

There are some stories one doesn't like re-telling and there are some things that can never be repaired. This is one of them.

Once upon a time, as the editor of the magazines World Art and 21•C I had the joy of having as a contributor – and as time went on a very close friend – by the name of Kathy Acker. Kathy was the author of some seminal books of experimental fiction such as Blood & Guts in High School and Empire of The Senseless. She had connections throughout the literary, musical and art worlds and was ridiculously generous in sharing them with me. It was through Kathy that I came to meet such figures as Patti Smith, Lou Reed, Laurie Anderson and Willem Dafoe. (Yes, I'm name-dropping but, as you will sadly see, that's the point.)

When we weren't catching up in person, Kathy and I maintained an intense and deeply personal e-mail correspondence. We were never lovers but we were certainly the next best thing. Then in 1994 she e-mailed with an invitation you couldn't ignore. She wanted me to be her date at William S. Burrough's 80th birthday party at his ranch in Lawrence, Kansas. It was to be a small affair, she said, just Allen Ginsberg, Richard Hell and one or two others.

But there was a problem. I was broke and Kathy had only given me four days notice. I begged friends, tried to borrow and considered stealing but, alas, it was simply not to be.

The day came and with it a very strange e-mail from Kathy. Complete gobbly-gook. Wow, what drugs are they on, I wondered and nonchalantly pressed delete.

Then another e-mail from Kathy appeared. It read something along the lines of "Hey Ash, did you get William's e-mail? Make sure you keep it – it's the only e-mail he's ever written!!!!"

Yes, I had deleted the only e-mail ever written by William S. Burroughs.

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15 January 2010
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