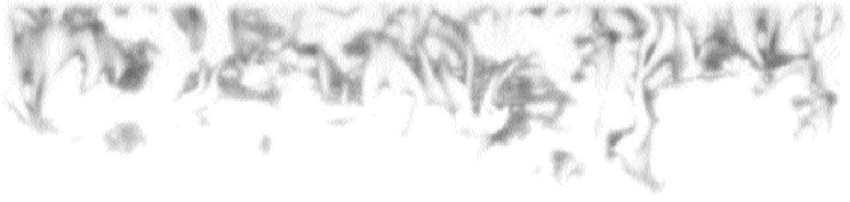
why do people take sides on politics,  
when no politicians do anything for their country

the politicians are usually crooks, or cheaters  
better political leaders manage to hide their “bad” side  
they have a bunch of people paid to write their speeches  
so they don’t ever have to save face

I need to learn how to save face for what I do wrong  
politicians use the same lines over and over again  
until people forget that they aren’t told about the problem

How do you find someone honest  
when you’re used to cheaters and liars  
don’t look in politics, that’s the best short-  
term advice I can even give you





## Seasons 1998

the entity of Earth lives  
attacked by its denizens  
Spring follows winter

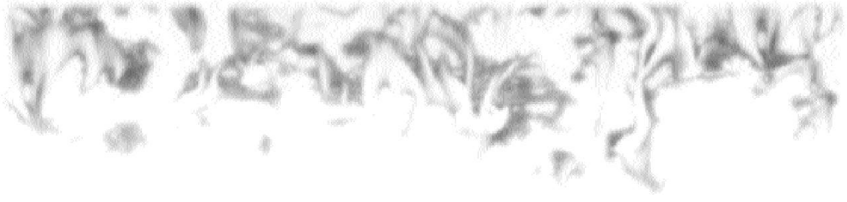
Winter fire burns bright  
Warmth flows over my brick hearth  
Summer fire is shunned

Grandchildren bring joy,  
vigor, love, fun, liveliness  
With age comes calm, peace, knowledge

Soft loose wrinkled skin,  
white coarse bristly chin whiskers  
mark the wise woman

Limbs etched against sky,  
full white clouds gathered in close  
foretell winter's snow





# Slow Painful Death

*December 29, 1998*

it is funny how hindsight is twenty twenty

but you were are liar  
and still are one

I was not immune to your violence

you gave me good memories

they are clouded by your anger  
rage, insolence, and idiocy

I can not do it this time  
I have to write about things that matter to me  
I could write about how I  
want you to go through a  
slow painful death

but you know I think that  
and I do not need to go into that at length





# Someone Give Me the Answers

*September 7, 1998*

my dictionary is older than my schooling  
my encyclopedia set is older than I am

I've been looking for answers to what  
I thought were simple questions and the  
people who are supposed to be smart  
never have the answers

I can't even finish a sentence with people  
and I'm expecting finished sentences and sense  
and answers from all of the people I've already  
lost so much faith in

when I regained consciousness,  
I was given the same meal three times a day  
I was physically strapped to my bed  
the answers haven't come to me for quite a while  
not since my hospital visits  
or my school days  
or my friendships

someone give me the answers  
I don't know where the answers are





# Sometimes It's Not

*December 13, 1998*

sometimes I wish I could  
turn back the hands of time  
but maybe I might still think  
that I could live forever then

we have our hopes and our dreams  
and usually we don't think about them  
and we try to avoid them







# Supposed To Be Done

*October 28, 1998*

I was ten when they buried you

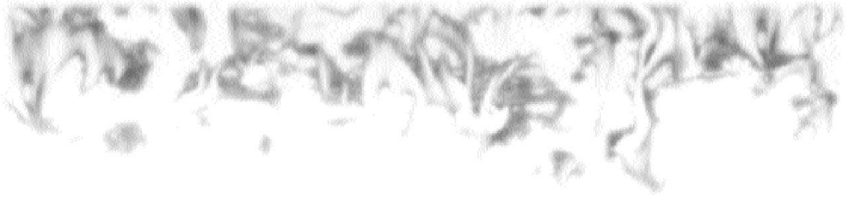
At twenty-eight, I tried to die

At twenty-eight, I tried to die  
And get back, back, back to you

I thought even the bones would do

isn't that how it's  
supposed to be done





# take it all away

*September 19, 1998*

I found out weeks after I was in the hospital  
it was then that I found out details  
what the doctor did to me  
while I was in there, unconscious

whether or not  
they were helping me or hurting me  
I didn't know  
and don't know

they put a piece of metal in my leg  
to stop blood clots  
to my heart, or lungs, or brain

do I need a piece of metal  
in my body for the rest of my life,  
I needed to know this after it  
had already happened

X-rays were taken of me  
a ventilator was on me for 6 days  
All I knew at the time was  
most of my rights were being taken from me





what if one day something went  
wrong in your body and your  
heart just stopped beating

what would happen to you  
if you heart just  
went out  
and you made it in an instant  
and people were worrying about  
you and they thought you might  
not make it and they had to think  
that you may be gone and they  
had to come to terms with that

would you clean up your room  
would you try to be nicer  
It answers so many questions



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