

Dark Pool Party

Hannah Black

Celebrity Death
Match 8

City Built At Night 26

Press For Service 42

Atlantis 58

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"The work is not an autobiography."

Leslie Feinberg

Why write life as fiction? We were maybe one-third of the way through *Stone Butch Blues* before we realized it was a novel. In an interview Leslie Feinberg said, "I have had a much richer, fuller life than Jess." Moved to defend Jess against her creator, we cradle our image of Jess, which is also the back cover image of Feinberg, close to our heart. What could be a richer or fuller life than the fullness of longing, than the ruin of being a man/being a woman? Why write life as fiction? A fictional character stands in a room at a window smoking a cigarette and directing exhaled smoke out of the window. People pass by in winter clothes, on bikes or on foot. The character feels how the eye receives each passing figure like woman, man, woman, woman, woman—a split second of cognitive sorting that the character resents, a little, and is awed by, a little, silently sorting the passersby into the four basic categories of M, F, unknown, and baby. These thoughts feel like factory thoughts, as one might sort nuts and bolts dividing each into each, fast-moving hand like the will of a totally degraded god. All that is left of the gods is their power of division. In general, a line drawing would be better than writing to express the movements and the experiences of these passé gods.

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care about the art department! Who cares about
sand. Whatever, who cares about the room! Who
anything from one or two to several hundred thou-
the room. In this case the sum of zero can mean
art department or there are no black people in
pie in Berlin or there are no black people in the
There are no characters. There are no black peo-
unknown, baby and black. There are no genders.
and baby. There are five genders: male, female,
These are the four genders: male, female, unknown,
will use. That's because we can't write fiction
The first thing that arrives of the character is the words we

now the character has not noticed
The character's eyebrows are unkempt, for days or years
into in order to make enough texture for fiction
The blank surface that we will dig our fingertips
mind's eye of the character: a sheet pulled taut on a bed
jaw, undoubtedly, but what about the eyes? An image in the
ed with gender, obviously, but the elbows get off lightly; the
pools like water in the creases of a tarp: the chest is satur-
surface on which gender seeps in or disperses, collects in
The character thinks of the character's body as an uneven

history
wear baseball caps I don't wear skin I don't wear
I going to do with them I don't wear dresses I don't
thoughts to the character because what else am
The character steals my thoughts or I donate my
correspond to an equal thinness in the writer's life
the world and the fullness of the life of the character must
character must be the accumulation of my encounters with
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character cannot go anywhere without its writer, has no
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art department or there are no black people in the
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sex with
page for work and find people to have or not have
an impoverished account to manage a company
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seven thousand on Facebook but the character
genders on the popular dating app. There are like
say nothing or are polite. There are only two
no, depending on the character's mood. The women
you a man or a woman? Yes, says the character, or
where are you from? The second question is: are
asked by the men on their dating app of choice is:
part Grindr. The first question the character is
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Berlin! We are all on the internet now. We are all

The harder I try to keep myself from becoming the charac-
ter the more the character becomes a white woman, as
I'm sorry
gency, whispering to the ground all the while,
character once pissed in a cemetery in an emer-
even in death: beloved wife, devoted husband, the
Dead is not a gender because you bear a gender.
in which the first interpretation is nothing like race/gender
come and even the wildest sci-fi struggles to describe a world
man, baby, unknown, black—but the life of gesture has yet to
is as complex or more complex than this process—woman,
question of what's a gesture and what's a subset of a gesture
those three, smoking standing looking thinking, four? The
those two gestures, standing and smoking and looking, or are
the gesture of smoking and looking out of a window, or are
formless and nameless, the character is concentrated into
for one wound, a giant leap for woundkind. The character is
acter doesn't know how to write fiction. This is a small step
means an open wound on the moon, which means the char-
The character's moon conjoins the character's Chiron, which

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remains furious and grateful transform the baby into a "her," for which the character breath until it flowed like blood into the baby, helping to melted down his planetary grief on the warmth of the baby's father. The grandfather held the character as a baby and says, "This is the language planet," to the character's grand- is not an autobiography," then later dies. The character the autobiography of writing... Leslie Feinberg says, "This writing becomes more and more like itself, like writing, like of writing is an opportunity to know less and less... Maybe writing is to know something... But maybe each moment The character cannot be unknown because the task of to the regal "he," the writer hides the writer's face in it... be a man because there is a shame in always defaulting drags centuries of kitsch behind it... The character cannot be a woman because the word "she" character cannot be so complicated and long lost... The house of babies seem so complicated and long lost... The The character cannot be a baby because the rules of the

an unfamiliar house, as if taking off outer clothing and shoes the threshold of the description as if following the rules of the right word, they hovered respectfully or resentfully at This was because the students hesitated, they searched for that the students were discussing real people, not characters. school, the character realized within ten or twenty seconds the people they invent. Once, coming late into a class at film and fantasy. Some real people have the capacity to desire The four genders of character are: pretext, archetype, self,

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she's a woman from the way that others seem
hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The character can tell
The character becomes a woman between the
What useful lies can I tell

Sarah Harrison said, don't think of it as fiction,
think of it as lies about the truth

give him, her, them, the baby
frozen in the one unified gesture I have yet been able to
The character stands at the window as a rebuke to me,
The shame of invention is like the shame of being
The character's skin darkens almost to black at the creases
character's powers of division
them, all that is left of the character is the
because the character is how we have received
endless plain of whiteness
and we have still not fully rescued the character from the
Perhaps the character is one hundred years old and a man,
draws a sad face with punctuation

the character types, "I always forget it's fiction," and then
minutes pass then in a sudden moment of embarrassment
writes "someone who doesn't know how to forget"
presses return

presses return
writing from inside the place of their forgetfulness"
The character writes in the gchat box: "it's like someone
of being understood

misspelled but presses return anyway in the hope
The character notes that literally every word is
of the descriptions of violence and the aftermath of violence."
The amazing thing about *Stone Butch Blues* is the vividness
The character opens a gchat box and types to a close friend,
The gender of the universe is a single human life
they threaten at all times to become the full extent of one
is not an autobiography, but nor is race or gender, though
and is and is not nothing, and is and is not everything. God

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What useful lies can I tell

The character becomes a woman between the
hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The character can tell
she's a woman from the way that others seem

expressed as a number
the character is all the love the character wasted over time,
dollars, it's easy
the character has no money or a million US
the character is relatable
the character is loosely based on your mother
the character is thin
the character is on my clit
the character is bleeding out in the stairwell
of the situation but wants to go out dancing anyway
the character is fully cognizant of the complexities
or growing very old or living on less than £30 a week
as you while you discuss your experience of taking hormones
the character is eight or nine people looking encouragingly
in school
the character's friend did when the character was
the character has a tattoo saying FTP that the
the character turns around they are hugely pregnant
the character says
the character says I'm crying because I'm unhappy
the character says I'm crying because I'm happy
don't cry, and until now I didn't know that the
Someone else in the room says to the character,
in the morning, the witching hour of being a woman
acter only dares to even imagine that world at three o'clock
would be finally possible to really write fiction, but the char-
acter only dares to even imagine that world at three o'clock
Perhaps the character could inhabit a world in which it
were only a button?
compelled to try to love men sometimes if men
emergencies. Would the character no longer be
being a lever behind glass to be touched only in
FOR SERVICE and the state of being-man is like
button with a polite sign above it saying PRESS
this state of being-woman is like being a switch or
to anticipate that she will do as they say. Perhaps

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PRESS FOR SERVICE

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the character is still pretty young relative to people
who are dead

We leave the room the cigarette the manifold gesture, the
street or we are left with only the room the cigarette the
manifold gesture the street without the momentary coher-
ence the character promised to give it just by appearing or
appearing to stand in it

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Hannah Black
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