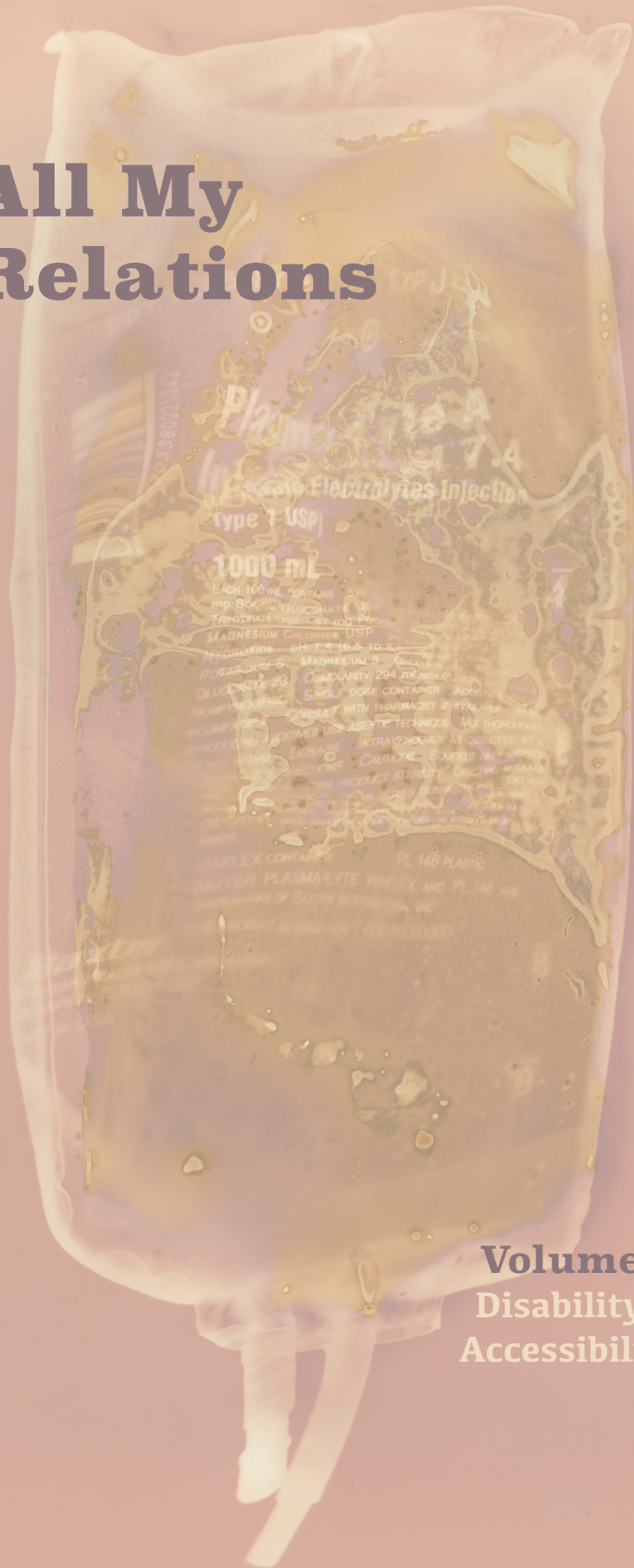


All My Relations



Volume 4
Disability &
Accessibility

It's All Relative

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CW: Surgery

When I visit a doctor's office, I bring a pad to take notes if my husband for some reason can't come with me, but I didn't need to write down the orthopedic surgeon's warning about my upcoming hand surgery.

"It's gonna hurt like hell," he said. Balding and rubicund, he was a matter-of-fact guy who had not previously felt like he was given to hyperbole. I took him at his word—or words.

Easy to remember that warning, right? I guess I could have ghosted him, but I wasn't as surprised as you might guess. Or scared. Because my hand hurt like hell already, the pain in the base of my left thumb so intense that it interfered with my sleep.

Which was lousy anyway since I was already fighting what they call "maintenance insomnia": you can fall asleep but within a few hours you wake up and have trouble falling back asleep. Well of course you do because you're

1—pissed off that you're up in the middle of the night when you should be out cold or

2—trying hard not to make noise that will wake up your partner, or your dogs because they'll have to go potty and being outside would guarantee staying awake or

3—you have all sorts of worries and regrets about your insomnia and wish you were anywhere but here or

4—in the silence, comments you wish you had or hadn't made turn into flashing neon lights inside your head

Now, there were other things the surgeon mentioned that didn't register in quite the same way because I was desperate to be pain-free, like the fact that I'd lose "pinch strength" in my thumb and forefinger and that full recovery might take a year after the cast was off.

He wasn't lying about the pain after surgery, which was what I imagine being hit by lightning might feel like, except it wasn't just one bolt, one time. It went on and on and I had to "stay ahead of the pain" with painkillers.

But once the pain faded, that bit about "pinch strength" suddenly loomed large. Buttoning a shirt was a series of fumbles. Picking up pens or pencils or anything small turned into an obstacle course. Putting on my dogs' harnesses with those tricky clips was a trial. And opening cans or bottles or typing? Forget that.

Then in the middle of a self-pity jag, my husband said to me, "I don't mind about your pinch strength. I've never like being pinched anyway. But you can still hug, can't you?"

I could and I did.

Lev Raphael is living his childhood dream of being an author. He's published 27 books in many genres as well as hundreds of essays, short stories, book reviews and blogs. Best of all: his writing has taken him to eight foreign countries.