

Dark Pool Party

Hannah Black

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Sex is the only private place and it becomes unclean in writing

Just before Rihanna came to collect me it occurred to me that I wanted to fall in love with her and I looked at every woman walking towards me, disappointed by the ones I didn't think I could love. When she actually arrived I understood immediately that it was her and I was neither disappointed nor excited. We went for dinner at a Korean place that we found on Yelp and talked a lot.

I think that's how it happened but my memory is very bad. Earlier today I was texting with Ryan Gosling and he told me that Justin Bieber wants to get Italian citizenship and change his name to Robert De Niro, and for a long moment I couldn't remember Justin Bieber's unchanged surname at all. Forgetting is not similar to relief. On the plane to Amsterdam, an evil city, I read a book about the history of Australia and all this weekend I thought a lot about the people in the book whose world was destroyed. (When Usher said he longed for the apocalypse I tried to say, the apocalypse has already happened, but I was too high.) I didn't want to be in the grotesque city with the kitsch houses and the drunk white men, I wanted to be somewhere clean, and I felt the sadness of there being nowhere clean and then the sadness of the fascist longing for cleanliness.

CELEBRITY DEATH MATCH

DARK POOL PARTY

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There was a Dutch man at Rihanna's symposium who reminded her of her racist brother-in-law, she said. If your sister's husband is racist, doesn't that make her racist too, I asked or pointed out, and Rihanna looked very shocked, but what do I know about the lives of women? Rihanna told me that her brother-in-law had an alcoholic mother and was raised by a black maid and I thought of how strange these men's relation to black women must be, the combination of intimacy and distance, longing and disgust, familiarity and strangeness.

At Rihanna's symposium I said things I didn't mean because I wanted to convey my anger and sadness, to convey the feeling of reading the book. I wanted to turn away from the heaviness of history. I hate the word history.

Rihanna and I texted when I was waiting in the airport and we told each other that we like each other and it felt sort of big and sort of pointless. She told me a lot about her emotional baggage and I wrote again and again with my thumb in the little box, things like *I'm a mess* or *I'm a hurt person who hurts people* but could not bring myself to send them because I was afraid they were all true and I thought of Barack Obama who can't love anyone and me who can only love people who don't love me.

The screen is paused at a picture of a raccoon holding a gun. In the film the raccoon is an experiment and has to be explained as if it were not the most normal thing to have a talking animal in a film.

In films it's normal that the imprisoned and the poor have extraordinary powers and that the prison guards and the rich and powerful are ultimately weak. In reality the rich and powerful are not weak. I fly on my cheap ticket in the cheap section of the plane drinking cheap white wine. The

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stranger said he just got out of prison and would I give him  
Outside the station just now in the perfect light a  
The phases of the earth's shadow falling across the moon.  
how she wanted the phases of the moon painted on her nails.  
in a big house in West Philadelphia. Queen Latifah described  
Last night I went to a dance party with Selena Gomez  
My head is full of the thin airless feeling of exhaustion.  
complicatedly articulated. The light makes everything gold.  
plus plastic. The branches of the trees are arthritic or just  
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but no one noticed. From the train I watched two ducks  
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you were only a man.  
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CELEBRITY DEATH MATCH

DARK POOL PARTY

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street with his bag over his shoulder and his brand new cheap trainers. But it might be important to remember something about him, though his face is already receding, a nice face under a cap—the moment when he said “it’s kind of embarrassing,” the picture on the ID card that he showed me to prove something, I was too tired to understand what was being proved. The significance of relationships is actually secretly inverted and the people you meet for ten minutes and under are the ones who determine your fate.

Angela Merkel accused me of not being grateful enough and of masochism and of being self-hating which I maintained were different things.

The trees with their complicated limbs are still holding up the evening light as it turns red. The wooden frame of a half-built house. I wanted to say that hating yourself for hating yourself was femme, but anyone can do it.

Usher and Rihanna fold together in my thoughts. In the mornings making breakfast with Rihanna—it feels like we are still talking somewhere but neither of us is there.

I don’t know what to say about Usher. Maybe he will disappear too and I will only remember the mound of hamburger meat.

To what extent is the past still happening? There is the white fog that covers everything. There is irony and forgetting. There are competing claims.

I have to try not to dwell on all the intricate mistakes, the multilayered mistakes, the rocks swirling with millennia of mistakes and the mistaken moss on the rocks and the houses built by mistake and the mistaken magazine subscriptions and the words said by mistake next to the glass top coffee tables manufactured in error, the marriages that

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Obama, and I just remembered that I was alone.  
in pain I forgot about Rihanna, Usher, Ryan Gosling, Barack  
crisscrossing the massive TV screen at the foot of the bed;  
tomb-like room. At 7 a.m. I woke again to the Samsung logo  
laying it on my head, crying from pain and self-pity... The  
night, feverish and sick, soaking a towel in cold water and  
to see his name on my phone. No, I was already up. In the  
is our mother. Waking up in the windowless hotel room  
downloaded his album; at least one is me and at least one  
My brother called me, excited because seven people  
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have any money? Jeff Koons I could never ever love you.  
are you? Jeff Koons will you give me your money? Do you  
he is brown and black, he is a shining star, he is tightfisted,  
Koons I don't like your name, my father doesn't look like you,  
about loneliness, I think that's the trouble with men. Jeff  
follow LeBron James to Berlin. I don't think you know anything  
selling all your mountain things and Vancouver things to fol-  
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remembered scents. I am a dog so I must follow each smell  
buildings simplify into only doors and floors, impermeabilities,  
listen to me. Before I was an architect but now I am a dog  
the organs, weighed in bone, that's the story. You must not  
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The body is a register of more or less obscure credits and

Open letter to "Usher" and "Rihanna"

anything that's wrong with you.  
Well you're lucky, said Usher, because I don't know  
should be the one to tell me.

was something wrong with me I would listen to you, so you  
I thought that you were the one who if you said there  
How should I know, he said. Why are you asking me?  
Usher, I said, is there something wrong with me?

herself inside herself, privately, half from memory.  
Beyoncé's turned inwards like she is reading the text of  
and Jay Z's faces so open, Jay Z's expectant or amused,  
round smooth egg, like a wide open face? Both Beyoncé  
and I learn to roll along in evolving circles, like a  
anyone else.

eat badly, and you don't know how to look after yourself or  
I like you because you know how to give orders. But you  
Do you need my faith? No? Have all of it then. Usher,  
teeth—  
Release me—who is the prayer to?—I'm gritting my

anything he said, I just feel neutral.  
I was frightened that I'm not able to love anyone. I don't feel  
bet, your dreams, Usher will you send me an email. Because  
bottle, I just want to hear your voice, Usher do you remem-  
recite me a poem, read to me from the back of a shampoo  
to London in two hours, let me come and just look at you,  
much, I said, please let me come and see you, I'm flying  
Today I called Usher. I miss you, I said, I like you so

CELEBRITY DEATHMARCH  
DARK POOL PARTY

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not observant but even for me sometimes a current of air  
a liquid inside a container or was itself the container. I am  
and life leaked out very gradually: it's not yet clear if it was  
leave them. There is no holding on. There was a hole in life  
light in their branches though they must know it wants to  
know this is no way to talk. The trees grasp the high-calorie  
golden head and sheds a single tear. I praise you recklessly, I  
feel more awake, more or less. The emoji bows its huge  
transformed into an animal or understand everything or  
you yet? By the time the coffee cup is empty, you will be  
the one about the communist revolution? Has Jesus saved  
appear now and then like flashes of lightning. Did you hear  
went to Armenia and Tao Lin went to Taipei, their wives  
bowl and the black punctuation marks. Osip Mandelstam  
watermelon emptiness, the red juice hovering in the green  
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I check my bank account to see how much life I have left  
gender is its price; love is money, I think, but I don't know.  
product still in its pristine box. Race is love's limit and  
exact weight of my body but airless and numb, a mystery  
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as sunset; all this has been an aside. The air is the same  
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you're blocked. Important to balance the textures: this part  
and now I've tried too many times and I'm blocked or  
shake briefly, like I've typed the wrong pin code into you  
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passes over the skin. Don't I live in this world just as much  
as you do, "you" here a vague epithet for the strangers who  
pass in the street? If one of them is too beautiful I avert my  
eyes, like the unclean in a caste hierarchy or like workers on  
the set of a Tom Cruise film who have been told not to look  
at him, the star. He leaves, as you do, my lost loves, my  
failures, a blue imprint on each eye.

DARK POOL PARTY  
CENSORED BY DEATH MARCH

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At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit."

G. W. F. Hegel,  
Lectures on the Philosophy of World History

Does every departure repeat an original departure? Leaving this time by air is like the last time by road: the city fell back behind us, we entered a world of only roads and forest cut through by roads. The horizon covered up the sun, night came, I got off at the bus station. The skin of the world stays still and the organs move.

That city was dedicated to the happiness of the white bourgeoisie, each perfect tooth a monument to its own possibility. Their faces carry the extraordinary teeth in communal seclusion behind the lips and I have been educated in the faces' beauty. We ate trash for breakfast, squeezing ketchup sachets onto the strip of American bacon, the perfectly round egg, both of which signified: the unimaginable suffering of animals. Whispering into the mouth of the coffee cup I half-inverted an old prayer: *Thank you God for almost not making me a woman—every fuckable orifice (i.e. all?) defends its secret substance.*

When we're no one we're nowhere but we travel in hopes of finding a place to stay still or someone to stay still with and as soon as we've found it we move again because it must at least be possible that never moving is

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familiar from the years I spent at a fancy college. I could  
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But it takes practice to leave right. In the Harvard

from time to time.  
baby. Yes perhaps even Hegel can grow up to be a woman  
both surprised for example by the thought of Hegel as a  
anxiety in my touch but we are comrades now and then.  
now it's outside and I don't deserve anything. There is  
built it only on nights with a full moon." My inside cracks,  
her. I can feel my eyes, which are nothing. She says, "They  
"They built it only at night." By what light? I ask, looking at  
person says, with certainty, because she is always sure,  
of labor and domination, how terrible it was to build it. My  
city in the desert in Morocco. But imagine, I say, thinking  
and write page to show that I love the image of an ancient  
miraculous, built invisibly, built by no one. I touch a black  
white colonialists describe the buildings that seem to them  
to distract me from the luxury of my tears. In the book,  
brings me a book called *Architecture without Architects*  
soon as I can stop crying, which should be any year now.  
job. The person I'm considering falling in love with just as  
wall inside is stone, it doesn't have a body or a part-time  
if I can't stop crying! I hate myself! I'm a real girl! The  
At night I've found a wall inside myself and I try to describe  
am changed back into a woman. But what kind of woman?  
Coast I'm an animal and on the West Coast by a miracle I  
the dull suburbs of a half-hidden unhappiness. On the East  
windows of downtown, the way you are with your friends;  
a person is like getting to know a city." The plate glass  
From Los Angeles I write, "Perhaps getting to know  
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tolerate its hateful familiarity because this particular place  
wasn't supposed to be for me. The light was an afternoon  
gold. The campus historic. The scholarships generous.

from time to time.  
baby. Yes perhaps even Hegel can grow up to be a woman  
both surprised for example by the thought of Hegel as a  
anxiety in my touch but we are comrades now and then.  
now it's outside and I don't deserve anything. There is  
built it only on nights with a full moon." My inside cracks,  
her. I can feel my eyes, which are nothing. She says, "They  
"They built it only at night." By what light? I ask, looking at  
person says, with certainty, because she is always sure,  
of labor and domination, how terrible it was to build it. My  
city in the desert in Morocco. But imagine, I say, thinking  
and write page to show that I love the image of an ancient  
miraculous, built invisibly, built by no one. I touch a black  
white colonialists describe the buildings that seem to them  
to distract me from the luxury of my tears. In the book,  
brings me a book called *Architecture without Architects*  
soon as I can stop crying, which should be any year now.  
job. The person I'm considering falling in love with just as  
wall inside is stone, it doesn't have a body or a part-time  
if I can't stop crying! I hate myself! I'm a real girl! The  
At night I've found a wall inside myself and I try to describe  
am changed back into a woman. But what kind of woman?  
Coast I'm an animal and on the West Coast by a miracle I  
the dull suburbs of a half-hidden unhappiness. On the East  
windows of downtown, the way you are with your friends;  
a person is like getting to know a city." The plate glass  
From Los Angeles I write, "Perhaps getting to know  
to be constitutive.

the same as always moving, and we believe our nothingness  
to be constitutive.



A vision is following us around but we can't all see it because it's mine. We time travel, by plane perhaps, to a book-lined study straight out of a period drama before white people think black people were invented, where we are both this one mulatto of average height and a white man is in front of the mulatto who we are and a negro stands behind. Were the mulatto to turn his head just a little he would catch the negro's eye and the negro would have to turn away out of caution, and behind the negro is the wall and on the wall are bookshelves. The negro with his hands interlaced behind his back and his eyes resting carefully on the spine of a book, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. Then back to the white face. Then back to the brown cheek turned away and the gleam of having turned away still held in the half-seen eye. Then back to the white face. Then the window. The small hands of trees. Yes the sky!

Describe the eye in which this sky is materialized— what kind of brown exactly? I could tell you but it would be (1) embarrassing and (2) un-contemporary. But despite ourselves we carry the knowledge and the suppression of the knowledge and the knowledge of the suppression of the knowledge of these kinds of eye and skin, pigmentation here standing in (not perfectly) for the movement of history or for the failure of history to move. No I will not embarrass you or myself by affirming brownness let alone blackness as anything special, as the heart of history—what do I look like, like a liberal? Like someone who doesn't know what room she's in?—but I will insist on its existence against the tedium of white and blue. No, I will be smart and say that this eye is not meaningful. No, I will be cautious and say nothing of the eye. I know it is creepy to watch you for too long so I turn away and pretend to be interested in something anything other than you. Here I will say the word *capital* to show that I sometimes read. Capital.

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Back to the poetry library, which is full of white  
kindness and white ease, if you are willing to keep your head  
still then the library will hold you in its strong palm. Build-  
ings like this are why the great European philosophers and  
every rich white boy had to discover in astonishment that  
the world might be neither self-evident nor for them. These  
types of buildings declare truth or experience a legislative  
matter to be decided among white men—architecture only  
the most tangible of the methods through which this is  
enforced. In the library wrought in their image I sprawled  
inelegantly on a sofa balancing my seventeen inches of hard  
silver MacBook on my stomach, zapping my ovaries with  
data. We feel sure that Hegel sat upright at a desk to work.  
His big, crumpled face with thoughts troubling it system-  
atically like light proceeding across a sundial. Hegel's long  
white penis lying flaccid on his thigh. Carla Lonzi wrote of  
him in *Let's Spit on Hegel*, I paraphrase, "Dear G. W. F. I love  
you, but it pains me to think of you." Her white-and-pearl  
spittle sliding on his long white thigh.

To say it's myself that I'm trying to escape only briefly  
defers the question of who made me want to. There is no-  
where to go but there must be a place to install this escape  
that is better than the others or less subject to reversions.  
The first task of forgetting is to remember. Hegel called  
Africa "an unhistorical continent, without movement or  
development of its own." Blackness doesn't move. "Intrac-  
tability is the distinguishing feature of the negro character."  
How to distinguish intractability from bravery? How to  
become more like Hegel's black African, close to nature,  
sensuous, free from guilt? The image of blackness is the  
violence of whiteness. But there is no single body that can  
live this out, unless it lives an idea of race by dying of the  
intensity of the distinction. The Europeans held a special  
place for the mulatto, whose infusion of white blood almost  
made of him a citizen. If I return to London I will die again

DARK POOL PARTY

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and so on. We are investigating Hegel's wager that as far as  
of the men up with my eyes and brought him into a cubicle  
like liking the feeling. In Minneapolis I could have taken one  
murs of turbulence rock the plane, I like the feeling and I  
There are huge circles in the desert below and mur-  
but my fingers inside.  
where I can rest. I think gratefully of everyone I have ever  
others recognize me as. Find me somewhere in the world  
I am back inside this disappearance, inside the woman that  
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does soup feel when a spoon dips inside it? I am disappear-  
and warmth like a world bearing down on the head. How  
focus on just the cock as if it were mine. There is pressure  
unified with the experience of men. I get high and try to  
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might as well not have. They jerk off in the evenings watch-  
ni for the inner lives I can't read otherwise and that they  
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I wore only a thin layer of cotton. In sex they would show  
glances skimmed my body and rested on my breasts where  
sign of their interiority. The accumulated mass of all their  
seemed like animals to me because I couldn't detect any  
cows, but that was only my association, or maybe they  
fair, like big healthy farm animals, like thickly inseminated  
In the airport in Minneapolis the men were big and  
from me I am flattered, and you can have it.  
or boy, life force in you, if you think you can take something  
the fist clenching to ward off a remembered shame. O girl  
all the time, a city built only by moonlight, a joke or a story,  
circles, I try to think of reasons other than love, which fails  
Either leaving or staying would concede too much. I turn  
velled hills, where I stop, daunted by the steep incline.  
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of the men up with my eyes and brought him into a cubicle  
and so on. We are investigating Hegel's wager that as far as

we have attained whiteness we are not collapsed in oneness  
we are not each in each other and if it would help the study  
I am willing to take a dick I am willing to take it far enough  
inside me that you forget you ever had it. I picture the  
distinction of the circumcision scar, which is the sign that  
pleasure derives its authority from the attempt to master  
pleasure. But I am not brave and could do nothing with the  
men's glances. The fantasy, mostly redacted here, which  
included at its apex a kind of joke about anal sex in the  
Midwest and the image of an automatic toilet flush repeat-  
ing over and over was a fantasy of mastery of pleasure, like  
the circumcision scar, that recommits me to the impasse of  
trying to find myself in pleasure.

Does every departure recall the first departure, until  
it doesn't anymore? I was returned back to womanhood  
(for now) by the fissure in identity, which is that everything  
that is itself is also something other than itself. "We hold  
systematic thinkers responsible for the great humiliation  
imposed on us by the patriarchal world." But Carla, I say,  
speaking this time out of the eye of Hegel's penis, it was  
the commodity form, value extraction, domination, all of  
this that humiliated us into being; not systematic thinking  
itself, but a system that thinks itself called capitalism. Is this  
clear? What was I saying? Thank you God for almost not  
making me a woman.

Let me try again to say something clean and theoret-  
ical—if there are no things-in-themselves—or if things-in-  
themselves are barred to us—and if consciousness can't be  
its own object—or if—and if I can't pay rent next month—  
and if I love what doesn't love me—  
In the end although I left so many times I have gone  
nowhere, I have remained in place, unhistorical, blacker than  
I thought. White moves all around me—yes that cloud looks  
very much like a face. Nothing that wants movement has  
moved; we have passed through the absolute stillness that

CITY BUILT AT NIGHT  
DARK POOL PARTY

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where I started, to where I have yet to begin.  
means we are coming closer to it. Now I'm almost back to  
its own (im)possibility. I mean. If the land comes closer it  
colonizes experience, I mean experience is conditioned by  
experience. I mean some kind of expression of difference  
without imagination or sensitivity. Gender and race colonize  
for the same reason the fields are cut like that, so squarely.  
When we land, I'll be as I have been up until now, perhaps  
edge of the mountains. The wing of the plane cuts the sky.  
descending. There are agricultural squares right up to the  
from the evil of thinking I know myself alone. The plane is  
My beloved in the morning. A city built at night. Keep me  
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contradict it. What I write: what I think I will forget and  
instead is this seam of the real and what we find that doesn't  
call so I'm just touching my screen? Beyond or beneath or  
cute how I'm like I'm touching your nose but it's a video  
to the start of history to the movement of blackness. Is it  
you'll do the same. That way we might roll like pet rock  
I'll consider getting reconciled to what's strange in me if  
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"The work is not an autobiography."

Leslie Feinberg

Why write life as fiction? We were maybe one-third of the way through *Stone Butch Blues* before we realized it was a novel. In an interview Leslie Feinberg said, "I have had a much richer, fuller life than Jess." Moved to defend Jess against her creator, we cradle our image of Jess, which is also the back cover image of Feinberg, close to our heart. What could be a richer or fuller life than the fullness of longing, than the ruin of being a man/being a woman? Why write life as fiction?

A fictional character stands in a room at a window smoking a cigarette and directing exhaled smoke out of the window. People pass by in winter clothes, on bikes or on foot. The character feels how the eye receives each passing figure like woman, man, woman, woman, woman—a split second of cognitive sorting that the character resents, a little, and is awed by, a little, silently sorting the passersby into the four basic categories of M, F, unknown, and baby. These thoughts feel like factory thoughts, as one might sort nuts and bolts dividing each into each, fast-moving hand like the will of a totally degraded god. All that is left of the gods is their power of division

In general, a line drawing would be better than writing to express the movements and the experiences of these passé gods

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DARK POOL PARTY

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care about the art department! Who cares about  
sand. Whatever, who cares about the room! Who  
anything from one or two to several hundred thou-  
the room. In this case the sum of zero can mean  
art department or there are no black people in  
pie in Berlin or there are no black people in the  
There are no characters. There are no black peo-  
unknown, baby and black. There are no genders.  
and baby. There are five genders: male, female,  
These are the four genders: male, female, unknown,  
will use. That's because we can't write fiction  
The first thing that arrives of the character is the words we

now the character has not noticed  
The character's eyebrows are unkempt, for days or years  
into in order to make enough texture for fiction  
The blank surface that we will dig our fingertips  
mind's eye of the character: a sheet pulled taut on a bed  
jaw, undoubtedly, but what about the eyes? An image in the  
ed with gender, obviously, but the elbows get off lightly; the  
pools like water in the creases of a tarp: the chest is satur-  
surface on which gender seeps in or disperses, collects in  
The character thinks of the character's body as an uneven

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DARK POOL PARTY

PRESS FOR SERVICE

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Berlin! We are all on the internet now. We are all

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I'm sorry  
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even in death: beloved wife, devoted husband, the  
Dead is not a gender because you bear a gender.  
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is as complex or more complex than this process—woman,  
question of what's a gesture and what's a subset of a gesture  
those three, smoking standing looking thinking, four? The  
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remains furious and grateful transform the baby into a "her," for which the character breath until it flowed like blood into the baby, helping to melted down his planetary grief on the warmth of the baby's father. The grandfather held the character as a baby and says, "This is the language planet," to the character's grand- is not an autobiography," then later dies. The character the autobiography of writing... Leslie Feinberg says, "This writing becomes more and more like itself, like writing, like of writing is an opportunity to know less and less... Maybe writing is to know something... But maybe each moment The character cannot be unknown because the task of to the regal "he," the writer hides the writer's face in it... be a man because there is a shame in always defaulting drags centuries of kitsch behind it... The character cannot be a woman because the word "she" character cannot be so complicated and long lost... The house of babies seem so complicated and long lost... The The character cannot be a baby because the rules of the

an unfamiliar house, as if taking off outer clothing and shoes the threshold of the description as if following the rules of the right word, they hovered respectfully or resentfully at This was because the students hesitated, they searched for that the students were discussing real people, not characters school, the character realized within ten or twenty seconds the people they invent. Once, coming late into a class at film and fantasy. Some real people have the capacity to desire The four genders of character are: pretext, archetype, self,

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she's a woman from the way that others seem  
hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The character can tell  
The character becomes a woman between the  
What useful lies can I tell

Sarah Harrison said, don't think of it as fiction,  
think of it as lies about the truth

give him, her, them, the baby  
frozen in the one unified gesture I have yet been able to  
The character stands at the window as a rebuke to me,  
The shame of invention is like the shame of being  
The character's skin darkens almost to black at the creases  
character's powers of division  
them, all that is left of the character is the  
because the character is how we have received  
endless plain of whiteness  
and we have still not fully rescued the character from the  
Perhaps the character is one hundred years old and a man,  
draws a sad face with punctuation

the character types, "I always forget it's fiction," and then  
minutes pass then in a sudden moment of embarrassment  
writes "someone who doesn't know how to forget"  
presses return

writing from inside the place of their forgetfulness"  
The character writes in the gchat box: "it's like someone  
of being understood

misspelled but presses return anyway in the hope  
The character notes that literally every word is  
of the descriptions of violence and the aftermath of violence."  
The amazing thing about *Stone Butch Blues* is the vividness  
The character opens a gchat box and types to a close friend,  
The gender of the universe is a single human life  
they threaten at all times to become the full extent of one  
is not an autobiography, but nor is race or gender, though  
and is and is not nothing, and is and is not everything. God

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expressed as a number  
the character is all the love the character wasted over time,  
dollars, it's easy  
the character has no money or a million US  
the character is relatable  
the character is loosely based on your mother  
the character is thin  
the character is on my clit  
the character is bleeding out in the stairwell  
of the situation but wants to go out dancing anyway  
the character is fully cognizant of the complexities  
or growing very old or living on less than £30 a week  
as you while you discuss your experience of taking hormones  
the character is eight or nine people looking encouragingly  
in school  
the character's friend did when the character was  
the character has a tattoo saying FTP that the  
the character turns around they are hugely pregnant  
the character says  
the character says I'm crying because I'm unhappy,  
the character says I'm crying because I'm happy,  
don't cry, and until now I didn't know that the  
Someone else in the room says to the character,  
in the morning, the witching hour of being a woman  
acter only dares to even imagine that world at three o'clock  
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acter only dares to even imagine that world at three o'clock  
Perhaps the character could inhabit a world in which it  
were only a button?  
compelled to try to love men sometimes if men  
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FOR SERVICE and the state of being-man is like  
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DARK POOL PARTY

PRESS FOR SERVICE

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the character is still pretty young relative to people  
who are dead

We leave the room the cigarette the manifold gesture, the  
street or we are left with only the room the cigarette the  
manifold gesture the street without the momentary coher-  
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DARK POOL PARTY

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# Atlantis

DARK POOL PARTY



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DARK POOL PARTY

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Last winter I decided that the best way for me to  
become beautiful and strong was to lift free weights at the  
gym. I joined a gym in Kreuzberg in Berlin and my body  
gained strange new qualities: a band of muscle around the  
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types of user: young working class men of color from the  
neighborhood, and young mostly gay men who, as far as I

can tell from the muted fashion signals of their gym clothes, belong to the international bourgeois or post-bourgeois class who are attracted to Berlin because it is cheap compared to other cultural centers, which is to say, because it is relatively impoverished. These people move according to differentials in wages, fluctuations in airfares, rent, and so on: I also belong to this class. The young men of color train mainly in groups, standing over each other to spot benches; the international cultural workers train in ones and twos, sometimes glancing at each other to flirt. All the ambition and desire in the room passes over my shoulder in a way I don't exist in the free weights room and in another equal way the free weights room is a place where I might become bigger and stronger, more and more existent. Because I was already ignorant in relation to the men lifting weights, because I was already an outsider, because they practiced global and identical forms, I thought I could go down to Atlantis and make context-free contemporary art about the context-free bodybuilding practiced there. But it turns out even if you go somewhere intending to discover only your own ignorance you still turn out to be differently ignorant than you thought. In Atlantis, I was also not ignorant in one particular aspect because the people of Atlantis are fascinated by blackness, and I was interpellated by their perception of what blackness means just by appearing on their waterlogged streets. In the end, wishing to be respectfully ignorant, I found myself in possession of an empty knowledge that I could not share.

But as an artist I was there as an avatar of the global dominance of whiteness, a whiteness enriched by strategic inclusions, a whiteness that is the animated face of the global flow of money, an abstract whiteness that flows through the empty apartment blocks that the Atlantis leadership has built through the Zaha Hadid building that houses a museum of the dictator's life, through the deserted Olympic stadiums.

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of analogy in its universal equivalence everything becomes  
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of my desire, like Marx says of Milton, another analogy: he  
of free desiring activity, I should work from the free activity  
meaning of labor by bearing its negation or opposite side  
this banned limbo. I am tasked as an artist with bearing the  
through the enslaved person as well as the worker, hover in  
that blackness and maybe also labor, considered now  
metaphors are banned in the war on analogy, too. I think  
it sits on this world's shoulder, it is its parrot, its angel, but  
are tasked with imagining or hypothesizing another world;  
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realm of partial exorcisms from which attempted exclusions  
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and a donkey. Instead I slide the simile into the conditional  
faintly disgusting in the uncanny valley between a unicorn  
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ATLANTIS

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is of mediator: the artwork is supposed to mediate between an excrecence of financialization or an avatar of (il)liquidity. The position of the artist, insofar as the artist is not last as material. I told myself, but here again I deploy my discomfort critique. My complicity will not wear the saving drag of the material of the politics of elsewhere as a kind of ersatz being "very political." I told myself I would try not to use from the violence of the gallery the satisfaction of my work arrive at in Atlantis were that I would at least withhold including art-making. The only threadbare ethics I could cold white light of accumulation through procedures epicenters of black life in London now brought into the the specter is no less frightening in Peckham or Hackney, in Atlantis, where I had nothing meaningful to say but specter of critique as self-exoneration loomed very large to the contemporary artist. The mechanism, the banned of representational power that is understandably irresistible only of torture but are themselves torture, an intensification the tortured prisoners at Abu Ghraib, images that are not work by Parker Ito that included the famous depictions of praised some of the works as "very political," especially the terrorized by the threat of its own softness. The curator agents of desire: it becomes intermittently impotent, and my art-making suffers the fate of all socially appointed basic infrastructure of contemporary art. Overdetermined, supposed to justify the movements of capital that provide the credit operations on it as a straight man's sexuality; both are terms. My desire has almost as many social claims and pyrrhically in the currency of my desire to be seen on my I am paid partly in the fame of the other artists. I am paid least famous and the least rich and the least well paid artist; space, gesturing to invisible artworks that will soon be

DARK POOL PARTY

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Down in Atlantis the curator showed me around the space, gesturing to invisible artworks that will soon be expensively shipped from far away to fill the room. I am the least famous and the least rich and the least well paid artist; I am paid partly in the fame of the other artists. I am paid pyrrhically in the currency of my desire to be seen on my terms. My desire has almost as many social claims and credit operations on it as a straight man's sexuality; both are supposed to justify the movements of capital that provide the basic infrastructure of contemporary art. Overdetermined, my art-making suffers the fate of all socially appointed agents of desire: it becomes intermittently impotent, and terrorized by the threat of its own softness. The curator praised some of the works as "very political," especially the work by Parker Ito that included the famous depictions of the tortured prisoners at Abu Ghraib, images that are not only of torture but are themselves torture, an intensification of representational power that is understandably irresistible to the contemporary artist. The mechanism, the banned specter, of critique as self-exoneration loomed very large in Atlantis, where I had nothing meaningful to say, but the specter is no less frightening in Peckham or Hackney, epicenters of black life in London now brought into the cold white light of accumulation through procedures including art-making. The only threadbare ethics I could arrive at in Atlantis were that I would at least withhold from the violence of the gallery the satisfaction of my work being "very political." I told myself I would try not to use the material of the politics of elsewhere as a kind of ersatz critique. My complicity will not wear the saving drag of critique, I told myself, but here again I deploy my discomfort as material.

The position of the artist, insofar as the artist is not just an excrecence of financialization or an avatar of (il)liquidity, is of mediator: the artwork is supposed to mediate between

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As long as they keep their hands off your neck it's easy to  
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Sexual feeling blossoming in the ruinous body: high  
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DARK POOL PARTY

LONG TERM EFFECTS

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only ever looking at herself, so it takes her a long time to see him. If it's years later by now and he is reading this, he should know that a mulatta's problems are always historical, or that this one believes so constitutionally: that is her stupid fate.

Fate is always stupid, both real and not. When the antibiotics stop working we will all die more often of love. Technological leaps in medicine are meant for the evil rich, in Europe and its far-flung acts of violence. Let the genome rattle off its wrong letters: the feeling of not being able to read yourself is a dark pool and this is a dark pool party. She won't shake his hand because her palm is sweating. You can't be a race traitor when your race depends on context. Desire, and administrative rearrangement, is that everyone? Betrayal has to come from the heart, or "really come from

the heart," like on reality TV.

First they put the handcuffs on the boy and then they shot him in the back of the head, and by "they" she doesn't just mean America. The dead remain dead. They owe her nothing, but their names are given to her. As for those who should never have lived—

The curtain lined with dust, the peeled summer street, the singing drunks, some so raw they still carry guitars, faces like skinned chicken breasts, she knows without looking. Un-spool the wet wool of my big stupid heart, baby, or don't look at me at all. Love me or leave me alone. The secret liquidity, the Facebook friend request: while we live we go on living. It's retroactive: the activated ancestors' limbs unfurl in the stinking holes where they are kept. But first she must name them, and their names are Bitch You Can No More Avenge Life Than Death.

Lord, she prays without knowing God, send me a man who likes to fuck. For once, God provides, which had to happen at some point, statistically. She was fathered by Egyptological adventures on the

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Anyone can step over the held-tight line of the self  
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now that it has been wrenched free of utility and become  
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DARK POOL PARTY

LONG TERM EFFECTS

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Someone approaches her at a party and tells her that they  
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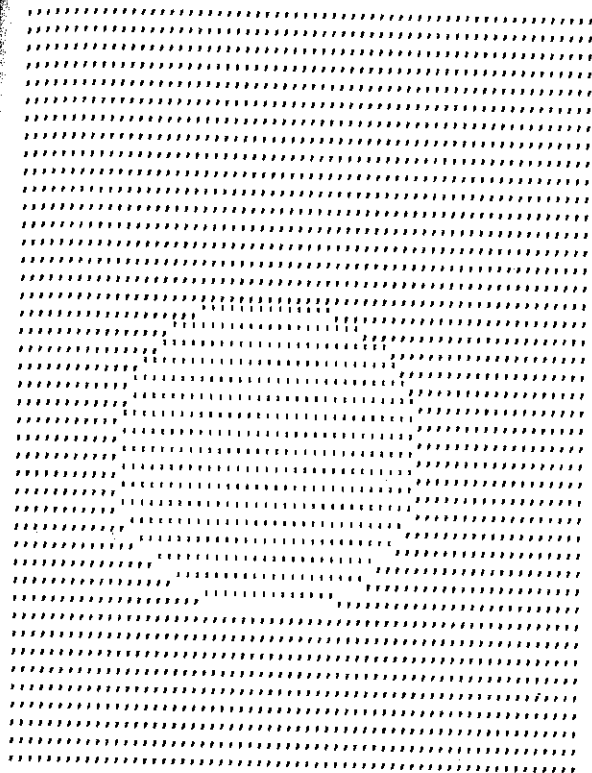
of living. to participate against hostile elements, the collective practice line and the next, hoping every time to discover new material Because of this and other things she goes on to the next asleep and said something like, "We have to return the dog!" friends who laughed in their sleep or turned to her still the administration of life defeats life, she has slept next to other days she just watches the moving lights. Although from being what some people think it is: a mistake. On in insisting on her fragmentation, she might save identity (basic) as his strong hands. On braver days she thinks that what she can only describe (though embarrassed to be so just wants to melt into the feeling of melting, the feeling of insurgent compromise) to redeem anyone but herself, she insurgency and compromise (compromised insurgencies, living or dying might be capable of. Too much marked with of the sentence only skim the surface of what language or or that you give me sometimes? The many permutations give myself to having nothing, to the nothing that I give you. Can't "yours" mean I don't own myself, refuse ownership, redeemed from these histories of ownership: of non-black women by non-black men, of black women by everyone? But who cares about redemption? Father-God is the only in the sense that a voucher can be redeemed for up to 10% off. importance of despair, or that she's waiting to be redeemed

importance of despair, or that she's waiting to be redeemed only in the sense that a voucher can be redeemed for up to 10% off.

But who cares about redemption? Father-God is the theology of treating women badly. She will say to him, *I'm yours*, and he will say, No, don't say that... Can I'm yours be redeemed from these histories of ownership: of non-black women by non-black men, of black women by everyone? Can't "yours" mean I don't own myself, refuse ownership, give myself to having nothing, to the nothing that I give you, or that you give me sometimes? The many permutations of the sentence only skim the surface of what language or living or dying might be capable of. Too much marked with insurgency and compromise (compromised insurgencies, insurgent compromise) to redeem anyone but herself, she just wants to melt into the feeling of melting, the feeling of what she can only describe (though embarrassed to be so basic) as his strong hands. On braver days she thinks that in insisting on her fragmentation, she might save identity from being what some people think it is: a mistake. On other days she just watches the moving lights. Although the administration of life defeats life, she has slept next to friends who laughed in their sleep or turned to her still asleep and said something like, "We have to return the dog!" Because of this and other things she goes on to the next line and the next, hoping every time to discover new material to barricade, against hostile elements, the collective practice of living.

# Spirit/Level

DARK POOL PARTY.



for Jesse Darling and Taki Shiomitsu

SPRIT LEVEL

SPRIT/LEVEL

The ground is the first condition; the ground is a hypothesis: the theory of gravity as an arrow pointing suggestively down, the theory of you hit the bottom and you're done. One day we will switch names and tenses, but for now we're aligned in time. You keep me honest by lying flat on the ground. The first condition is the ground, the second is touch, the third is still only a promise. Here's the deal: he'll make an honest man of me, I'm becoming what I imagined of you, it's your birthday, I'll throw in a free mirror, hand cream, done. This glassed-in bubble is a breath I didn't take, and on this scale the ground is quantified as zero, an open mouth. You keep me pleasurably dishonest. You keep me in line and I move according to how you are mistaken. Sometimes I'm pleased to find myself pleased by you and sometimes I'm pleased to find you pleased by me and other times I'm not pleased at all, and at all times these possibilities of pleasure/displeasure are conditioned by the zero that marks the place we call the ground.

DARK POOL PARTY

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SPRIT, LEVEL

I realize I have misaligned my bones to a string of saliva  
 dangling from your mouth. I correct my mistake. I leave  
 town on a weekday. I go where I can, like water, like drinking  
 water, like floodwater. At sea there are no fixed contours  
 and it's all the wrong scale. I text you it's too late I know  
 everything. Then I come back again, back to the beginning  
 and the end inside the beginning again. I have nowhere to  
 go but the beginning/the end. I have misaligned my hands  
 to your spine, fingernails prising up an almost imperceptible  
 line. Having nowhere to go but each other, we inevitably go  
 there, and the food is OK, and there are other people we  
 know, on the steps, drinking from cans.

LEVEL I

First you defeat the defenders of the monster, then the  
 monster itself, then you rescue the girl/boy, then you attain  
 to glory, then the music plays, then they array you in gold  
 stars, then you pass out and dream that first you defeat  
 the defenders of the monster, then the monster itself, then  
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DARK POOL PARTY

SPIRIT

recent scientific study  
 tween us also moves the world in general, according to a  
 and tearing up off their foundations. Whatever moves be-  
 outwards concentrically towards the beyond of the suburbs  
 the glass of the windows outwards, the buildings are leaning  
 gathers worshipfully at your feet, this crazy wind is sucking  
 are, the plaster is yearning off the walls to you, the dust  
 of like that if I moved my head to see you. I know where you  
 where you are but I would die of shame or something sort  
 out, curving up and moaning, from the old wood. I know  
 of the room: you magnetize the floorboards, nails popping  
 screen with the world passing through and down to me in  
 face or like four hours later I am still just staring at the  
 back and forth like ancestral features appear in a child's  
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 Whatever moves the world in general, I think also moves

SPIRIT

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 tween us also moves the world in general, according to a  
 recent scientific study.

LEVEL SPIRIT

On leaving London I relaxed my enormous will and let all the buildings fall to the ground and on the plain behind me a single horse with a rider like a country song swinging a shotgun. Out of the corner of my mouth I slurred, you keep me honest. Kick your harness? UKIP harvest? One day son all this won't be yours but until then there used to be a city here and it was fine while it lasted then we learned the past tense and from then on it was all we could talk in. I had my wild days too in my youth and I would run all around town with a single word rolling around in my wild young mouth and sometimes that word was honey and sometimes that word was a knife in my youth in my youth.

LEVEL 3

and then you are one and then your tongue goes straight through its whole head flat on the ground and the monster lies down on top of you and then you drink a beer with the monster and then the monster and then you defeat yourself and later you are the monster and then you defeat the monster and then the monster defeats

SPIRIT/LEVEL  
DARK POOL PARTY

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LEVEL 2

First, you defeat the monster and then the monster defeats you and then you defeat yourself and later you are the monster and then you drink a beer with the monster and then the monster drinks the beer that is you and then you lie down flat on the ground and the monster lies down on top of you and then your tongue goes straight through its whole head and then you are one



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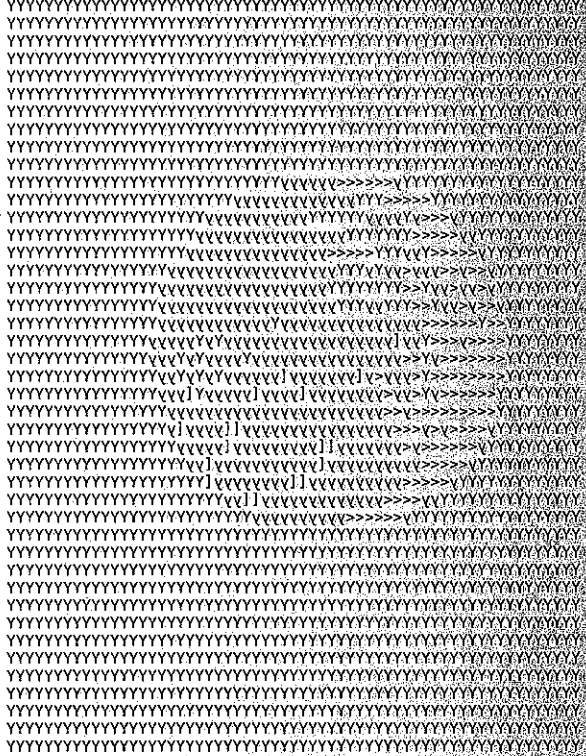
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Dark Pool Party



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