



# **THE TALKING CURE**

**MELISSA STERN 2012**  
[www.melissa-stern.com](http://www.melissa-stern.com)

# CONTENTS

- 1     **Stainless**  
Written by Sarah Langan  
Read by Allison Moy
  
- 3     **If the Shoe Fits**  
Written and read by Larry Fessenden
  
- 5     **The Queen's Advice**  
Written by Susan Lewis  
Read by Celia Schaefer
  
- 7     **Dance**  
Written by Max W. Friedlich  
Read by Brennan Lee Mulligan
  
- 9     **Friends**  
Written and read by Janet Grillo
  
- 11    **Bye Dad**  
Written by Arthur Mednick  
Read by Michael Samuel Kaplan
  
- 13    **Double Bind**  
Written by Anthony Weintraub  
Read by Aaron Matteson
  
- 15    **Gawker**  
Written by Annie Nocenti  
Read by Eli Gelb
  
- 17    **Conversation**  
Written by Valeria Luiselli  
Read by Myles Kenyon Rowland
  
- 19    **Angry Girl**  
Written by Julie Gilbert  
Read by Paula Redinger
  
- 21    **Tongue Tied**  
Written and read by Robert Burke Warren
  
- 23    **Snake Eyes**  
Written by Paula Sharp  
Read by Eddie Pepitone
  
- 26    Acknowledgements and Contributing Artists

# THE TALKING CURE

My brain is inhabited by a universe of people who look a little like you and me but tend to lack a limb or two. They are cheerful, standing tall in the face of absurdity and adversity. They balance delicately both physically and emotionally, seemingly ready to fall, but they never do.

I have long been fascinated by what goes on in people's minds when they look at art. What stories do they tell themselves? What emotions and memories are triggered? I have made work that deals explicitly with memory, childhood and family, subjects with a strong psychological bent. I'm as interested in what others think the pieces are "saying" as in what has motivated me to make them in the first place.

"The Talking Cure," takes its name from Sigmund Freud's original description of psychoanalysis. I made twelve sculptures- some of the folks living in my brain made real. I then asked twelve writers- poets, novelists, screenwriters, and

playwrights- to each chose a sculpture to which they related most intimately. Each wrote his or her imagined monologue of the goings on in the sculpture's mind.

The next step in the game was to find twelve actors and have them each record one of the monologues. With minimum direction from me, they spoke their interpretations of the written pieces that had in turn been inspired by each sculpture. It's been like a game of "whisper down the lane" with each participant interpreting what they see or read and giving each next step a little tweak of their own.

The audio recordings were coded and sent up onto the Inter-Web. When you point your phone at the code it triggers the audios.

And now, by looking, reading and listening to the work, you too will become part of the collaboration.

**-Melissa Stern Feb. 12, 2012**



# STAINLESS

Sarah Langan

Do you love me? It's a weight, I know. Like boiling steel poured inside your heart. On Sunday mornings we can go to Central Park. I'll show you where the turtles swim. Then brunch some place nice, like my daddy used to take me. A pop-over or a burger, I don't care. Except maybe you'll guess about the lime rickey and two cherries, and for that you'll be the one who got away. When I was a little girl I used to hide under the stairs because of the yelling. I cut my hair short so it would stop getting pulled. Cut all kinds of things. But you'll never know that. I'd never burden you. We're all damaged. It's how well we hide it that counts. They all say I'm perfect, and it's probably true. From the outside, everybody loves me. I don't want things like most people,

so you can have everything your way. Your friends, your job, your parties; fine by me. We'll go to the beach. Night waves and swimming with invisible hands. They reach up when you're sleeping, so you can't see. I look through your journal; touch the part of your brow that crinkles and think

Maybe. Maybe. Your dog doesn't like me. I guess everybody's heart's all cramped full. Even for dogs, by the time someone new comes around there's no room.

When I see stairs now, that little hollow in old buildings where steel fire escapes crawl, I imagine invisible arms reaching out and pulling me inside. They scoop me empty. Do you love me? It's hard, I know. The trick is letting the metal cool 'til it's rock. The trick is in the architecture of the thing, like tall buildings that can't stand too close, or else they'll sink the earth, and tear down all the walls.





## IF THE SHOE FITS

Larry Fessenden

Uh oh we got a problem—not a big one of course, but a little source of anxiety and I just gotta try to be cool. Just grin and bear it, not like I'm gonna share it, what I think about it, but I'm just gonna stare at that sign that says "Please remove shoes at the door."... I know they're not asking anything more. "Please remove shoes at the door". Awwwww. I like my shoes, my shoes are my rock. I could walk a mile in 'em. Don't even need socks. Takin' off my shoes, feels like I got knocked down a peg. I gotta glide across the floor in my stocking feet, it's just not my scene, I don't feel complete. If the shoe fits, wear it, but my foot's so big it would tear it, I'd put it back on but I don't dare, it's obviously a rule around here, it's way too cool around here the way they wantcha to "please remove your shoes at the door", that's the score, don't wanta ask you one more time—just do as you're told and be polite, don't be bold—but I always feel is it too much to ask "can I just keep these on—if not both the one, can I just keep this one on? And the other I'll leave right here by the door and you don't have to think about it anymore if I have one on or two or it's just me by the door standing here on the linoleum, like a car without petroleum, looking so old it's been hard to seems sometimes just this one will do." So I tell you whenever they ask "please remove shoes at the door" I can never get past, just stand here aghast and always the last one in.









# THE QUEEN'S ADVICE

Susan Lewis

To think of where we started, me & Mr. Sea! Which is not to say if we're coming or going, starting out or ending up. Not off the top of my head. Not off the cuff. Off hand. Over the shoulder. Oh, we have a certain past. Who doesn't? There was something. What we made. Some things. Same things. Or not. Some broke. He bagged what fought. I kept what not. But then he – he's another animal altogether. Stately Mr. Sea! Prim Mr. Purity! Haughty Mr.



Holier-Than-Thou! Proud Mr. Pick-Up-The-Pieces (no matter how scattered, no matter how worn). Oh, he thinks he knows, & knows what he thinks. For instance, what to call one's own. Whereas I—I think we're born of chaos, delivered by chance, to carry on at random. So who's to say what to keep & what to drop? Don't get me wrong—I'm no weakling, not at all. I could be more independent, if I wanted to. I don't need any of this! Not him, with his unforgiving focus. Not this opening, promising shelter, this opportune trap weighing on my waiting like lead, even as it leads me on. On the other hand—who among us is not bound? Perhaps it's best to keep calm & carry on. Accept & build. Meet & greet. Make a deal. Make a vow. Criss & cross & scuttle with my mate, like a pair of pairs of ragged claws.



# DANCE

Max W. Friedlich

I wake up and I have to pee so I sort of hobble to the bathroom, sort of tucking my morning wood between my legs and sort of waddling penguin style till I get to the toilet. Peeing with erection is rough but it's the least of my worries today. Most days probably. And I think that's healthy. I have a weird dryness in my mouth (booze) and a sort of foreign taste is nesting in my tonsils (some girl). I have a weird sort of chaffing around my left nipple. I always get it



when I wear my nice shirt. Price of beauty I suppose but regardless it's really uncomfortable and I make the executive decision to remain shirtless. Nobody's home anyway so I don't really care. She's supposed to come by today and pick up some art books she left here. I'm leaning towards leaving the keys in the mailbox and going to Chipotle. When I see her, it's like the experience of throwing up. Mentally I mean. My heart sort of heaves and wheezes and coughs and sputters and spits and then it's over and I'm weak and fragile and a sharp acid is still congesting my mouth and nose. I used to think she was my best friend who I happened to be in love with. Now I think its more that she was just someone who I loved who for a time was my friend. We're not friends anymore but from where I'm standing that doesn't mean much has changed. I feel fat. I haven't been exercising enough. I've been watching NBA reruns

from the 90s most days and ordering in Indian food. I feel heavy. Physically I mean, but there's also this weird lightness. There's this big hollow sort of cave that I can feel sort of imploding from the inside, sucking me inside out. It's like a tunnel and I'm just pouring out the other side. Things that used to define me, words like student, volunteer, ball player, son, and boyfriend are all just nametags now. Hello My Name Is. Once you no longer have occasion to wear them they peel right off your shirt taking a little stray thread with it. And then out they go, along with the rest of the litter building up in my chest. It makes me feel like I'm floating. Like I'm at the mercy of everything and everyone and I'm being whipped back and forth by their inconstancy. And then she's there to hold me down. Is she my anchor or my weight? I'm learning how to walk with it but she will always be there for the world to see.



# FRIENDS

Janet Grillo

Of course I like him, why wouldn't I like him? He's adorable! Just look at his ears, I mean, if I could have ears like that, imagine what I would pick up on! He's Charming. I just, you know, didn't expect you'd bring anyone else along. It's not that I mind, not at all, whatever you---That's what love is, right? Accepting each other. So if this is what you need, him, with us, then he's aces with me! But I guess, what I don't quite understand, is why

his eyes are so—Look, he's adorable. It's just that maybe you could have, I mean I would have preferred if, maybe before we got married you could have, you know mentioned. Told me about... this little guy. That he was part the deal. You know, gonna be with us. Like, always. I know, I know you said it was only for a while, but it's kind of funny cause, since you introduced him, he hasn't left. And he's the one who gets to have the eyes! I dunno, I



might be wrong, but since he's been here, it looks to me like, I mean it seems like yours have---OK, sure. If you don't need them, then--Oh, I see...because he has them, you don't have to. See things. Right...Ok. But, I mean, does he have to sleep with us? In our bed? Between our sheets?

Why have you dealt us this strange, dark, shadow of a fellow, who gets to see what you won't. And hear what I can't.





# BYE DAD

Arthur Mednick

She was Juliet. I was not Romeo.

More like Odin the wanderer.

I was no hero but to her.

At dawn, I would perform my morning ritual and then ... disappear. She thought it was magic. I thought it was my job. I didn't know what else to do. Then, at dusk, I would reappear to rescue her from the night. Magic.

She was beautiful. Not like scary beautiful. More like beautiful girl who liked me beautiful. I couldn't stop looking at her. She was an innocent. And for a time, we had each other. "Forever," she would say.

We had hopes. Like everybody else. Special and mundane. I hoped she would be happy; she hoped for the moon. We lived in tenements and apartments all over this town. We cooked and did laundry; and went to see movies and theater and music. Moving. Restless. Together under all those different roofs.

The magic was between us. She thought that would be enough. I knew it wasn't. I was the grown-up. I could never bring myself to tell her. I didn't want to break her heart. I knew it would break, in its own time, of its own fragility. And when it broke, I knew that I would be one of the pieces; brittle and sharp.

A fragment is made new by its incompleteness. A shard is not an urn. It is a new memento of something old. Once broken it can never be called broken again. I preferred it that way.

Of course I had to leave. It was the only way. The only way I knew. So many years getting up. So many years washing my face; like an act of purification. Dressing, collecting my .. self, walking out the door. Out. Ever out. I had to leave. It was the only way I knew.







# DOUBLE BIND

Anthony Weintraub

I made a mistake. I made a mistake. I regret it now, now that we're in this mess. But I'm too trusting.

Here's how it all started: I was doing a puppet show. At the park. Peeping through the curtains, I thought I saw you there. Maybe they were there too, watching us. Getting ready to pounce.

That's how it all began- I'd see you around town. In the parking lot at the grocery store. At the gym. All over town. You'd look at me, with those searing eyes. First came the wonderment- "you look like me." Then the touch of bitterness- "what are you doing here? Why do I keep seeing you?"

And then there was the time - hiking - walking on the trails on the outskirts of town. The hiking trails. The trees were bare. It was grey and cold. You could see the breath coming out of your mouth at every step. I came around a turn after leaving the meadow and

saw you. You looked at me like we knew each other, but then you sped up as we passed, and ducked your head. You knew something I didn't.

It wasn't long before we were inseparable. There was no ice to break. We went from strangers to best friends in no time. We were brothers. We could talk for hours, or just be silent around each other. It didn't matter. We had a code. We were brothers.

That's probably what they saw. They saw us as vulnerable. We gave them a way in. But it was me. It was me who let them in that day. I made a bad choice. I took a bad deal. It was me who got us involved in this plot, this bad turn, this unfortunate development, this turn of the screw.

So I made a mistake. But we can get out of this. Then you can go. We don't have to see each other anymore. You can be you again.





# GAWKER

Annie Nocenti

Eatin' a bagel and let it go to my head.

Trying to hold on to her, tell her about propulsion and man stuff and how I hadda take a bite to move forward but she was all entropy and the black spreading. It's all in the locomotion and to locomote you need energy an' bagels. She's all drag and yank and no locomote. Holding my hand and bouncin' her big head and diggin' her nails and then gone. Down my arm it's just nothing. The bagel's half in and no free hand.

Want to hunt 'er down. Miss the pink socks everywhere an' bringing the bacon an' the way toes lined up, purple an' blue in a row. The night wanders an' empty bed then there she'd be under the table with blue cloth and scissors makin' me new gloves with just the right number of fingers. What's mine's, mine right?

But women. Women, man. Don't want to give a lady sadness they got buckets of it and the buckets got holes enough plenty to take a bath and never get clean. She kept sayin': shut yer teeth. I was open wide to fit the bagel and she sez, shut your teeth. A few words keep trying to punch their way in like "bitch" but don't let 'em.

Still.

Before her there was the three-legged dog. She did okay but watchin' 'er slip-slide on ice an' sometimes sprawl weren't pretty. When the other bitch come along she make three booties for three paws an' no more slip-sliding. That was nice.

Hey! Johnny's the man. I find Johnny he owes me two jacksons. I gotta get pearls if I want back what's mine no help from god. Black pearls, chicks like black pearls.

What I figure, god owes me. Get back what's mine.







# CONVERSATION

Valeria Luiselli

He was positively blind. One of his eyes was bigger than the other. The one on the right, which was the smaller of the two, was permanently turned towards his lachrymal, immobile. The larger one rolled in its socket like a demented white bird trapped inside one of those railway stations, beating itself against the high, closed windows. I enjoyed watching that erratic eye, which didn't see me. We would sit together on his front steps while the afternoon slowly darkened into night. He was convinced that I was a ghost, or a mere voice inside his head, so he was in the habit of ignoring me. I often provoked him:

--If one of the two is a ghost, it must be you.

--(...)

--I'm talking to you. Why would I be the ghost? How do

you know it's not the other way around?

-- (...)

Together, we had developed a theory of multiple deaths. Or perhaps I should say that it was he who once insinuated it, and I just elaborated it at his side. His idea was that people die many times in a single life. Not in a metaphorical sense, but that one day you cross the street and a car knocks you down; another day you fall asleep in the bathtub and drown. Most deaths don't matter. Except that that's when everything takes a turn: people die, and irresponsibly leave a ghost of themselves hanging around; and then they, the original and the ghost, go on living, each in his own right. Sometimes, but only sometimes, ghost and original cross paths. Like us.







# ANGRY GIRL

Julie Gilbert



These are not my eyes—usually. No sleep makes them look like I have malaria. I wish I had malaria. Well, a mild case. I know better days are coming. That's what my friend, LaRue says. She's the only one who knows what happened in the shower. I could run away for that. I do not want to live in my house anymore! It's not livable anyway. I hate my sheets, which are hand-me-downs and have scars all over them from where they've been repaired and no matter how often they're

washed, they smell sour. I hate my quilt, which was supposedly made by Amish women but actually has a faded-out Sears label on the underside corner. My mother tells me things that just aren't true! For instance, why the hell would she tell me that I don't need a bra yet?!? I am what I consider developed! I have breast-y stuff and I have nipples. AND, I have tingles in both of them! My mother calls them 'buds'. She says I should wear my undershirt until further notice. She acts like she's the one who can tell me when I am developed. She should only know about the shower. That would fix her. She wouldn't have anything to say. She would go white and maybe start to drink again! .... My sisters drink and my father used to really guzzle but he's not here anymore. My brother doesn't drink. He does other things. (PAUSE) You know what else I hate? Food. Or at least what's in our house and on our table. I hate the table, too. Once or twice a year we go out—to somewhere like Red Lobster. It's very exciting to have so many choices and so much on the table. And cloth napkins. And we all act happy. No one is mad for an hour or so. I hate when that meal is over. It's like lights out

when the electric bill isn't paid. Yesterday I thought I'd have to run away. And LaRue said "Do it! Just do it! How else are you gonna get clean?!?" – because I never take a shower anymore. But you know what? I'm gonna tell you something even though I know it will come back to fuck me up...but you know what I'm gonna do the next time? I'm gonna sneak something into my hand and I'm gonna whip it out and I'm telling you, there's gonna be a lot of blood.



# TONGUE TIED

Robert Burke Warren

I have so much to say, to you and to the world; words and songs and poems, stories bubbling beneath the crust of my skin. Were I able to share all of this, you would know so much more. You would know you are beautiful; you would know the slow burning intensity of my desire for you and it would fill you with liquid gold; you would know the depths of my hate for those who would mistreat you, undervalue and forget you, and that would make you brave in the face of darkness.

And I would be changed, no longer a prisoner, cramped in the narrow confines of this idea of who I am, an idea we together have made, you and I.

I would be free.

But this heaviness is a problem; my words cascade from within. rolling from the wet rims of my mind, ready to be engorged with life by a supple, unburdened tongue, but instead they languish in the shiny red of my palate, peering from the very back of my mouth, surrounded by the bloodless smell of cold metal, and they fall unspoken down my esophagus and into my stomach, where they churn in the bile. They pass through like dirty copper pennies, unspent.

It is a sad story.

This ballast is filled with names, memories, tokens of cruelty, fears of hate, fears of love, fears of freedom. Bigger than my own head. Leading me on, but keeping me mum. The chain bears my hallmarks, my fingerprints, and the most passionate of my kisses. Kisses meant for you.





## SNAKE EYES

Paula Sharp

In this neighborhood, you have to deal with Henry Preakness; he plays craps with himself, and when you scurry past him, he waves his two red dice in your face and calls "Snake Eyes! Snake Eyes!" Perched on the stoop of his halfway house, a scar like a leer gleaming under his hair, slim as a weasel, he whispers and sings, hoping for a sympathetic ear. He jumps up and follows you, needling, "Hello, hello, hello, hello, hello," until you answer. He begs to share the flitting thoughts his mind's claws snare, which no one wants to hear. He likes to mimic the precise music, the chatter and squeak, the choice he-haws and whinnies of the sane, so that he might say, for example, in a pained voice, slightly exasperated, walking beside you, pretending to be late for his train: "The problem's this

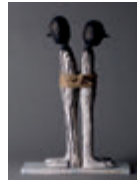
– our live-in maid wants to bring her six-year-old daughter to America to stay – Rosaria wants her own place too, but with my work hours, what am I to do, if I need her to watch the baby after eight?" He laughs cruelly at the rich. He chain-smokes and rattles his dice. He turns his pockets inside out to show his luck's slithered down a hole, and then he shouts: "All I have is Snake Eyes! You have money, so give me your money, if not your money then part of it, if not a dollar then a quarter, if not a quarter then a dime, if not a dime then a nickel, if not a nickel then a penny, if not a penny, then GODDAMN YOU TO HELL!" Finished, Henry begs you for your coat (Just say yes! he chimes), tilts back his head, opens his mouth like a slit throat, and howls like the dead.



# THE TALKING CURE- WHAT THE HELL ARE THESE THINGS MADE OUT OF AND HOW BIG ARE THEY, ANYWAY?



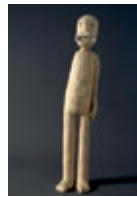
*Stainless, 2012*  
29 ½ X 10 X 6 ½"  
Clay, Graphite, Steel



*Double Bind, 2012*  
25 X 17 X 7 ½"  
Clay, Ink, Rope, Graphite, Wax, Paper



*The Queen's Advice, 2012*  
30 X 24 X 7"  
Clay, Wood, Lead, Objects



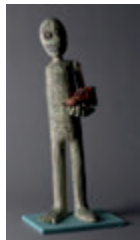
*Gawker, 2012*  
40 X 9 X 23"  
Clay, Paint, Graphite, Glass Eyes



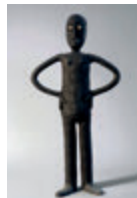
*Friends, 2012*  
18 ½ X 14 X 10"  
Clay, Graphite, Paint, Objects



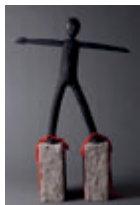
*Conversation, 2012*  
28 X 7 ½ X 7 ½"  
Clay, Graphite (Each)



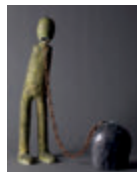
*If The Shoe Fits, 2012*  
31 X 13 X 9"  
Clay, Pastel, Oil, Objects



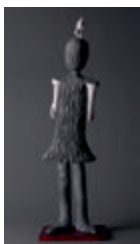
*Angry Girl, 2012*  
40 X 17 X 8"  
Clay, Paint, Glass Eyes



*Dance, 2012*  
39 ½ X 25 X 8"  
Clay, Paint, Objects



*Tongue Tied, 2012*  
31 X 7 X 36"  
Clay, Paint, Steel, Lead



*Bye Dad, 2012*  
34 X 10 X 9"  
Clay, Paint, Objects



*Snake Eyes, 2012*  
34 X 13 X 7"  
Clay, Paint, Dice

# CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

## AUDIO PROGRAMMER

Neil Hickey [neil.j.hickey@gmail.com](mailto:neil.j.hickey@gmail.com)

## WRITERS

### (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Sarah Langan	<a href="http://www.sarahlangan.com">www.sarahlangan.com</a>
Larry Fessenden	<a href="http://www.glasseyepix.com/html/at.html">www.glasseyepix.com/html/at.html</a>
Susan Lewis	<a href="http://www.susan-lewis.net">www.susan-lewis.net</a>
Max W. Friedlich	<a href="mailto:max@maxswag.com">max@maxswag.com</a>
Janet Grillo	<a href="http://www.janetgrillocricketfilms.com/index.html">www.janetgrillocricketfilms.com/index.html</a>
Arthur Mednick	<a href="http://www.themesanddeviations.com">www.themesanddeviations.com</a>
Anthony Weintraub	
Annie Nocenti	<a href="http://www.annienocenti.com">www.annienocenti.com</a>
Valeria Luiselli	<a href="http://www.grantabooks.com/page/3014/Valeria-Luiselli/1049">www.grantabooks.com/page/3014/Valeria-Luiselli/1049</a>
Julie Gilbert	<a href="mailto:jggilbert@att.net">jggilbert@att.net</a>
Robert Burke Warren	<a href="http://www.solitudeandgoodcompany.wordpress.com">www.solitudeandgoodcompany.wordpress.com</a>
Paula Sharp	<a href="http://www.paulasharp.com">www.paulasharp.com</a>

## ACTORS (DITTO)

Allison Moy	<a href="http://www.allisonmoy.com">www.allisonmoy.com</a>
Celia Schaefer	<a href="http://www.celiaschaefer.com">www.celiaschaefer.com</a>
Brennan Lee Mulligan	<a href="http://www.brennanleemulligan.com">www.brennanleemulligan.com</a>
Michael Samuel Kaplan	<a href="http://www.michaelsamuelkaplan.com">www.michaelsamuelkaplan.com</a>
Aaron Matteson	<a href="mailto:abmatteson@gmail.com">abmatteson@gmail.com</a>
Eli Gelb	<a href="mailto:eligelb.ny@gmail.com">eligelb.ny@gmail.com</a>
Myles Kenyon Rowland	<a href="mailto:myles.rowland@gmail.com">myles.rowland@gmail.com</a>
Paula Redinger	<a href="mailto:predinger@me.com">predinger@me.com</a>
Eddie Pepitone	<a href="http://eddiepepitone.com">eddiepepitone.com</a>

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Kevin Thomasson [kevinthomasson@yahoo.com](mailto:kevinthomasson@yahoo.com)

## BOOK DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Matt Owens [www.volumeone.com](http://www.volumeone.com)

Shipping-Stebich Ridder International, Inc (SRI) [www.stebichridder.com](http://www.stebichridder.com)





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the past few months many people have jumped onto this Merry Prankster bus. I am deeply grateful to all of the writers and actors who gave generously of their time, words and voices. They are listed on the previous page, along with their contact information. You should contact them and let them know how wonderful they are. Also hire them. The great Neil Hickey, techno wunderkind, anarchist and audio smart guy – thank you. Gerald Thomas- a great carpenter and very patient man- thank you. Amanda Coen, - thank you. Beck Underwood, comrade in arms, a woman with

clear vision and a most generous spirit- thank you.

Thanks to Stebich Ridder International, Inc (SRI) for their help with crating and shipping the artwork.

The work was photographed by Kevin Thomasson, simply the best and a really fun guy to spend the day with under hot lights.

This book would not even be in your hands without the brilliant graphic design eye of David Ceraso & Matt Owens of VolumeOne/AthleticsNYC. Thank you Matt & David! And finally to Max and Jim, my roomies and homies and the best-est guys in town.



