Bacterial

Turned

Viral!

#4
My name is Rosy and I am in the fifteenth grade.

Well, it’s been awhile. See here’s the thing: I want to take this whole deal a lot more seriously, like not rushing to do something every month. Quality over quantity, ya know? This is one of the few things I’m really proud of, and I want to work harder at it.

I’ve also been pretty absent from everything and everyone the past few months. I am sorry about that. This summer’s been really rough. I wasn’t able to find a new job, so I ran out of money, went into debt, had to move back in with my parents, and a whole lot of other shitty stuff happened. But you know what, shitty stuff happens and I want to work to make sure it never happens again, and that’s all I can do.

I just moved into a new house, with an old friend, so I am looking at that as a brand new beginning. New beginnings are exciting AMIRITE LADIES?? I’m definitely ready for one. I hope you have beginnings as well.

Also, this zine doesn’t make sense chronologically or mood-wise. Things happen left and right. But I wrote it at the time, so it’s valid in that way, ya know? Even though things change faster than you want them to.

Let me know yr thoughts. Yr feelings. How yr afternoon was. What you had for breakfast. Make me fall back in love with Chicago. Tell me yr hopes and dreamz.

Per usual,
Email: rosyphinick@aol.com
Real mail: 3037 N. Southport Apt. 2F Chicago, IL 60657 (new address!)

Love always ‘n’ ferer, Rosy
Right now:

I am at my parent’s house in the suburbs.
I am listening to a Black Sabbath album.
I am totally comfortable admitting that.
Just like I am comfortable admitting that I am uploading the BeeGees “Love Songs” onto my itunes right now.
“How Deep Is Yr Love” is one of my favorite love songs. Totally serious.
I have been feeling really romantic.
Case in point: I saw “The Proposal” last night and liked it.
I just ate at a tapas restaurant.
I am wearing an acid wash denim skirt.
I spent all day babysitting my little cousins.
I am thinking about you.
About front porches and living room floors, and champagne sno-cones and my hands tangled in yr hair and yr hand on my throat.
About when I’ll ever see you again.
About how I was smiling ear-to-ear the entire ride home.
I feel whole and happy and loved for the first time in over a year.
I want to be vague.
I want to be discreet.
I want to make my heart stop pounding, but I can’t.
Ya know.
FYI.

Part one.

I don’t mind bruises or scrapes, cuts. It’s all just flesh. It puckers and it scars, making sure you never forget where you’ve been. Injury is always seen as this source of shame, something to be covered. My junior year of high school, during swimming in gym class, I had to wear a swimsuit in front of everybody, showing up purple handprints on my thighs. They were from a new partner, one that turned out to be the closest thing I had to a high school sweetheart (though it was a lot more sour than that). My friends laughed and said I should borrow shorts or something, but in this weird way I was proud. I wanted everyone to see that me, ugly and awkward, had someone that lusted after me that much, enough to leave their imprint. That wanted me.

I feel the same way when I skin my knee or my shoulders ache on Monday mornings- I was doing something that took enough out of me to hurt. Anything that leaves a mark was worth it. I have two bruises on two vertebrae right now, from when they hit the concrete floor (you were kissing me and kissing me). We sat almost naked in the laundry room, completely wrapped up in each other, and yr the first persyn I haven’t been afraid to look at in the eye in months. Maybe I’m just taking things too seriously, but as long as I have these bruises, I can still keep you and that night with me, and that feeling of safety, value, and when you told me you thought I was pretty. I don’t have yr phone number (and you didn’t ask for mine) and we aren’t in the same time zone and when the bruises fade, it’s just me and you and miles and nothing else.
I was eighteen.

She couldn’t have been older than twenty-five, but it seemed like she’d been lonely for longer than that. Her gloves were missing fingertips. I couldn’t decide whether she did that on purpose, or if she had just worn them down and she was freezing now. There weren’t any other open seats, so I sat next to her on the train.

"Want some?" she looked at me with glassy eyes and motioned at the tall thermos she was holding. It had some faded cartoon on it, like the gloves, either an impoverished find or a purposely ironic purchase. I imagined her rummaging through bins in Wicker Park. I thought about what her house might look like. I asked her what was inside and her teeth were outlined in burgundy. Red wine.

I took a sip. It tasted really cheap. I drink cheap wine at home, from recycled jars, eating dumpstered food, but drinking it out of a stranger’s thermos on the Red Line just felt cheaper. Her hair was dirtier than mine, but not by much. She told me I could have some more and we split the entire thing between Grand and Fullerton. We didn’t talk about anything, just passed the wine and laughed shyly as the alcohol found its way through our veins. When I left to meet a friend at the station, I was drunk.

As I was leaving, I noticed her taking a new thermos out of her bag. She drank from it slowly. She couldn’t have been older than twenty-five, but I knew she was going to spend the rest of her afternoon and probably her evening getting drunk alone on the train. And maybe she didn’t that yesterday, and she’ll do it tomorrow. And something seemed alluring about it. Being drunk when nobody else is, watching commuters through that lens, all the drones becoming characters, all by yrself. Maybe she was lonely, but she had found solace. And then I realized what I was actually thinking about, and I didn’t drink at all that week.

"Marriage, that poor little state and church-begotten weed." (Luv u, Emma Goldman)

Sometimes I think about marriage and if I ever found someone that would want to marry me, I think about how I would suddenly get stupid and say yes. Most of the time I feel like everyone is leaving and if I married someone, it would be hard and expensive for them to leave me. Ya know? Like there’s something comforting about living in a cage, in bondage. I mean, I really hope people don’t read this and think that I like the idea of marriage. I think that marriage is an oppressive institution that cheapens love and reinforces heteronormativity and patriarchy. But I’m lonely. And I can see why someone would want to legally tie themselves to someone else.

But I mean, really, I would never actually get married. White is never flattering on me, and I’m always uncomfortable in rings.
Lake Michigan, last March.

We drank a few bottles of wine and all took turns screaming at the lake. That means exactly what it says and I don’t know why we did it, but we did it and it felt good. Not cathartic or cleansing. I didn’t have any big awakenings and the bricks in my heart didn’t get any lighter but it felt good enough to put all of me into it. Patrick and Janna yelled at the lake because they loved it. I yelled at the lake because I hated it. Because she used to live across this lake, and she’s gone now. Because death is permanent. Because people made it toxic- we can’t even swim this summer. Because the lake looks so infinite at night; illuminated by industry, it goes on forever. But it doesn’t. Even the lake has boundaries. It’s only feeding into something bigger, something greater. It’s this small part of a whole and it could swallow me alive. I wish I had felt something more profound or at least something I understood, but all I felt was hate. I hated the lake and I hated myself, because even the lake could kill me if I let it. And I screamed my throat dry as wine and just as bitter.

Part two.

Out of curiosity, I made a mix cd of only bands that I’ve hooked up with or dated. I guess it was just to see. Everybody’s music is really different, which is pretty cool. I guess that means I don’t have a type, unless that type is people that all know each other. It’s much longer that I thought it would be, and other than Anti-Flag and some ICP-esque horror rap (freshman year of high school, shuddup), it’s some pretty good jamz.
On the very rare occasion that you ask how I'm doing, I wonder what you would say if I told you the truth. About how every night when I'm trying to sleep, I pray for blood, a limb even, swollen little eyes pleading up to me from the white tile floor. I'd rather have it ugly than not at all. How every movement feels like kicking. How I don't have any money and I don't know how to get that money. How I keep muttering to myself, like a mantra, that even science lies (science lies) and you can fake positivity. I've been doing it for years. I think about how the next time I see you, if I ever see you again, you'll stuff the towel between my teeth and give instructions: bite, push, breathe, bite, push, breathe, don't cry, don't cry, who are you, how could this happen. I think we could be friends. We have a lot in common. But right now I'm looking up at the moon and begging for it to have fucked up, not me.

501 So Much Fun / The Costume Shoppe Collective / Stephen Hawking's House of Physics / Jurassic Park

I think about the stories you've told me when I feel like this. I think about you fleeing yr city. The way you describe it, I picture you and yr friends running from a fire, panicked, all going in different directions and not knowing where yr going, just going going going. Of course I don't know anything about what it was really like, just what you've told me, but I want to do that. My city is on fire. It's not my city anymore. I know now that if I left, without telling anyone, it would take months before anyone noticed and nobody would really care. I'm not being melodramatic, it's just a fact and I've come to accept it. All of my dreams are in new towns. I used to want to stitch the flag into my skin, four red stars burning glory across my back. I could carry it the way it used to carry me. I thought about the word "home" and it wasn't empty. Now I just sit here and count the minutes until not even this June, but the next, while the flames turn blue and lick my ankles.
This is going to sound so stupid, but guess what, I DON'T CARE.

I saw a picture in a magazine of Karen O from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs wearing a skeleton suit with a tshirt over it. I am determined to wear this outfit. However, the cheapest I could find a skeleton suit was fifty-so dollars. I don't have that. So this is what I am asking you: if you have or see an old skeleton suit- I want it. It doesn't have to be nice or anything, and it preferably does not have hands or feet (they have these!). Just like a black romper with bones on it. That would fit a Rosy-sized persyn, five foot four wit sexy curvez duh.

This is what I'm willing to trade:

- Baked goods
- Petty cash (like five bucks-ish)
- I'll set up a show for you
- A crafty gift of yr choice
- Zines (but you can have those anyway)
- Back rubs
- Kisses
- Possibly an MO-sesh (20 min tops)
- I just really want one
- C'mon
- Please

Also, if you don't live in Illinois I will (of course) pay for what it costs to mail me this. If you have one. Oh my god I just want one. Tell all yr friends.

Thanks!

Goals for this coming fall:

- Get straight A's in school
- Find a good school to student teach at
- Find a job. I seriously can't beleive how long this has taken
- Decorate my new house really cute
- Work really hard on this zine
- Make new friends. Make good, honest friends
- Treat them well
- Go on a long bike ride every day/night
- Save money
- Get out of bed, get out of the house, even when it's hard
- Grow an herb garden
- Say goodbye
- Get over the past year, the past twenty years, just get over it and move on
Part three.

At the very first all-grrrlz sleepover party, we kept telling each other—never hook up with touring musicians. We yelled it at each other over and over. Why don’t we take our own advice? I know I broke my own promise the very next day.

I fall in love with everybody I meet. I meet travelers, people just passing through on their way to something greater. They meet me on the road and I’m mysterious and new, and we kiss when nobody’s looking and share a bed. One night. They don’t ask for my phone number in the morning (what’s the point?) and then they leave. There are more exciting things to come—their world is open and incredible and they have things to share with the rest of the country. It would be selfish to ask them to stay. I don’t even really want them to stay, I’m not actually in love. I stay here though, just waiting for the next passerby. I never leave. So I’m sorry that I try to be friends afterward. There’s just nothing for me here.

SIDE NOTE WHOA: I am not trying to reduce the amazing people I’ve met in this scene to “touring musicians.” These are friends, artists, activists: kind people. I really hope this doesn’t come across like I regret our times together or would lump you into a category. Even though my friends and I said we were going to avoid hooking up with you.

This is what I know.

I know that everybody has broken someone’s heart.
I know that binary gender is boring.
I know that I love it when you sing.
I know that the revolution is possible.
I know that work sometimes doesn’t work.
I know that flaws are what make us beautiful.
I know that you hurt me.
I know that I can be bitter.
I know that all wounds heal, even small ones.
I know that not all scars tell stories.
I know that the streets are pulsing.
I know that money doesn’t mean a goddamn thing.
I know that blood is everything and it doesn’t mean a goddamn thing.
I know that I make something out of nothing.
I know that I make everything out of nothing.
I know that I have nothing.

I know that when we were both staring at the ceiling, wide-eyed and out of breath, we wanted to stare at each other. And when we did, it felt routine in the best way. And that’s why I still think about you.
If I rode my bike 1000+ miles, how bad would it actually hurt? I mean, would I hit a point where I’d eventually stop sweating and just start swimming? I mean, would it really be that bad? And if I started right now, how long before I got to you?

I feel like kind of an a$$hole for putting this here. I’ve been reading it for months, but it’s not published anywhere. My wonderful friend Patrick Gill and I want to make a zine of bad hookup stories, so if you have any, send them our way. I really want this to happen. Because everyone talks about awesome hookups, love, sexytimes, gettin’ yrs, whatever. But the majority of hookups are pretty lame. However you interpret that. Nonconsensual, gross, embarrassing, funny, trainwrecks and trauma. Here is one of my very worst hookups. (Trust me, I have enough bad hookups to fill the zine on my own LOLZ.)
This is really how it happened.

It was December 2007. My school has a six-week-long winter break, but you can’t stay in the dorms during it, so I was living with my parents again. I was still feeling pretty awful from my partner and I ending things in September, so being in that town again was especially difficult. I hate to give him this much credit, but even today I associate my hometown with him.

It’s just that when you spend enough time with one persyn in one place, that persyn becomes everything. They’re yr best friend, yr lover, the house you grew up in. They’re the twin bed at that house, where you laid awake as a child gasping from some nightmare, or you laid awake at eighteen, watching his chest move up and down and up and down and trying to match yr breathing to his while he sleeps. They’re the only hand that doesn’t hurt when it rests on the back of yr neck. They become the whole town yr leaving the trees and the roots and they’re the only reason yr scared to leave. But I left, and then he left me. And when I came back I knew that I wasn’t going to see him.

I knew that I wasn’t going to go to the graveyard, or the forest preserve. These places weren’t for me anymore— he was taking new girls now. I knew I was going to wake up in the morning, and go to work, and leave work, and smoke a bowl, and go back to my parent’s house, and go to sleep. There was nothing else to do. I smoked more weed that December than I could ever fathom smoking now. I mean, I guess I just wanted to feel nothing. And there was nothing else to do.

I got a job at Blockbuster Video to make use of my time and make some money. I used to promise myself that I would never work anywhere that made me wear a nametag, because I can’t respect a place that doesn’t know the names of the people that work there. Nametags are more for other employees than customers. I don’t think I could name all my co-workers. My nametag was meaningless, I was just “New Girl” or “Hey” or “Daaaammmnnn”. But there it was, and it said “Rose” not “Rosy”, and I was too tired to object.

I wore khakis and persuaded people to rent stupid movies that I would never watch. I asked them if they’d like to save some money today and become a Blockbuster Rewards member. I was that asshole. I did it with a smile.

To work at Blockbuster Video, you have to be between the ages of nineteen and twenty-eight. You have to be male and the idea of life outside a gender binary is completely outrageous. You have an earring that you think gives you “edge”, and you live with yr parents still. You mostly work here for the free video game rentals. You’ve been here for years. You think words like “bitch” and “slut” are appropriate labels for womyn. You think I’m “wild” because I have a nose ring. I was too tired to object.

Every night when I’d come home, stoned and exhausted, I’d think about calling my old partner. I wanted to kiss him. I wanted to just talk to him, see how his afternoon was. I’d get paranoid. How desperate would it seem if I called him up to meet at the diner? What if he was with his friends? What if he saw my name as the incoming call and groaned and put his phone back in his pocket? What if he deleted my number? What if he did meet me, and he saw my red eyes, and was disappointed in
One night, I drove to the graveyard alone after closing the store. Him and I used to make love in that graveyard every night. It seems pretty teenage- our parents were always home, we needed a place to fuck, it had an element of danger, but I swear it meant more than that. It was our place. I could never go there now- I wouldn’t want to. When I went there by myself, I don’t know what I was hoping to accomplish. Half of me just wanted some privacy, to sink further into solitude. Half of me wanted him to be there, taking in some new girl so I could point out what an asshole he was, how this was a perfect example of him desecrating the love we had for each other. Just to see if he’d feel any kind of shame. I lit up a bowl, closed my eyes, and sucked in deep. I wanted to hold it in forever. I hoped I choked and couldn’t catch my breath.

My coat wasn’t warm enough and my hands felt hard. I got more and more stoned, and I thought about the mosquito bites on my legs, and the bark scratches on my back. The way he’d sweat. Walking up the hill together, holding hands and grinning stupid, knowing exactly what would happen when we reached the top. Dousing each other with bug spray and grimacing when we tasted it on each other’s skin. The first time we went here and he still had a girlfriend, but he kissed my eyelashes like he loved me already. The last time I was here, the night before I left for school, we were both crying. And now it was just me: hazy-eyed and thick-tongued, knowing that all the ghosts under me were the only company I’d had in weeks.

Nobody talked to me. There were the people I’d smoke with, and my parents, and people at work, but other than that nobody talked to me. Being the only womyn at Blockbuster, I was constantly getting hit on by forty-something fathers, reluctantly renting their kids another dumb Disney-Pixar shitshow, while their wives tapped their press-on nails in the minivan. When you go long enough without anyone talking to you, you start to flirt back. Yr not yrself anymore. You smile big, and wink, and you are in awe of how much younger everyone looks in real life- you cannot believe this license says forty-three, are you sure? And then you get off work, and you smoke yrself stupid, and then the only persyn who talks to you is you, stammering “I’m going to make it, this is so stupid, I just need to make this” as you struggle with the drive home.

Then one three-to-close shift I met him. He isn’t a him with a capital H, like anyone of importance- I am just too ashamed to say his name. He had a swagger about him, but not an attractive one. He just looked like such a douchebag- I can’t say it any more articulately. Blonde hair, dumb tattoos, new boots- no scuffs, no work. Apparently he was a senior at my high school when I was a freshman, and he was really excited about that. I wouldn’t have paid any attention to him, but he talked to me throughout our entire eight hr shift. He told me all about his girlfriend who wasn’t really his girlfriend, and I told him about how my ex-partner and I used to watch “Evil Dead” three times a week, and how he still owed me $30. He said I was cute. He said it would be really funny if we fucked in one of the aisles after close. He was a manager, so it would just be us. He’d worked here for years but apparently no attractive girl had ever worked with him, so he couldn’t do it until now. Normally, I would be repulsed. I’m repulsed to think about him now. But when he asked me, I said, “Ok fine whatever.”

I hadn’t been with anyone like that since my ex-partner. I had had some sloppy drunken kisses in bathrooms and fooled around in dorm rooms, but I couldn’t muster the energy to have sex with anybody new. Just the thought of it made me feel dirty, even though I wanted so badly to exorcise him from my body. It was like I didn’t want to get over it. I didn’t want to ruin what he had had.

But I let my manager have it.
I was bored. And the only person I wanted to talk to wouldn’t talk to me. And the only person who talked to me in a few days was this guy. So, after closing the register and tidying up the shelves, we turned off all the lights and locked the front door.

“You’d better kiss good,” he said, unbuckling his belt. And then he didn’t talk anymore. We decided on the action aisle because it seemed funny at the time, and I tried not to look at him as I kicked my underwear between the Die Hard movies. This whole story is hilarious when I tell it now. It’s one of those jokes I tell. But I can’t describe what it felt like then. It wasn’t making love. It wasn’t fucking. I was just there, but like it wasn’t even me there. I mean, you get to a point when you’re sad, sad doesn’t mean anything, you just kind of floating around. We didn’t clock out until afterwards, so I got paid an extra $8.50 to bend over between shelves.

I wish I could say I was apathetic. I almost was. The tears were silent, just falling down an expressionless face as I drove home, sober for the first time in weeks. I didn’t feel any better than I had felt before, but I didn’t feel any worse. But something in me felt heavy. At a red light, another ex-partner, the one I’d lost my virginity to the spring before, texted me asking if I was in the suburbs and if I’d like to come over for a bit. I thought about my unzipped khakis and was sickened at the thought of being with two men within an hour. I thought about the ex-partner I really wanted to have texted me. I thought about how all I had were exes. When I texted back, “Let me go home and change first,” I’m not sure who I was. When I hid in my basement and didn’t answer my phone, I was just back at square one.

We didn’t work together after that. I quit on December 31st. In January, I moved back to the city, and started smiling again for the first time in six weeks. I drank heavily every night of the first week back, but it was the fun kind of alcoholism. One night, sprawled on the floor of my dorm bathroom with the door locked, looking like some clumsy deer-limbs making no sense, $5 vodka burning up my stomach, I finally got through to my ex-partner.

“I miss you,” was the only thing I could slur for what had to have been minutes. My tongue was heavy and I had a million things to tell him. I could have told him that I was doing pretty well in school, or that my roommate and I made a shrine to Karen O in our dorm room. How the song “Maps” still makes my breaths get shaky, how no, listen, wait- they don’t love you like I love you. I’d been trying to talk to him for months and all I could manage was a miserable “I miss you”.
I demanded to know how many girls he'd slept with, and he said none and asked me the same.

"Well, I fucked my boss at Blockbuster. In the action aisle." I don't know why I told him that. I guess I wanted him to be jealous. I wanted him to think of me bent over and sweating, with an older man's hands clasped on my body, and I wanted him to get hard. I wanted him to smash his phone on the pavement and yell at me, call me a slut and a whore and how dare I. But all he did was laugh, in the friendliest and meanest way.

"Ha! That's awesome."
I like you.
I like you.
I like you.
I like you.
I like you.
I like you.
Yr wonderful.
I like you.

Yr just like everybody else.
Yr just like everybody else.
Yr just like everybody else.
Yr just like everybody else.
Yr just like everybody else.
Yr just like everybody else.
You rip me apart.
Yr just like everybody else.

bacterial turned viral!
is always made by
me. rosy phrnsck. thanks
for reading it. this is
yrs now.