

Folks You Meet in

Bongos[®]

and other stories

Lee Cataluna

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To Curtis Lum, who let me steal his story.

DEDICATION

To Jim, who would go to Longs for me if I was too sick to go myself.

INTRODUCTION

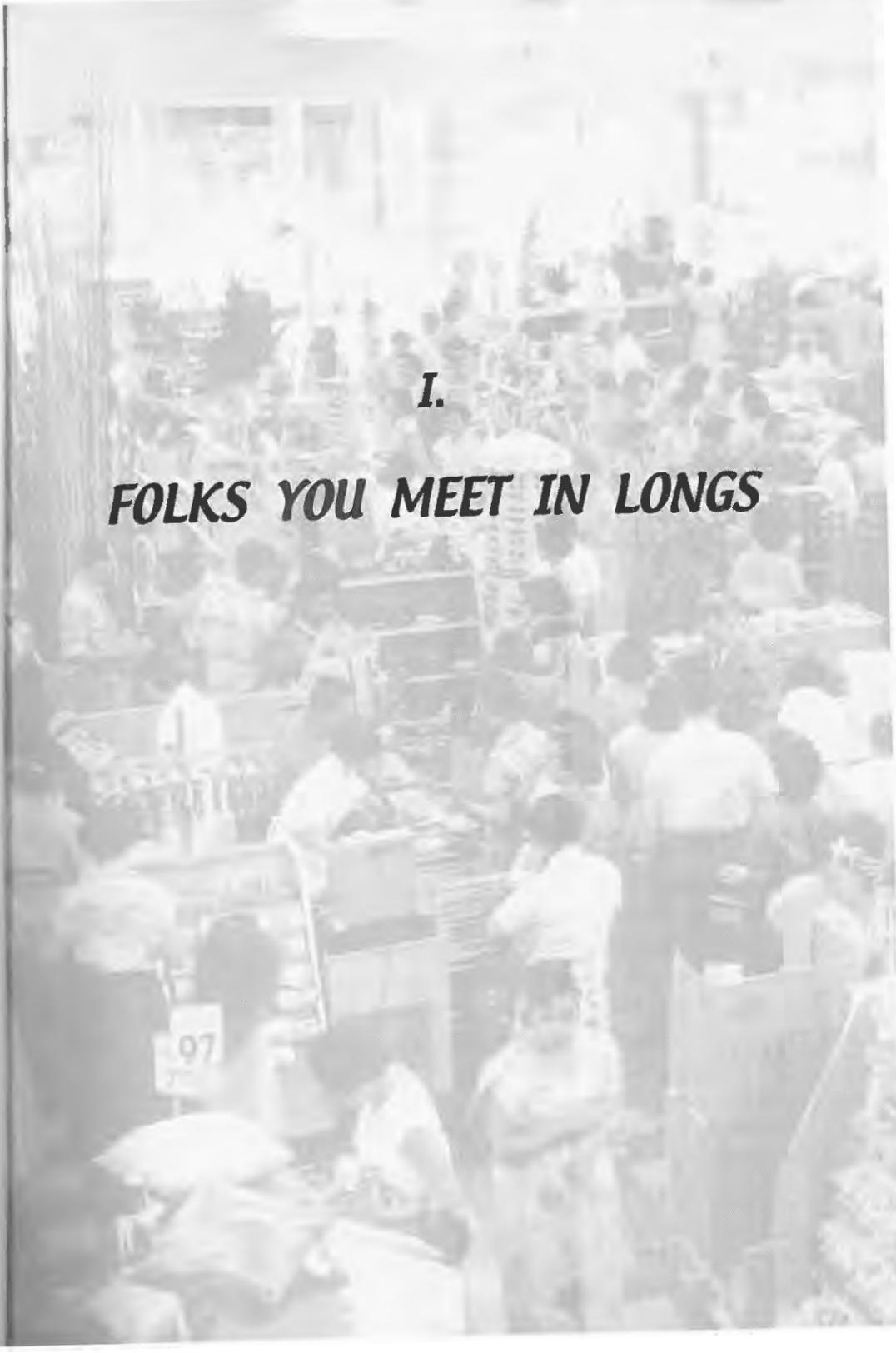
People have suggested that these stories could happen in numerous other places: little neighborhood grocery stores, on TheBus, at beloved plate lunch counters. Some have been quite insistent on this point and offer up their "Folks You Meet in . . ." stories from other locations.

But to me, Longs is unique. It is the place you go to when you're in pain. The aisles serve as passageways through the various stages of life. It is the place young girls go to furtively buy the items that mark their transition into womanhood. It is the place old folks find the salves for wounds acquired over the miles. When a woman is pregnant, she's in Longs almost as often as she's in the ladies' room.

It is the ever-ready storehouse to visit when you need a last-minute birthday card, when you're putting together a local-style CARE package for a college student on the Mainland, or when you've left home in a hurry without provisions and need a toothbrush and socks.

Longs is where people go to when they NEED. On the shelves, you find relief, distraction, healing; and if there's no product for what ails you, there's often a kind clerk, an intuitive fellow-shopper, or a bit of overheard conversation that is enough to keep you going.

And yes, many of these pieces were heard in those hallowed aisles.



I.

FOLKS YOU MEET IN LONGS

NADINE TAM SING
 —
LONGS WORKER

YOU KNOW HOW WHEN YOU WATCH MOVIES, THEY ALWAYS have the bartender guy who seen it all? Let me tell you, bartender man neva seen nothing. I worked here twenty years already. I seen it all. I seen it all two, three times. The whole world comes into Longs.

I see the ones that come in all sick when they should be home in bed. Some of them, they too proud to have somebody help them. They young and strong and cannot believe they have to take pills. They should be lying on the couch, taking a nap, watching TV, but they come here, drag themselves through the store, pick up their pills, and go back to work. Some of them, they just don't have nobody. Nobody to pick up their medicine for them. They should be at home, but they don't have choice.

I see the fat-a-boobas who come in and spend fifty dollars on couple cases Slim Fast Shakes. Two weeks later, they back in, spending more money on DexaTrim and Korean Diet Tea and sugar-free gum. I take notice when they lose couple pounds. I watch when everything they lost they find again. They come in and buy Milk Duds and Cheetos and Oreos Double Stuff. I don't say nothing. I just ring 'em up, bag 'em up, count off their change. I see the eyes, though. All shame.

I see plenty of that. Shame eyes. Eighth grade girls buying pads. High school boys buying rubbers. Old men buying diapers. I see the young girls trying to hide the at-home tests in the bottom of their basket. I don't say nothing.

Most people, they come in and buy their hope. They hope they going lose weight or look younger or not hurt so much all the time. They hope this eye shadow going impress Leighton Pacheco or that Ace bandage going fix their leg.

Sometimes it works. The skin clears up or the pain goes away or the hair dye looks good. Then they're back. Then they're regulars, they hooked, and hoo! they get mad when something happens in the stockroom and we don't have their stuff on the shelves. They think it's against them, like we the ones standing in their way, keeping their stuff away from them on purpose. Like we in it to make them suffer.

I see the grampas coming in wearing their grandkids black rock and roll T-shirts. I see kids coming in wearing their grampa's soft, buss-up cotton undershirts with so much yellow stains look like one pattern. I see the tourist girls coming in wearing sand on their feet and not too much else.

Sometimes they take stuff, and I see that too. I don't say nothing. If you gotta steal from Longs, you get problems in your life that nothing on these shelves gonna solve.

People don't realize that they walk around with their needs on their face like a grocery list pinned to their shirt. I need attention, I need distraction, I need help. I seen it. I seen it every day. If that movie bartender came in, I could take one look at his eyes and tell him which aisle he was going first, and he would be surprised. Nine-B half-way down, third shelf. And sir, next week, going on sale. Twenty years. I seen it all.

MRS. TAKENAKA**—
WEDNESDAY MORNING REGULAR**

YOU HEARD ABOUT HARRIET?

Ai-ya, you neva hear about Harriet?

She stay hospital. You neva hear?

She hit her head. Terrible, you know. She stay wit one coma. Or maybe so not one coma, maybe was concussion.

Wait now. Was coma or was concussion?

Something like that. I remember so, start with one 'c.'

Anyways, she was at the daughter's house cuz the daughter just had the baby, yeah?

You neva know the daughter was going have one baby?

Third one already. So cute. From that good looking Filipino boy.

The first two not from him, but. They not so cute.

So Harriet went the daughter's house. She live behind the old Emjay's, you remember over there?

So Harriet was inside the bathroom and the daughter just had put one new bathmat down, you know, in the place in between the toilet and the edge of the shower.

Not the kind with the rubber underneath kind.

The kind he more like terry-cloth kind. Slippery, that's why I no buy that kind. And more expensive.

Harriet wen stand up from the toilet and she was reaching down for pull up her pantyhose, and her jade ring had catch on the expensive bathmat, and she was pulling and pulling because I guess so the prong part was stuck, yeah?

You seen how big that ring? That's the kind they used to call cocktail ring, but Harriet, she always get that on, even when she only going shopping.

So she was pulling and pulling and somehow that bathmat went up and Harriet went down and when the daughter found her six hours later, she was flat on the bathroom floor, all blue.

Her head crack the toilet bowl open just like one egg and all the water came out.

They thought she wasn't breathing but the blue was from the toilet water, you know how they get that blue toilet water thing to clean? So Harriet was blue, tankobu on her head, pantyhose all wrap around her ankles.

Terrible, yeah?

So she went hospital.

I cannot remember if was coma or concussion. Something with one 'c.'

Three days already.

She still yet all blue.

The thing get hard time to come off.

Ai-ya, you don't know Harriet? I think so she moved 'Aiea before you came, yeah?

Ah, poor thing. Nice lady, you know. Always with the big jade ring.

Except not now in the hospital.

They had to cut that thing off.

Now she only get the blue.

CORINNA MOLINA
 —
JANESSA'S FRIEND

AY, JANESSA, TRY LOOK DA PURPLE NAIL POLISH. YOU should get 'em.

Match with your hickey necklace.

No act like you can hide 'em with makeup. I can see the thing shining through like purple panties underneath white shorts. Shoot, not too obvious you wearing turtleneck to school for three days, kudeesh.

Here, get the purple nail polish with the sparkle stuff inside and then get the spray-on body glitter for your neck for da night time look. Get the plum passion lipstick so you can leave all kind marks on him and no even gotta suck.

Rub 'em all on top his shirt so when his mother wash clothes she think her son was bleeding.

Oh, you gotta check out this lotion.

Look the lotion, Janessa.

You should get the lotion.

You no like chap.

You chap? You chapping? You chap planny, no, you?

You such a chappa', Janessa.

Look the small cute little perfume get.

So cute, yeah?

You should get that, Janessa. You should get perfume.

You should get deodorant.

Get the all-over kind, you know. You should get the all-over kind.

All over, you know.

You should buy couple.

Buy the shelf.

You know, if you put planny eyeliner, going draw the attention to your face so people not going be staring at the muffler burns all on your neck.

Get the black eyeliner.

Not brown-black.

No, that's just black. Get the black-black kind.

That's the kind.

Draw attention to your eyes, that's why. You no like people staring at your neck cuz look kinda buss.

Or just buy the thick-kind scar-kind pack-'em-on makeup.

Put like Bondo on top your neck.

Make everybody think you hiding one zipper for keep your head on like the Frankenstein lady.

I no think so this even your aisle, Janessa. Come, we go find your aisle.

The one close to the pharmacy.

The one with all your stuffs that you need.

Maybe get some hickey cream right next to all the other stuffs.

Maybe get cream you can rub on top your neck for take 'em off so you no gotta sleep your aunty's house one more night.

I promise, Janessa, look so obvious.

DEATRA LANNING
—
BRANDON'S MOMMY

BRANDON, COME HERE.

Brandon, come here.

Brandon.

Brandon.

Brandon. Come over here Mommy said.

Put that down and come over—

Brandon, don't you get that look on your face Brandon. I better not see that look on your—

There's the look. What I said? What Mommy said, Brandon?

I told you don't you give me no look and then you give me the look and—

Oh! Don't you turn your back on Mommy, Brandon! Don't you dare turn your back on Mommy or you're gonna get it. I didn't go through nine months hard labor pop my belly button ring, stretch marks starting from my neck for this, Brandon.

Brandon come here.

You come here, Brandon.

Ay, God, don't you run away, Brandon! Don't you run—

Damn kid, come back here. You young and you fast but Mommy get the car keys and the money for McDonald's so you ain't getting very far

without me. Come back here. Brandon! Don't you go up those stairs. Don't go up the—

Oh so what. Mommy going take the escalator two steps at a time and I going reach the top first. I going get you, you little brat. Six years old and running around. You just like yo' father.

Brandon, I going leave you in the shopping mall, Brandon. That's it. I'm going. I'm leaving you all by yourself in the shopping mall, Brandon. I going. Mommy going. You not going have no Mommy no more. How you like that?!

Brandon! Come back here!

TOMMY PINTO
—
LIVES AT HOME

MY MOTHER CALL ME ON MY CELL: "BOY!" SHE TELL ME, "I need coffee filters! You gotta get me coffee filters!" Shoot, I tell her. I go Longs after work. "Not after work!" she tell me, "Right now!" What, coffee emergency? "No ask questions! Just get 'em NOW!"

She no tell me what kind. She no tell me how big. All she like is coffee filters and as much as I can find. I get her one box with 60 inside. She send me out for more. I get her one box with 120 inside. She send me out for MORE. I go four different Longses, buy out every store. She like more. What the hell you doing, Ma? She tell me 'as one project for my small nephew's church class. They making Virgin Mary procession like it's one Aloha Week float and she need the coffee filters for make the ruffly-part of the kāhilis. Ho Ma, I tell her. So authentic. Shut up, she tell me. And if get any more coffee filters out there that you left behind in Longs, you better hope I don't find out about it 'cause you going get it!

They up all night. I try go sleep in the parlor but they wake me up so I can help stuff coffee filters in the chicken wire on top the broomstick. Afterwards, we gotta go outside in the backyard to spray paint 'em all the different colors for the islands. I tell her I didn't know Virgin Mary worked Hawaii Visitors Bureau. She tell me no talk like that, so blasphemous.

The next morning, I all tired, but my small nephew look so cute in his Moses robe, satin sash, and kukui nut lei, I gotta go church for see him do his thing.

So all the kids walking down the middle aisle with their coffee filter kāhilis and my mother tell me, "Ho, look nice, yeah?" But get kinda plenty coffee filters falling out of the chicken wire. I tell my mother, "Ma, why you never just borrow the kāhilis from the church school? They get for May Day."

My mother's face kinda dropped and she neva say nothing.

I go, "You neva think of that?!"

That's why my mother had swear at me in church.

So from now on, no matter what I do, she cannot tell me nothing because I tell her, eh, at least I never use that kind language in the House of the Lord.

And you know what else? She no buy coffee filters no more. She shame. She use paper towel.

LISA KAMA
—
IN THE SNACK AISLE

YOU KNOW HOW HARD IT IS TO FIND PICKLED MANGO?
Get dried mango, li hing mango, sweet mango mui or whatevers, but I talking green mango, vinegar juice, red food coloring, jar with little bit rust on the metal lid.

I so ono for pickled mango.
I cannot tell you how ono I am for pickled mango.

I can eat one whole jar pickled mango all by myself. One time.
I can eat pickled mango until my lips are peeling and my tongue is numb and the roof of my mouth has blisters.
I can eat pickled mango for breakfast and wash it down with a glass of milk.
I can eat pickled mango on bread for lunch.
I can eat pickled mango with rice for dinner.
I can get up in the middle of the night and eat pickled mango, brush my teeth and go right back to sleep.
I can suck the vinegar juice right from that rusty metal lid.

I know I can, cuz I already did.
And I like more.

When my Mom was pregnant with me, she ate Samoan can tuna breakfast, lunch, and dinner. She ate Samoan can tuna the way I eat pickled mango. My aunty-them had to ship 'em in for her. But Samoan can tuna easier to find than pickled mango.

With my sister, it was chocolate. Her husband had to hide all the candy in the house, but she would find it. He had to hide the car keys because she would sneak out in the middle of the night. He'd find her sleeping in the car at Safeway, all Hershey's wrappers by her feet and one big smile on her face.

I heard had pickled mango at one store Wahiawā. I made my husband drive me.
We get there, the place closed.
I tell him break the window.
He tell me this gotta stop.

So Longs is my last hope.
And if they no more on the shelves, I going just walk up and down the aisles and ask every clerk and every customer if they get green mangoes their house and if they tell yeah I going ask, where you live? We go!
I cannot tell you how ono I am for pickled mango.

DEREK Y.Y. PANG
—
PROFESSIONAL THUG

HERE YOU ARE.

I thought I would find you in the Tylenol aisle.
Oh, no, you not going check out yet.
We going have a little talk, first.

I can unnastan you no mo da money, but what I no can unnastan is how
come you telling me you no mo da money.
Look at me.
Check my size, bra.
How's my girth?

You like dat word, eh? Girth.
That means wide.
They use that word when they talking about horses.
They use that word when they talk about me.
Girth.
I get girth.
I wide,
like one horse.

So das why I cannot unnastan why you, one small pitot, mejiro bird little
guy stay looking at me wid all my girth and telling me you no mo da money.
You supposed to be begging.
You supposed to be crying.

You supposed to be telling me all kind lies, like you going get da money as
soon as your braddah sell his car or as soon as the check clear da bank or
as soon as your chick give you back da bracelet.

You supposed to be telling me stuff like, "No, Mr. Pang! I had the money,
but then one guy more big den you came and took 'em!" That's what you
supposed to be doing.

But for stand there, look me straight in da eye and tell me to my face you
no mo' da money, I cannot believe.

I cannot think.

Neva happen to me in all my years in the collection industry.

You with all your nerve, me with all my girth.

UNCLE CHOOCHIE NAWAI
 —
SHOP STEWARD

HELLO? HELLO? HELLO? FUCK IT. HELLO? WHO DIS? DIS
 Choochie, who dis?
 I stay Longs.
 Longs.
 LONGS!
 Why, who dis? Who dis? Who? Dis you or I got wrong number?

Eh, Bobby, das you?

How come you get one drug dealer voice when you say hello?
 What is "yo"?
 Das not how you answer phone.
 You sound like one drug dealer. I thought you was one drug dealer. Never
 mind. Never mind I said.
 DRUG DEALER!
 Shit, you making me shame in Longs, Bobby. No make me shame in Longs.

Go ask Mommy what kind she like.
 Go ask Mommy what kind she like.
 What brand.
 Go ask.
 No, not color, it's what brand.
 No, not what flavor. The thing no come in flavor. I no think the thing come
 in flavor.

What brand. Find out the brand Bobby. Get like choke brands that kind
 and I no like get the wrong one, bumbye gotta come back. Find out the
 brand.

Da what?

What?

No more that kind.

No more.

I need the brand Bobby.

Shit, I coming shame already, Bobby.

People looking.

They looking.

I stay inside the wahine aisle at Longs yelling at my damn drug dealer kid
 on one small piece plastic dat play da Lone Ranger song when supposed to
 ring like one RING.

Help me out, Bobby, what's the brand?

What's the brand!

Go talk to your mother and find out what is the god damn brand so I can
 grab the thing, run to the car and dig the hell out of here before one of the
 guys from my working place see me.

FIND OUT THE FUCKING BRAND!!!

Okay, now ask her what size.

**NADINE AND THE OLD MAN
WITH THE PĪKAKE**

EVERY MORNING EIGHT O'CLOCK SHARP, HE COME IN WITH his plastic bag full with pīkake. If not in bloom, he bring gardenia, but then he apologize about the bugs. If no more flowers his house, he bring plumeria from the school, but then he look little bit shame. Like maybe not so good. He put the plumeria on toothpick and go right down the row and give to all the girls. That's his thing. He come to flirt with the girls. Pretty good for one old fut, I tell Sonya. She tell sad, yeah, since he lost the wife. Sometimes when no more flowers his yard or windy, he bring papaya. Anything just so he can go down the line and say hi to all us. Sometimes, when he get extra, he give the girls at Bank of Hawaii next door or he make us two, one to put in our hair, one to put by our registers.

Come to find out, get one at every Longs. Every store get their own old man who bring flowers from his yard. Sometimes they still get the wife, but she real quiet or she don't leave the house. Mostly, the wife is gone already and they just get their yard. And us.

Not like we get time to talk story. Maybe he get for come behind the counter to put the flower in our hair. Maybe he get one small half-hug. Hard, 'cause we so busy. And not like he ever buying anything. When Sonya working, she see him coming, she run fast in the back, get him one cup coffee. If get pastry in the break room, she give that, too. Ho, his face is like he hit the jackpot. I tell her ho, Sonya, you so nice. She tell me, stupid, he the one being nice. I just getting him some damn coffee and one stale doughnut.

**CHERYL MOANA MARIE SAKATA
—
KAIMUKĪ**

SO I'M SITTING ON THE BENCH AT ZIPPY'S WAITING FOR MY large chili cracka and thinking if I gotta stop Foodland still yet on the way home and what was on sale at Longs this week and then it hits me:

My whole life is Zippy's, Foodland, Longs.
Zippy's, Foodland, Longs.

Sometimes, the order change little bit.
If I buying stuff like ice cream or frozen chicken, I go Foodland last.
Or if I pick up the kids, then I do my shopping first and take them Zippy's after.
But other than those variations, that's it.

Longs, Zippy's, Foodland.
Foodland, Longs, Zippy's.
Zippy's, Foodland, Longs. Zippy's, Foodland, Longs.

And I tried to think when my life wasn't Zippy's, Foodland, Longs.
Before I had kids,
before I got married,
before I got married again.

Small kid time, same thing.
Instead of Zippy's, we went Diners and instead of Foodland my mada had Tamashiro's down the street.
But Longs was Longs.

I think there was like this short time in between high school and the first baby when I actually went to a real restaurant.

Not like Sizzler or Wailana, but the kind with tablecloth.

I remember thinking that it took a really long time for the food to come, but nobody else looked pissed off so I figured that's just how it is.

I guess so people who go to real restaurants have the time.

They don't have to run to Foodland and Longs after.

And as I'm sitting there, trying to think how many years of my life I've spent sitting on a bench at Zippy's waiting for my damn chili cracka, it hits me again, but this time, it's even worse.

This is my whole life.

This is the rest of my life.

Zippy's, Foodland, Longs.

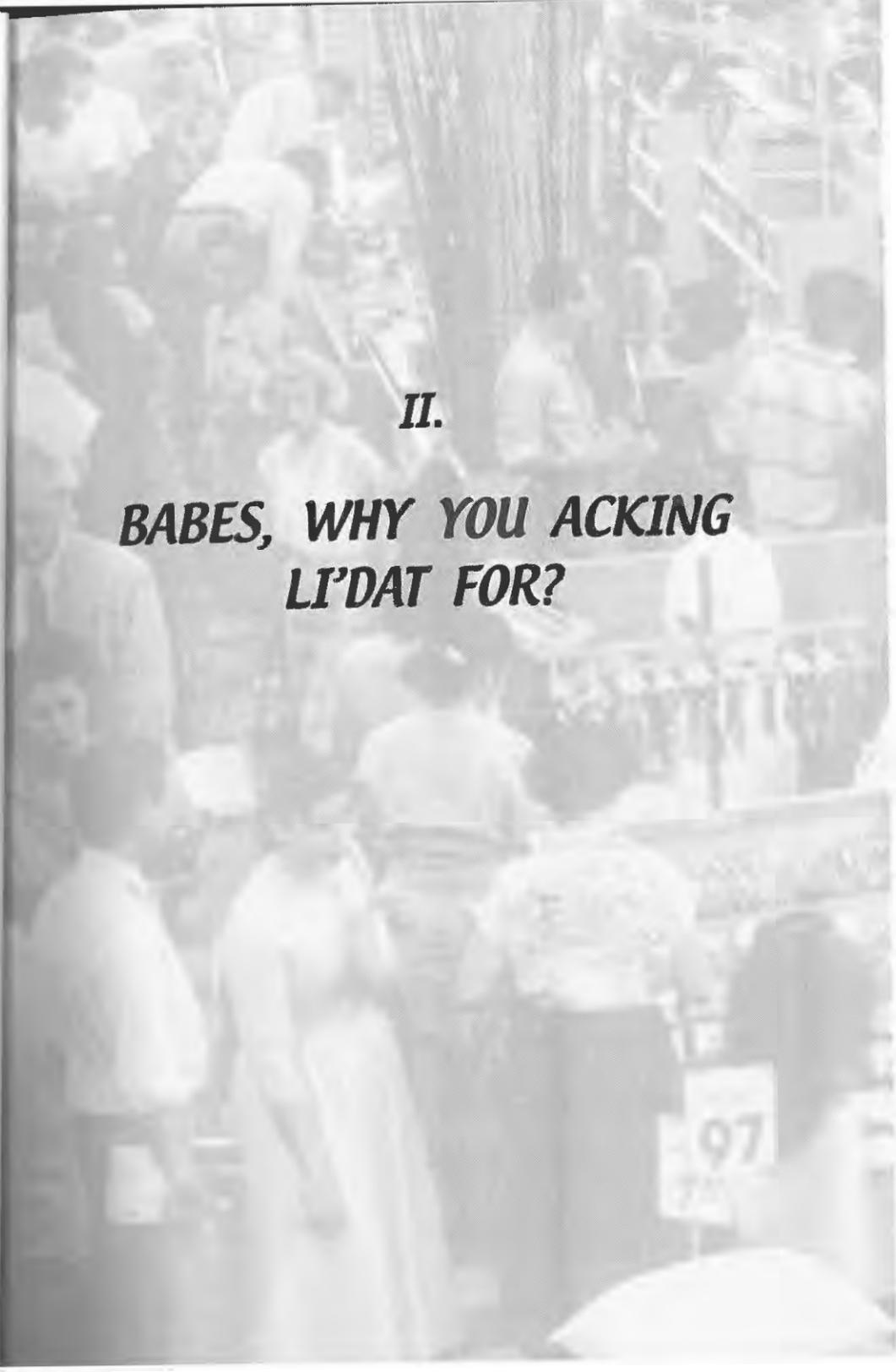
Zippy's Foodland Longs.

When I'm an old, old lady and can hardly walk, going be the same thing:

Zippy's, Foodland, Longs,

Zippy's, Foodland, Longs.

Except, going be real early in the morning.



II.

**BABES, WHY YOU ACKING
LI'DAT FOR?**

ROGELIO CABINGABANG
A.K.A. "DJ STANKMASTER"

BABES, WHY YOU ACKING LI'DAT FOR? HA? WHY YOU ACKING li'dat?

You know I love you babes.

You my babes.

You my only babes, babes.

My odda babes befo', she no was my babes. Not like you my babes, babes.

Ho, babes, when I go sleep at night, I close my eyes and I only see you, babes.

When I dream, I dream of you, babes.

I wake up in the morning, I open my eyes, I only see you babes.

I see you and I wonder how you snuck out your house without your father catching you and giving you dirty lickers, but I see you, babes. I come all happy.

You know why? Cuz you my babes, 'as why.

You remember the time Sheldeen-dem called you one bitch and you got suspension six days fo' throwing her sister through the girls' bathroom window?

I had back you up, babes.

All the way.

The whole time you was home, I neva even talk to one noddia girl. Notting.

Even when Mrs. Sakata made me partner with Tiana Muñoz for Social Studies class, I neva talk to her notting.

She not my babes 'as why.

You my babes.

She not my babes.

I mean she used to be my babes befo' time, but she not my babes no more.

No ways.

Not even when you get suspension,

not even when you got arrested,

not even when you got charged attempted murder and had to go juvenile detention two nights befo' they found out wasn't your fingerprints on the cricket bat.

No ways.

Even if I had to go Tiana's house every night fo' make study partner fo'

Mrs. Sakata's class, you always is my one and only babes, babes.

And when Tiana WAS my babes, befo' time, she no was really my babes, you know?

Not like how you my babes.

Ho babes,

you my babes.

Always and forever.

Babes.

CRAZY AUNTY COOKIE

USED TO BE MARRIED INTO THE FAMILY BUT STILL COMES TO PARTIES

YOU KNOW HOW YOU READ THE MAGAZINES AND THEY tell you how to tell about a man? Like "How Your Man Drinks Coffee Tells You What Kind of Partner He'll Be" or "What's in a Man's Car Reveals the Kind of Lover He Is."

What is that? I mean, how he act going tell you what kinda partner a man is, right? And if you like know what kinda lover he is, well, what can I say, you gotta sample before you buy, yeah?

But how he drink coffee, what he get in his car, the lines he get on his hand, the moles he get on his back, that don't tell you nothing. That's not how.

I tell you, but. The one thing you gotta look is how one man rips tape. You laughing now, yeah, but I promise, how he handle one roll pack-and-seal is very revealing.

Not like I made research study or anything, but I did work Island Movers couple-tree years, and I got to know some of the boyz real good. Real good.

Like Jerry, he was the wild one. How you call, impulsive. He would rip the masking tape with his teeth. SSSSHHHHAAAA! Exciting, you know. But after a while, not so good.

Some guys, they use the two-handed twist method. Too much work, that kind, and plenny times, they leave that long tape tail, you know the jagged

one keeps going around and around and around the roll. Hard to get rid of that kind. No good. Sometimes gotta start up one whole new roll. Humbug.

Then get the guys use knife for cut the tape. Or more worse, scissors. What's up with that? They no like touch? No like get their hands sticky? I don't think so.

Sometimes, you see the guys use two-hand twist, teeth, knife, scissors, everything but they still get the tape all twist-up, stuck to their hands, tangle up everything. No waste your time, sistah. No waste your time.

What you like look for is one man can tear off the tape one stroke with just his thumbnail. Fffft! Clean. No rough edges. Smooth. That's the one. That's the winner. Just put the sticky part on the box, pull down, and fft, one hand. Maybe he use the odda hand for stick 'em on good. Whoo, boy. That's the one. That's the one.

KAIPO BALMORES
—
NEWLY SINGLE

SO ME AND MY GIRLFRIEND, WE WAS WALKING AROUND Longs and she was laughing up cuz I was making like I in the Society of Seven, like maybe I numba eight, the second team . . . cuz you know they get about twenty-one guys on the bench and they just switch around like football.

So she was cracking up and just so happens we was coming around by the light bulb/extension cord aisle and I seen this girl and I couldn't help it and before I could even think my mouth just went "Ho!"

And wasn't just the kind "Ho" kind "Ho." Was the kind "HO!" kind "Ho." And the girl heard me go "HO!" and she had turn around. And she was pissed. And my girlfriend, she heard me go "HO!" except she thought was the kind "Ho" kind "Ho," so she stop laughing right there and could tell she was pissed, too.

So there I am in the towel rack and plunger aisle of Kaimukī Longs and I get one piss off one in front of me and one piss off one behind. And I thinking, "Ho!"

I just like Jackie Chan over the shelf into the Kleenex and toilet paper aisle already.

So while I trying fo' figure out if I could clear the Igloo coolers on the top shelf, my girlfriend takes the shopping cart and heads straight to the check-out counter. And I kinda tripping out because we didn't even get the paper

towels and hashi on sale yet and going check out already, pushing the cart with the buss-up wheel.

Kaduk-kaduk-kaduk.

I walk by her, she go more fast.

Kaduk-kaduk-kaduk.

So I tell her, "What?" and she go, "Notting," and I go, "Not notting, what?" And she told me, "I heard you go HO," and I tell her, "I neva go HO," and she's like, "I heard you go HO," and I told her, "Yeah, I went HO but I neva go HO." And she go, "Same difference."

Kaduk-kaduk-kaduk.

So I stay thinking, wow, should I just give it all up and explain or is that going get me in more trouble. So I decide just fo' go for it. I tell her, "I went HO not like she pretty. I went HO cuz that girl, she get one really big ass."

My girlfriend's eyes got all big. I figure I had to swim fast or I was going eat it. I told her, "Beyonce big. Bootylicious big. Like one Sir Mix-A-Lot video big." And my girlfriend's eyes got all small and she tell me, "You told me that about me. You said that's the kind you like."

And the thing came out of my mouth before I could even think: "Yeah, but her ass even way more big than yours."

Just so happens, Beyonce was standing right there in the next check-out line and she had hear. I could see her gunning with her buss-up shopping cart:

Tang-tang-tang.

So I hang around the hair dye/razor blades aisle for twenty minutes, trying fo' decide if safe, listening if the shopping cart leaving the store:

Kaduk kaduk kaduk.

Tang-tang-tang.

When I finally walk out to the parking lot, I see my car, windows smash, tires flat, doors dented. So the cop ask me if I get one description of the suspect. I tell 'em, yeah, she piss off and she get one big ass.

LEONARD KAUI

— DONNA'S OLDER BROTHER

DONNA USED TO BE PRETTY BEFORE. EVEN NOW, SOMETIMES when you look at her when she not thinking, you can still kinda tell little bit. But then juss like one thought fly through her mind like one mosquito in the night and she go back to looking juss how she always look.

She neva come that way when she got sick, you know. She was like that before.

She got sick because she came that way. She look at herself in the mirror and that made her sick. Sound like I joking but I not. That's how your brain work sometimes. You make yourself for real sick because you make yourself sick. You understand?

I tried to tell Donna that, but her, cannot tell her nothing.

She smart girl, her, but not smart for figure out some stuff. Not about her own self. She smart for understand math and numbers but something go wrong inside her life and she only think think think and she neva come out with the answer.

We used to tell her that some things, cannot understand. They just happen. Nobody know why. But she no like hear that. She don't believe in that. So her brain think on top of itself and that's how come she came like that and that's how come she look like that and that's how come she came sick.

So when you talk to her, don't mention nothing, 'kay? Nothing she can worry about. Nothing she gotta think think think.

LINDA HAMAMOTO
—
BANK WORKER

NO LOOK AT ME LIKE I CRAZY CUZ I KNOW YOU DO IT TOO.

You lonely.

You start thinking about
... stuff.

You start getting those
... feelings.

Some of my friends, they go bar or club or 24-Hour Fitness.

Me, I go McKinley Car Wash.

You mean to tell me you never did take notice the way those guys rub the cars?

Whack the mats?

Use the hose?

Come on.

I know I not the only one.

My car not even dirty and I go there on my lunch break.

The big braddah with the jail house tattoos and the buss teeth come up to me and ask me what I want.

I tell 'em, Junior, I like you fill 'em up.
 I like you fill 'em up and then I like you wash 'em
 and yeah I like the wax.
 Give me the wax, Junior.
 I like dat wax.

Sometimes, I tell the guy that I think so I spilled my cigarette ashes under
 the seat so that he gotta go with the vacuum hose way way underneath
 and then I stand right in the back of him and,
 on a good day,
 I get, like,
 four inches of ono.

See, those guys, they look bad. I like that.
 They look bad, but they get job.
 I like that even more.

KELCIE CAMARA
 —
CLERK ON BREAK

I LOOKING AT HIM AND I CANNOT BELIEVE WHAT HAD JUST
 come out of his mouth
 but I trying not for look like I cannot believe
 but hard
 because I cannot believe.

And he just looking at me,
 waiting for me say something,
 looking like I going say something,

but I cannot say nothing.
 I cannot think.
 I trying for be cool
 but I cannot believe.

And me,
 the whole time before that time I was all talking, talking, acting, acting like
 been there, done that.
 But what he had ask me,
 I never been there and I would never even think to do that.
 Who would do that?
 I don't know nobody.
 Except maybe that chick Wanette down in receiving.
 She look like she would.

She look like she did.

And here him, looking at me,
 looking looking. Waiting waiting.
 And I stay trying, trying, holding, holding,
 no like crack,
 no like him know that I never did in my whole life even hear of nothing like that
 but gotta act cool like I did,
 oh yeah, sure, me? All the time. Why? No big deal. That's how.
 But ai-ya
 I no can believe.

And my mind is all white,

like when you go to the bathroom in the middle of the night and you turn
 on the light.
 AAAAH!
 How the hell? I cannot even picture.
 I really and truly
 no can believe.

So finally, he tell me,
 "You like or what?"
 and me,

I cannot believe what had come out of my mouth.

I wen tell him,
 "Yeah."

I no can believe.

DELORES KINORES

ONLY BUYS COFFEE ON SALE

HAVING SEXUAL RELATIONS WITH TOO MANY MEN WILL GIVE
 you cancer and wrinkles.

Having sexual relations when you are too young, like younger than twenty-
 five, will give you cancer.

Having sexual relations when you are not married will give you diseases
 and itches worse than cancer.
 And it will give you cancer.

The tricky thing is, though, if you don't ever have sexual relations or not
 enough, you will get cancer that way, too.

But not the wrinkles.

My friend Sophie—three times married and boyfriends always on the side.
 She died of cancer last June.
 Face like a pickled plum.

My friend Julie,
 married at sixteen,
 grandmother at thirty because, you know, her daughter ended up just like
 her.
 She was dead by forty-two.
 Cancer.

My friend Junko,
 she had cancer, too,
 but it was the stroke that killed her.
 Never married, never fooled around.
 Died with the face of an angel. Not a single line.
 But she still died.

Me, I'm looking younger ever since Vincent passed away.
 Doctor says I'm in excellent health. Passed all my tests.
 Vincent was the one caught the cancer.

But men, they get 'em different way.
 It's what they breathe in their lungs,
 like where they work or if they smoke,
 and it's what they eat if it's bad food.

Men get their cancer from up side.
 Doesn't matter too much what they do down there.

ANNA SIMAO
 —
JOHNNY'S EX

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I'VE SAID I SHOULD HAVE known. But I should have known.

I should have known from the very first time I met him, he had this smell, like he wiped himself with a bath towel that no one washed for a couple months. He had that stink towel smell. Somewhere in my mind, I thought, poor thing. He needs a woman to wash his towels for him. Here's someone I can take care of.

When we met, he told me he was a pro surfer and when I said no kidding, my cousin is a pro surfer too. Maybe you folks know each other. Oh, all of a sudden he USED to be a pro surfer but then he had an accident so he doesn't surf so much any more. At least not pro.

And then he tells me that he's a businessman. So I go what kind of business? And he says he owns his own business. And I go what kind? And he says, well, he has several. Auto parts, construction, carpentry, welding. So I thought, wow, talented. Stupid yeah? And I felt so sorry when he told me one of his employees stole money from him and a lot of his equipment and now the jobs are backed up and his companies are in debt so I just had to help him make rent on the office, just one month, okay, two months, just to help, you know. Because I'm that way. I figure if they ask and if I can help, then I try to do the right thing. But that's how they trick you. They get you to think you're doing the right thing.

He tells me because the business is in trouble and because he really wants to pay me back, he has to work nights. All night. He says he's willing to make that sacrifice. And I say, that's okay. Just come over when you're done.

And I give him a key.

And pretty soon, he's sleeping at my house all day while I go to work, gone by the time I come home. And I never see him. But I can smell him on my sheets. I could smell him on my towels.

I should have known.

I should have known, but after everything that happened, I know better. It wasn't the towel that was making him stink. It was him stinking up the towel.

JAMES KIMO HOOPAI

THE BEST JAWAIIAN SONG EVER WRITTEN

I SAT IN MY TRUCK
 And I wrote you dis song
 Fo tell you I love you
 And fo say I wuz wrong

I sorry I hurt you
 I sorry I had lie
 When I saw you hurtin'
 Ho, I just had like die

I no could go surfing
 I no could go eat
 I no could go sleep
 Ho, I just felt like shet

When I close my eyes
 I can just see your face
 All mad with my ass
 And flying my stuff every place

If you come back to me
 I not going do 'em again
 So please listen to me
 And no listen your friend

I going treat you real good