URBAN LEGEND | *Jes Battis*

Like a body, the tire was there all along,
asleep in the garage, merely waiting for us to
need it so. I struggled to contain the cream
of my donut, remembering, as kids wailed
around us, how I'd been surprised that you didn't
want to be a dad: *you have a sweet father's face.*

I waved to a friend, rarely seen among the
warehouses, and you asked if she might come
over to the table, but her purple hair was only
serendipity, a crackle of the unexpected, like
when we met: me, stoned and listening to
Donna Summer; you, in orphaned socks.

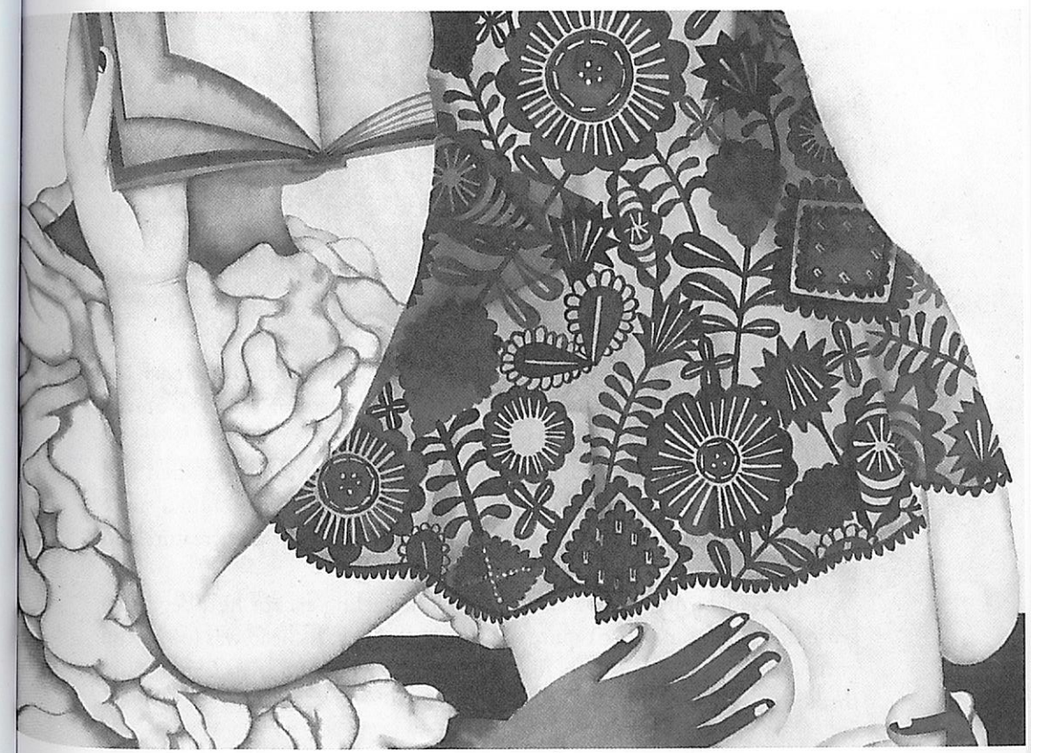
At the log cabin thrift store, a nail punctured
us, and then, the waiting. I found a secret
lesbian book cache, next to *Chicken Soup for
the Christian Soul.* The man who saved your
bad knee, who knelt on grit like a proposal,
kicked the tire humanely, shockingly.

Our friend greeted us at the door. *Hey sluts.*
We couldn't meet her birds because they sleep,
like their mortal enemies, cats, fourteen hours
a day. When we told the story of the spare tire—
how it had kept itself ready for us in garage
gloom—everyone praised the art of losing.

We watched a movie from the late nineties
where heartthrob Joshua Jackson is blond,
false, predatorial, nothing like Pacey,
who read gay Jack's poem in *Dawson's Creek,*
who painted himself Pictish blue to win Joey's
oscillating heart, now hanging wild from a tree.

In the end, Rebecca Gayheart, resisting her
famous Noxzema commercial, looked like she
wanted to make out with Alicia Witt, furious
nebula of curls, eyes mad with grief for
the pointless death of her boyfriend. All
becoming legends that expand in the dark.

I was an urban legend, moving from city to
unaffordable city. I wanted a writer's nightmare,
artisanal, sexy on transit, living on sugar water
of secrets. I wanted to be a legend, until
the sharp slap of coincidence gave me this:
a prairie fairy tale, a difficult bliss.



The Exchange (detail)