

# Love and UFOs

Cellar Door Coffee is abuzz with caffeine junkies this Tuesday morning. Al Green sings through the speakers about how tired he is of being alone while couples lean over tables toward each other, whispering conspiratorially. A hipster kid scowls down at the comic strip he is inking, not noticing that the fringe of his green keffiyeh has dipped into his India ink. I am standing in line, next to a display of fancy French press coffeemakers, when a conversation catches my ear.

"It was a UFO!" the man says.

The woman knits her brow. "Seriously?" she asks. "You're seriously claiming you saw aliens? When the hell was this?"

"Not aliens," he says, playing with his moustache self-consciously, "but something weird in the sky, certainly. Just a few nights ago."

"Was it the night of the eclipse?" the woman asks, amused but slightly incredulous. She runs a slender finger along the rim of her latté, crosses her legs at the ankle. "I mean, it's not out of the question to think the light of an eclipse could have changed what was visible in the night sky."

"This was something that was brightly lit and moving," he replies. "Frankly, it shook me down to my core."

"Why's that?"

The man holds his coffee mug in both hands, looks down into his drink. "I guess it shook me because it's not at all something I would have



## REMEMBER TO BREATHE

by Nick Mattos

*We go about leading normal lives until the world changes—an unidentified light appears in the sky. the heart inside our ribs races. there is a shudder in the fabric of the ordinary—and we are left blinking and rubbing our eyes in view of a life we never thought existed.*

wanted to see. I didn't even believe in UFOs before I saw one!"

"Dude!" the barista barks at me, interrupting my eavesdropping. "What do you want?"

"Two Americanos, please. To go." I pay and position myself so that I can keep hearing the couple's conversation as I pretend to examine a painting, waiting for my caffeine fix.

"I've never been the sort of guy to believe in

UFOs," the man continues as he awkwardly plays with his facial hair, "mostly because believing in them seems like a step down a rabbit hole of illogical thinking. I didn't believe that people actually saw UFOs—until, suddenly and shockingly, I did."

The woman does not look impressed. "So, when's the first meeting of your contactee cult?" she laughs.

The man shakes his head, his face downcast. "I don't know if that'll help the knot in my stomach untie, really."

"Americanos!" the barista shouts; I grab each in a fist, trying to overhear the last of the couple's conversation as I make my way out the door.

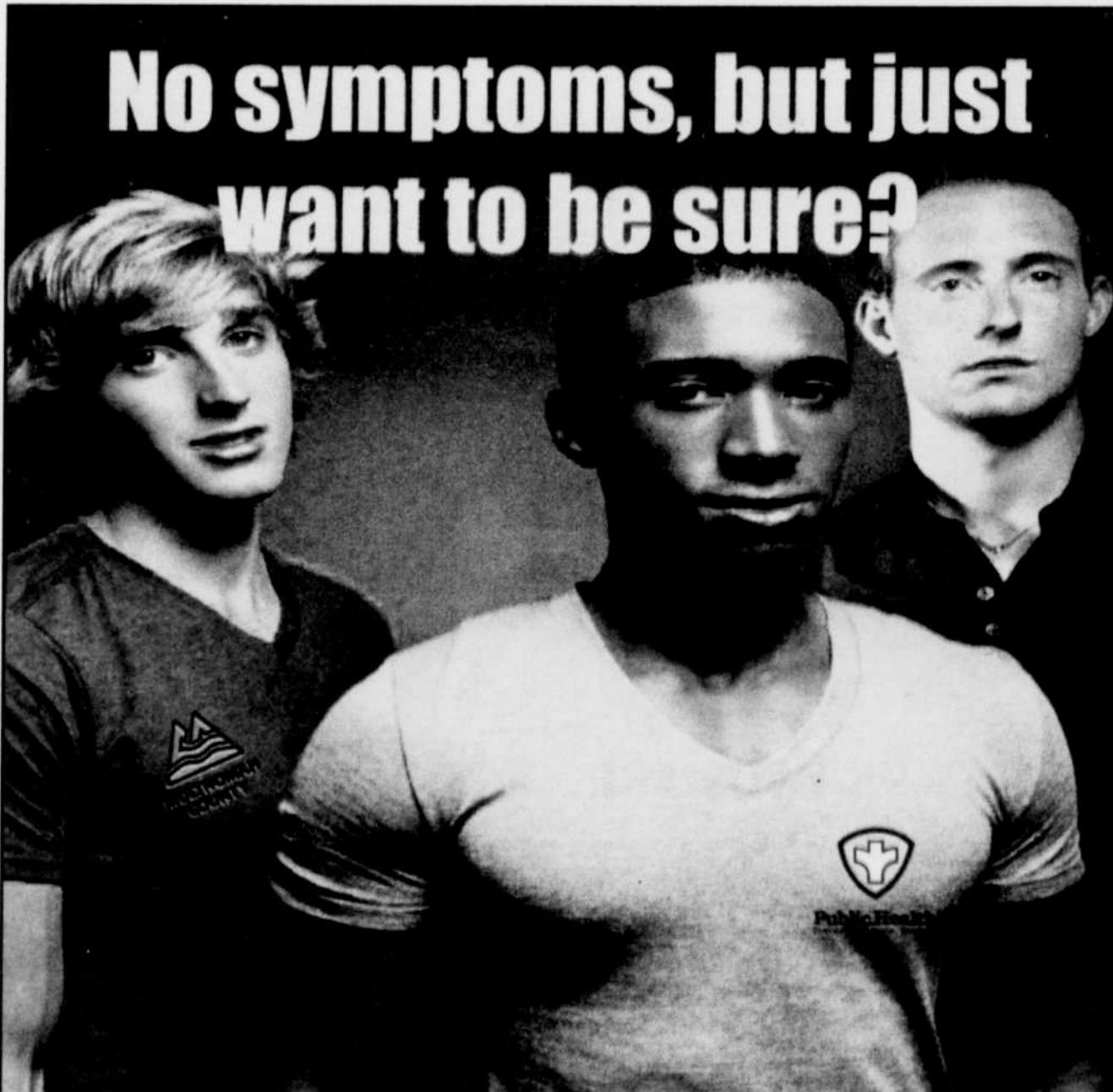
I step into my apartment, the two coffee cups in hand. In my bed, lying in a beam of morning light, my boyfriend is asleep—I set his Americano down on the nightstand, look at his red hair bright against the white pillow. In my chest my heart races with affection as I climb into bed behind him, drape my arm over his waist as he hums in sleepy acknowledgment of my touch. *I wasn't sure I believed that this was how life could be, I think to myself, that my heart could race like this for someone until, suddenly and shockingly, it did.*

We do our best at going about our lives as rational people, the man in the coffeeshop and I do. We go from day to day, knowing where

the house keys are, remembering to balance the checkbook and water the houseplants. We go about leading normal lives until the world changes—an unidentified light appears in the sky, the heart inside our ribs races, there is a shudder in the fabric of the ordinary—and we are left blinking and rubbing our eyes in view of a life we never thought existed. It's almost as though the racing heart, the UFO, the shuddering fabric is the world's way of changing our inner landscape, an uneasy awe flooding in and eroding away whatever keeps us from opening our eyes wide, sick with gratitude that we, of all lucky fuckers, get to live this life.

We lie, my chest against my boyfriend's back, as my bedroom fills with the scent of coffee and the morning streams boldly through the windowpanes. I close my eyes and rest my head against his, the tip of my nose touching the ridge of his ear, a knot of awe and thankfulness tied warmly in my gut. He and I lie here, silent and half asleep, two men being shown ample evidence of the unbelievable-but-true fact that love does in fact exist. We lie still, eyes closed, with each of our mouths curling into a smile. ☺

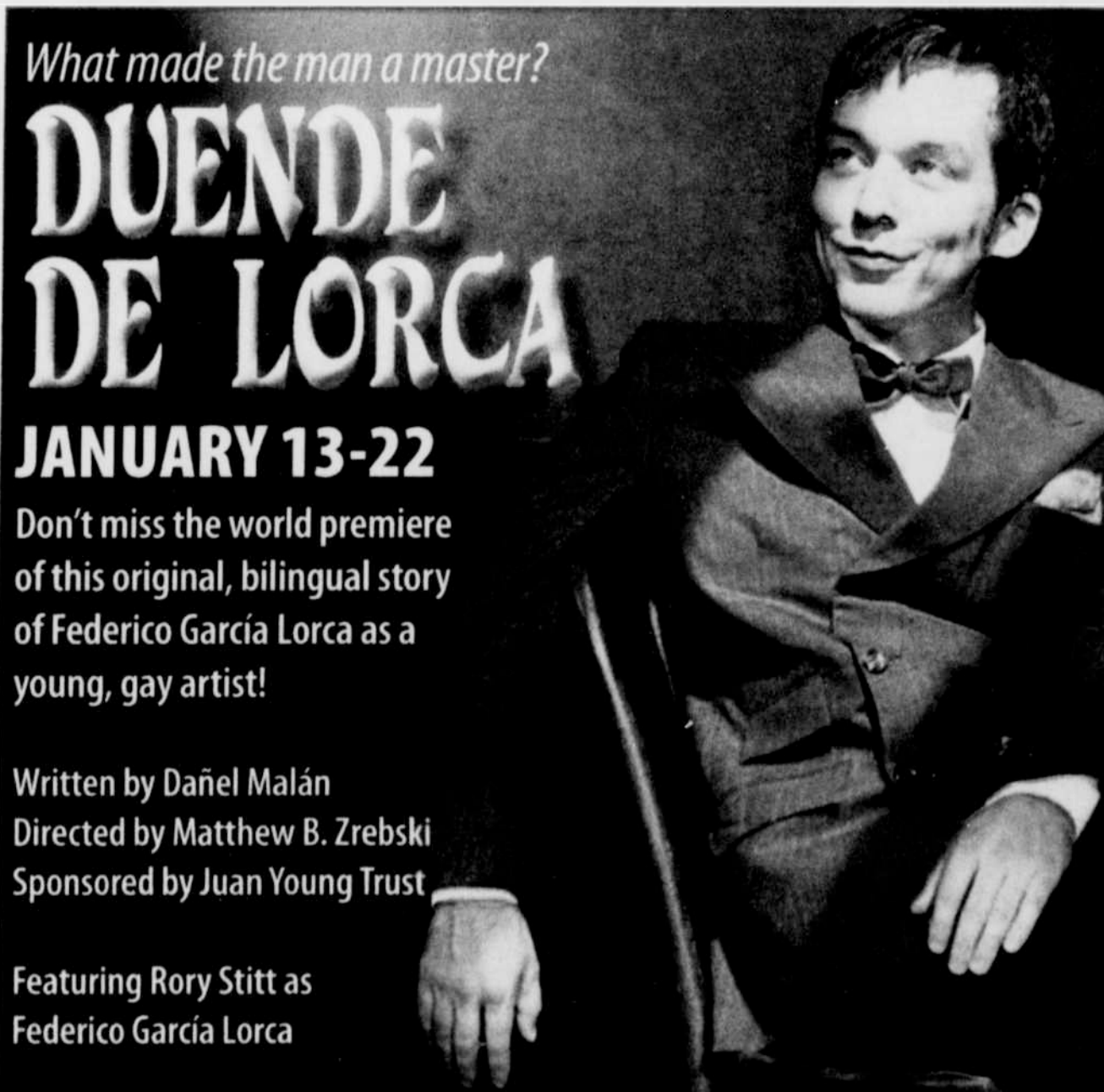
NICK MATTOS has never seen a UFO, nor any compelling evidence of extraterrestrial contact—but would be totally psyched if you sent him some such proof at [nickmattos@justout.com](mailto:nickmattos@justout.com).



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