

Night of The Lepus

by Misti Rainwater-Lites

Hi Joe.

I don't know where you are. I'm in San Antonio in a pink bathrobe that symbolizes redemptive love. I cried earlier eating raw vegetables listening to "How Deep is Your Love?" There was a lot of Chicago before that. And The Association. And Gram Parsons. There are still rabbits everywhere. I try and fail to appease them. Who knew rabbits could be so gargantuan with animosity?

It was June in Year of The Rabbit. You were there. I was ridiculous in my big deal designer blue velvet and faux fur coat. Chainsmoking and stoned and drunk off my ass, trying to talk you into loving me. "You should be an attorney," you said. Finally we went to bed and the next morning I was so happy I did something I hadn't done since I was a teenager. I played a record. Well. One song. "Wild Horses." Then we made that magical drive up your mountain to Camp Climax and you poured green Vitabath into the tub beneath those California stars and told me it would be like bathing in a vodka gimlet. Do you know how many men I've told this story to? I wrote a novel and then I told the story to anyone who would listen. "We didn't fuck but it was the most magical night of my life. The best night of my life." I never get tired of the telling. I've decided I'm here to be absurd. I'm embracing this in my late middle age. We had one week, almost. One night in Santa Cruz. One night on your mountain. How many nights in San Francisco? Not nearly enough. I blew it by serenading you with "Hold Me Now" and licking your face but the best part of the story is the vodka gimlet bubble bath and then the pizza rolls and then. I broke the heel of one of my Goodwill Mary Janes and you carried me into the cabin and sat me down at the computer and said, "This is the song that reminds me of you." I was too stunned to cry as I melted listening to Bob Dylan's "To Ramona." That was my Rose on the Titanic moment. I don't think it will ever be topped. All

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the men. All the try. My busted up tacky junkyard dog gnawed heart. That was my gold. I still carry it because I'm a fool. I get rid of everything. I lose everything. I pawn and sell and throw it all to the wolves. I keep the gold of that night. It's a rabbit's foot dyed purple. Terribly politically incorrect.

"I haven't laughed this hard since I was three years old," I said as I cried, watching "Night of The Lepus" with you, eating Cracker Jacks. The moon must have been in Sagittarius because suddenly Santa had brought me all the toys I stopped asking for in 1983. Then we were on those burgundy sheets and I was kissing you with my nose and eyelashes and you were delighted. Your first Eskimo and butterfly kisses. I like being the first. I've always wondered what it would feel like to be the last.

You've been dead now for less than a year. I still think of buying a ticket and visiting your grave. I keep your switchblade on my altar and the plastic shrunken head is pinned on the wall with my collages and bandito marionette. I'm in conversation with you, always. I'm back there in the stone of that day. The cold awful stone of that morning when you asked me if I had any last words and you hugged me and then I walked around the financial district crying in my pajamas. I mourned you then and I mourn you now. I made a YouTube a few days ago of me reading Zooey's phone call to Franny. I cried because you were Seymour and you were Zooey and I'm still Franny at 45. The weight of that day. The gold of that night. I'm carrying.

You're here now. You're telling me to forget the raw vegetables and to eat a Chef Boyardee pizza. You're telling me to fly. You speak to me in every man I even think about kissing. When a man high fives me at the comedy club on open mic night, that's you. Will I ever fly to Paris? Lima? Barcelona? Fiji? If I do I'll toast you. I was your first reader and when I lost you I got Sinhalese characters tattooed to my right forearm thinking, "Someday I'll show these to Joe" because you

wrote a chapter in Sinhalese and you couldn't believe I was familiar with the language. Your moon was in Gemini, trining my sun in Aquarius. Baby there will never be a time when the two of us ain't talking.

Nothing makes any sense and we never did trust the ones who profess to have all the answers so it will be angry killer rabbits always, with us. Laughter and tears and songs to the moon and lucky charms carried like gold because we are the fools with zero interest in inheriting any conceivable kingdom.

