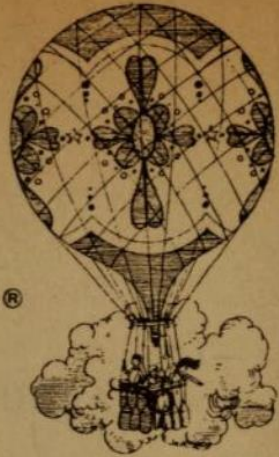


# CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE<sup>®</sup>



You're in a bar called HEAVEN and your head is pounding.

It could be the drumset positioned right behind you (O.K., it's not ideal, but the venue was a stickler for floor support.) It could be the two sips of Terry's vodka orange you had backstage (gross.) It could be the stuffy basement stopping you from getting any air.

Either way, it stinks. Your fingers are slipping on the strings of your bass. You miss a key change. Nobody notices.

As Terry screams the final note, you shred that fingerboard like it's got your Social Security number on it and stumble offstage. You need to get a breather.

If you head for the door, turn to page 2

If you head for the bathroom, turn to page 4

As you stumble off the stage, you pat yourself down for your glasses and realize that they're back in the van.

But that's O.K. You like playing shows without your glasses on. It can make a crowd of twenty feel like a hundred. Or a rando you met on the street feel like she's made from the same cosmic stardust you're made from. Like when a chick is drunk in the bathroom and loves everything and everyone. That's how you feel with your glasses off.

You may also be a little bit drunk.

You pick your way down the stairs and hazily see the red glow of a metal door marked EXIT, but the I is burnt out so it just says EX T. Some fresh air would be so choice right now.

There is a gaggle of blond-haired girls standing right outside of it, blocking the way. The laughter they emit makes your ears hurt. But you love them anyway.

If you ask them to move, turn to page 3.

If you rudely brush past, turn to page 5.

If you decide to head backstage instead, turn to page 11.

As you approach these chicks, you realize you can't see their faces. Like literally can't- the half-resolved blurry smudges you see without your glasses on don't come into focus as you move closer. It's hard to tell where one girl ends and the other begins.

You must be really drunk.

As you lean in for a better look, two of them whisper something to each other and laugh, and the rest join in, closing the circle decisively to you. Now you can't see their faces either, but you know why.

You feel your ears grow hot with embarrassment. This door is impassible to you.

If you decide to look for another exit, turn to page 6.

If you go cry in the bathroom, turn to page 4.

You kind of remember where people go to the bathroom here. Maybe. You saw the drummer (what was her name again? Jamie? But you know about eight Jamies on the Lower East Side alone so that's not helpful.) head off to the right of the stage after the first set. Maybe it's there.

As you trudge back to the stage Terry is drinking water that's probably vodka from a beat-up plastic bottle and taps her watch at you. Four minutes to feel better.

"Where's the bathroom?" you ask. She points to a hallway running along the side of the stage where your instrument cases are stored.

"Thanks," you say, and she rolls her eyes. You step over your sickeningly cool Y-shaped bass and head to the hallway, holding tight to the railing.

Turn to page 11.



You approach these chicks and realize you can't see their faces- like, literally can't. The blurry smudges of their faces without your glasses refuse to resolve into detail no matter how close you get.

It doesn't matter. You jam your hands into your pockets and approach LOUDLY, the clomp of your steel-toed work boots unmistakable, with that awful peeling noise on the off-beats from the beer-soaked floor. You are the bowling ball and they will scatter like pins.

Except- they don't. Once you get close to the crowd of girls, they melt away, and you don't catch where they've gone except for some tittering on the wind. Lots of people who aren't in the riot grrrl scene don't get your music. People who aren't in the scene yet, you correct yourself. Every girl is a grrrl waiting to break free.

You open the door to the outside, only to find- it leads to the hallway backstage. This place is a freaking maze.

Turn to page 11.

You press your palms against your eyes, trying to cool down your brain enough to think of where the exit is.

Someone places a cold water bottle on your head. You take it and turn to thank them, but there's nobody there. Still, it helps a lot. You drink it in two long swallows.

O.K. You summon to your mind the bubbly voice of the bartender as she gave you a tour of the venue this afternoon. It looks way different in the dark.

"So, like, there's a huge backstage for y'all to spread out and like the back patio for smoking- don't let the security guard catch ya! Specially if you don't have a real ID, haha - and like a little balcony upstairs so watch for falling rocks! Haha! "

And now you kind of have to pee. But you'd kill for a cig. And the window next to you looks kind of tempting...

If you head for backstage, turn to page 11.

If you head for the upstairs, turn to page 12.

If you break a window, turn to page 19 (don't do this).

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The "backstage," as it was advertised to the Corvettes when HEAVEN's owner saw one of their flyers at the EAT PUNK OR DIE vegan leather shop, is really more of a... hallway? There's packing tape everywhere and paint on the floor. The words 'service entrance' come to mind.

In the low light, it looks kind of spooky. Foreboding. But then again maybe that's because you can't see two feet in front of you. You really need your glasses. And a drink of water. And now you *really* have to pee.

At the end of the hallway is the tiny room you were given to hang out between sets. It smells kind of like weed. Maybe there's a bathroom there?

Next to it, there's a metal door with a real EXIT sign above it this time. Through the window you can see the brick wall of the back patio.

If you head for the room, turn to page 24.

If you head outside, turn to page 19.

You take a metal stairway up to what you remember as the bar's second floor. It's a long, narrow, dark room that's mostly storage- there's dusty stools with cracked vinyl covers and empty glass bottles.

For the first time since you got here tonight, you're well and truly alone. Not fake-alone, like you are onstage, but real, no-one-can-see-you alone. It is almost comforting until it all rushes in on your chest at once and you bite back a sob.

You don't really know why. All the dudettes playing here have been awesomely cool. You joined the scene to make friends, but it feels like you play a lot of gigs and go home and sit there staring at your homework until you black out. You don't know if anyone in this bar even knows your name.

Before your brain shoves you off the deep end, you take a breath and refocus on the problem at hand. You have to play in like negative one minutes and your head is swimming worse than ever. Crying on top of that is like adding gain to a slap bass.

You try to open one of the windows, but you break a nail trying to find the latch. Okay. No balcony. Maybe one of the other Corvettes can help you find the exit.

Turn to page 24.

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It's New York City. People see weirder things on the street all the time.

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Right?



Right?

Right as you undo the button on your skinny jeans, you make contact with the girl's many, many eyes and your resolve breaks. As cursed as this bar is, it cannot possibly be worse than public indecency and also peeing right in front of this cute girl who is about to see you onstage in like two minutes.

You turn around to open the door back into the bar, and discover it now leads to the backstage room, where a couple of the Corvettes are hanging out and smoking weed. You briefly think this is weird, but the thought slips from your mind like water scattering across a mirror. That's where you were going anyway.

Turn to page 24.

You burst outside onto the back patio as though you're suffocating. It's a small brick space with high walls around it, redolent with the smell of the trash bags piled back here. The cold night air feels amazing on your sweaty skin. You gather up your shag into a loose handful so that your neck gets some of it as well. Maybe you should buzz more of it.

There's a girl with long dark hair smoking against the dumpster. She has a couple of eyes tattooed on her face which looks sick as hell but you can't really see which ones are real so right now it's just wiggling you out.

"Can I bum one?" you say, as though you are legally old enough to buy cigarettes. She wordlessly extends the pack to you. Her lighter is shaped like a little dragon wrapped around a teacup.

As you smoke, looking up at the city lights - no stars - you feel almost happy.

But god, you still have to pee.

If you try to find a bathroom in the bar, turn to page 20.

If you...if you decide to... go... out here... turn to page 18.

When you go back into the main room of the bar, it is completely empty. The dim glow of your cigarette illuminates a room caked in dust, and dark black circles lining the walls and floor. There's a single bottle of Kahlua sitting on the bar.

It doesn't look like there was a party here tonight.

It doesn't look like there's been a party here for the past forty years.

The sign above the bar is still there, though. It's burnt out, but it says HEAVEN. There's an arrow pointing towards the backstage hallway, where a warm golden glow spills out of the room where your band members would be.

You relax when you hear the main singer's laughter spilling out of it (what was her name again? Tex? Theresa? God, you wish you had a better memory for names). Whatever the fuck is going on, you wanna be with your friends. Or, O.K., bandmates. Or, O.K., acquaintances.

You head towards the backstage room.

Turn to page 24.

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As you enter the tiny room, you see Theresa and Lockman are sitting on a pile of band merch smoking together. Lockman is tall and was in the army and doesn't use any pronouns anymore which is pretty cool, and Terry is short and likes to wear shirts that she has crocheted fruits onto. Tonight she's covered in strawberries. It's awesome.

They look at you for a second, and then Terry reluctantly offers you a hit.

"Do y'all know where the bathroom is?" you ask. Terry shrugs. "Can I have one of those stickers?" Lockman nods.

"Can you put one in the bathroom once you find it? For the pub." Lockman says. You nod and take two shiny little CORVETTES stickers. There's a pop art drawing of the old bassist on there, but you take a sharpie from the t-shirt box, draw a cool ass shag on her and write "TONIGHT'S" above "CORVETTES." You show Terry. She looks unimpressed.

"Hey, kid, just use the main one."

"Or go behind the bar. There's a staff bathroom there."

You frown. "I couldn't find the main one."

"You can see it from the stage. There's a big lit up sign."

If you head to the stage, turn to page 31.

If you head behind the bar, turn to page 32.

If you stay here and smoke, turn to page 33.



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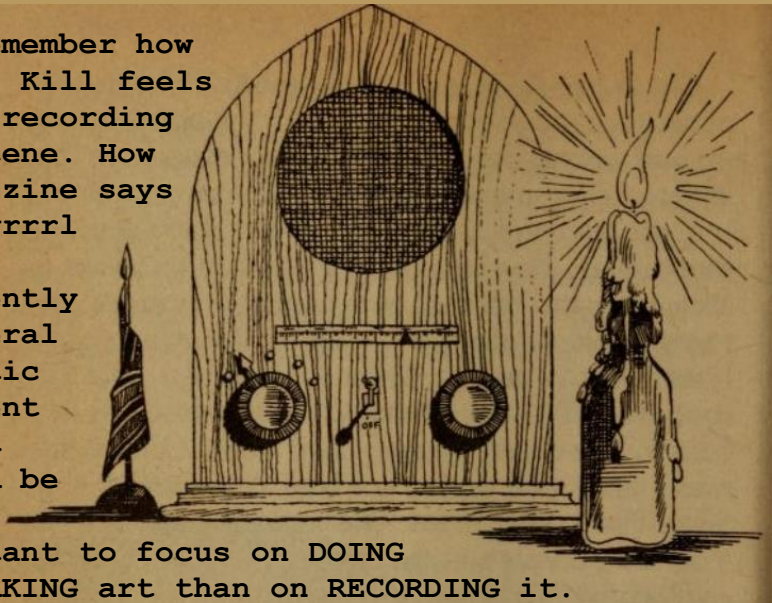
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When you step back onto the stage, the crowd is somehow singing your favorite song. You pick up your bass and lean forward into the mic. Your voice is O.K., but tonight, it sounds fantastic.

The blur of faces in the audience has more white than pink- people are smiling.

You remember how Bikini Kill feels about recording the scene. How their zine says riot grrrl is an inherently ephemeral artistic movement and it should be more

important to focus on DOING and MAKING art than on RECORDING it.



But you turn on your tape recorder anyway.

Suddenly, the lights turn off. There's nobody out there after all. But there is a lit-up bathroom sign at the back of the bar you could've sworn wasn't there before.

If you stay and sing alone, turn to page 37.  
If you head for the bathroom, turn to page 38.

You walk back out into the main floor of the bar. It is getting CROWDED, and not good-crowded; tourists and uptown yuppie babies and guys prowling the edges of the scene looking up people's skirts. Ick. As you slip behind the bar, you realize the bartender isn't there. The staff door back here is locked tight. You bang on it a little in frustration.

You hear whatever the exact opposite of a loud noise is. There's a loud silence rushing into your ears, and when you turn back towards the bar you see that it is completely empty. In fact, it isn't a bar, but a dark, abandoned laundromat, with planks over the windows and washers with the doors broken off. Something is thumping around in one of the dryers, but the power isn't on so you're not sure how.

Instead of the glittery rainbow bottles you saw in HEAVEN, there's a single bottle of Kahlua on the washing machine in front of you, and a jar of moldering olives.

The bottle says, written in the dust, DRINK ME.

If you drink some Kahlua, turn to page 44.

If you do anything but drink that dubious shit, turn to page 45.



You let Terry and Lockman's conversation wash over you as you occasionally take hits from them. They're pretty generous with it, and you're not surprised. Solidarity is excellent.

"Did you hear they're playing Portland?"

"Fuck, dude, everyone's playing Portland."

"'Cept us."

"Because we're bad."

"Nah, nah, girl, we just don't have The Sound yet."

"I don't think there's a Sound to Have."

Your eyes begin to slip closed. Their voices turn into mush.

Suddenly, a bright spark of pain on your thigh wakes you up. You come to in a dim, empty room with mops and cleaning supplies around you. How long were you asleep? The blunt has burnt a hole into your jeans from where you dropped it, and you quickly brush it off and put it out.

"Terry? Lockman?"

Nobody answers. But you really have to pee. You see the glow of a bathroom sign through the door, and bolt for it.

Turn to page 39

WHAT DID I DO TO YOU?

WHAT DID I DO TO YOU?

WHAT DID I DO TO YOU?

WHAT DID I DO TO YOU?

WHAT DID I DO TO YOU?

WHAT DID I DO TO YOU?

WHAT DID I DO TO YOU?

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YOU ARE MY MOTHER  
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I KNOW YOU ARE

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FEAR.

You approach the mic with caution. Your band members wouldn't want you entertaining the crowd at intermission- but also, what crowd? Why not have a little fun with it?

You turn on the reverb and the crunch (yeah, it has a name. No, you won't use it. That's the crunch dial right there.) as high as it'll go. And you sing. You sing a song you wrote and a song you love. You sing one you hate.

By the end of it, you're sweating, and your voice is hoarse. Probably the tape isn't good for anything. You imagine the label in the audio store: bass and unaccompanied female voice. You laugh a little, then a lot, listening to it crunched and reverbed into your ears. You try to laugh in sync with yourself, then slightly faster, then slightly slower, creating an overpowering cacophony of laughter that echoes over and over itself.

At some point, you fall.

When you open your eyes, you aren't at the base of the stage, but in a warmly lit hallway with tiny mirrors all over the walls. Your eyes in the mirrors make you laugh again, and it bounces back tinny and small.

Turn to page 39.

You sling your bass over your back and step off of the stage - it's only about a foot high, anyway - into the audience. Or, rather, where the audience would be.

Now that the lights aren't in your face, you realize this isn't really a bar. Washers and dryers populate the walls, their cracked white enamel faces showing through glistening black and red guts. This place hasn't been used in a long time.

One of the dryers at the end of the room is turning, turning, turning. Something large, heavy, and wet thumps around inside it.

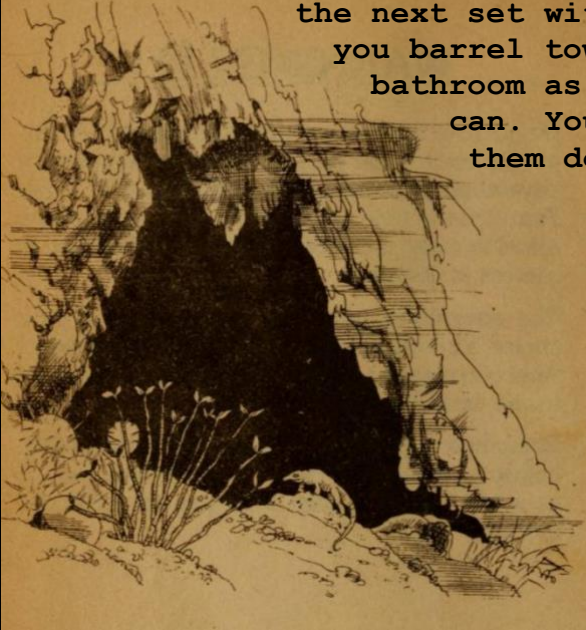
Just as you stumble forward towards the wall, the ambience of the bar arrives in a rush again, filling your ears like the approach of a faraway train. Blink, and there's a grrrl with a spiky pink ponytail giving you the side-eye from the bar, and people jostling you as they head back towards the stage. You're expected to be back there in like thirty seconds. The glittery pink bathroom sign is not a suggestion so much as a command.

Turn to page 39.

The hallway to the main bathroom is mirrored, because of course it is. This must be what the inside of a disco ball looks like: tons of tiny little mirrors reflecting back your face.

You frown to see how pale you look. Maybe you are genuinely sick and should tell Terry that you need to go home.

Then, you hear them start the first song of the next set without you, and you barrel towards the bathroom as quickly as you can. You cannot let them down.



Turn to page 40.

The bathroom door closes behind you, and you breathe a sigh of relief. It was once painted black, probably, but now it has been completely covered with stickers from various bands. One of them just says "FUCK YOU!", which you giggle at briefly. You take out your CORVETTES sticker, trying to find the place where you cover up the fewest other stickers.

As you wash your hands, you look a little closer at the stickers in the scratched-up mirror, and see that there's one behind you for the band you played in in high school, the CHEETAH WILDS. That's insane- you barely played one bar before you broke up over the drummer dating the pianist. As you lean closer in to the mirror, you realize that the stickers in this bathroom as yours- or at least, they're all from bands you've played with. It looks like the collection you have on your notebooks at home, but multiplied a hundred times.

When you look down at your sticker, you see it's really a sticker for BIG RED BOX. You take out the other one from your pocket- it's the same. The band you always wanted to start, once you had people to be in a band with. It trembles on the end of your finger.

If you place the sticker, go to page 47.

You're going to place the sticker, aren't you?



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You open the bottle's surprisingly tacky yellow cap and take a huge swig just as you remember you HATE coffee. As bitter, sweet, and sour alcohol explode over your tongue, you remember every other time you've done something really stupid in your life. It takes a while.

Miraculously, you manage to keep it down. Unfortunately, it does not manage to keep you down. When you open your eyes, you're back in HEAVEN, and the bartender grabs the Kahlua from you with an angry sneer.

"No ID, don't go breaking in here to cop one, you hear me?"

You're so astonished you stammer an apology before slipping by her to the exit of the bar.

The mirrored, beautiful bathroom hallway looms before you, and you could collapse on the ground and weep. There's two unisex rooms, and both are empty. Thank god. You make a beeline for the closest one before it decides to become a Roll-a-Rama or whatever.

Turn to page 40.

The bottle gleams appealingly, but you are NOT drinking some nasty ass laundromat liqueur. Absolutely not.

You will use it as a weapon, though. You grab the bottle around the neck and hold it like a bat.

Slowly, you approach the dryer. There is a wet SMACK of the object inside hitting each it whenever it turns. The plug is trailing by your feet. There is no way there isn't a human head in there, right?

You throw open the washer door, and out of it bounces... a bezoar? It's about the size and diameter of a microwave oven, but circular and grey-tinted. Sticking out of it are... no, not teeth, but big chunky plastic computer keys. A cassette tape. Half a record. Some kind of plasticky cylinder thing. But the main body of the object seems to be piles and piles of wet paper, with ink fading into it.

You lean close enough to see it in the dying light. It's someone's handwriting- *en abîme*. You don't speak French.

When you straighten up, you are back in HEAVEN, staring at a girl's white platform shoes. Behind her, you see the gleaming, welcome sign for a unisex bathroom, and make a beeline towards it.

Turn to page 40.

You look behind you. There is no door. There are only more stickers.

Turn to page 49.

As you peel and stick the BIG RED BOX sticker right in the corner of the mirror, you feel the back of your neck prickle, as though someone is watching you. You look up into the mirror, but it's just your face in front of a field of stickers.

If you turn around, turn to page 48.

Behind you is another mirror. It reflects nothing but your scared face and an impossible field of stickers behind you, stretching back into infinity. When you lift your arm, hundreds of copies of yourself lift theirs in unison.

You look to your left. There is no door.  
Only another mirror.

You look to your right. There is no door.  
Only another mirror.

Turn to page 46.



You look behind you. There is no door. There are only more stickers.

Turn to page 46.