

“In cooperation with the RAINN Speakers Bureau, we wanted to share with you an opportunity to share your story. RAINN was recently contacted by Lexie Bean, who is currently working on a project called Attention: People With Body Parts. In an effort to create solidarity and raise awareness, she is looking for survivors who have been told or forced to believe that their bodies are not safe spaces to participate in a multimedia project. From now until August 8, 2013, she will be accepting letters survivors have written to one of their body parts to publish in a book about reclamation. If you would like to participate, click here for more details and guidelines for submissions. Names of contributors will remain anonymous in the published version of the project.

Lexie Bean, Founder and Creative Director, Attention: People with Body Parts:
www.attnpeoplewithbodyparts.org.”

RAINN Project: “Attention! People with Bodies” Submission

June 13, 2013

¥ Submission Number One ¥

by Gregg Tyler Milligan

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Dear ‘Right Wrist,’ I know you are only eight-years-old right now and you do not know how to read very well. But I have been meaning to tell you that I did not know a giant fat artery ran down the length of your soft belly. Nope, I did not know, but Mother did. Sometimes I wonder how she knew because she did not seem much smarter than me about things like that. When she drank and the bad things happened, she did not seem very smart or nice at all.

I remember how Mother made you show her your thin white belly and also the way she traced her fingers down the whole length of your upside-down arm. You were so scared but I remember you telling the brain that this sort of tickled and could be fun. That maybe, the brain said, it could be a new game. But then she showed you the knife. The one with the broken handle Mother always kept hidden

under the cushion of the dirty couch. The knife was always dirty even though she never used it in the kitchen. Mother did not spend much time in the kitchen, but the brain said it was because there was no food. My stomach told me the same thing all the time.

We –all of us; the eyes, brain, heart, and ‘you’ right-wrist, realized that this was not a game. That Mother was in one of her moods and a really bad one, so you started to jump around and seemed to want to run away on your two weak, but friendly legs. Mother’s own left-hand was awfully strong and her right-hand seemed to really like holding the knife and poking the tip into the pale skin where our wrist began just under the palm of our right-hand. Remember when the brain kept asking why was Mother staring a lot at the elbow?

Then the mouth screamed before the brain could answer. It was a familiar scream. The scream the mouth got really good at and even knew how to tell the lips when to pull back and tighten in a thin line. The teeth always helped by making this hissing noise.

The brain said, No! When all of a sudden the sad green and gold eyes both saw Mother smiling and showing us her own teeth which were fake. And the brain said, “The teeth are not real and she is not real,” but the pain was and the first stabbing motion pushed the dirty kitchen knife deep into your wrist; almost exactly in the middle, and then <other’s stronger right-hand stopped.

Her left-hand then grabbed our elbow and held it very strongly. She now pulled the knife down your little belly, leaving a tiny trail of pink and red folds of skin. The path was very straight to begin with but I think Mother’s brain lost concentration and the trail began to curve to the left, reaching half the distance between the beginning of your wrist and the end of that funny pocket in your arm where it can bend only one way. The brain then sent a message to the body that sometimes Mother made it bend the wrong way?

Oh poor wrist, now the under-side of your right-arm’s belly is covered with a pretty red blood and my eyes can no longer see your skin because of its new liquid blanket.

That’s when the whole body told the brain that it was not hot any more from the summer heat, but now getting both cold and sleepy. Mother let us lay down on the floor and then she stumbled away on her own not so strong legs. Not because they were a little boy’s or weak from hunger, but because her mouth and stomach really liked the smelly alcohol.

Then Tina found us soon after because I remember her mouth talking to our ears and saying things that did not make sense to us, like; “Tyler, don’t die! Don’t die!” The brain thought Tina was silly to think that because we were not dying, we were just resting – all of us – every part of our body.

The towel Tina used to wrap around your small bicep, round and round, over the ‘one-way bendy part’ hurt every time she twisted it with something like a stick.

We, the body, did not mind any of this. Because Tina had carried us to the front porch and laid our thin body on the cool cement. Our eyes stared at the clear blue sky and the brain was too busy telling us that we were sleepy. While the heart told us that ‘everything was going to be okay.’ But our ears heard Tina crying and so my mouth told Tina what the heart was saying, but this only made her cry harder.

But it was okay. My body told me. It told me that we can rest for a while, and when we wake up, ‘Everything is going to be okay.’ The mouth said the words one more time, too quiet for the ears to hear, but the brain did.

And, finally while your soft belly pumped a pretty red color all over the towel and onto the now cold porch, with Tina rocking our head in her lap back and forth, the eyes closed and the mouth smiled before the most amazing sleep came and wrapped the whole body in love.

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