

waif



What is Waif.

When that noise is so white you can't even hear it.

Messy hair is waif, but so are bangs.

Waped Veed is Vaify.

Waif is when you fall down the stairs but still can't scrape your knee.

Waif is when you play the piano & you don't know how to play the piano.

Waif is when you play piano really well. And drums. Because you were taught.

Kix is Waif. So is special K. Trix is not Waif.

Whores are Waif. Prudes are Waif. Dudes are Waif. Nudes are Waif.

Your Grandmother is Waif, only when she's knitting a hat for you, you Waif.

Waif is when your corn shows up later.

Gardening is Waif. Love your dead plants.

Waif is when you shave every single hair on your body. Waif is when you've never cut a single hair on your body since birth.

Talent shows are Waif. Throw a talent show. Invite us.

Arms that jiggle like hot jello are Waif.

Zit Scabs are Waif.

Chicken feet are Waif.

Beady eyes are Waif.

You can't spell Waif without I.

Leave the taps dribbling overnight if it's below 30 degrees fahrenheit.

You, me, all, we're all Waif. If we want to be. And we want to be.

waif

issue 19: Waif Loves You

Conceived by
SUBTLE PRIDE

Misha Brooks, Zach Donovan, Brigitte Lundy-Paine, Mina Walker

Guest Creative Director
Matt Keim

This issue of Waif Magazine features the talents of

Alex
Allison
Elliot
Graham
Greg
Zoe Agapinan
Drew Ariana
Leah Beck
Halle Benoit
Reese Bland
Maddy Bloomfield
Adinah Bolden
Karla Boone
Rafaella Fontenelle
Mara Lee Gilbert

Abbie Goldberg
Clark Hamel
Leandra Haupt
L'ogan J'ones
Gunnar Kortenbach
Peter McCain
Frankiee Moses
Hailey Orrange
Rebecca Orr
Sarah Peterson
Oskar Sinclair
Jen Steinbeck
Trey Trader
Delilah Twersky

Cover Photography by
Gunnar Kortenbach

Interns

Joan Flaherty
Justine Engel

Anna Champion
Charlotte Grimm

Additional photography courtesy of Waif Magazine.

*Waif Magazine is published by
Subtle Press
in collaboration with Silver & Smoke
and IS WAIF.*

www.iswaif.com

© 2020

Table of Contents

CULTURE MATRIX Waif Loves You

ASK A WAIF with Adinah

ARTICLE Imperfectly Perfect
By Leandra Haupt

INTERVIEWS Clark and Alex, Greg and Allison, Sarah and Jen, Graham and Elliot
Photos by Matt Keim

ARTICLE To All the Books That Lied Before
By Maddy Bloomfield

EDITORIAL The Knitted Waif
Clothes by Drew Ariana, Modern Renaissance Knitwear
Modeled by Leah Beck, L'ogan J'ones, and Oskar Sinclair

LIST My Depression Symptoms Ranked by Gayness
By Abbie Goldberg

ARTICLE Masquerade
By Zoe Agapinan

EDITORIAL Gunnar Kortenbach
Photos and Interview by Gunnar Kortenbach
Photos Assisted by Rafaella Fontenelle
Makeup by Halle Benoit

ARTICLE I Love You So Much, I Will Cause You Pain
By Mara Lee Gilbert

EDITORIAL Sea of Perfection
Photos by Reese Bland
Modeled by Frankie Moses
Body Paint by Trey Trader

ARTICLE On Femme
By Delilah Twersky

ARTICLE Love So Fully
By Clark Hamel

ARTICLE Renewing My Membership
By Hailey Orrange

EDITORIAL Butterface
Photos by Peter McCain
Modeled by Karla Boone

ART Saint Valentine/Lonely Hearts (2019) & New Prints
By Rebecca Orr

WAIF



*** CHOCOLATE**
"A woman in lust wants chocolate"
- Ben Barry



*** MICE FIGHTING**
We lust for it; the drama, the risk. Better than 6 seasons of an HBO show and at a much better price



*** SALT**
Too much and it will kill you, just like time with a Waif

*** LIMES**
Like the truth, they're hard to swallow. And there's nothing a Waif loves more than a challenge



*** FISH**
We love fish, but not like that! Just in a platonic, sit and have a coffee together way



*** TOM HANKS**
He is clean and pure. We cannot fight to love we have for Tom

LUST

LOVE



*** THE KARDASHIANS**
We wish we had their bodies but they wish they were Waif

*** BANANAS**
Whether you're eating or singing about them, this beloved "fruit" has no place in waif culture; it bruises far too easily



*** GOING OUT**
There's nothing out there for you! We promise. Spend more time online



*** CLASSIC BOOKS**
Why read them when new material is being let loose in the world every day? Keep your finger on the pulse, Waifs

*** MONEY**
Just because we think about her every day doesn't mean she's waif. Not everything that glitters is



*** DIAMONDS**
"A woman in love wants diamonds" - Ben Barry



NOT WAIF

ASK A WAIF

YOU ASK
WE ANSWER

Adinah is a true upholder of the “slash generation”: a graphic designer, musician, writer, and nap-taker. You can usually find her bingeing tv shows, playing her ukulele, or taking far too long to decide where to grab dinner.



YOU ASKED:

“What purpose should I make music for?”

ADINAH’S ADVICE: Ahhh the age old, question: “Who is my art really for?” Sometimes it seems the people around you may have a very clear image of what they feel you should be using *your* voice for. As a fellow musician, I’ve asked this question many times. I’ve had people express that I could “go far” in taking a more mainstream R&B route and ditch the alternative and acoustic influences. I’ve been advised to make more religious music. To make raunchier music. To make music for social causes. To make accounts on youtube, tiktok, triller, and countless other social channels. But at the end of the day, I make the music that I want to hear. It’s cleansing for my soul and fulfills me like nothing else. You should make music for whatever purpose you see fit. If there's a blunt genre change between one song and the next that's perfectly fine. Want to sing in your secret language? Go for it! Have a song based on Saturday morning cartoons? Create it. As long as it pleases you and you're proud of it- it has already lived up to its true purpose. And young waifs creating art without societal constraints and being free to explore their innate talents? Well, that's *music* to my ears. Too corny of a joke? ok lets move on.

YOU ASKED:

“What to do with a boy who flirts with you but doesn't make any moves?”

ADINAH’S ADVICE: Well, there are two parts of my brain: The first part of my brain is a skeptic. “He’s flirting constantly but not making any moves? He’s getting the ego boost, but offering you nothing in return?” Baby, that's what we call a fuckboy. Do not entertain the fuckboy. Do not look the fuckboy directly in his beautiful eyes. Do not pick up the phone. Do not let him in. Do not be his friend. (Do Stream “New Rules” by Due Lipa) Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200. Put him in fuckboy jail. And focus on romantic exchanges with people who are your energetic equal. The other part of my brain is a little more forgiving. Maybe he’s just a little shy and thinks you’re so hot and completely out of his league that he doesn’t have the confidence to ask you outright. Maybe you try making the first move. It could have a very happy ending! (Good luck and write back!)

YOU ASKED:

“I have no idea what I want to do in the future. I don't want to work to live, I just want to travel and disappear! Help!”

ADINAH’S ADVICE: I know this struggle all too well. So lets start with this: what are you interested in? Fashion? Movies? Photography? Books? Doing your makeup in the mirror and pretending you’re filming a tutorial? Remembering at 5pm that you put a pot of tea on at 4? Doing the High School Musical choreography in the kitchen appliances aisle at Target until you’re asked to leave? Regardless of the interest, there’s a way to still practice it and also be able to sustain yourself. For example, you mentioned travel. The “travelpreneur” and “digital nomad” lifestyles are more popular than ever. Nurture skills like social media management, design, and coding that can allow you to work remotely from anywhere in the world. Consider practicing photography, video editing, and writing skills to grow a travel blog or youtube channel. Or maybe refine one of your many other interests and plan amazing getaways with PTO and vacation days. Though life may seem daunting, make sure you’re allowing yourself to live in the moment wherever you may be in this world.



BUTTER YEAR

PERFE

-CTLY

IMPER

-FECT//

By Leandra Haupt

my love journey starts in the 90's; Angelina Jolie, Pamela Anderson, Christina Aguilera, Heidi Klum, Pocahontas, my mom. damn how I loved their curves! my biggest dream was to follow the colors of the wind to Hollywood one day, shaking my hips like Shakira and fighting monsters with my boobs like Angelina. unfortunately my name was neither Pocahontas, nor Shakira or Angelina, but Leandra.

do you know these magazines that you find in a doctors waiting room? well, my hippie parents didn't allow them in the house but certainly I loved my friends parents for buying them. my parents were these kind, who get the

organic box from the farmers market delivered every week with dark bread, rice milk and seed poppies, so also the shopping catalogues we got sent home, as this was the time before online shopping, were all full of sustainable organic hemp clothes. still they had an underwear section and I immediately zoomed to these pages. I could not stop looking at the gorgeous big round boobs on all pages I was so excited to grow up and also have boobs and being able to order all these pretty bras and bikinis. soon I grew up. but there were no boobs. and I waited. and waited. and still no boobs. only growing tall real quick so I was called: hockey player. musketeer and leandrathaler and to be suspected to have out of control bones, as I was unusual tall.

as i didn't get any growing on my chest, I ordered bras with patting. patting is basically like putting socks on your chest, but already sewed in. so they look like big like pillows or airbags and i wore them day and night so none could ever find out my „little lie“ . but then i got scared to wear them at a date. what if we get along well and then he asks me to go home with him and then we make out and then he wants to take off my bra and..... realized its all fake and i have no boobs??? so i still dated of course. and went

home with boys. but the pillow bra was my protective shield and chastity at the same time.

with the boys it didn't really work out anyways; my parents had just separated, so my mother - an ultra feminist, reading feminax and walkürax instead of asterix and obelix, having jokes about men on the fridge door instead of magnets from the Eiffel tower like my friend's parents and only going to

women's bookshops with literature about how to hate men - was telling me on a daily basis why i shouldn't get involved with the other gender. i would get left behind, disappointed, and screwed over by these mean

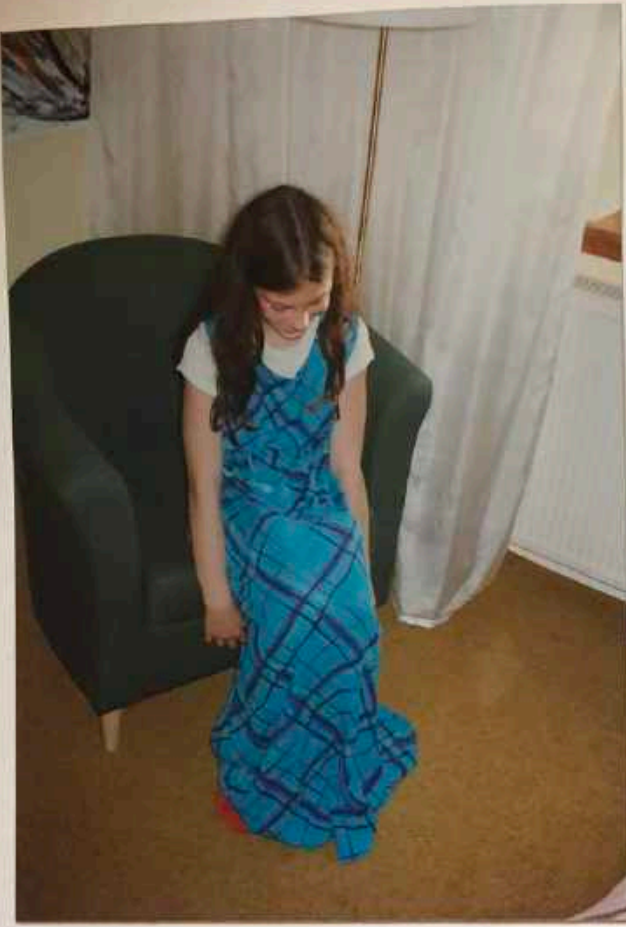
“why did you only make a B cup? F is sooooo much better! Arnold Schwarzenegger will never date you like this!”

creatures.

the years went on and slowly my little sister began to grow up and from one night to another as it seemed, her chest exploded. she supposedly had inherited our moms and grannies genes while it seemed like the genes had missed me. so unfair. why me? i wasn't the best in math but my calculations went from: both grandparents in DD Cup, mother in E cup, sister in D cup, honestly all aunts with minimum C-D, the probability calculation saved the exception of the rule for me.

so the years went on and on and I was working as a fashion photographer first, then I was discovered as a model as I was still overly tall and skinny as always. I had stopped looking at the magazines but at REAL peoples naked bodies. models with real perfect breasts and was looking at them legally all day by photoshopping them even rounder and bigger and putting an oily shiny glance on them. then Instagram and Facebook came into my life. more boobs, asses, meat, bikinis, skin, flesh, bras, models, breasts.....

and the years went on and on, and suddenly i met a man that i allowed to look at my naked chest. with his hands touching it, he would



change my life forever. an man who would give me an anesthesia and cut a thin long line under my nipple. a man who pushed 215 gramm of silicone under each of my my breast muscles. a man who sewed me up. a man who just did his daily routine, working 5 days a week to make women happy.

waking up 4 hours later, i felt an incredible pain, but hip hip hurray, i looked down on my bandaged body and... couldn't see my tummy anymore. goal reached, thanks to 215 gramm of silicone was finally a full woman! that night i dreamt of all the wonderful bikinis and bras without padding i would order once i would be fully healed.

if you don't want the implants to end up under your armpit, you're not supposed to move your arms up for the first two weeks, so i was happy to invite friends every evening to cook dinner for me and tell them about my sudden womanhood as a surprise. so my first excited question when i opened the door was always; do you notice i look different? they were confused and even more confused when i buttoned open my shirt and an ugly compression bra showed. my friends who had known me for various years didn't notice a difference. I began to struggle: i expected to be looked at as a grown up curvy superstar now, ready to go to Hollywood. but in my dreams pamela anderson showed up to me and was yelling at me: why did you only make a B cup? F is

sooooo much better! Arnold Schwarzenegger will never date you like this!

I kept on spending more and more time on instagram and became more and more unsatisfied. if i could have chosen every size on this planet, why did i not get a proper one? should i go for round 2 in the silicone battle? how about 300 grams?

the years went on and on. i was looking down at my chest with discontent and still did not dare to go braless. what if men would notice its fake? what if they touched it and they could obviously feel its hard as my bones on the same spot before that?



only my bikinis i had ordered somehow fit better than before, so i decided to take them out on a journey, which ended up being a journey in a direction I had not imagined before. a journey that was only supposed to go to Bali, evolved into a journey right into my heart, my

soul, my past, my future. healers say Bali is one of the earth's chakra points and the energy therefore very intense and cleansing, which i had absolutely no doubt about, once getting there. the stunning waterfalls. the crickets at night. the fullest of all full moons. the fresh and delicious food. the never ending green rice fields. a paradise. but you can be in the most beautiful paradise, if you have a hell inside of yourself, you can't see it. i had restless nights in my lovely villa,





thinking about the inefficiency of my shameful body. wanting to cry every time a saw myself in the mirror. hating myself for how i looked and at the same time about what i had done already to modify it. i suddenly realized my whole life lie: my mother had made me hate men so much, that I started to hate the male part inside of me. I hated myself so much, that I thought by changing my appearance I could love myself. I thought, I could get my moms love and the love and recognition by men.

I wanted to be perfect in a perfect Instagram world. I wanted to find love on the outside while I couldn't find it on the inside. i knew i could not live on like that. that was the moment i realized that even if i'd look like pocahontas, even if i had a D, E or F cup, i would not be able to love myself then, if i'd not love myself now.

what do you do when you want to go through a transformation on bali? right: you book the next meditation and yoga class and start eating vegan. you book a tantra class and cacao ceremony and look out for the best coaches. i might sound like a spiritual organic hipster now, but these tools are very powerful and I slowly came to accept myself. I suddenly saw that there was no more need to perfection, because I was already perfect. perfect, because nature makes no mistakes. perfect, because perfect is not about a cup size. perfect because i am not my bra size. i am a should and spirit inhabiting a human body to make experiences on this planet. and i certainly don't mean surgery experiences. it was probably the most challenging time in my life and i could feel layers and layers of old believes and limitations falling of me like pieces of clothing, stripping me naked down to my skinny bony body with yet big boobs. making it each time more acceptable to look in the mirror.

so suddenly I knew it would not have been the last time I saw the man who makes the women happy. I had to face this man one

more time to truly become happy and purely perfect. pure like nature. like the full moon and the waterfall and the rice fields and pure like my spirit.

the doctor had never seen a more cheerful person in his surgery room before a surgery. I smiled up to him, looking forward to have him cut open my chest, have him rip out these hard pillows, sewing me up again. knowing in a few hours I'd be leandra again. not pocahontas, not pamela, not angelina.

“in a few hours I'd be leandra again. not pocahontas, not pamela, not angelina. just leandra.”

just leandra.

when I woke up hip hip hurray, I could see my belly again and I touched my soft yet empty chest. I never realized that breasts can be so wonderful soft and sensitive. I was looking forward to order unpadded soft bras, supporting the little soft flesh that was left. that afternoon I left the clinic with two implants in my hand and happy smile on my face.

my breasts do not look like the ones I used to photograph and photoshop, but I love them more than ever because I love myself. I love and embrace every part of my body, including my male part. I love not wearing padded bras anymore and I love going on dates with men who are not Arnold Schwarzenegger.

happy Valentine's day to me and to you precious human being, because love starts with the love to the person you should love and marry before anyone else: yourself! (and does not end with your bra size). ♦

If you want to connect on the topic or find out more about me, you can find me on Instagram @leandrahaupt

write.
photo.
art.
submit.

waif

seeks new talent

but please no poems | waifmagazin3@gmail.com



CLARK AND ALEX

1pm on a Sunday. Alex and Clark are just getting up and have started a load of laundry. Their cat, Basil, wanders around the apartment. They sit on their couch and Alex grabs a spool of dental floss off of the bookshelf and, I kid you not, starts to floss his teeth. I ask if this is common and about their flossing habits. This is common, and they both floss regularly.

C - We met at a basement show. We met at a rock show.

A - He moved to the city and one of the first places you went to was a basement show that I helped set up.

C - I'd lived in the city for a few months.

A - Months, months. How many basements had you been to? And you found yourself at the one proprietary to my school crowd. And I had been here for four years.

C - A friend was playing the show. And you were talking to the one other person that I knew that was there.

A - I was talking to strangers who were your friends.

C - And I was like, oh these are my friends and here's a stranger. And that stranger is cute.

A - My cute story, my like "how did you meet?" memory, is they were like "Clark how are you?" and he went on this diatribe about how fucking awesome he was and I was like, wow, i need that confidence in my life.

C - I am fucking awesome.

A - I need that positivity.

WM - So it was immediate. You liked each other right away?

Unison - Yeah

C - We spent the whole night talking

WM - Did you go on any dates after that?

C - A couple days later, I didn't think you'd text or reach out to me again, but you did, and you invited me to go to a jazz show.

A - Uhh

C - Ok. Not jazz. You invited me to go see Chris Thile play. And I was like, ok? This is a high-scale date.

AH - My roommate ghosted me on a pair of really expensive tickets. Town Hall. [We] sat in the seats of the Town Hall. You know, for just a little casual date.

C - And then like two months later I cornered you in Washington Square Park and was like "What are we?"

A - I was like, oh shit. I haven't thought about it, but, we're good?

C - You freaked out.

WM - So what happened after that conversation?

C - We decided to be partners. Neither of us were really seeing other people.

A - Well first I was like, chill out, do you think you can afford me like ten minutes to think about this? Can we go into the establishment that we were about to go to to see my friend's

band play. We killed another five minutes and caught the last two songs of their set because we were having this conversation. Still sour about that basically.

C - Sorry. No regrets.

WM - What went through your mind in those moments in between being asked and answering?

A - I don't think I'd ever been asked that question, so though it was fairly simple to answer, it felt like i should deliberate a little bit. It was an anxiety producing question.

C - It was a very direct question. I was being very forward about it. I wasn't like, "thoughts on what we've been doing?" I was like, "Are we dating?"

WM - Do you talk about your future at all?

C - Yes and no.

A - Yeah.

C - We do. We agreed kinda implicitly awhile ago that talking about forever is really daunting and weird for young people. We like to say in the future or in the foreseeable future, because talking about forever and ever is kinda freaky.

A - Also occasionally we have kind of goofy exchanges about some of the things that might be part of the distant future of the relationship. They are theoretical and goofy, though they are rooted in what we might be up to in ten years.

C - Yeah like actual wants and desires about where we want to live.

A - Maybe I'll say that, "Clark, isn't it cool that one day I'm going to fuck your kid up really bad emotionally."

C - It was a couple days prior I had said something about children and you were like, "That's so serious I don't want to talk about that." Then two days later you were like, "I think I'd be a really good dad." And I was like, "What!" So normally when we talk about the future in more lofty ways it's just kinda fun and goofy but there is an air of reality to it.

A - You're like the only person I can talk to honestly about my anxieties about the future. Just for me, and what I'm doing with my life, and my slight sense of instability or unknown, or just like stuff everybody deals with but that maybe doesn't talk about a lot.

C - Not knowing is a huge part of looking to the future and not knowing things is really anxiety producing, so it's nice to have a person to not know alongside with.

SAINT
VALENTINE



***TO ALL
THE
BOOKS
THAT LIED
BEFORE//***

By Maddy Bloomfield

Okay, full disclosure: I'm bitter.

I'm bitter for a number of reasons – bitter because the planet is dying and the rich white men in charge are doing nothing; bitter because avocados are now £1.20 in my local supermarket (£1.20 *each*, just ludicrous – I'm a millennial for goodness' sake, give me my lifeblood); bitter because I left all the washing up until this evening and regret every life choice I've ever made; but most of all I'm bitter because every single book that I have ever read has been telling me gigantic, bold-faced lies in the form of unrealistic romance. I tell my best friend that I'm writing this essay and ask her about her thoughts on the matter. She tells me, "you did spend all your childhood and teen years with your head in a book, it's not a surprise to me."

And it isn't just books

(I just like the witty title). Films, TV shows, even songs, portray an incredibly unrealistic notion of what romance will be like, particularly in your teen years. I don't think I've read a single book aimed at young adults where I haven't read

a sentence like this: 'our lips touched and fireworks exploded in my stomach', or 'his hand brushed mine and I felt sparks', or 'kissing her was like coming up for air'. On top of these ridiculous sentiments are wholly unrealistic situations that the vast majority of teens nowadays will never experience. I'm talking kisses in the middle of the rain at a park at 3am in the middle of a fight where she's screaming at him for something and he screams back something along the lines of 'I punched that douchebag because I like you, okay?' and she goes breathless and suddenly he pushes her up against a wall and kisses her so passionately she feels that she has found her home in his lips and that everything is right in the world and everything fades away into nothingness around her and his lips are all that matters and she suddenly forgets that he's the unapproachable jock and she's the nerdy girl pre-mid-film-makeover who still wears glasses.

"Wondering why a beautiful, sun-kissed man in a loose unbuttoned shirt whose touch sets you aflame and who seems to know your every thought on a deep, instinctive level hasn't appeared at your villa in Italy yet? Me too."

Now, there's a lot of harmful and negative tropes in situations like the one I made up above (which is based on about 90% of hetero romcoms), but no one really talks about how growing up with expectations of romance can become damaging. I write this as someone who has little experience with romance and sex in general, but I have support from those I know who do have experience that these tropes rarely, very rarely, occur in real life. Many young people will have had their first kisses drunk, at a party, not knowing what to do with their tongues or hands; I can't even remember my first kiss, it was so inconsequential. Most young people will not have magical first sexual experiences and wake up thoroughly satisfied on clean sheets with a beautiful person beside them. My first (and last, I might add, because it was so vile it put me off for years) sexual experience was

with a boy I had just met at a party when I was 16 who said 'wanna make out?' and I replied 'yeah, sure'. There was a lot of teeth involved; as he shoved his hand up my top I wondered what I might have for lunch the next day and whether I would be

vomiting in the morning or not. As I gave him the grimeiest hand-job in history, I remember thinking *shit, is this what it's all about?*

I'd like to say that I am well aware that sex and anything surrounding it is rarely a fun activity initially, especially for girls. I know that it gets better. I am surrounded by friends having Good Sex™. (I'd also like to add that in that boy's defense I was, and am, fairly gay.) But because of all the books and films and shows I devoured when I was younger, I still go on dates expecting the world to fall into place with this one person, for the kiss to mean everything, for my date to bring me flowers or turn up outside my window holding a boombox. I'm 21 – shouldn't I know by now that in reality it doesn't happen quite like that? And yes, I know: sometimes it *do* be like that. If that's the case, great! I'm genuinely thrilled for you (and not *at all* jealous). The thing is, it's often not.

I can list tens of examples to back up my hypothesis; I'll list the first that come to mind. Dramatic declarations of love in an airport? *Love Actually*, *Sleepless in Seattle*. An instantly ardent hatred that simmers into sexual tension and ultimately ends in a happily-ever-after despite opposite personalities? *10 Thing I Hate About You*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Virtually Every Romance In Cassandra Clare's Books*, *The Vampire Diaries*. Borderline-stalkerish behaviour but it's okay because the guy is cute and would kill for you? *Twilight*, *50 Shades of Grey* (now this trope could not be less of a healthy idea to plant in young minds). Love at first sight blossoming over the course of one, hot, intense summer of passion? *Call Me By Your Name* is a prime candidate here, which incidentally is a fabulous example of an unattainable level of romance. Wondering why a beautiful, sun-kissed man in a loose unbuttoned shirt whose touch sets you aflame and who seems to know your every thought on a deep, instinctive level hasn't appeared at your villa in Italy yet? Me too.

I'd like to add, then, that this isn't an exclusively heterosexual trait. In fact, a lot of LGBT books have a habit of perpetrating these incredible romances too. First kisses are a great example of this. The protagonist has spent their early teen years kissing members of the opposite sex, but then someone comes along, shifts their perspective – they lean in, press their lips together. *Ah*, the protagonist thinks. I understand now. This is what kisses are meant to be. Everything makes sense. The scratch of stubble / the lack of stubble feels

perfect. And again, hey, if you had this moment, then how fabulous for you. For me, and for my friends it was more of an *oh, this is nice*. Kissing girls is nice. Nice and soft. No sudden realisations of who you are in the world from this one kiss. It's funny that LGBT books and movies and shows, which are often praised so strongly for being relatable to young LGBT people, fall victim to these same ideals as seen in hetero media. *Simon VS The Homosapien Agenda*, for example, praised upon its release for being a realistic portrayal, of some sorts, of what life as a gay teen is like. Love forged via anonymous emails? Sure, happens all the time. And of course the boy on the other end of those



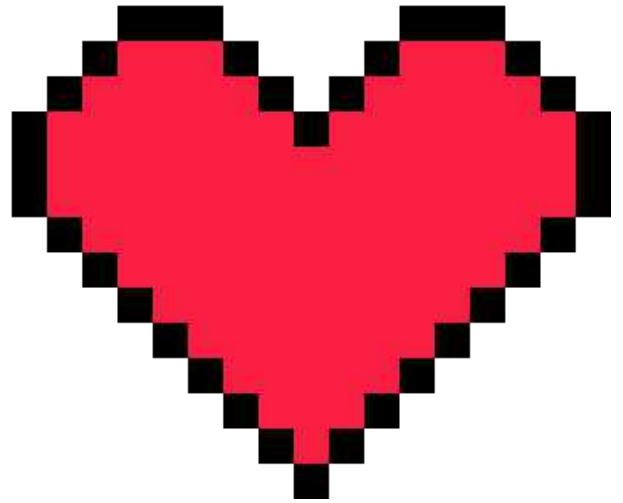
messages is the cute, quiet one you always fancied anyway. What a lucky coincidence!

I type into Google, 'unrealistic romance movies', and up pops an article from over a decade ago. The article describes a study conducted by Heriot Watt University where they asked hundreds of people to fill out a questionnaire on their expectations concerning relationships. They found that fans of rom coms failed to effectively communicate with partners, expecting their partners to know what they were thinking or what they needed without any communication involved. The researchers argued that common themes in rom coms such as the idea of 'the one', an

oversimplified version of falling in love in a short time frame without effort, and unlikely happy endings were instilling a warped sense of romance perfection within society. So psychology agrees with me, then. These tropes really are harmful.

If you're reading this and thinking, wow, she is *bitter* – you're not wrong. I am. And I'm hoping that these expectations I hold are going to slowly fizzle out the more I grow up and face what sex and romance are really all about – love, fun, and good vibes. Romance and sex don't have to be all fire and passion and stealing-of-breath. They can also be just really, really nice. And make you feel good and happy and satisfied and loved and in love. Something you want in your life.

And you know what? I'm really looking forward to it. ♦



BUTTER YEAR



***THE
KNITTE
-D
WAIF//***

***Styled by Drew Ariana, Modern Renaissance Knitwear
Modeled by Leah Beck, L'ogan J'ones, and Oskar Sinclair***



ALL VEHICLES AND PICKUPS ARE SUBJECT TO INSPECTION UPON ENTRY AND LEAVING THE PROPERTY

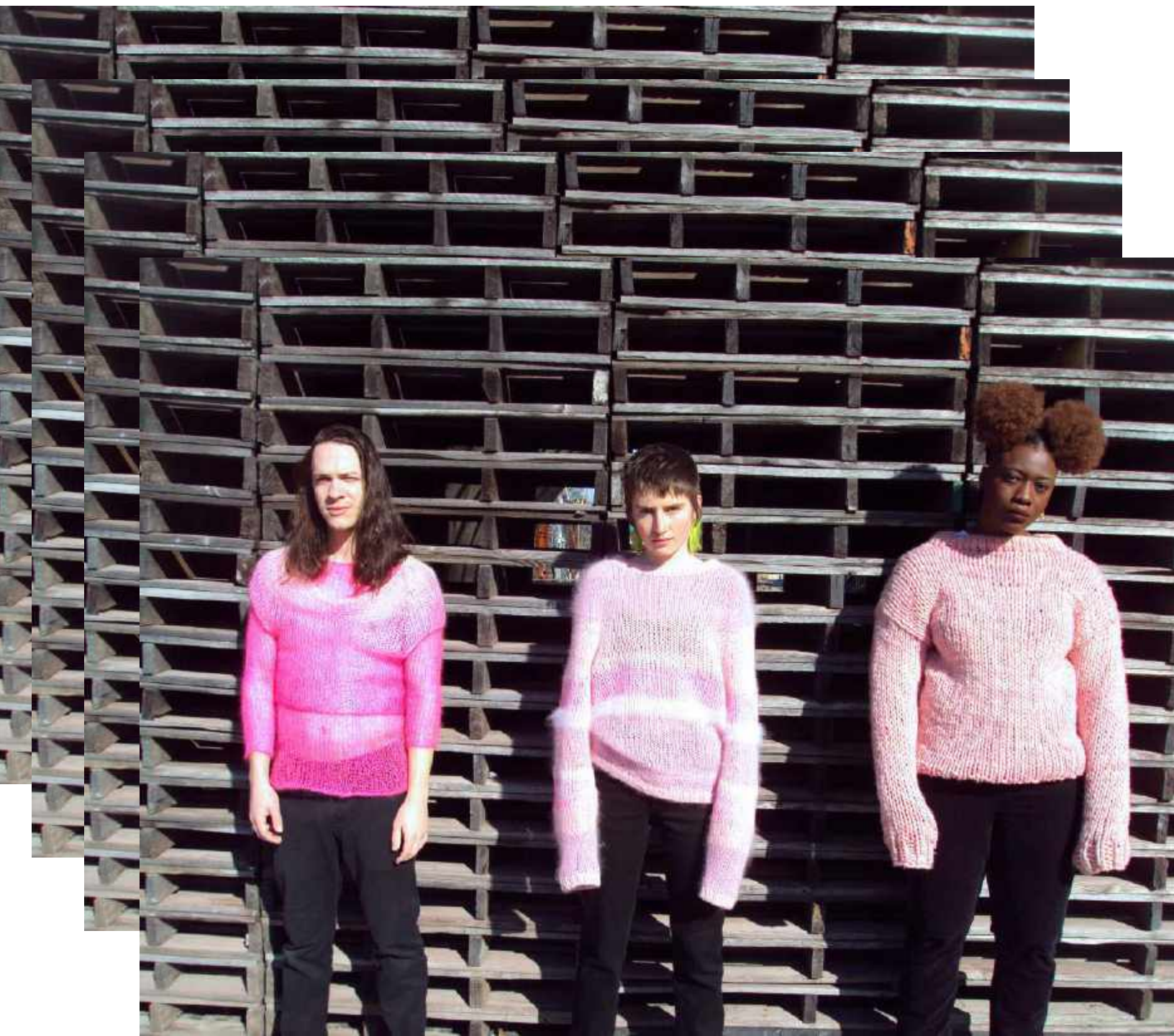
258
23rd
Greenwood S

consider
24 HO
ACTIVE
DRIVEWAY
O PARK
ANYTIA

DANGER
HIGH VOLTAGE

THIS GATE MUST BE CLOSED AND LOCKED AFTER EACH USE IT MUST BE UNLOCKED WHILE IN USE









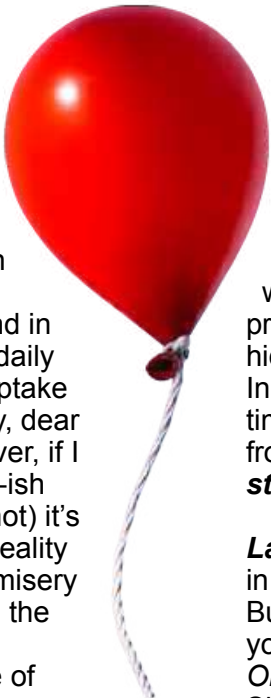






***MY
DEPRESSION
-N
SYMPTOMS
RANKED BY
GAYNESS//***

By Abbie Goldberg



Happy Valentine's Day, world! And by happy I am referring to the warmish feeling in the head and stomach which I achieve primarily by making friends out of things I find in my recycling bin as well as the daily use of a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor. This is of course to say, dear ones, I have depression. However, if I know one thing (and despite 17-ish years of schooling I deeply do not) it's that nothing soothes the biting reality that life is a meaningless pit of misery like the 1. 2. 3. of a bulleted list, the soft sedating illusion of linear progress culminating in a sense of closure allowing you to let a metaphorical balloon of anxiety slip from your fingers as you wave it goodbye and it drifts off to the moon to land among the stars following its own dreams and whimsies.* And why not try to make sense of the world? Like the existentialists who came before us, Beauvoir, Sartre, Nietzsche, in the face of randomness and pain we will not crumble into nihilistic despair! (Wait, did some of those people experience small-ish mental breakdowns? Nobody fact check this plz). We will fight to give meaning! We will find beauty in the absurdity of our existence! We will make lists! I guess what I'm trying to say here is fuck it-- I'm ranking my depression symptoms by gayness.

Lack of interest in things that used to be enjoyable: Not that gay.

The best part of queerness is people getting to be interested in the same old queer shit only openly and freely and with more knowledge of said queer shit's place in the queer canon! Nothing warms my heart like a pic of a future twink in short shorts and heels or a line from a friend's middle school poem stating "I am converse sneakers, short nails, and the color purple." We are becoming ourselves! **Lack of interest gets 1 out of 5** who do we appreciate style cheers at the end of *But I'm a Cheerleader*.

Not getting things done at work: I am queer, and work is terrible.

Would it be offensive, then, to describe my very chill life as a nanny as homophobic when lots of people face actual discrimination and prejudice in the workplace? Yes definitely. Am I still going to pretend it's a beautiful and radical act when I hide in the bathroom reading my horoscope? In the words of Chani Nicholas: "Jupiter's time in Scorpio asks you to seek affirmations from your inner life." **2 out of 5 hours studying crushes' birth charts.**

Lack of Appetite: Contrary to the depiction in pop culture, we are not all spindly Tim Burton style spider creatures with hip bones you could slice a pie with (à la Cosima from *Orphan Black*, Alex Danvers from *Supergirl*, Shane from *The L Word*, everyone from *The L Word*). Therefore lack of appetite **should not be that gay**. Also, though there definitely can be lots of pressure to meet aesthetic standards in queer communities — which like, what are we doing — but this is getting a bit too real for what was meant to be a lighthearted take on two of the things that most make feel like I'm about to explode at all times. Lack of appetite gets **2 out of 5 smoothies at a Fruits for Fruits college LGBTQ club event.**

Fending off Advice to go exercise: Ok so it's turning out that queer people are way less monolithic than I previously thought (maybe we can nail things down in the 2018 edition of the Gay Agenda. Someone please call Susan in editing and tell her to get her shit together and also that I very much look forward to receiving my mailing this coming March). Sports def can be gay. You've got softball, hiking 1,000 footers with your dog, looking outdoorsy by attaching carabiners to things, but these things are not for me. My sport of choice is power napping. This will have to settle for a middle spot with **3 out of 5 poorly concealed swoons at the women's rugby team.**





Feeling like a Failure:

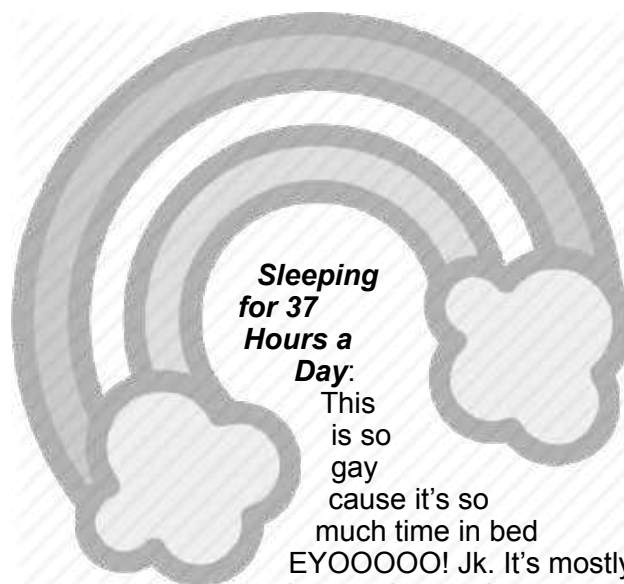
Ok. Here's one of approximately a billion problems with being attracted to people who fall anywhere on or off of the gender spectrum. I feel really intimidated by women and femmes and trans masc and non binary people cause I feel like they're probably cooler than me, but I feel like I'm basically cooler than most straight boys. It is a low enough bar for even my crushing anxiety and tortuous self-loathing to mount. So it's way easier to date straight boys, but then I feel like a failure cause they're quite often terrible and boring and also I don't want anyone to come revoke my queer card (I have hidden it in a cave filled with cats wearing flannels and beanie hats to keep it safe. They are blasting Tegan and Sara and reading *The Essential Dykes to Watch Out For* by Alison Bechdel. I figure this should bide me at least a couple more straight boy dates without having to appear before the queer board). Also if you're potentially attracted to anyone but still have too many #intimacyproblems to not simultaneously want to marry and push away everyone you make eye contact with then that can also create a bit of a complex. Gayness level: **3 out of 5 on the Kinsey scale (jk) (good riddance to that outdated, unuseful metric) (but also help me).**

Inability to Concentrate: This isn't the most logical take on this symptom, but then again, the earth is a minuscule speck hurtling through an infinite-ish universe and death is inevitable. SO. I watch a lot of shit tv for queer characters. Do you know how mad I was when no one turned out to be queer in *Supergirl* til season two? I watched a whole season for what? The plot?? To break up the hours spent staring at the wall wondering if memories of myself as a happy person who had desires and knew how to laugh were real

or just a fiction I invented to trick myself from finding out I was actually a sad person at my core and nothing was actually ever going to get better? I watched the wrong *Black Mirror* episode and had to sleep with the lights on for a week! Listen, I was disappointed when *FAKING IT* ended! I wish *FAKING IT* had another season! Point being: who can concentrate on these tv shows when there's no queer smooching? And who can concentrate on anything else when there is? **3 out of 5 lesbian death scenes.**

Feelings of Guilt and Worthlessness: 4 out of 5 thanksgiving dinners. Why did I think this was going to be fun.

Self-Medicating: #party #shots #rosé **#4 out of #5 #Hayley Kiyoko jams at a pregame** #This is totally fun.



Sleeping for 37 Hours a Day: This is so gay cause it's so much time in bed EYOOOOO! Jk. It's mostly sleep crying, eating potato chips in the same manner a cat laps milk from a bowl, and watching hours of 1 minute interview clips of former *RuPaul's Drag Race* contestants. No, the reason this is so gay because depression is basically the lesbian bed death of the soul. Oversleeping gets **4 out of 5 grayscale rainbows.**

Feeling like I should Stop Making a Big Deal Cause it Could be Worse Other People Have it a Lot Worse: 5 out of 5 reminders that I am not a straight boy !!! Hallelujah amen!!!! ♦

***Don't let go of balloons you monsters.
There's nothing whimsical about 1000s of
dead sea turtles per year.**

ELLIOTT AND GRAHAM

6pm on the same Sunday. Elliot and Graham have also just put a load of laundry in. They are roasting a squash in the oven. Everything smells wonderful.



G - I had just started at Little Skips [A coffee shop we have all worked at]. And Elliot had been there for years. It was my first day. We met on my very first day. I had been up since six or whatever to get there to open and train. So I finished my shift, came out from behind the counter, and this person was like "Hey Graham". I had never seen her before, but somehow I felt like I recognized her. So we just sat down at one of the tables and started talking. Elliot had a custom of sitting down and breaking down what Little Skips is - kind of the truth of Little Skips. So she got that out of the way on my first day and it was me, Leah, and Elliot, and we went over to Baby Skips and had lunch. Elliot had a crush on somebody else at the time. But I didn't really know about feelings or whatever because it was my first encounter, but then we started working together all the time, started going to shows together, and we went to one particular show that kind of sparked everything off. We were kind of flirting and stuff and it was really fun. Then things weren't really working out with Elliot's other person and there was some dramatic stuff at work, so I was hanging out at her house a lot, and I was like, "Holy crap. I'm totally falling for Elliot!" I told everybody at work and they were all like "Oooo!"

WM - I would've been like "oooo" too!

G - And then the fateful decision of mine happened which was to basically confess my feelings to Elliot, so I made her a set of three earrings and put it in her jacket pocket in the basement of Little Skips.

WM - Did you tell her?

G - No of course I didn't tell her! And then she was in the middle of a meeting to follow up about some of the drama that had been going on and she discovered these earrings in her pocket and came back to Big Skips after her meeting at Baby Skips and had one of my earrings in. I was like "Oh so you found the earrings." She acted all surprised like she didn't know it was me that made them. Then it was the next night we went on a big walk and went back to her house and she was like "I think we should talk about stuff." And she was about to basically pre-break up with me, but then, I don't know, we didn't break up. I don't know. Yes?

E - I spent a very conflicted week even before the earrings knowing from

circumstances and from the fact that people might have bigger mouths than others that I was in a situation where my actions might be responsible for hurting somebody's feelings depending on how the situation progressed and I didn't know what outcome I was looking for at that time myself. I knew there were a lot of reasons why I was hesitant to potentially accept the feelings of a person who wanted to be close to me. Between working together, and not knowing each other too well, and there being some age difference, and some experience with living in New York difference, and some number of years at work difference - I was really scared of jumping into a situation that seemed off balance. So I didn't want to stop hanging out, but I was really nervous about creating any expectations that we were going somewhere that I wasn't comfortable going. So it was a sticky kinda couple days of figuring out how I wanted to proceed and it was of course scary to bring up because I didn't know how I felt.

G - And I was scared because I was very vulnerable. All my feelings were out in the open. I loved her, I do love her, so I was nervous.

E - I pretty much decided that I had to hit the brakes on what wasn't really being discussed out in the open, but I had to bring it up, and said I don't think I can really go where it seems like you're steering. But the second I brought it up for us to be able to discuss it openly and directly they said "I know. I get it. I figured. I didn't think it would be possible." I understood their disappointment and I was disappointed, too. Over the course of a couple hours of basically staring at each other and wondering why we're stuck in this situation where both of us are disappointed at the outcome, it kind of just coalesced that maybe it wasn't the right outcome. So we pretty much mutually decided then that maybe it should be that way. If neither of us wanted it to not be that way, then what's stopping us after all. And that's how we decided.

WM - What was your first date?

G - Our first date happened before we started dating.

E - We never really dated, but our first date was only a friends hang, but we can tell you about that. I have friends who have a house in Kensington and have house shows. So

this one in particular last February, Buck Meek from Big Thief was playing. Figured that would be a draw for someone who liked Big Thief, as I do, too.

G - But at that time I didn't even really care about Big Thief, and I didn't even know about his name.

E - Also Big Thief kind of formed at Little Skips.

G - Which I learned at the show.

E - I was like, hey, this person's new to town and I would normally just go alone and meet up with people who I like when I'm down there. I don't normally coordinate my show plans with anybody. I'm used to kind of showing up and knowing people who are there, but I thought it would be nice to go together since we had just met and were fast friends. Show them my part of the scene that you can not really find without knowing somebody, so it seemed like a fun night and it was in a neighborhood I don't go to much I figured I would go to a restaurant I would otherwise never make it to, so I did some research on where I wanted to go and see if they wanted to come. We met up and took the train an hour down to Kensington and had Indian dinner.

WM - At the time was there any sense of romance at all in your minds?

E - Not for me.

G - Not for me either. I don't think.

E - This was all happening in a very compressed time frame. This was less than two weeks after we first met and only a week until the next conversation where we ultimately decided our fate. There was less than three weeks from first meeting and then deciding.

G - I think this point was the turning point for me where I think I knew I had a crush on you, but I was like, there's not a chance in hell. She felt out of my league. But I still really trusted her and basically shared why I am the way that I am over the course of dinner. I told her about this dramatic experience I had with my last partner. My last two partners. That I was still reeling from because it had only happened a few months before. I just really needed to talk about it and she was really open and listened to the whole entire thing. Then we got to the show and it was awesome and we were snuggling on the same chair. The vibes were happening. I

was like, "Oh my god. Maybe she likes me. Ya know? I think she likes me. This seems like she really likes me. We're snuggling! I think she likes me." We were just there enjoying music together and it felt like we had known each other forever and I felt really comfortable with her. I don't know how you felt?

E - Like that.

G - It just felt really easy and nice and chill and I was really excited. We caught the train back home listening to music the whole way.

WM - Sharing earbuds?

G - Yeah. We did that for a long time, but then we got a headphone splitter. We upped our game a little bit.

WM - Do you ever talk about your future?

G - It's nice to have...I mean obviously nothing's certain, but sometimes the state of the world can feel really scary and it feels really...I thought I was going to be alone for my whole life. I didn't ever think I would meet my person. And then she surprised me. And I feel really...There's this certain comfort that comes from having someone to share life with no matter what life is or becomes. And no matter what the future is, it's nice that we have a future.

E - I think that was part of the initial uncertainty and hesitance because we are both people who are serious about other people's feelings and each other's feelings and agency and commitment and sense of commitment. Knowing with how quickly everything unfolded, there was nothing frivolous about it. It was not just a thoughtless kind of happenstance. If we were to involve each other in our lives...

G - It would be forever

E - Which could seem limiting, because if you make a decision to be with somebody, there's no medium, it's either off or it's all the way on. I know for so many people that's not the case, but I think, I certainly knew for me, but I think I had a sense for both of us that that's how we operated.

FRAGILE

i I O U E Y O U
i I O U E Y O U
i I O U E Y O U



FROM THE HEART OF
SAINT VALENTINE



the beanie



iswaif.com/clothes

MASQ

-UERA

-DE//

By Zoe Agapinan

Last summer I was forced to resign from a job I was very good at. It came as a total shock. As I left the store, I couldn't think of anything to say except a meek, "Thank you." But right before I am out of the door, she calls my name.

"And Zoe?"

I turn around.

"I think you need to love yourself more."

Wait, what!?! Are you kidding!? I love myself!! And I'll fucking show you too.

Who is that girl wearing the trademark hot-but-in-an-easy-way uniform of a black bodysuit with high-waisted jeans? And a FANNY PACK? In the *front*?! And wow, she is making clogs fun and young again! I heard she's from California but in a humble way. She's drinking vodka sprites and everyone is wondering, "How does her hair grow so fast?"

It's me!!! Zoe Agapinan! And it's true, I'm extremely humble about being from California, the state with the most songs about the girls there being hot.

Life post-resignation was a breeze. I had so much time again. Having a full-time job totally didn't allow me to be the person I wanted to be, which was me but like *way* better. I was being held back before, but now I was free. Free to be... who I really am. When I told my friends what happened, I left the "love yourself more" bomb for the end. Then I'd follow with, "Can you believe that? Me? Not love myself?" I would flip my hair behind my shoulders and we would throw our heads

"I had a vision of who I was becoming, and she was everything I couldn't be before."

back and laugh before making a toast to our bright futures. The way I see it is that every heroine must hit rock bottom 3 or 5 times before they realize their full potential. I was just that much closer to realizing mine.

It was the summer and it was easy to feel alive. I was spending so much time soaked in sunlight and open space. I had vodka lemonade on porches and rosé on stoops and IPAs in beer gardens. I learned how to edit pictures on my iPhone 6 and came to the conclusion that actually, happy people who love themselves use social media for the right reasons! I was constantly on Old Navy's website trying to find a sale on their dresses and jumpsuits. I had a vision of who I was becoming, and she was everything I couldn't be before. She was confident, she took risks (career and fashion), and she did things that made her happy. I have to tell everyone - this is who I really am.



If this were a Freeform show, a dance anthem would play in the background as I walk in slow motion to the center of the dance floor. I swing my aforementioned beautiful locks back and forth, occasionally taking moments to run my fingers through it. I make a silly face as I dance a silly dance. I grab my friend's arm and yell the lyrics. My left hand holds my drink as my right arm is extended into the air next to my head and I sway back and forth like a sailboat. The camera is in constant movement, first passing over me, then my friends, then finally panning over the crowd. From up here, you see the whole bar dancing. Everyone in bliss and enjoying this moment. Then finally, a cut to black.

But my life kept going. The summer ended. All that free time became a burden.

Shame began leaking in through the cracks in my cool-girl facade. I was someone who had been fired (let's just call it what it was), and not for doing the job wrong. I was fired

for being a bad person; for being who I really was, underneath all the shitty attempts to hide it. It doesn't matter how good I want to be, I am bad. My brain started gathering evidence. I was the judge, I was the jury, I

was the prosecutor, and no one was defending me. I, Zoe Agapinan, am fundamentally a bad and unlikeable person. I hereby sentence myself to a life plagued by this weight. No matter how hard I try to hide this fact, I am doomed to let my true colors show eventually. Case dismissed.

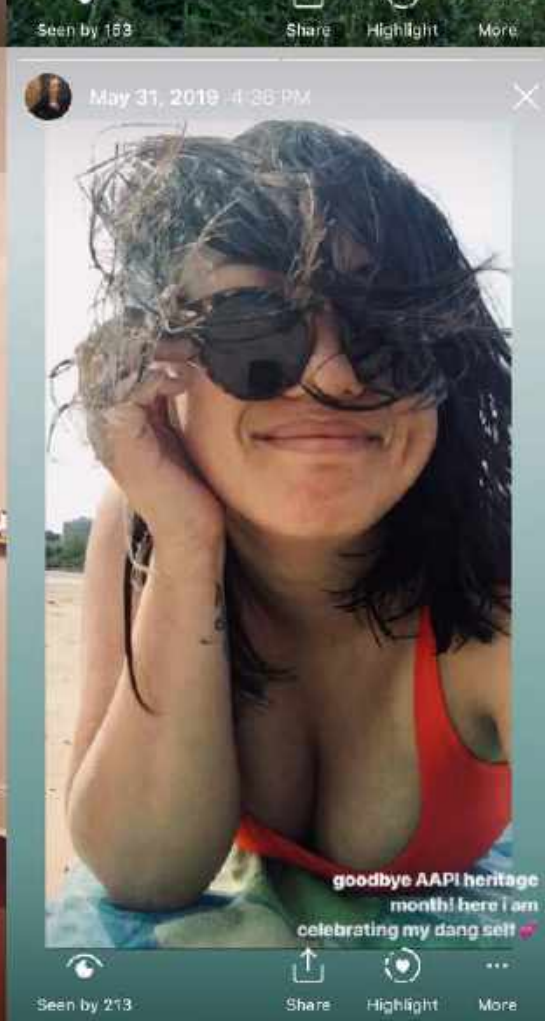
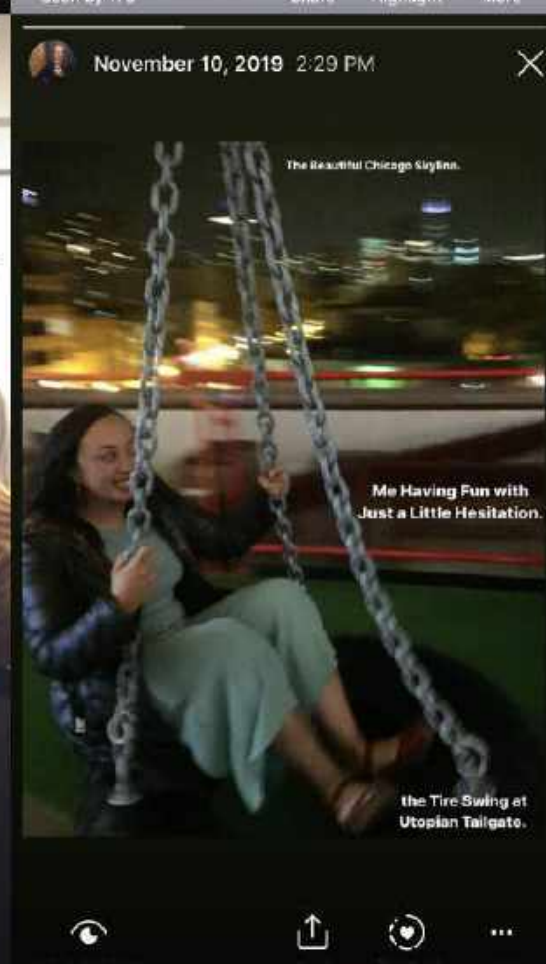
My therapist once asked me, "Can you tell me about your sister?" I said, "Yes, I love my sister. She is very important to me. I hope she knows I will always love and support her."

Then my therapist says, "Can you flip that to be about yourself?"

I froze, the same fear I had when I was told I was being forced to

resign. I shook my head and looked down at the carpet. My brain began to attack those words like the body attacks a virus. They aren't right, those words don't belong here. As I even begin to think about saying them, I





start to see my dad's face. Then an old roommate from college. Then my former boss. I hear everything they ever said to me all at once. A cacophony of my darkest moments. If they are right, then I am not. I never was. I am spiraling again. Then, silence. The only thing I hear is the white noise machine tucked behind the couch. I look up at my therapist with fat tears falling down my face and I say, "I love myself. I am very important to me. I will always love and support myself."

I think I always knew that I didn't love myself. The greatest enemy to my happiness is that hate. It has always been apart of me. Hating Zoe was the only thing I have ever known for sure. It was easy. It was safe. I wanted to overcome it. I needed to prove to myself and to the universe that I could change my fate. I thought that this realization would empower me to change. I pictured the beginning of a redemption arc, beginning with me crying in the rain and ending with me running a marathon.

Instead, it was like putting on glasses. I could see the inside of my mind more clearly than ever. Surprisingly, it looks a lot like my bedroom. There are clothes all over the floor, and the trash is beginning to overflow. There are many pictures of friends and family all over the walls. They remind me I'm not alone. There are a lot of shoes... I guess I have a lot of shoes. I do go to a lot of places. The bed isn't made, it might look better if I just smooth out the comforter. Then I'll go grab a trash bag all this up. Since I'm here I might as well hang up the clothes, put them where they're supposed to be.

I had to stop fantasizing about who I "could" be. What I was really imagining was a person who was not me. But, I am me. Me is myself. Myself is Zoe. I'm Zoe. And to start working on myself, I had to clean up the space I was living in. There was no big dramatic change. It was a lot of small steps - cooking for myself, staying off Instagram in the morning, devoting a little time to plan out my weeks. It got easier to see myself as the Zoe I was, not as the "Before" to a dream Zoe's "After."

I'm still that girl wearing high-waisted jeans and a black bodysuit, but it's the winter now so there's usually a few layers over that. I am from California, after all, anything under 60 degrees is cruel and unusual punishment. I switch to whiskey and coke in the winter

because it seems more cold-weather appropriate. God, it's so fucking cold in Chicago. If you ask me why my hair is growing so fast, I'll tell you it's because I've been

drinking a lot of milk lately. But, I'm embarrassed about it because I saw a meme once that said people who enjoy a glass of milk are disgusting. I enjoy my milk in private.

It's easy to look like you love yourself. Over the course of my entire life, I had constructed an air-tight narrative that I was a bad person. Without knowing, I had filed and saved every moment that proved to me that I was unloveable. I never contested it. I gave weight to negative thoughts about me and made them undeniable facts. I was good at looking like I loved myself but really bad at actually doing it.

"And Zoe? I think you need to love yourself more."

I'm trying. ♦

"If you ask me why my hair is growing so fast, I'll tell you it's because I've been drinking a lot of milk lately."

BUTTER YEAR



Gunnar Kortenbach

@gunnar.rhea



Photo Assistant: Rafaella Fontenelle

Makeup Artist: Halle Benoit

“I had done some sketches for how some of the outfits and makeup would go for the shoot, and showed them to my makeup artist, Halle...”

“...and she came up with her own solutions. It was with this four point strobe lighting system. I used these different diffusers on the lights so it would achieve the optimal glow ratio...”





“...Then me and my photo assistant Rafaella, took these photos. It was really satisfying to go from seven hundred photos to just these eight or nine.”

“Growing up in Florida, to this day, my family still keeps backyard chickens. Chickens are just this funny social animal. They act like tiny, not exactly people, but they have a lot of drama. They're just birds, eating stuff off the ground. I used to spend hours with them...”





*“...Here [in NYC] I
just go out to all
these wonderful
events.”*





“In relationships I've had this problem where they've projected onto me so strongly that I have no freedom to actually be who I am, you know? It sort of comes through in these photos. They have a very object-oriented gaze.”

“You can't help collecting role models along the way. I went to this magnate high school. All of the people I knew there were so inspiring. We were doing really intense design and photo works from a young age. It's been really inspiring to see my peers grow so much.”

“Instagram started out as just a hobby. I used to take all these chicken photos when I was in tenth grade. I would take all these elaborate setups with props and lighting of just tiny birds.”

“People have told me they love me online. They've asked me to marry them. Seriously. You just have to roll with it. I can't control what people think of me. I live my life and I make these things.”

“When you are distributing something, you're only going to post something that you think is worthy of posting.”

“I value quality time above all else. I think that's the best.”

“My family has worked in the vintage sales area for a while, so I grew up with a real knowledge of clothing and where to source it from.”

“It was just a way to share that, but it sort of grew from there. A lot of my fans just watch the story. Every day. It's people I've never met from countries all over the world. Always asking me stuff. It's sweet. It's really sweet to matter to someone, even if you don't really know them. I think it's really powerful. I really care about how they're doing. Some of them I'll talk to every day. I've never met them. I don't even know what they look like, really. I'm getting emotional talking about it.”





SUBTLE PRIDE

afterparty

February 18 2020

featuring

DJ TOAST

DYLAN THE GYPSY

11 pm

FREE

21+

The Dance

428 Lafayette St,

New York, NY 10003

***I LOVE YOU
SO MUCH I
WILL
CAUSE
YOU PAIN//***

By Mara Lee Gilbert

My name is Mara. My parents, who gave me the name while filled up with love, to honor their mothers and sisters who's names all began with M-a-r, did not realize they were also giving me a name that the Devil shares. In the Buddhist faith, Mara is equal to the Christian version of Satan, who tempted Siddhartha to distract him from reaching enlightenment. Mara is also considered the God of Death and Destruction. Although this sounds like a highly undesirable association, I quite resonated with it. Not because I feel like an evil being, but because I have always questioned what exactly is Evil? Humans tend to view things we disagree with as evil. It's not even things we fear, necessarily. But things that challenge what is acceptable to us. Forces that cause pain - which is currently largely unacceptable to us, or irreconcilable in our psyches - are labeled as evil.

However, Mara is also considered the necessary chaos or darkness we all must spiritually pass through, so that we can understand enlightenment; the idea that we are all battling our own inner demons. It is popularly perceived that these demons are

what are preventing our growth, blocking us from more desirable states of being, such as enlightenment. These demons must be "destroyed," lest we ourselves be destroyed by them. Kill or be killed.

Existing as a Mara (and given the name imbued with Love), I disagree. In fact, I say, on a spiritual level, that our greatest pain is given to us through a love so fierce, it feels like annihilation. This ferocious love is pushing us past our limits, so that yes, we come into enlightenment (or a recognition of love). It is our inacceptance of pain, and subsequently our fight against this very natural state, that keeps us in a perception that we are in an undesirable state of being, battling a demon. We are then fighting against something that is happening anyway. We have made a decision that this is not something to be welcomed and explored, but destroyed. Yet, Destruction itself is merely a concept. According to my current ponderings (which I take on as part of my spiritual practice, and what I feel is my responsibility as a creative professional and Inner-Life Coach), destruction does not actually exist.



Will you take my hand, and go on this Devilish thought journey with me? If you say no, but keep reading, you'll only be fighting what's happening anyway (insert devilish laughter)... But in truth, know that I offer these ideas from a place of my own experiences with ferocious love. If you disagree with me, and call me evil, that is perfectly ok. I offer you this unpopular perspective of love, regardless.

Ok, let's begin with the question: What got destroyed by the Big Bang? We do not have knowledge of what existed before our Universe suddenly came to be, but one idea (among many) is that Nothing existed before the Big Bang. What that really means, however, is that none of what we're currently aware of as space and time, existed. And even further, none of what we're currently aware of as space and time existed in the form we are currently familiar with; as scientists state that everything in the known universe did exist, it just existed in a condensed point of form far smaller than a

single atom. Yet, if we go with the idea of Nothing being before the birth of our Universe, it is this Nothing that got destroyed.

And what does that mean anyway? Destruction. Destroyed. It's a word we don't feel friendly towards. In fact, it can stress us out or create a sense of fear. We often equate destruction with death (something else we really don't understand, by the way). However, the destruction of whatever Nothing is created our reality; it created our very existence.

And what about each of us? We each were created out of the destruction of both a sperm and an egg, as they merged together, obliterating themselves in an observable flash of light. Scientists report this flashing as the release of zinc emitted in the moment the sperm and egg combine. The zinc apparently shoots outwards, binding with small molecules, visualized by the human eye as a radiating burst of metal. And stored up inside that sudden burst is all the raw material needed to create a human being. That sounds a lot like the Big Bang. A sudden bursting forth of a lightemitting soup of all there is.

How do we feel about the fact that two perfect forms - a totally healthy, beautiful egg and a totally healthy, beautiful sperm - were completely ruined in order to create our beautiful selves? ...We don't care about the "death" of the egg and the sperm at all. We call their sacrifice the Miracle of Life. In fact, we don't stop to consider that destruction is what allowed our creation. When contemplating the Universe, we only refer to Creation; or if we have religious/spiritual inclinations, to the Creator. When we refer to anything as a Destroyer, we begin to conjure images of something we label as evil. We may call it the Devil. There's the fun (or scary) realization that Evil is Live spelled backwards and Devil is Lived spelled backwards. And yes, many believe that the Devil in all its evil ways destroys life!

But again I ask, What does that really mean? We have discovered the Absolute Law of The Conservation of Energy (with energy being

the true nature of all there is), which states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, it merely changes form (a la- the Big Bang changing the form of our Universe from small and raw to large and structured). And so with this in mind, Destruction and Creation are merely concepts, rather than true happenings, through which we can explore what Change actually is. It can be conceived, then, that Change is the event of simultaneous destruction and creation. And we can actually view destruction as simply the destructuring of current form into something new. So, why do we love creation,



but fear destruction? I think we have mislabeled the sense of awe we feel in the completion of Change as Creation. The act, or event, of Change that happens in ways we don't understand feels painful, scary, chaotic, violent; and we have mislabeled this as Destruction and Destruction alone. I make this distinction of understanding, because in fact we change

every moment we take a breath in and release it back out. Sucking air inwards is a change of state from pushing air outwards. But we understand what breathing is. We don't interpret this as a chaotic, potentially harmful state of being. However, an infant in its first moments out of the womb appears to be in a state of panic and chaos as it suddenly finds physical functions of its body kicking in, in complete disruption of all it had previously understood as existence.

And, in this, we have a vague sense of acceptance towards Change. We accept that we grow; physically, spiritually, mentally; and that growth is in fact, change. We can actually say, I'm changing, and know what that means because growth includes completion within the scope of our awareness. There's the knowable before and after. We can currently perceive both the destruction and creation - so it can simply be Change.

We accept that we die, but we don't really consider it Change. We consider it the End, because we can only perceive the before. How our energy is reformed through death is currently unknown to us. So there's fear attached to this inevitable moment of change. The fear of Destruction.

That's not to say there isn't fear attached to different versions of growth. Fear crops up whenever we don't know what the outcome of a change will be. For example, we consider puberty uncomfortable, but most of us don't fear it, because we know the outcome of the process. Whereas, if we go through sudden and unexpected change such as a divorce, a loss of employment, physical violation, or the death of a loved one, we can experience the fear of not knowing how, or if, we will survive this restructured reality. It's when the question of survival pops up that fear arrives and we experience psychic pain, which is quite possibly simply our misunderstanding of the change we're going through, like the infant taking its first breaths. This psychic pain is the birth of what we call trauma. There are varying degrees of trauma, but any situation in which we're uncertain we'll survive is being in a state of trauma. And the trauma of

being inside of psychic pain is the mother of all pain, which at a high enough and prolonged enough level, leads us to decide that the unknown of death is a more welcome option than the anguish of the current reality, and can result in suicide.

I want to explore that conundrum: this great fear produces enough pain that it negates fear. We can say this of any time we have Faced Our Fears. It doesn't have to be the extreme of suicide. The basis of all fear that would keep us from doing the things we desire is the uncertainty of our survival. And when that pain gets to the unbearable point, when it has grown to a size we cannot manage, we say Fuck It, let me die then if I'm going to, I cannot stay like this.

Is Fear then, a self-annihilating energy? Self-annihilation is an observed phenomenon of our universe. To the degree that I understand what I've read as reported by astrophysicists: In the first millionth of a second after the Big Bang, energy conversions were taking place amongst the light energy that is the basis of all things, which scientists named photons. These photons converted into matter: anti-matter pairs which self-annihilated back into light energy. As the universe expanded it was always possible the whole thing would self-annihilate, leaving no structure, only light energy; until it settled on not self-annihilating, allowing a billion-and-one to a billion imbalance between matter and anti-matter to exist. Yet, even if total annihilation happened, energy would still exist in the formless nature of light.

So it seems Annihilation simply means the absence of form so far as we understand it. This brings us back to that sense of trauma of misunderstood change. To lack form as we understand it. We don't know what that means. We feel fear until we simply decide not to feel that type of fear anymore and burst out of our current state of being into the unknown. We are constantly bursting in and out of new states of fear, each one keeping us inside a current form until we simply cannot stay like that anymore. Kind of like the virtual particles quantum physicists have observed to appear to be popping in

and out of existence all the time (like in that first millionth of a second of our universe). Or, the Big Bang itself, suddenly popping into existence. I make these comparisons to actual physics, because we are creatures of this universe, governed by these laws of physics. When we burst out of a current state of fear; such as the first time we say I Love You to a romantic interest, we literally take on new form. There was an instantaneous destruction of how we related to existence before saying this and the creation of how we now relate to it after having said it. We can apply this to anything we're doing for the first time.

We might say that well, that's not really painful. But of course there are levels to all of this. If we felt no pain of fear before doing something, we must not have perceived it as something to fear. Or, whatever we're about to do for the first time has a perceivably acceptable outcome, so whatever uncomfotability we may be facing, is within a manageable range.

Taking our grasp at understanding this: that fear produces the energy of pain that will eventually cause it's own annihilation, leading us to experience the absence of fear, thus the power of ability, it would appear that pain is a desirable thing to experience. Can we accept this?



And for those of us experiencing the level of psychic pain pushing us towards suicide, I do not say these things to negate your suffering. And I do not say these things to encourage anyone to commit suicide. This is a serious level of suffering that feels unbearable, and seeking help is the other way through it. Seek help, seek connection, seek the reminder that you are loved and

desired to remain in human form. Know that no matter what unacceptability you appear to be facing (family members that do not understand, feeling like a burden on others, feeling worthless, anyone telling you to get-over-it), it is acceptable that you are in pain. You are worthy to make it through this experience. You are worthy to seek help every single step of the way. Whatever change you are undergoing, your existence is valuable beyond words.
See the end of this article for resources.

Can we accept that pain is acceptable? When we can stand in our pain and say, simply, I accept you, relief can begin. Acceptance leads us to recognize Love. When we decide pain is something undesirable, and something to fight against, we begin to see monsters and demons all around us. We desire to invoke an ability to destroy things. Aha, but destruction is what

we fear. And yet, we're literally asking for what we fear in our lives when we wish to destroy things. And so pain persists, as long as it needs to, until we can pop into a different form of existence. That ferocity of love is like, alright, you still desire to experience me as a demon. You still desire to hate me. That is fine with me, because I know you will eventually come to understand you are capable of more. Because Love is actually the force asking us to expand and see things from a more capable point of view.

Consider how we perceive the state of the world. We are quicker to identify hate and destruction, rather than love and change. Who among us is going to walk up to someone we perceive as an enemy and say I Love You to them? Not a great many of us. What do we think will be destroyed if we do that? Ourselves? Our cause? Our sense of right and wrong? Justice?

When we see enemies, we are blind to other people in pain. Someone causing pain in the world, is in fact in pain themselves, fighting against their own perceptions of demons. To say, I Love You, is not to say, I agree with how you are causing pain. It is to say, I recognize your pain, and know you are capable of more.

Is it that, existentially, we carry this bizarre molecular memory of being condensed out of form, from before the Big Bang? It is agreed that when we were a sub-atomic point, it was so hot that all there is was melded together in this singular mass. The energy that gave rise our consciousness was there. So it is possible that we carry a collective memory of a pain so great is caused the Big Bang? And in this we fear going backwards should we decide to enter the unknown realm of unconditional love? After-all, there was the theory, that had previously been leading the pack, that the Universe could only expand so far before gravity would cause it to snap it back upon itself into the state of nothingness again. But that misunderstands that it was we ourselves, as a universe, that decided to change form. That again puts us fighting

against an opposing force. Something that will shrink us back.

Yet, as we have continued to grow (ie, change) as a collective humanity, it has now been discovered and accepted that the universe is simply continuing to expand, at rates faster than we thought possible before, due to something we don't yet understand, that scientists call Dark Energy. Dark forces. Evil. Demons! But we're expanding anyway. Change is happening anyway. Can we entertain, just for a second, that we're expanding into greater realms of love? Can we accept that the pain the world is reflecting to us, and the pain we feel individually, is the universal cry of, I cannot stay like this anymore!

Let's breathe deep, in and out, and accept the pain that will push us into a new form. Let's decide we can say I Love You, even if only to ourselves, and see what happens as a result of that change. The other option is to keep fighting. ♦

*** Please call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline if you are in crisis. You do not have to be actively suicidal to call. They will find interpreters for your language of choice. They operate 24/7 1-800-273-8255 Si hablas español, llama a 1-888-628-9454. Lifeline ofrece 24/7, gratuito servicios en español. Or, you can text HOME to 741741 to receive help from the Crisis Text Line. www.crisistextline.org ***



BUTTER YEAR

Allison and Greg

9pm on a Thursday. Allison and Greg are moving to a new apartment the next day. Their dog Barney is unaware of this fact and is very excited to greet me before falling asleep on the floor.



G - We met in college. Our first time meeting, I don't remember. Allison was a year older and working.

A - We had a student center that I worked at and I was stuck working there on a Friday or Saturday night. I really didn't want to be there. I wanted to go to a party. Greg came over to talk to me. I was all like, "I don't want to be here. I want to leave." And he was like, "I'll work your shift for you." So I left him there and he stayed behind with a friend. I came back later and hung out with you guys again.

WM - And you don't remember this at all?

A - You were with your friend visiting from Japan.

G - I was with Hugh? Ohhh. That makes sense. That checks out.

A - And from there we became friends.

G - I'd say it was an instant connection in some ways.

WM - But friends and not romance right away?

A - We were both in other relationships?

G - I wasn't at that point, but you were.

A - I was in a very serious relationship that took up a lot of my mental space and time and life. We maintained a friendship through most of it. Eventually those relationships ended. Mine ended really chaotically. I just had so much weird stuff going on. My dad passed away that year. Also that relationship ended. I was going into my Senior year and trying to just finish out college. Greg was a really big support system at the time and a really good friend, but he did approach me.

G - At an inappropriate time I would say.

A - Not the best timing. I was like, no. There was too much going on for me to be able to concentrate on that. I was like, "What are you doing? You need to stop immediately."

WM - What was going through your mind?

G - I had a huge crush. It was a very intense time for me, too. In a different way. I'd say a positive way. I felt like I was becoming cognizant for the first time in my life in some ways. I was excited about being in this environment and felt when Allison and I hung out it was really fun and special. I started to develop feelings pretty quickly.

WM - How long before approaching Allison did those feelings develop?

G - Probably a full year. Slowly but surely. But then you graduated and you were working in a hot dog truck.

A - In a food truck in Westchester. It's close by SUNY Purchase.

G - I was working at Chipotle and I would just spend all my time hanging out at Allison's hot dog truck. Then my relationship at the time ended and then what happened?

A - Then you went for it again. You were like, "OK. I'm out of my relationship. You've had time." We went on a group camping trip to Shelter Island. That's when you approached again. That same camping trip I got a phone call that I had been hired for a job in Acadia, Maine. And I was like, I guess I'm going to Maine. I left pretty soon after that. We sort of..

G - Lost touch for the summer and my first semester.

A - This story is so long! I went to Maine and I met someone that I had a brief fling with that I brought back to New York.

G - You brought him to Purchase. I was at Purchase again and Allison called me and I hadn't talked with her in like three months. I was like, "Oh Allison's calling me." There's no service up in Maine, so we didn't talk. She was like, "Hey. How's it going? I'm going to come to Purchase and hang out." I was like, "Great. Awesome. Can't wait to see you. I'm here. I'm ready for ya" And she was like, "Yea. I'm bringing this person, Miles." And I was like, "Who the fuck is Miles!" "And you were like, "Yeah, I'm just letting you know that I'm bringing this person." So the two of them stayed on my couch for like three days.

A - In my head I didn't think that you were still caught up in all of it.

G - Like any normal person wouldn't have been.

A - I don't know. I didn't expect that. That relationship didn't last. We continued to hang out for the winter.

G - I helped you move into the city and after I moved you in I took your car back to Purchase. I was kind of like holding onto this car and waiting for Allison to...I don't know...We had started hanging out in this intimate way a little bit...And I had her car and helped her move...So I figured it was time I should ask her again if she's interested. And she said no again. And then we went to her family's Christmas party.

A - [Laughs] Well, I'd like to say first and foremost we had this friendship from the beginning that was just, I don't know, it meant

so much to me, I wanted to maintain that. Ok, but you asked me one more time.

G - And you said no. And this was a clear communication. I was like, "I want to date you. We're hanging out in this intimate way. Is this something you want to do?" And you were like, "I can't date you or anyone at this time. My dad just died, I'm kind of still going through this stuff. I'm just not ready to date anybody." And when it was clearly broken down to me like that I was like, that's ok. I understand. We still maintained a friendship and stayed close.

A - Then, we didn't hang out as much. You were touring a lot and away. I was starting to heal from everything. I was starting to feel like I had this hole where...I have always been in relationships in my life. I feel like I commit pretty easily to people and I'm generally always in it for the long term. That had been missing my life for a long time, so I felt ready to meet someone new again, and I did, but it was someone who Greg had been friends with from high school.

G - Yeah. I was upset about this. I mean, we started hanging out again towards the end of my college life and I invited Allison to my family's graduation party. Then I went away on tour for a couple months and when I came back she was dating this friend that I grew up with. I was like fuck you guys, I hate this. I let it be known to both of them quite intensely and immaturely and upsettingly for everyone involved I would say. I was a really big fucking baby about this thing.

A - I mean, it wasn't really fair at the time. There was this sense that when I told you I couldn't date you, our relationship did change. I felt like you were less willing to be my friend after that, and that's understandable, but the previous year had been so insanely traumatizing for me that I just took the first sign of something that felt good and that was at your expense. We didn't talk for a while. Probably for the year that I was dating that person.

G - Year and a half. Long year and a half.

A - Yeah. I moved in with that person and then things fell apart pretty quickly after I moved in with them.

G - I told you that guy was a dud.

A - [Laughs] Heart-broken I went to move home with my mom.

G - You spent this long cold winter building stuff in your mom's backyard out of wood.

A - My dad's old workshop, but I desperately wanted to move back into the city. I finally did. The first week I did I got a Facebook Message from Greg saying I heard you're back in the city. I'm sure we'll be running into each other if you want to sit down and catch up. I went. I said I broke up with that person. I'm pretty sad.

G - Tell him where we met up.

A - Oh! At Skips! We met up and had coffee.

WM - You weren't working there, yet?

A - This was before I even knew what Little Skips was.

G - It was directly between our two apartments.

A - We met up then and we continued to keep in touch and start hanging out again. That was maybe like March? By the summer we were dating.

G - I remember I was upstate recording a record. And I was having bad allergies. I'm allergic to everything outside. Allison texted me and was like, "Hey do you want to hang out and make some dinner this week?" I smiled for the first time in like three days.

A - It was just the right timing, finally.

G - Finally good. And then we started dating. And that was like four and a half years ago.

A - Going on five years.

G - And last year we moved in together and now we're about to move into our second apartment together. It's been an eye-opening experience for me.

A - I mean it's crazy when I think back on all of it, and I don't like rehashing it that way, but I think it's all fine because it really was just about getting to this point where it was the right time.

G - I don't think that there are any hangups about anything that happened in the past. We feel really comfortable and good together.

WM - Do you talk about the future at all and what do you talk about?

A - I can't even plan ahead for my future right now. I don't even know what I want. I think we have...For me at least there's this unsaid agreement that we are just together. There is no question in my mind about us just being our person.

G - We don't talk about marriage or kids in any sort of serious way, but I think that in terms of the future, we talk about it all the time. "In the future we'll do this or that." It seems like a casual understanding. Togetherness or something.

LONELY HEARTS
CLUB



waif.

not waif.

fashion.

refuse.

waif

Read Waif Magazine at iswaif.com

SEA OF PERFECTION//

*Photos by Reese Bland
Modeled by Frankie Moses
Body Paint by Trey Trader*

featuring

ON FEMME//

By Delilah Twersky



What is my femininity through my hair long ways down to my fingernails being painted? I stopped painting them because I felt too much like a boy, with drawn-on black nail polish that lay dark with my feminine arm hair. I stopped painting them because looking down and seeing the artistic color I felt like I was trying too hard. I cut my nails not for masculine context but for dirt to not be stuck on me. I cut with a clipper that shines silver. I pluck with a sharp set to draw blood or rather carefully avoid it. I'm careful like a woman.



My femininity runs through hollow tubes of makeup bag. I carry my funny paints that flush my cheeks and shine my lips. I love to sparkle , I realized. For so long I avoided sparkly dresses and shiny shoes just to discover that my lips were where I wanted those finishes. I'm pretty as a woman but now I can be pretty as a man. Men can play dress-up almost better than me, and I envy men now for being rough and delicate in the most balanced fashion.



***My curls used to help me
and tie me down with
feeling femme. The more I
braided the more motherly
I became. The longest hair
wins. But cutting my hair
gave me more strength
than Samson and more
intelligence than Delilah
thought she had. I, Delilah,
felt femme with shorter
curls, shorter braids. Less
of a mother society
thought I became.***



I look in the mirror and feel immensely masculine today. I don't do it on purpose, it just feels that way. Rougher around the edges, not as put together as a woman would put herself together. No open-toed shoes or thin dainty necklace—I leave those in my room because putting them on makes my arm hair feel darker. Russian blood maybe darkened them for me, no box dye holds on that tight. I look in the mirror today and forget about my insecurities but rather focus on my gender. I love my body I am sure of that, but why do I feel like a man with thicker eyebrows, and why do I feel like a man with painted lips?



Rougher around the edges is not something I fear, but something I wonder in. Jagged outer rim, like a halo, now we're thinking femme. A halo around my rim, how angelic and soft, remnants of my sex.



I take fifteen minutes every morning and night to stare into my mirror more deeply, ruminating on my skin. Smooth occasionally yet texturized more often. I smear honey, well it's only 40% but it smells heavily of the bees I admire. I work hard on this organ to make sure it's appealing. I say to myself, it's the first thing people see, hiding my femininity behind my skin, I seal it with tape. It's not great for the skin, but I like the tack. I close my mouth off and forget how to speak.



It's quite hard to explain where I am coming from. Being a woman who identifies as one has recently fallen short. I like to remain hidden in my identity at times; walking outside I make myself appear more of a stranger to a passerby. I look down and form my lips into a line, not giving off a hint of what my mind may be dwelling on. But my gender, it's loud, I am woman the passerby hears, my lips don't say it, but they might. Their shape teases, soft like a woman I think. But I walk by and I am immediately so, a woman with lips and hips and I can't cut my hair short enough to pretend I'm not. I do not want to hide that I am but what is a woman except for the paint she wears and the hips she swings. I was called "femme" and it made me cringe. I can't explain that. I am not gay enough, but enough of me is gay, so why do I get labeled "femme" in order to diminish the attraction I feel toward a woman? Is that not what sexuality runs through? I'm sick of shock factors and "really?" responses. More compartments in gay than I can count, and I feel too much strain to decide where I fit. My gay runs through my veins, not something I can label on my clit for your passerby to see. Even that makes me cringe. Silly to say now, but I don't think about what others think of me, more wonder about what they think. Like my passerby glancing at my lip, or my mirror reading my complexion. I take care of myself, gay like a man but fine as hell like a woman.

Femininity runs through me. ♦

BUTTER YEAR



LOVE

SO

FULLY//

By Clark Hamel

i work with the parents of transgender and gender creative children. and the parents who have young trans kids, i'm talking ages 5-13, tell me that one of their biggest fears is that their child will not be loved. fear is a driving force for many parents who appear to be surface level unaccepting. it is fear of murder, fear of suicide, fear of sadness and neglect and general lacking in quality of life.

but most caregivers think about what love will be like for their child. they picture a person of the opposite binary gender and a wedding and grandkids and they run with a fantasy. and it's not an inherently bad thing. it's a fantasy of someone loving their kid romantically and intimately and maturely, purely and fully. people just need to know that image might change, and change is not bad if it means their child is happy. but when something about their kid makes them different, puts even a shadow of doubt for that fantasy in their head, it's terrifying.

but what they don't seem to realize is that not being loved is something we fear as well.

being loved in my (trans) life, in my (trans) body, is not something i ever thought would happen. in fact, it stems from feeling explicitly unloved because of my transness early on.

my senior year of college, i told my then

boyfriend that i knew i needed to start taking HRT² in order to be a happier person, in order to feel full and complete and whole as a person. and i remember every detail of that night. we were laying in bed together. and i remember how quiet he was. how slowly his mouth moved as he responded. how he said

“being loved in my (trans) life, in my (trans) body, is not something i ever thought would happen”

he didn't know what that would mean for *him*. how i told him i needed air and got out of bed, pulled on some pants and walked outside. how i called a friend, how i wept. how i came home and got back to my bed and he was

gone, he knew to leave. how soon after, we split up, but never named my transness as the reason.

i spent years prior to that never quite ready to ask for what i needed. never quite ready to admit that this was a need, and not a want or a desire or a choice. i would let myself be misgendered in order to receive external gratification, usually in the form of sex. i was a hot girl, and i worried i wouldn't be a hot boy (i am, don't worry). i wanted to continue to know, absolutely certainly, that people wanted to be with me. but more than that, i knew the violence that awaited a transman when he revealed his pussy or a transwoman when she revealed her dick. you read about it online, you see it in instagram stories. and at the time, i was not “passing,”³ so i thought there was no point in bringing it up anyway.

so i'd meet someone, we'd get to a bedroom,

1

most kids aren't old enough to know what it means to conform, let alone defy that expectation intentionally, so instead of “gender non-conforming” we use words like “creative” or “expansive” or “playful” to describe their gendered expressions.

² hormone replacement therapy— in my case, Testosterone.

³ this is a word that has a lot of debate around it. the basics: you are able to be perceived as the gender you identify as. but the idea that you are passing as a gender rather than just BEING that gender is pretty ridiculous. “passing” also involves a level of privilege. you are not read as trans and thus not receiving the negative attention or prejudice that “looking trans” comes with. lots of quotation marks, i know. it's all very complicated.

they'd call me a girl—directly or otherwise—and i wouldn't correct them. i wouldn't say a thing. in the past, i've said that i had trouble finding someone who would love me in all my trans glory— but the reality is that i wouldn't let anyone in far enough to even know about it.

when i finally felt able and ready and started taking Testosterone, there was no more hiding my transness. my voice dropped. i started getting acne (ugh). my jaw line became a little more pronounced. there was suddenly so much hair. everywhere. my body shape straightened out, no more hourglass figure.

waking up one morning to an adam's apple was one of the weirdest days of my life. but with all these changes came the serious reality that i would not be able to hide anymore. and i worried even more now, how could anyone possibly love me in this body, in this life?

people commonly understand love to be broken into three phases: Lust, Attraction, and Attachment. and ALL of them involve hormones.

that first stage, Lust, is ALL about testosterone and estrogen. it's all about sex

and libido and feeling hot hot hot.⁴ Attraction brings in dopamine and norepinephrine,⁵ which make us excited, energetic, elated, euphoric. and then, finally, we have Attachment. we get oxytocin and vasopressin, which are hormones that allow us to bond with other people. oxytocin is nicknamed the cuddle hormone (cute).

so if hormones are responsible for feeling love, and my hormones were completely and totally off balance, there's no way anyone could love me!!

but as much as i looked to science to rationalize my fear, let's be real, it was—

self hate and internalized transphobia!

i had to take a few steps back and think about who i knew i was and what it meant to me. confidence doesn't just happen. it grows with time and, often, with active effort. at this point in my life, i am self-assured in my body and my emotions—most of the time (nobody's perfect). i know who i am, even when others might not, and that confidence is a large part of what makes me sexy, or so

i've been told... i know i'm not going to be for everyone, and i just have to remind myself it probably has nothing to do with my transness. not everyone is going to like the way i communicate, or the way i express myself,

or my work or my hobbies or my general personality. that's okay. i'm not for everyone. the people who do like me, well they like me for me and that's what makes it important.

but i thought so much about what love IS, that i started to forget how love FELT. i have a deep love for who i am now, and how it relates to who i've always been. they are both different and the same. but at the end of the day, i accept with open arms the love i am given for being myself, and the rest isn't important. and i want other people to know that. in my (trans) life, in my (trans) body, i am loved deeply and fully, platonically and romantically, kindly and beautifully. my friends love me. my partner loves me. and lots of ex-lovers have cared for me deeply.

i decided to make a list of what it feels like for me to experience this love that was always a shadow of doubt, this love that i denied myself. i experience love so fully now, in so many parts of my life, and i want to share that with the world.

“the people who do like me, well they like me for me and that's what makes it important.”

⁴ which is why when i first started taking testosterone, i was horny all. the. time.

⁵ norepinephrine also plays into “fight or flight” responses...so you can see why sometimes people feel like love makes us feel wacky and irrational

How It Feels To Love and Be Loved As Clark

- you respect my thoughts and opinions
 - you touch me in public spaces
 - we argue about small things
 - and get to hug after
 - you kiss me on the forehead
 - and it's somehow affirming
 - you see my chest as if there are no scars
 - but also think my scars are hot
- we can sit together and do absolutely nothing
 - little tiny touches here and there
- you don't say things like "before you were a man"
 - when i cry, you know it's serious
 - because i am not a crier
 - you know not to yell, ever
 - we can be silly
 - and laugh together
 - you also find farts funny
- we discuss our triumphs and our failures
 - you know when to give me room
 - and when to push me juuuuust enough
- we try our hardest not to judge each others anxiety
 - we give each other space to grow individually
 - and together
- i know you never question my maleness
 - even when i do ♦

Sarah and Jen

11am on a Saturday. Sarah and Jen are drinking coffee at their kitchen table. Their cat, Science, has disappeared to another room. The mood is buoyant despite Sarah being sick.



S - Oh god.

J - We met on Tinder. Sarah's picture was of a lizard, so I didn't really know what they looked like.

S - I had some pictures of myself on there.

J - You had wigs and masks on and stuff.

S - [Laughs] I figured if anyone talked to me with that it would be pretty funny.

J - The only one with faces was you and someone else, so I remember passing my phone around my old apartment and no one could really figure it out.

S - I kind of half-serious made the Tinder account, but...

WM - It worked out.

S - Well it's really kind of complicated. It's like, much more complicated. I was dating someone else, and we were trying to figure things out so we opened our relationship. There was a period of time where I was seeing Jen and was still with my ex-partner. There were hiccups and we were trying to figure it out, but, I don't even remember all the details...When we were first meeting up there were a lot of rules around, you know...

WM - What's ok?

S - Yea. We kept talking and we did hang out.

J - Yea. That was a good while. It was pretty, in some ways, chill and relaxed.

S - Then I kind of came to this realization that this relationship I had been in for quite a while didn't make sense to try and make work, still. If we're talking about linearly what happened, then I was like, "Oh. Let me stop seeing Jen for a little bit so I can figure things out." So then I broke up with my partner, we were living together. I was pretty young, too. It was pretty crazy. So I was trying to figure out where to live. Pretty basic shit. It was pretty awkward. I was still in this apartment and trying to end things with this person and start a lot of things over fresh again. I stayed in that apartment for a month, which was pretty terrible, honestly, but then I moved out and kind of started seeing Jen more and with less rules. But then funny enough to add to that story...

J - A little clear twist...

S - While I was still living with my ex we were talking, and I found out they had just started casually seeing Jen's roommate.

J - I had mentioned my roommates before when we passed around the Tinder, looking

at the photos, trying to decide who I was about to meet. Well, the other person was Sarah's ex in the photo. So then it went full circle and my roommate started seeing them. I lived in this kind of...The space was awkward in that it's four rooms and one huge common space in between. That was it, the kitchen and the couch were in the same central room. We're all friends, so we were all cool living pretty close and hanging together, but then we were all trying to be cool about it, but there would be nights where everyone was in the apartment. Then we tried to coordinate. Like, "You guys are in the apartment, so we'll go to the other person's place." But that got sloppy, and of course emotions and all the things pop up, and everyone is trying to be cool about it, but you can't just fully compact some feelings. Like, yeah, this is fucking awkward.

WM - Especially when you're in your home turf area. I feel like it would be hard to be comfortable at all times.

S - Yeah. Part of it was we were trying to eliminate the element of surprise, so that you could at least mentally prepare if, for example, your roommate was coming home with my ex, they would just text us, so we could either choose to leave or stay. We did that for a while, and it was ok. I don't feel like it was ever that bad, or that weird, but of course it was weird. I feel like it's interesting, too, because for me and my ex, things were rough for so long we had come to terms with the relationship. I feel like we were ok with it a lot faster than the other people in the situation.

J - It was more a problem with communication than anyone being hurt. It was more the hurts that can come from bad communication.

S - I don't feel like there was any jealousy or anything like that.

J - It was a lot to get tossed, especially when you're in a new relationship.

S - That's true.

J - Here's your parade and here's some fiery rain. It wasn't that bad. It wasn't fire rain. No one's burnt.

WM - Where did you go from there?

J - We really spontaneously decided to move to California.

S - I feel like before that, things had gotten super normal between the...

J - That drama and us leaving? Oh yeah. We just carried on in our various apartments for half a year. But then we spontaneously decided we're going to move and that means we're going to live together. Kind of in that order. I remember having a conversation sort of like that.

S - Also initially, how we visualized living in California wasn't just us two living alone, we thought we'd have roommates. We didn't think we could afford to live alone.

J - We tried to, before we left even, to find roommates who would be cool with a couple and a cat. Which are very controversial things.

S - It was impossible.

J - Especially when you're trying to live in the bay.

WM - Were you both into living together?

J - I was down. I mean, half the rent.

S - [Laughs]

J - And at that point we'd spent a lot of time together. It made sense.

S - I didn't feel like we'd have any...The way we live isn't too dramatically different. Some things become easier, too. We were already sharing groceries and all those couple-y things.

J - Co-habitant things.

WM - So then off to California?

J - And the bay was a mess. It was a disaster. We tried to move into a place where so many people can't even stay in. So that was a bit...Obviously that's not going to work. We literally just packed up my car and drove to California. The reason we aimed towards the bay is that Sarah has family there, but while we were there it didn't work for a good amount of reasons, so we went to Los Angeles. It's close. It seemed like another reasonable place to be. We gave that a year, and then we came back.

WM - Had either of you moved to new places solo before? Do you think it was easier doing it together? More difficult?

J - It was less lonely.

S - But it also meant we both saw each other at our worst.

J - And I think that's a very unique thing that has bound us together. Cuz we went through

S - Like levels of hell.

J - And in those locations have been the only friend or anybody to hold each other up. But when you get to a new place you don't know

that many people. We spent a lot of time together. We did everything together.

S - Which could even be inhibiting in expanding your social circle. You're not forced out of total fear of being alone to find people. We kind of ran into this problem, especially in LA, anytime we were to meet up with friends it was always together. It was never, "Hey I'm going to casually hang out with my friend" We both needed friends so bad.

J - There was this desperate thing where if one of us made friends at work, we were both so desperate to socialize, if I was invited to something I'd feel bad if I didn't ask if Sarah could come, too. Otherwise the other person would be at home, lonely..

WM - After the initial dating when Sarah broke up with the person they were seeing, was there a conversation or a moment you realized your relationship was more than just a casual thing?

J - There was one day where we were like, "Do you want to be my genderqueer boyfriend or girlfriend?"

S - Oh right. We were trying to decide what to call each other. We both don't like the word partner

J - Because it's been fully pirated

S - There's no gender-neutral term that sounds nice. I don't know if we talked about seeing other people at the same time.

J - We were just dating more and more, if you want to call it dating. I think there was a point where I was like, "I'm not seeing anyone else. I care about you more seriously."

S - I can't pinpoint an exact moment, but I feel like it gradually happened.

WM - Do you ever talk about the future together?

[Nervous laughter]

S - More not in a direct...I don't feel like both of us are the kind of person to be like, "Oh in five years we'll get married and do this." But more abstractly about the future we make plans to do stuff and go places and stuff like that.

J - I mean obviously we have a lease. But I don't know. Yeah. I don't know. The word marriage came up once and we laughed about it. I think it's just, you know, living.



LOVE YOU
LOVE YOU
LOVE YOU

RENEWI

-NG MY

MEMBE

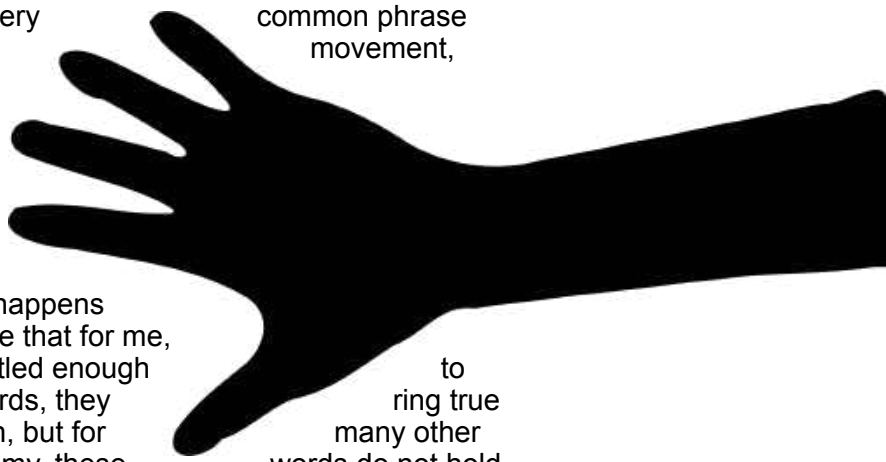
-RSHIP//

By Hailey Orrange

If a body is supposed to provide a safe and warm home to its owner, why is it that mine has never felt like it belonged to me? I wake up every morning, crawl out of bed, and stand before the mirror, studying myself. I will run my hands down my arms, my fingers tracing every part of my skin, and I will feel nothing.

"My body, my choice," is a very used in the pro-choice and in the fight for reproductive rights for people with uteruses. I've said this phrase time and time again, because of course it's true. My body is mine, and it's my choice what to do with it and what happens to it. Nobody else can decide that for me, and nobody should feel entitled enough to do so. When I say these words, they for me in regards to abortion, but for aspects of my bodily autonomy, these the same meaning.

common phrase movement,

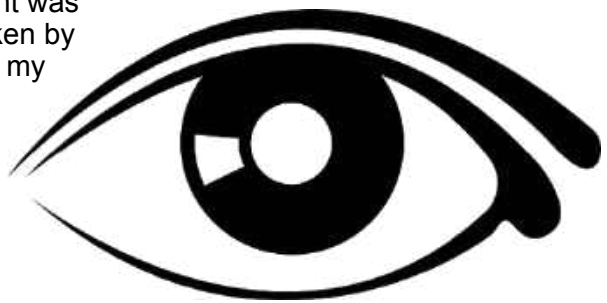


to ring true many other words do not hold

I was sexually assaulted a year and a half ago, by a person who I considered to be a best friend. It was traumatic, like any assault is, and it has left a lasting impact on both my mind and body. The thing about the sexual assault is that I didn't fully feel the effects until a few days after it had occurred. It was a delayed one that crept up on me from behind, silently, attacked me full-on. I felt dissociated from body, like my mind worked in complete isolation from the rest of me. My boobs, my ass, my stomach, every slightly vulnerable part of my body became a battle zone between my touch and my freeze response. The truth was, I didn't even fully grasp the concept of consent until after mine had been violated. It was the same feeling I imagined one feels when their home is broken into, their belongings touched, sorted through and messed up, until the burglar escapes, unharmed, leaving everyone else with the mess they left behind. I use this comparison reluctantly, as I see no possible comparison of sexual assault to inanimate objects being stolen, but I know that often times simplicity helps people to better understand what message I am trying to convey. The assault left me feeling as though my body didn't belong to me. It was a rude awakening, one that came unexpectedly.

My body, the body that I had thought was mine and mine alone, had been taken by the hands of someone else without my permission.

Through multiple evenings of processing, reflecting and healing I came to an abrupt realization.



My body had never belonged to me.

During the time I have been working to heal and process the trauma that has resulted from the sexual assault, I have also been coming to terms with my non-binary identity. I was assigned female at birth, yet I've never truly felt like a woman. I align myself with being feminine, and I enjoy being feminine because I feel as though with the femme identity comes power and resistance. With being femme, however, comes much objectification and violation of comfort.

Being non-binary has fucked with my mind, my soul, and my body. My dysphoria had caused me to feel as though I need to crawl out of my body and tear my skin apart, and like my body is a restraining prison cell. It's like my mind exists in isolation from the rest of my physical body, because my mind is telling me different things than my body is. When I look in the mirror, I see an average height, thin white female body with big eyes, small boobs and a nice compact butt. I see slender shoulders and elegance, a gently-shaped form staring back at me.

It makes me want to scream.

Because in my mind, at myself "YOU ARE ARE NOT A GIRL." matter what my me, or is perceived

I'm constantly yelling NOT A GIRL YOU And I'm not. No body tells to

I am not could have massive most figure, or the feminine legs, would not be a that's what I was.

others, a girl. I the most boobs, the hourglass longest, most and yet I still girl, unless decided I

Navigating feelings, traumatic full-time job. It's never applied for, dreamed of here I am. I and process the isolation and triggers and by taking back from me, and my own.

these emotions and memories is a a job that I and never having, yet work through feelings of dysphoria, the the memories, what was taken reclaiming it as

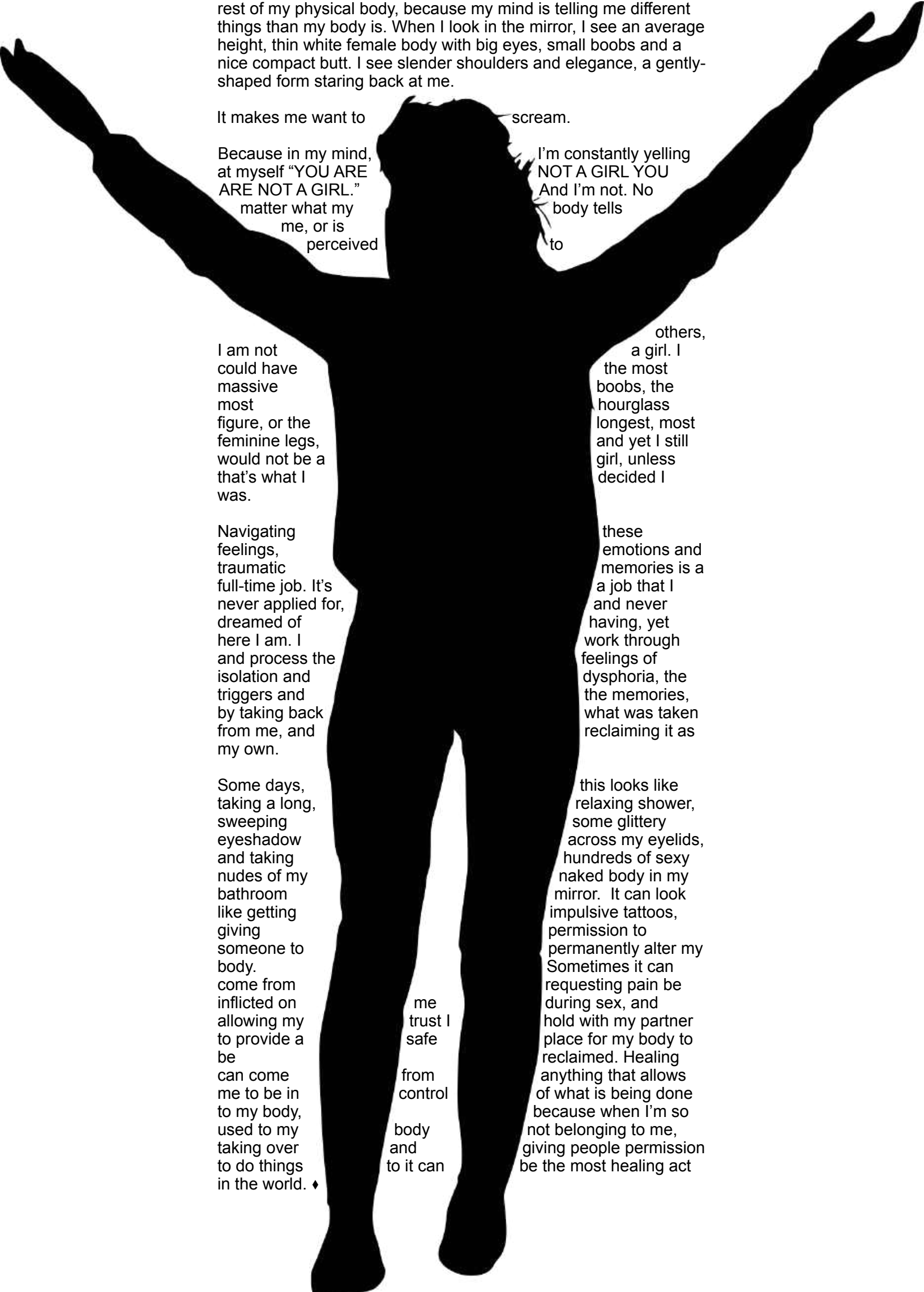
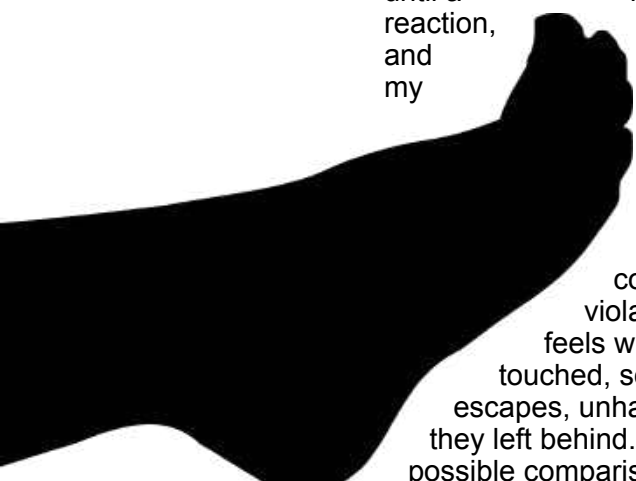
Some days, taking a long, sweeping eyeshadow and taking nudes of my bathroom like getting giving someone to body. come from inflicted on allowing my to provide a be can come me to be in to my body, used to my taking over to do things in the world. ♦

me trust I safe

from control

body and to it can

this looks like relaxing shower, some glittery across my eyelids, hundreds of sexy naked body in my mirror. It can look impulsive tattoos, permission to permanently alter my Sometimes it can requesting pain be during sex, and hold with my partner place for my body to reclaimed. Healing anything that allows of what is being done because when I'm so not belonging to me, giving people permission be the most healing act





BUTTER YEAR



Thank you for reading Waif Loves You..

Waif Illustrated will hit the shelves next month, just in time for Spring Break.

Like the Waif Beanies featured in this issue? Order yours today at iswaif.com/clothes

Don't like what you read in this issue? Send us your stories, photos, artwork at waifmagazin3@gmail.com.

Please no poems - keep Waif at the cutting edge of journalism. Or tell us whether you think we should change our ways and why we should if we should. Should we?

Follow [@waifmagazine on Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/waifmagazine) for updates

What is Waif

?

iswaif.com