

*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 13: the hot waif***

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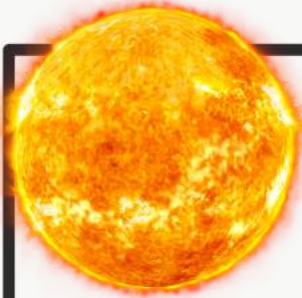
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# WAIF



## \* THE SUN

Nothing says Hot like the gas ball that lives in the sky. It does everything a Hottie is supposed to, leads the way, defines your fashion choices & causes pain if you stare directly at it

**\* MEGAN THEE STALLION**  
This issue was originally just photos of Megan but corporate made us change it



**\*BASIT/ DIONNE SLAY**  
It's a shame "Are You the One" isn't a competition, but if it were; this is our official endorsement



**\*POPSICLES**  
Anything wet can be frozen and licked. Anything. And THATS Waif.



**\* OLD TOWN PETE**  
Pete Buttigieg was denied by Lil Nas X's team to be featured on an Old Town Road Remix. In other news, Mason Ramsey has just announced his bid for president

HOT

COOL



**\* CONGRESS GLUERS**  
While a group of Climate Change activists glued themselves to Congress this week, we're waiting for the real deal: Who's going to be the first to glue themselves to Mitch McConnell's back skin?



**\*SEPTUM PIERCING'S**  
Really really cool. Get one! Yea it's going to look so good on you

**\*THROWING SHADE**  
Waifs live and breathe kindness



**\*GENDER REVEAL**  
The creator of the gender reveal party released a statement saying her "daughter" now wears "suits." Awkward!! We thought you said she was a girl???

**\*STANDING IN THE SHADE**  
Waifs live and breathe direct sunlight



# NOT WAIF

I TRIED TO PUT MYSELF IN YOUR SHOES

BUT THEY WERE UGLY & CHEAP



# ***SUPER- GOOD//***

***HAVE THE YOUTH LOST  
THEIR EDGE?***

*By Will Norris*



Here at *Waif*, we've caught wind of a trend among our younger readers: they don't like bad behavior, or the depiction thereof. It seems they want even their niche, bizarre magazine content to come pumiced into a shape more easily swallowed, which is to say, edge-free.

"A bullet hole? No thanks, I'm tired of 'death' being fashion," commented one disgruntled adolescent on a *Waif* Instagram post.

"Lovely photography but underage/binge drinking isn't something to glorify," wrote another discontented youth on a second post.

This being a bastion of journalistic integrity, *Waif* welcomes criticism in all forms. Shout your complaints from the mountaintops. But this line-toeing, it seems, is a trend not limited to our little *Waif* world: like the content they want to consume, teenagers appear to have lost their edge. What was until recently a perpetual certainty of adolescence -- that danger and provocation and the flouting of rules are all cool things -- has abruptly flipped. Teenagers are more risk-averse and prudish than ever before.

Let's take a look at the unvarnished facts. According to several decades of public polling, teenagers today drink at half the rate they did thirty years ago, and do things like take drugs, attend parties, smoke cigarettes, and have sex way less than their parents did, which is a depressing thought. They spend more time safe and sound at home, and they wear their seatbelts more.

To teenagers today, bad behavior is just that. This is a far cry even from when I was in high school approximately seven years ago, when the antidote to the doldrums of teenage-hood

was to take swigs out of a bottle of plain Rubinoff and throw around a glow-in-the-dark frisbee in a field.

Of course, the good news is that for all the above reasons, teenagers today are physically safer than in the past, something this publication wholeheartedly endorses. *But at what cost?*

Clearly problem #1 is that this dreary rule-following and solitary digital existence, this flatlining of youthful rebellion, has given young people the misbegotten idea that the media they consume should not inspire

discomfort. Important ideas are often best conveyed through the unsavory and the grotesque, lest we forget.

Secondly, youthful indiscretion provides the raw material for personal growth and art. From

what wellspring of youthful folly and puerile decision-making will art originate for the next generation if they're all at home watching Twitch streams and listlessly scrolling through Instagram? Hunter S. Thompson didn't write *Fear and Loathing* after watching Summit1g play "Splitgate: Arena Warfare" for a week straight. And there's no way I'd have the creative savvy to write this article if I hadn't spent high school smoking weed out of a Gatorade bottle with my friends.

Once more, I have the data to back this up. A number of studies suggest that as IQ has risen over the last 30 years in young people, creativity has taken a nosedive towards the x axis. Of her 2014 study on high schoolers' creativity over several decades, the researcher Katie Davis told WNYC, "What we found was the creative writing became more mundane--they may take place in a school or in a home, whereas in the earlier pieces [from the '90s] they may take place on Mars."

***"There's no way I'd have the creative savvy to write this article if I hadn't spent high school smoking weed out of a Gatorade bottle with my friends."***

Some combination of the hysterical obsession with standardized testing and the stultifying effects of staring at your phone all the time instead of thinking thoughts is likely to blame.



What explains the new disinterest in risk and provocation? My theory is that the unintended cost of more liberal child-rearing has been the

generation has grown up in an era where art, politics, and commerce are all braided together into a tight and tasty Twizzler of culture, this the age of sponcon, identity marketing, and steely-gazed political messages from Gillette. What we aspire to and what we consume are two halves of the same tuna melt sitting under the heat lamp of neoliberalism. We're decades removed from when corporate America's attempts to co-opt punk and skate culture were laughably clunky; corporations now precede and anticipate and in fact create what is cool. They're the helium of the cultural balloon.



excitement-defeating lack of opportunity to rebel. Gone are the great generational clashes of the 20th century, those halcyon days when parents could credibly threaten to send their children to military school because they're in a Lynyrd Skynyrd cover band or whatever, and with that loss has gone the romance of sticking it to authority. Not only did the attitudes and aesthetics of 20th century counterculture calcify into our new status quo, but the act of rebelling itself became boringly acceptable. What's the point of getting tattoos on your eyelids if everyone's totally cool with it?



But the jets in this whirlpool drowning all meaning out of counterculture would be

Young people evidently see this mingling of commerce and culture as no impediment to authenticity in an age when an editorial from *Slate* just might--wouldn't you know it--be brought to you by Samsung. Perhaps, then, it's this corporatization that accounts for the banal sensibilities of teenagers. Provocation, after all, will only hurt one's personal brand. That would-be influencers will now actually post *fake* sponsored content<sup>1</sup> seems a fitting coup de grâce for the age of teenage rebellion.



capitalism. Over the last two decades, corporations have affixed themselves to the zeitgeist with ruthless efficiency. This

Let us know what you think! ♦

<sup>1</sup> It's true--Instagram is riddled with 15-year-olds pretending they were paid by Maybelline and Voss to hawk their products. The internet was man's greatest mistake.



*write.  
photo.  
art.  
submit.*

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*seeks new talent*

*but please no poems | [waifmagazin3@gmail.com](mailto:waifmagazin3@gmail.com)*

*OPINION*

# ***ARE EARWIGS WAIF? //***

*By Freya Giles*



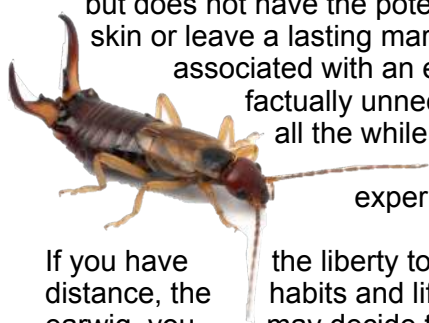
Upon first glance, an earwig is not waif.

The first time I ever saw an earwig, or in this case about two hundred of them, was one summer many years ago. I was outside in our little garden playing away as young children do, thoroughly engrossed in an imaginary game when the fateful event occurred. I reached down and picked up an old discarded flower pot and all hell broke loose. They were suddenly all over me, their vicious pincers clawing and grasping at the air, their creepy legs scuttling and crawling in all directions. I could not escape the horrors of the earwig and to this day I live in fear of the next time an ambush of catastrophic monuments such as this occurs again.

Earwigs do not restrain their wanderings to the outdoors. They feed on plants, fruits and vegetables, of which they find in plenty in the common household kitchen. Seemingly perfect fruit bowls can fall prey to a hoard of hungry earwigs, they lie waiting under kitchen utensils, waiting for the moment they can devour your fresh produce and ruin an afternoon snack.

An old wives' tale tells it that earwigs are named so because at night they crawl into your ears and eat your brain. Currently, this terrifying tale is just that, but when observing the spine chilling pincers of the earwig you just can't help but be wary of this lethal weapon and hope you aren't next on the earwig's list of victims. Said victims are often the products of their own stupidity, as an earwig can and will pince you if you attempt to pick it up and disturb it from its business. This pince, while small and futile, has been reared by childhood imagination into the most horrific of childhood injuries

but does not have the potential to break skin or leave a lasting mark. The trauma associated with an earwig is factually unnecessary, but all the while part of a rather trying experience.



If you have the liberty to discover, at a distance, the habits and lifestyle of the earwig, you may decide that they actually do possess a few of the qualities that could contribute to one's Waifiness. Firstly, an earwig does not care what you, or I, or even any other earwig thinks of it.

They just do their thing, crawl around, eat plants, live life. This total disregard for societal norms and structures is something to be respected as their freakish appearance can often lead to the earwig being stomped on or exiled. This brings me to my second point: the earwig, despite being hated on and screamed at for centuries, has not complained once.

Countless insults and banishments would surely cause any other insect to revolt and refuse such horrid treatment but the earwig just takes it as it comes and continues to earwig along. The root of so much hatred towards earwigs comes from their appearance. Their pincers are creepy! But also kind of cool? Used to fend off predators and assist with mating rituals, an earwig's pincers are not intentionally a weapon of attack and do not pose any major physical threats to humans. They serve as a hip and functional accessory for our earwig friends and make them quite unique - a very Waif trait.

Once you can look past the fact that one could possibly crawl into your ear and eat your brain, you have to admit that the earwig is pretty Waif. They do their own thing and don't let the abundance of hate they receive affect their happiness or lifestyle. They have no secret agenda to take away our health care or start any wars; they just want to eat plants and crawl around. Earwigs are Waif because they are unique and have cool pincers that they (usually) don't want to pince us with.

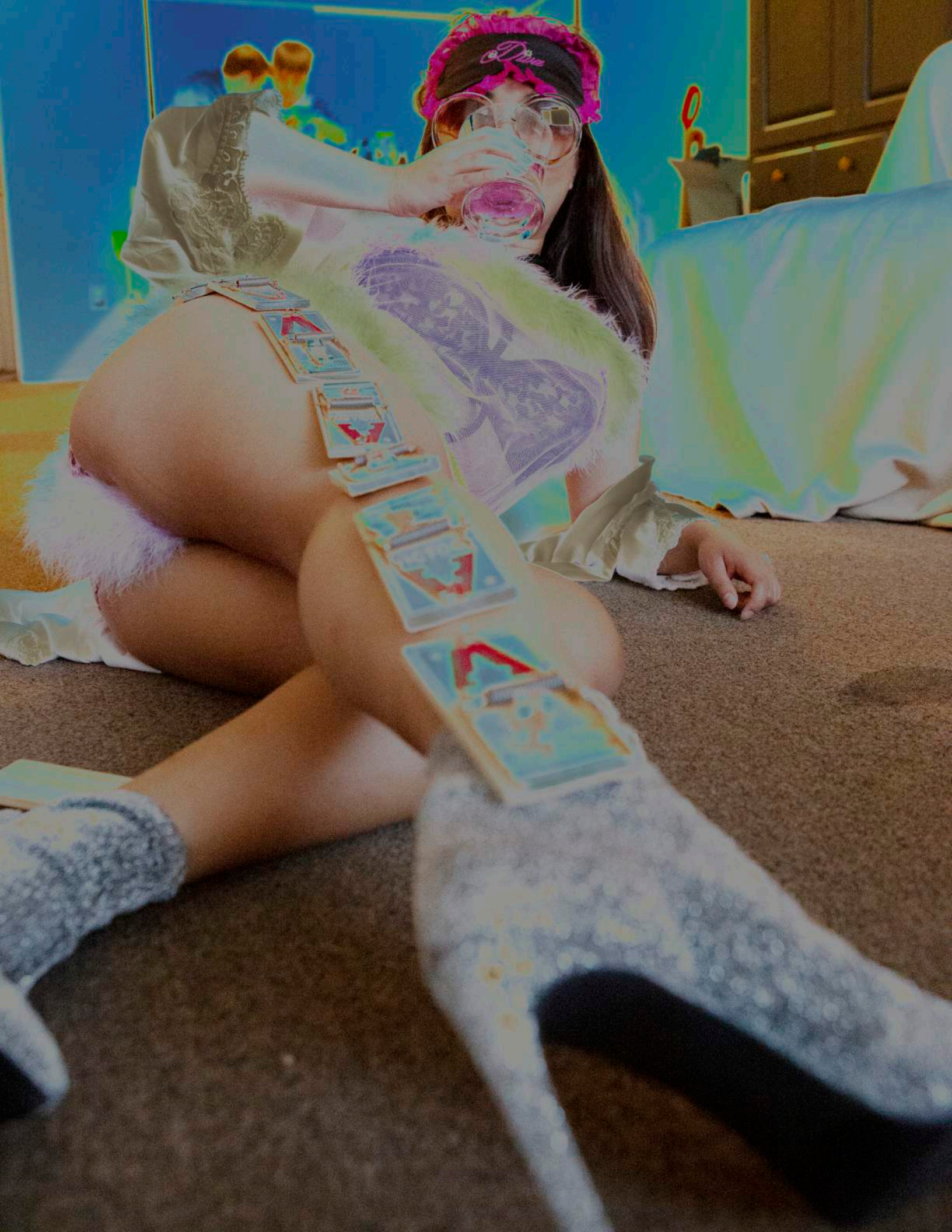
I saw an earwig the other day. It was crawling alongside the skirting board in my living room, minding its own business. As I watched it scuttle along, I reflected on the hatred that I had previously thrown in the general direction of the earwig species. I felt a sense of regret at my never having stopped to appreciate the earwig for their immense individuality and extreme Waifiness. I then made peace with this regret by observing the earwig as it promptly annihilated another in its path and I confirmed my role as an earwig appreciator, from afar. ♦

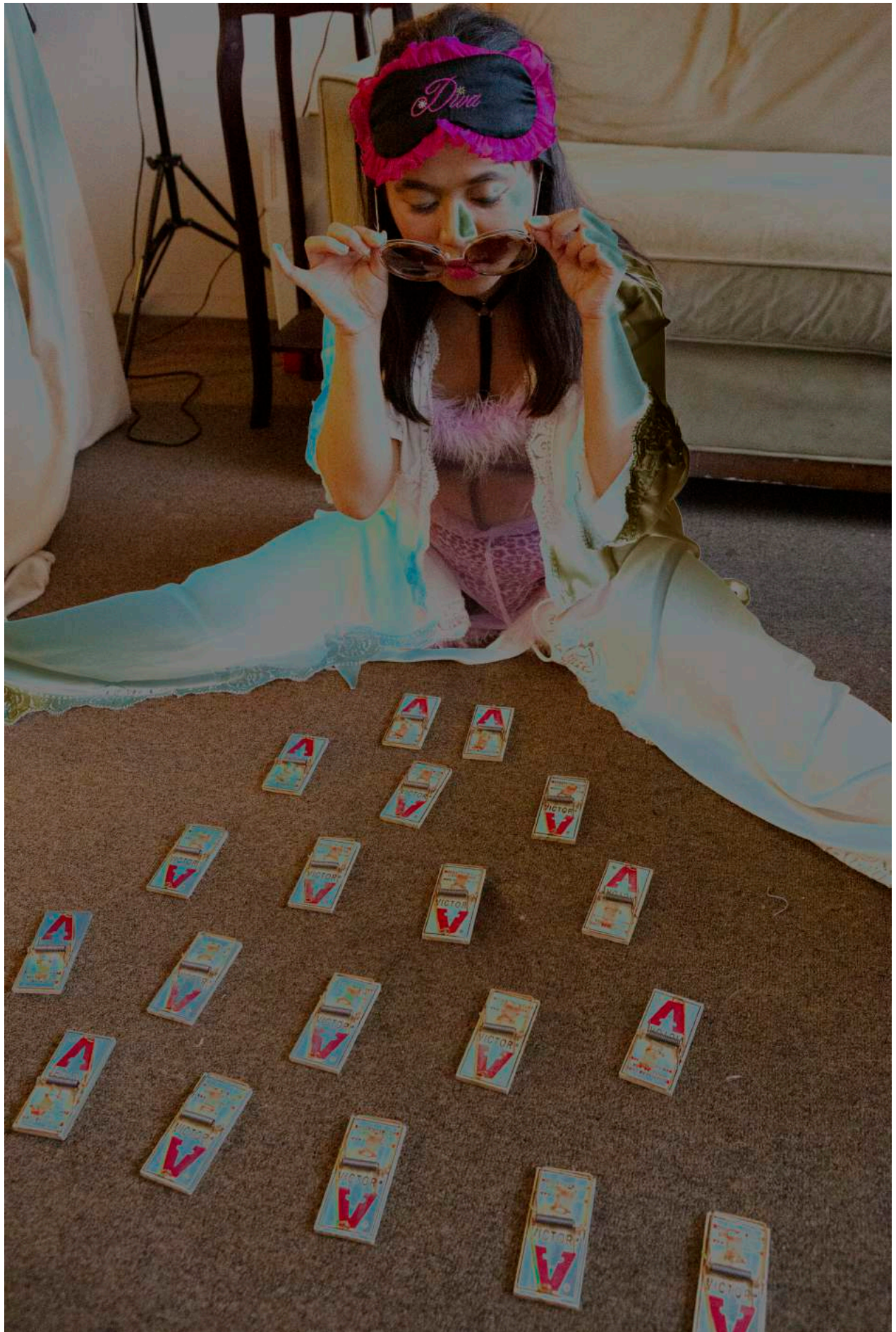
# ***THIRST***



***Photos by EJ Lee  
Modeled by Amanda Centeno***



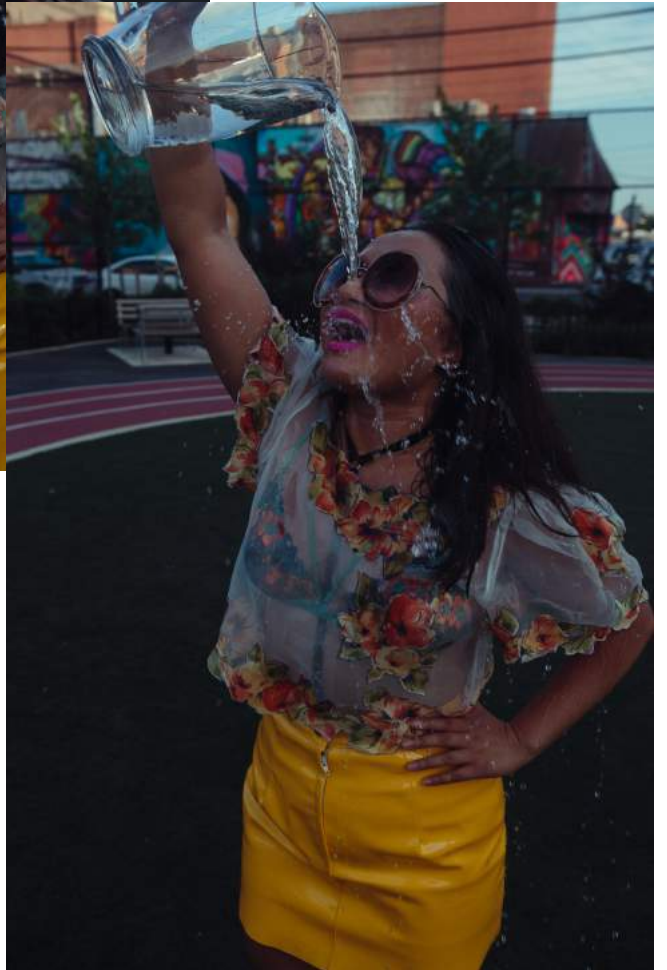
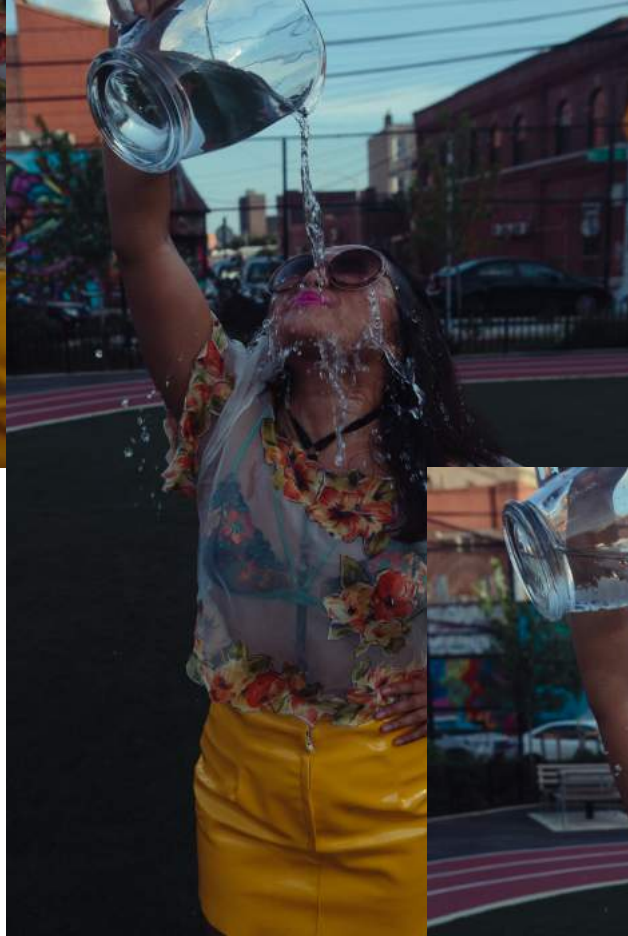














***SPOILERS ONLY***

# ***REVIEWING MIDSOMMAR***

***//***

***By Asma Horea Abdourahman***



The Summer season calls for the good things in life; more parties! more travelling! hot weather! festivals! Sometimes, even drugs! This is the Swedish getaway writer-director Ari Aster creates for his sophomore feature, *Midsommar*. A year after the critically-acclaimed release of *Hereditary*, we meet protagonist Dani, who is dealing with a now-trademarked Aster family tragedy. She travels with her boyfriend, Christian, and his rowdy anthropology nerd-friends to experience the Midsommar Festival in Hårga, a rural Swedish commune. They dance, enjoy the weather, see some cliff-diving, and of course, watch their friends get killed off one by one.

At a Q&A at the Lincoln Center in New York, Aster joked, "I think my trick is I don't process anything and then it comes out as some evil movie." Creating art to express your own pain and existential suffering? That's hot. He's repeatedly stated that this film was designed

to be a cathartic release about codependency and the end of a relationship inspired by his own experiences. Although the collapse of Dani and Christian's relationship begins long before the events of *Midsommar* take place, we can see it continuously punctured by a lack of communication and empathy. Much of what happens in the film is the result of characters refusing to express their emotions to one another, and so the film's ethos can be captured simply as "expressing yourself? That's super hot." *Midsommar* dangerously highlights the importance of belonging and community to the human spirit, and how easy it is to weaponize the lack thereof.

While Aster was simply making a self deprecating joke about neglecting his own emotions, his characters do exhibit this same trait. A common theme throughout the film is suppression. Dani constantly struggles to be forthcoming about her own feelings and suppresses her wants and needs as to not inconvenience anyone else. Though she knows she doesn't fit in with Christian's friends, she tries to push her anxiety to the side and be a good sport when they all decide to take hallucinogens together as to not hold anyone back. She suppresses disappointment when Christian forgets her birthday in the interest of not rocking the boat, even taking the blame for his mistake. Though Dani is a strong protagonist, she spends much of the movie passive and cooperative in hopes of placating her boyfriend and his friends. On the other hand, Christian's biggest sin is his own contention to express his true feelings to his girlfriend. It is established early on that he feels suffocated, but refuses to say anything until

leaving Dani is no longer an option and they are forced to bond through grief... except, they don't. He chooses to stay with her out of guilt and as an act of consolation. Dani not wanting to be alone and Christian not wanting to abandon her, they cannot be stopped from drifting apart. Aster alludes to this through paintings in Dani's apartment. One of them places Dani and Christian literally an ocean apart. Tableaus on the compound portray the cataclysmic third half of the film; the audience realizes their fates were sealed from the very start of the film.. Dani and Christian just needed to start expressing themselves.

place any blame on Dani for *wanting* Christian by her side. We are given hints that he had been a caring and important figure to Dani as she dealt with tumultuous family life throughout the years. It would be unrealistic to expect her not to need him after her devastating loss. We see both characters placed in impossible situations within their own lives and at the festival. Dani and Christian are both victims of circumstances and yeah, of this weird Swedish cult. But while Christian is apparently trying, his dialogue with Dani is often dismissive. Christian spends most of the movie gaslighting her. His first conversation with her in the film is him dismissing her concerns



***“The film’s ethos can be captured simply as ‘expressing yourself? That’s super hot.’”***

It's hard to place any blame on Christian for choosing to stay with Dani. He knew she needed him and he obliged, although not to his greatest ability. Similarly, it is difficult to

about her sister's e-mail. His last conversation with her is at a breakfast table saying he wasn't concerned about his (dead) friends, although, she definitely was. Their

relationship had run out of love long ago, and was fueled with toxicity until it finally ran its course and ended in literal flames.

When we are brought into the commune, it is through relaxed customs and easygoing traditions that weren't exactly unfamiliar or too hard to digest. Lots of hugs, drugs, and communal meals. In terms of cultural appreciation, things only start to go downhill (literally) following the *Ättestupa* ritual. The most senior cult-members choose to end their lives before old age can begin to monopolize their control of mind and bodily

chooses what could possibly be important to the community. We see this exemplified in the tree-pee scene where he argues that the dead tree is just a dead tree. His foolish choice to not be attentive to what could be important to the community is ultimately what gets him skinned in the end as well. The tranquil image of Hårga that we were initially introduced to has now begun to flicker as the reality of the commune is revealed.

Likewise, much of the imagery we see in the first half of the film directly opposes the second half. We start with going from Winter



functions, believing that this was simply the end of their lifecycle. This bloody event causes the first big rift between visitors and locals. While the British guests could not come to understand or even accept the cliff-diving custom, the Americans were observing for their own academic gain; Josh, an anthropology student, even going so far as to sneak photos of the sacred text for his thesis, which he is immediately punished for. Mark, the joker of the group, represents a different kind of ignorance, in which he just picks and

to Summer. When Pelle asks Dani if she felt "held" by Christian and whether or not he felt like home, we can think of the earlier scene of her sobbing in his lap after hearing the news of her family's deaths. He is cold, quiet, and still as she screams throughout the night. Later, when Dani is crowned May Queen, he doesn't celebrate with her like the rest of the Hårgans, nor can he share in her joy. Though she constantly craves empathy, a person who can mirror her pain, at no point in the film does Christian express any empathy

towards her. Before heading to Sweden, Christian is frequently seen through the reflection of a mirror instead of appearing directly on screen. He is perceived as being close to Dani, but still, emotionally, so far away. In contrast, when Dani breaks down after seeing Christian having sex with Maja, a girl from the cult who recently came of age, the other women in the camp fall to the floor and cry with her. In one of the most iconic scenes in the film, Dani bursts into uncontrollable tears as her sobs release all of the hurt she has repressed for so long. Through a display of sympathy, the women surrounding her begin to sob hysterically in a way that feels somewhat like a parody. The longer they weep, the more they sync up, resulting in an almost tribal cry. In this moment, Dani is comforted, embraced, and finally receiving the empathy she's desperately needed. In short, they hold her.

As Dani and Christian begin to experience the festival apart, and the more time they spend away from one another, the more emboldened they become to make their own choices and speak honestly. Only when Dani is finally met with an environment where she seems to receive empathy, community, and love, can she finally begin to speak her mind. Through empathetic mirroring, she finds company in her grief; they share her cries and scream in pain with her. The beauty of processing emotions and releasing the truth allows you to release yourself, and even find community. Creating offers this same possibility, as Aster has forged his own community of empathizers through his art. In

a sense, by processing his emotions on some level and creating a story that mirrors his own, he has created a community of people who now understand his pain on some level. Though we aren't part of their relationship, we understand it and know why it ends so catastrophically. Though we don't feel his pain, we too crave to be understood as we bawl on the hardwood floor with him and Dani.

While *Midsommar's* visual identity is firmly planted in Swedish landscapes, I was pleasantly surprised to see the colours of tragedy remain consistent in the Aster



Cinematic Universe. Hues of green and blue flooded in darkness open the film, pressing on with the colour palette we saw in *Hereditary*, safeguarded by Pawel Pogorzelski, the Director of Photography of both films. We know that this coupling, accented by the red of sirens and car lights, announce death. We see this as the first responders walk into Dani's family home, and as Peter sat in the car after his sister is decapitated. These are not the only similarities we see in Aster's works. Aster excels in tense dialogue and impactful gore,



and characters who just can't seem to catch a break and I'll always love him for that.

Admittedly, I very much appreciated the film for what it was, but there were some oddities that I felt needed to be addressed in this piece - specifically, Ruben, the child who was purposely inbred to become Hårga's oracle. We are introduced to Ruben through an unexpected and unexplained cutaway when Dani and the gang first get to the commune. We are told about him when an Elder is explaining the book of runes. We see him through a few more arbitrary shots in the last half of the film. Beyond his brief introduction, Ruben's character has no other use if only to elicit feelings of discomfort from the audience and reinforce Hårga's otherness. Yet in that regard, the only discomfort really felt is due to the story's exploitation of a disabled character.

In the film's grand finale, Dani is forced to choose the last sacrifice of the Midsommar festival. Her options are either a random cult member or her boyfriend. She now needs to take care of the person who has been looking out for her, and what happens afterwards is really based on interpretation. Although the cult masterfully manipulates the situation, from Dani's perspective, Christian cheated on her with Maja. Perhaps due to Christian's ongoing gaslighting throughout the film and generally being pretty terrible to her and his own friends, Dani chooses to punish him through this sacrifice and moves on to have her eternal Hot Girl Sommar. Because she is one of them, she does not need him. In the film's final moments, we see Christian stuffed into a bear's body and placed in the sacred yellow building as it is engulfed in flames. His

now ex-girlfriend watches in horror, attempting to flee for a moment, before she eventually stops and comes face-to-face with the hot and sunny reality: Christian, along with all of her companions and everything she's really known, burn. Dani says goodbye to the bleak reality she once knew and so she smiles as she breathes in her new life with her new sisters and new home without Christian - her ultimate catharsis. When she is crowned the May Queen and invited to bless the soil on the compound, Dani asks if Christian can come with her and she is told "No. The Queen must ride alone". This could be just another of the cult's masterful manipulation techniques, but it also reflects

***“It’s scary how important it is to feel understood, accepted, and loved.”***

that Dani is no longer the broken girl who walked into Hårga days before. She has healed and prospered and there is no longer any place for her to be dragging around her destructive relationship with

Christian. Or at least, that's what she thinks. Right?

After first seeing *Midsommar*, I left the theatre having felt like I had been force fed Dani's arc a bit too literally. I had difficulty identifying some of the story's meaning and thought maybe this was all just meant to be a drop in the Hot Girl Summer ocean. But the more I focus on the optics of the story, the more it feels like I have been manipulated into agreeing with the cult's tactics. Like a Technicolor *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the outsiders were picked off one-by-one as they each defied the rules set by the commune. Not being able to acclimate resulted in a death sentence for everyone but Dani who was able to integrate with the other members of the commune, even speak their language and become their Queen. Aster has

hinted to political ideas interwoven in the story, and after some time away from the movie, they come to light with ease. None of the transgressions committed by the outsiders justified their violent punishments, yet we still root for Dani being able to find a community, no matter how intolerant they seem. Aster utilized radical empathy so we could consider this a happy ending for her while disregarding the group of people that failed to conform to the Hårgan culture. Dani's sense of belonging comes at a deadly cost fueled by xenophobia and nationalism, a strategy that has never failed our world's most bigoted and fascist leaders since the dawn of time. The true horror of *Midsommar* lies in so many of us identifying with Dani's need for empathy and community, and believing that she was the true winner after all.

What ends up being a horror story for Christian and his friends becomes a much needed antidote to Dani's pain following the loss of her family. After not feeling understood, belonging anywhere, or being cared for after so long, she becomes the queen, dressed in flowers, and surrounded

by a community who chooses to lift her up, share her pain and her grief; it is a fairy tale come true. For her. For now. The title of May Queen will eventually be revisited. She has all but shifted her codependency from Christian to the commune and entwined her own life with the same group who murdered her friends. Much like the cycle of life, the cycle of trauma persists until confronted. It's scary how important it is to feel understood, accepted, and loved. ♦



# ***waif instant coffee***

***with real news expert***

***Satchie Snellings***



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***REDUCE  
YOUR  
CARBON  
FOOTPRINT//***

***By wearing Baby Shoes***

***Photographed by Yaneth Valdez  
Modeled by Mia, Jack & Paige***





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F

S

A

E

















So, if I flossed it would help with the bleeding that happens whenever I - or anyone else - touches my gums

**Flossing Weapon of Choice:** I like the floss on a spool. Wax-coated, because it hurts less, and I have a retainer so a little delicacy helps.

**Is there anything you'd like to impart to the world:** I believe that we should listen to our dentists and if they give us free floss after our sessions there, why not use it?

**Is it eco-friendly to floss?** It's not! If we could find a way to make it more eco-friendly, maybe more people would floss. Maybe some people don't floss because it's not eco-friendly, you know?

**If there were a more eco-friendly way to floss - for example, a vine cut in half, or blades of grass tied together, or a dandelion stem - would you floss more frequently?** Yes, because when we're kids we do that when we're playing. We floss in the park with stems of things, so maybe it would bring me back to my youth in that way.

**Anything else?** I want to ask the world to make hair products cheaper, please. It would make it easier for a lot of girls trying to grow their hair back. No more chemicals in your hair, people.

*Follow @flossier for found pics of found picks and submit your own to waifmagazin3@gmail.com*

# HOW I FLOSS

FEATURING Julianna Mitchell

**From:** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

**Relationship to Flossing:** I think about it a lot, like once a week. I have floss in my bathroom, so I see it a lot, but I usually just think about it, I don't actually do it. I don't floss unless I go to the dentist. Then, I'll floss regularly for two weeks, I'll forget to do it one day, and it's downhill from there. Or if I know I'm about to go to the dentist, then I'll floss that day or the day before.

**Do you think that you should floss?** Yes, because I have gingivitis and I heard that when I eat and brush my teeth, not all of the food comes out of my gums.



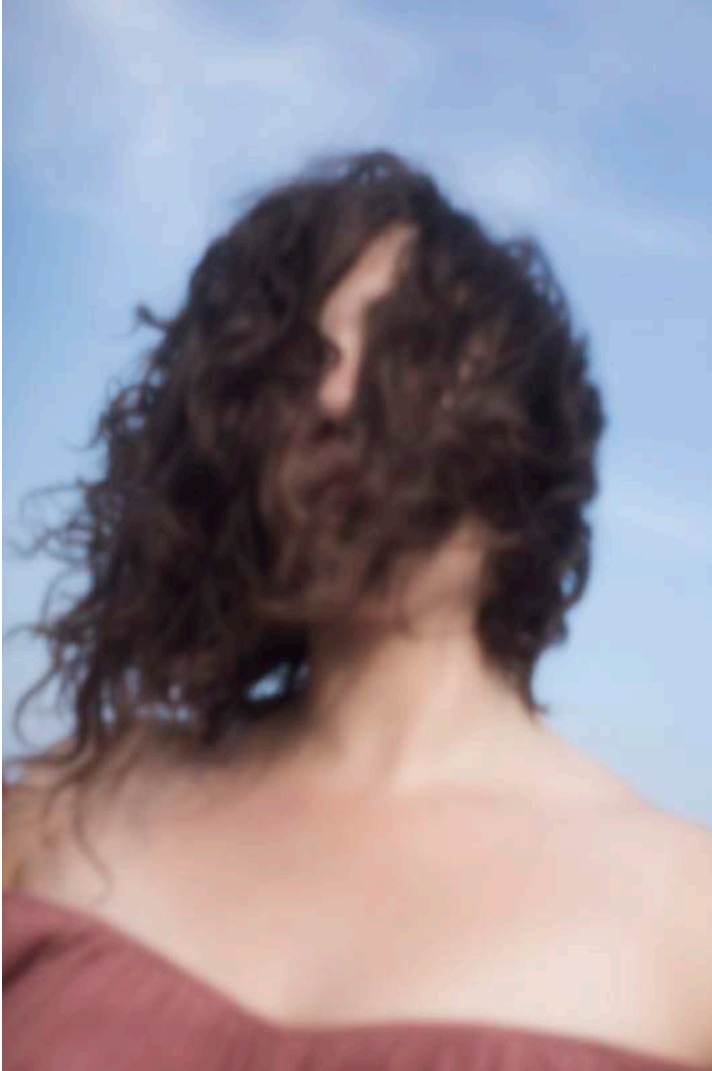
*INTERVIEW*

# ***BECCS***



*ON HER NEW SINGLE AND FILM, "BY THE SEA"  
Photos by Katelyn Kopenhaver*





**Waif Magazine recently sat down with singer and songwriter beccs to discuss her latest project, a song and accompanying film, “By the Sea.”**

**WAIF:** How are you doing today? What are you up to?

**beccs:** I’m okay. I’m on a bus. I ride it every time I go home and I’ve built up a strong aversion to the scent of their cleaning product. I hate it so much, Waif.

**WAIF:** Can you give us a little background on you - where are you from?

**beccs:** I’m from Newton, Mass. But home is Brooklyn and where the marsh is.

**WAIF:** What kind of music do you play?

**beccs:** I play music, yes I do. I guess the music is alternative singer-songwriter with elements of soul, folk and maybe pop. Marsh pop.

**WAIF:** Who are your influences?

**beccs:** I love Beth Gibbons (of Portishead). I wrote a [love letter](#) to her. I love some others too: Nina Simone, Supertramp, Melanie, Laura Nyro, Janis Ian, Badu, Tori.

**WAIF:** What moved you to start creating music?

**beccs:** My dad forced cello on me at age 4, and I constantly sang as a child. It was Britney bitch who lit that flame. But I started seriously writing my own songs around 16 when I, like too many, developed an eating disorder. Songwriting was the only pass-time connecting enough to overpower urges to binge and purge. It became a means of survival and evolved into my greatest love affair and spiritual practice.

**WAIF:** By the Sea feels like such a departure from your previous releases, sonically and in terms of imagery as well. I’m curious to know whether your approach to this song is different from your approach on an earlier release (i.e. “Therapy”). Can you speak to your process?

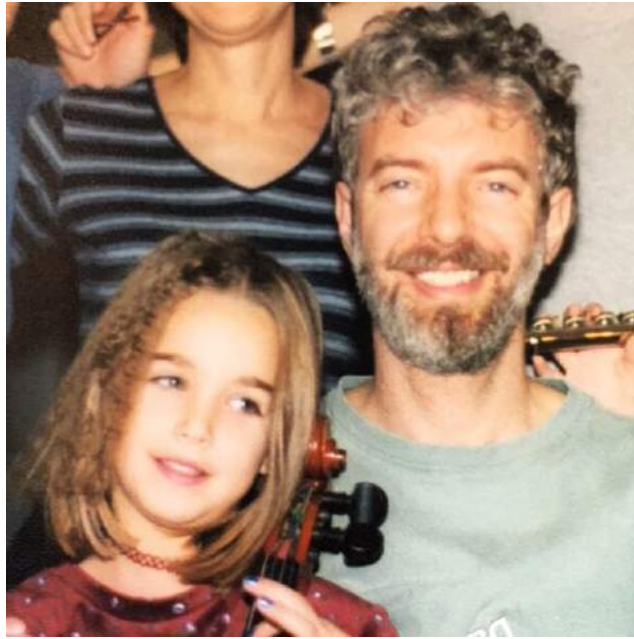
**beccs:** Well, it had been three years since releasing my debut record “Unfound Beauty” produced by Richard Barone and recorded by Grammy-winning Steve Addabbo. “By The Sea” was the first time I took production into my own hands. Learning to produce, arrange and even mix “By The Sea”, with the help of producer Sam Mewton, made it possible to capture my sonic watermark of today. *I think when you’re forced to work with such limitations -- not much gear, limited*

*knowledge and few instruments -- something unique and very specific to your own sonic vision emerges.* After I laid down the lead vocal and guitar, I started with what I knew most intimately, which was the walls of my mouth and my cello. I used both quite experimentally and then Sam and I fleshed the piece out from there. I guess what instigated this trial-and-error phase of producing my own music was feeling really defeated in the recording

process in these last few years since my debut release. My sound was changing and relying on producers, however talented and wonderful, to interpret my songs wasn't bringing me closer to my own language, my own dance. It took me a while to build up the courage to get my feet wet... but I got them wet!

**WAIF:** I'm curious to know about the film aspect of this release - the vision for the song seems to tie directly to the vision for the video. Could you let us in on the nature of the collaboration with Katelyn Kopenhaver and Sam Mewton as well as the relationship between the song and the video?

**beccs:** The song would not have come into existence if it weren't for the film. The two were very symbiotic. It was right after collaborating on an audio performance art piece I was developing that K popped the question about making my next video.



***I think when you're forced to work with such limitations -- not much gear, limited knowledge and few instruments -- something unique and very specific to your own sonic vision emerges.***

Neither of us had ever made a film, but I knew we had to; I knew we were meant to grow in new ways. By the time we had shot and edited the film, I still hadn't produced or arranged anything around the demo. What pushed me to try my hand at producing was in part the fear of disappointing K. I fucked around with my voice, got my cello back, which I hadn't touched in years, and started experimenting at home. Once my

relationship to the song started to feel unskillful, I hit up Sam. He had just released his record, "Ensnaring," and I was like, "Hey I am going to send you a song that sounds nothing like what you do." I wanted to work on this song in a tactile, experimental way, one that did not subscribe to a particular style out there, and I suspected (successfully) that his approach to production and crafting soundscapes would complement the vision I had. Why hire strings when you can use sirens, the trumpet you found on the street, and affected, high-pitched, glottal cries into the mic? I mean sure it's a folk, singer-songwriter song, but I wanted my sea to surround it. So I needed to go on a hunt to find that sea....

The visual world very much informed the sonic one. I knew I wanted the final scene to contrast the lyrics. When I speak of falling in love back with myself, I wanted panic to ensue. I remember closing my eyes and



seeing it. The stakes I described to Katelyn were of a mother losing her child in the water. It's such a tender moment in the song, and I just knew it had to be more layered than just an ode to self-love. There is something violent and painful about this falling back in love with yourself.



**WAIF:** You have, I think, several different voices converging in this video - could you tell us more about their relationship to each other and what brings them to the proverbial sea with you? Who are the beccs we see in the video? Who is the beccs singing? Who is the beccs making the video?

**beccs:** The beccs by the sea during the winter is the one singing "when you're not here." She is meditating on the ephemeral loss of someone she longs for as if she has come to the water to find them. Searching for this absent figure, she finally arrives at the sea (in Verse 3) and when she arrives, they are not there. beccs panics, and "the fall" ensues.

Enter the woman on the horizon walking towards me with a towel by the sea. This beccs is love, is god, is my spiritual, the sea personified. This beccs is also me.

The beccs singing is the beccs who wrote it: naked, sweating in her old apartment with no A/C, July, about to be 45 minutes late to meet Katelyn on the beach, singing about a friend...

The beccs who made the film is the one who falls in love with someone else, the one who falls in love back with herself by trusting her

hands to make in a completely new way. She is awesome. I honestly wish I could be her every day. Maybe I can. I think I will.

After getting in touch with this new beccs, I'm looking forward to the things we'll make together. It's all very exciting.

**WAIF:** What snack are you craving right now?

**beccs:** Dude this is so embarrassing. I have a headache from eating sugar this morning (ugh cereal), so honestly I'm actually just craving my apple cider vinegar water. I'M SO SORRY.

**WAIF:** Could you share the last text message you sent?

**beccs:** It was a photo. of me. to someone lucky.

**WAIF:** What's your go-to karaoke song?

**beccs:** I hate karaoke. (Drunk in Love)

**WAIF:** What's the title of your autobiography?

**beccs:** "Raising Rebecca." Mom and I are co-writing it.

**WAIF:** What's your go-to outfit right now?

**beccs:** Mom's sports bra and a see-through black floral skirt from @shopberriez

**WAIF:** What drew you to Waif?

**beccs:** Your mission statement. It's like eating week-old Twizzlers that you brought from home at the movie theater.

**WAIF:** What does Waif mean to you?

**beccs:** I literally have no idea. It's like the anti-magazine. I wish I was cool enough to be a Waif. But I think that means I am a Waif.

**WAIF:** When are you playing live next (within or outside of NY)?

**beccs:** August 3rd at Dodge 112 for my flautist/producer friend NTHNL's record release show. We met on a mountain. Jake (from NTHNL) is so special. I just want to be his friend.

And on August 14th for the "By The Sea" release hang!!! at my Brooklyn residency at Lizzie King's Parlor. I am going to do something with postcards. Did I mention that I hand-wrote 100 original postcards for "By The Sea"? They're very intimate and mysterious. It was exhilarating writing them. If you want one, visit b at her website. [www.beccsmusic.com](http://www.beccsmusic.com) OKAY. ♦



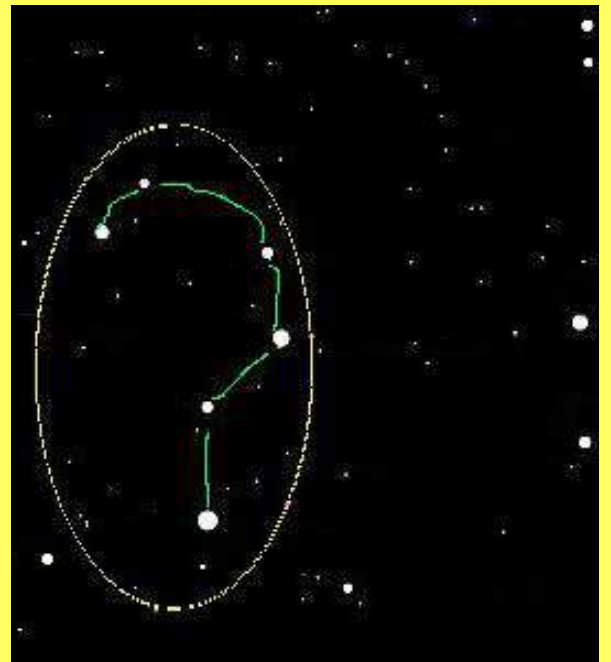
# *horoscopes for your* **hot girl summer**

2019 marks an astrological event far more life rapturing and earth-shaking than simply *another* Mercury retrograde. From June to August, the world is passing through a phase of Hot Girl Summer, a time period that coincides with Summer, but wasn't discovered in the astrological calendar until this summer.



“What is a Hot Girl Summer?” you might be wondering, as you, a millennial, anxiously wait for this intro to end so you can read your horoscope. The term was coined by rapper Megan Thee Stallion, who goes by “Hot Girl Meg” on Twitter and is the internet’s original Hot Girl Summer experimenter. Contrary to how it sounds, a Hot Girl Summer is more about self-confidence, love, and the little things that make you feel hot as opposed to how many Tinder matches you get between June and August.

Additionally, Hot Girl Summer isn't about it being hot outside or even exclusive to girls; anyone and everyone will be affected by and can have a Hot Girl Summer (I know I'm trying to). But, the true question remains: will your zodiac sign be finding love, confidence, or perhaps even sad vibes? Will your zodiac sign even be having a Hot Girl Summer or tread into Sad Girl Summer territory instead?





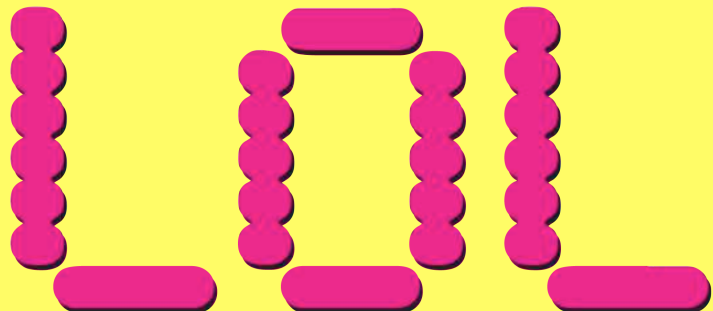
***aries (march 21 - april 19)***

Full send, dive head first, this is a summer of risks. Shoot your shot or run that marathon, you never know if you'll fail at something until you try. However, there is one exception to this: do not, however, full send and buy the electric toothbrush your dentist tries to sell you at every routine teeth cleaning. You don't need that, it's laziness and if anything this isn't a Lazy Girl Summer. Besides, the stars predict tremendous improvements in dental health this month.



***taurus (april 20 - may 20)***

This Hot Girl Summer is going to be a balancing act in terms of your stability, especially within the context of caring for Beta Fish. Your nature will desire you to put all your energy into providing your animal with serenity, but the stars are against you. You might lose a few friends with gills this Hot Girl Summer, causing you to be sad, which isn't a very Hot Girl Summer move. Thankfully, you can easily replace these fallen comrades with a quick trip to a PetSmart.



***gemini (may 21 - june 20)***

When consulting the stars about the Hot Girl Summer future of the Gemini, there was no solid answer. The stars aligned, not to show a future of the zodiac, but instead to spell out "lol." Quite literally, the stars moved around until their formation literally resembled that of the text "lol." Take that message (as multi-sided as you as people are) as you will.



### **cancer (june 21 - july 22)**

You've always had Nice Girl Summer in the past -- Nice Girl Summers where, even though your birthday lands in the midst of it, you still take on the docile, sympathetic Cancer attitude we all know and love. But don't be like that this summer. Choose to have your Hot Girl Summer or decide to finally book that trip to Barcelona with your best friend from middle school. This summer will be a big one for love as well, but only if you're in Barcelona.

### **leo (july 23 - august 22)**

Oh Leo, you're always having a Hot Girl Summer, almost obnoxiously so. Be wary of trends this summer; don't give into buying a puka shell necklace just because it seems "in." Expand your wardrobe. Be willing to make a bold statement by experiencing the cycle of Hot Girl Summer in your middle school PE uniform (you know the one). The XL pair of navy shorts that you would roll up to expose more leg and that had mysterious stains in areas you could only imagine how they got there (since after all they were unisex outfits). And the size XXL grey shirt with your name Sharpied in the corner. Give it a comeback. Show the world that you're a Leo and can Hot Girl Summer in anything.

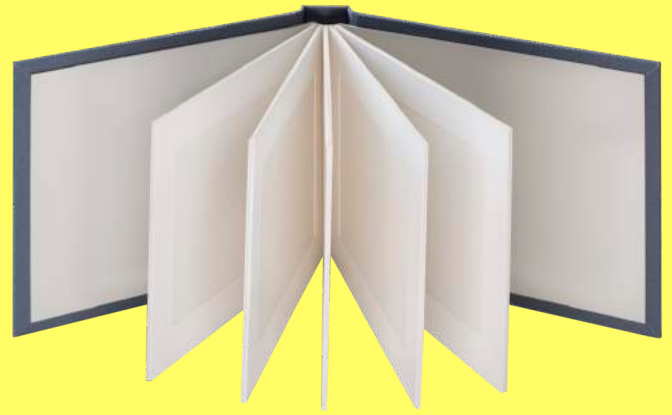


### **virgo (august 23 - september 22)**

On August 1st, your mom is going to give you a call at exactly 2:17am. She is not going to say hi or address you by your name, but will only inform you, in a hushed tone, to listen exactly to what she has to say. Your mother will inform you to leave your house, steal your roommate's car keys, and drive to a location she can only give you in X, Y coordinates. Once you arrive there, you embark on a four-hour journey to find a specific red-marked stone amongst the thousands of others in the quarry - did I mention the location is a quarry? It is. Once you've located the rock, you will use it to break your borrowed car's window to attract the attention of the police. From there, your mom will instruct you to run to the nearest 7/11 parking lot and enter the back seat of a 2007 Cherry Red Honda Accord with a "My son is an Eagle Scout" bumper sticker on the back. Once you get in, you will buckle up, it's the law. You'll think it's weird you had to sit in the back instead of in the passenger seat. When the car starts, the driver (who you believe at this point to be your mom) will turn around. It's not your mom, it's former *Full House* star John Stamos. You'll wake up, a weird fever dream because yes this whole time you will have a 101 degree fever and the flu.

**libra (september 23 - october 22)**

This month will be a great month to begin new hobbies! Try scrapbooking!



**scorpio (october 23 - november 21)**

This Hot Girl Summer you'll be haunted by past events, specifically the traumatic experience you went through during your middle school *Annie Jr.* audition when you accidentally forgot the lyrics to "Tomorrow" and pissed your pants on stage. And then you got cast as her dog's understudy, which retrospectively might have been a little degrading because they cast a real dog to play the role. And then your parents missed the matinee where the understudies performed because they decided to go to your neighbor's T-ball



**sagittarius (november 22 - december 21)**

This is a great time to invest in your four-year-old niece's lemonade stand. The stars have shown that she's going to be the next Bill Gates. Get her to sign something now so that 20 years from now you'll constantly be having a Hot Rich Girl Summer.





**capricorn (december 22 - january 19)**

Dear Capricorn, this will be an unusual time for you. Things will change. People may come into your life or they may leave. You might have success, you might fail. You might find your soulmate, you might be lonely. You might have a Hot Girl Summer, you might not. You might be robbed by your tinder date while you're sleeping after your hookup, you might not.

**aquarius (january 20 - february 18)**

Be yourself; everyone else is taken (:



**pisces (february 19 - march 20)**

Remember to drink water. Also, delete Co-Star; you've been using that app too much and how much can you really trust astrology? For all you know, it's some college girl sitting in her dorm room creating your horoscope.

*waif.*  
*not waif.*  
*fashion.*  
*refuse.*

*waif*

*Read Waif Magazine at [iswaif.com](http://iswaif.com)*



# ***THE MONSTER'S MONSTER//***

*By Mara Lee Gilbert*





It was roughly 3:30am, one October morning years ago, after a late-night shift at one of New York City's most visited Halloween attractions: a warehouse set up as a maze of hallways and rooms, with interactive horror scenes playing out, unique to each new turn the audience would wind through. After eight hours of behaving as depraved and grotesquely as we could fathom; in order to cause feelings of terror, unease, disgust, and intrigue in our guests; we actors were ravenous. Unleashed unto the city, our uninhibited state lingering in our bodies, we sat down at our usual diner to satisfy our overwhelming need to be satiated.

This particular morning, I had a popped blister on my right hand, between my pointer and middle fingers. I had been portraying a pole dancing vampire (a la *From Dusk Til*

*Dawn*), and one part of my "scare" choreography was to spin around the pole, revealing my hideous face exactly when the audience was just close enough to my stage, and just intrigued enough to wonder what was going to happen next. The art of seducing people into a scare was something I had been thrown into exploring, having been cast in this role, with the desire to master it looming large in my soul. The spin was essential; and my hand paid the price. But I had a low thudding thrill at the sight of my injury (one of many during my time there): physical evidence of my willingness to conquer the challenge set in front of me.

The loose skin kept getting snagged on everything I touched, causing pain. Uninhibited as I mentioned we were, I examined it, holding it up, there at the table, glistening with its serosanguinous drainage (the mixture of blood and fluid accompanying open wounds), as we waited for our food to arrive. I was pulling at the skin, deciding whether to rip it off now, or when I got home, when the man sitting on my right side, for whom I had the tingles, grasped my hand, pulling it close to him.

"You poor thing," he said. "Let's fix this now." And before I could blink, he whipped a large knife out of his pocket, cut the gooey flap from my extremity, popped it into his mouth, chewed briefly, and swallowed it; all the while looking directly into my eyes. I drew a quick breath in, wanting desperately to suck on the mouth that had just held this bit of my own sheathing inside of it.

Needless to clarify, the moment was wildly erotic. I think of it fondly to this day, feeling tingly every time. And I believe it would be difficult to find someone over the age of thirteen who would not recognize the powerful sexuality of what I've described here, even if the reaction is mixed with horror and disgust. For it is a fascinating phenomenon that moments of intensity, even if they are un stomachable, often lead us into a state of sexual arousal.

But that's confusing, right? And although I believe most people will recognize the sexual nature of my blister eating experience, I also believe that some of those who recognize it will disagree that something grotesque leads to sexual sensations.

Nonetheless, after years of exploration, through my work both as an artist, and a caregiver within psychiatric facilities, here's where my thoughts lie on it:

As sex is a primal need to ensure the survival of the species, so it is once we have *survived* the moment of disgust, of horror, of possible death, that our life-creating instincts get activated (in this period of relief from the fear).

Perhaps it is the molecular equivalent of thinking: Oh, right, I will die one day, I better make sure I do my part to continue my species! Relief has a way of creating a sense of safety (true or not); safety feels good - especially after we thought we might die, or be harmed - and so we become uninhibited. Primal.

I will acknowledge here that there is a spectrum of threshold for this response and particularly that sexual trauma can obliterate it. However, as human nature is as complex as how the universe manages to exist, there is always someone who will be turned on by what surpasses our personal threshold of horror to the point total shutdown, or turn-off.

*We like to deem the people who surpass our thresholds as monsters. And yet, we each surpass somebody's threshold. So we are always somebody else's monster. And aren't monsters sexy, in this weird, complicated way?*

I'd like to point out that I'm not condoning the harm of any other human being or creature. But the human reality we are currently collectively experiencing includes that harming others exists. And to some degree, we all get turned on by this. What I'm

referring to here is the universal "human condition," or the experience of being human. If you were to start to define what it means to be human, would you be able to describe it without including the experience

of pain; of being harmed by another (even minutely so), or of harming another? No. We harm others in all types of ways, often without ill intention behind it; but sometimes so - such as to kill an insect we view as an invasion in our personal space, and all the way up to

intentional murder. Consider a time you've executed intentional harm in defense of yourself, such as standing up to a bully, or telling someone the painful truth of how they make you feel. Does not some part of you feel sexy, or activated in a way? Powerful? Can any of us deny that feeling powerful makes us want to have sex?

A way for us to explore this darker side of ourselves safely, without causing anyone actual harm, is to create fantasized versions of the things we are afraid of, and would

***"We like to deem the people who surpass our thresholds as monsters. And yet, we each surpass somebody's threshold. So we are always somebody else's monster. And aren't monsters sexy, in this weird, complicated way?"***



label disgusting. Enormous amounts of energy and resources get poured into such endeavors. I paid for a trip to Barcelona doing just that, spinning around that blister-inducing pole. And yes, I had sex during the trip.

Yet, it doesn't even have to be fantasy, such as the thrill of watching a good (or even a bad) slasher movie. Consider our fascination towards murder, dismemberment, cannibalism, necrophilia. We have entire television networks dedicated to telling us



these real life horror stories, in which real people were terrorized, tortured, and killed. We want to know the details. Some of us want to see the photos. We want to see the real blood, the real broken limbs, the real human innards spread across a floor or road. Someone hit by a car. Someone who committed suicide by jumping off of a roof. We can Google those photos and see the gore that makes us flinch, makes us squirm, makes us gasp, makes us clench in our stomachs as our faces grimace. We can even see the similarly grimaced faces of the bodies in many of these photos. We're safe as the witness in this way.

It's interesting to point out here that the "money-shot" in porn films most often involves the face, particularly if we're watching a female-identified orgasm,

regardless of genitalia. What's the point of watching an orgasm (faked or not), if we can't see the expression on the performer's face? And how do we really feel about porn as a society? Isn't it most popularly considered disgusting and to be ashamed of? Getting off alone in the dark watching someone else go through something that generally makes us feel uncomfortable. If you have ever been ashamed of your own orgasm from watching porn, did it make you question if there was something monstrously wrong with you? Especially if it was unclear how consensual the scene was as it played out?

I'd like to take a brief turn here and ask what makes us more repulsed: that we might be watching something nonconsensual, or that we are actually watching something highly consensual and in fact enjoyed? Some people will find it more palatable to accept that they've witnessed someone else's real, unwanted pain, even if they were turned on by it, than that they've witnessed a person in a state of pleased acceptance of what they're doing. This type of aversion gets stronger the more rigid a definition we hold in regards to how things should be. Here is another way we keep ourselves safe: to define what is and what is not disgusting to us according to our larger definition of how things should be. It's like an invisible barrier, keeping us safe inside of some kind of knowledge we claim as truth.

In biology, the physical response of disgust is there to keep us physically safe; i.e., so as not to eat something that could kill us. It's not always easy to untangle an attempt to feel mentally safe from this primitive survival instinct of physical safety. Especially as, survival instinct will override our disgust response wherein engaging in possibly dangerous situations may actually serve our survival. Quite a tangled knot, isn't it?

Cannibalism can fall under here. Drinking one's own urine (or perhaps another's) when water is unavailable in emergency situations. Crossing into uncharted territory to find better resources. This is also true of sex itself. Sex can expose us to a myriad of dangerous microorganisms that have the potential to kill us. But sexual arousal kicks

in, pushing us into threat territory so that we may survive. So here is a great dilemma many of us face: having the mental definition of something being grotesque and dangerous, yet feeling our sexual turn-on override this, pushing us to engage, in some way, in the behavior. Sometimes a witness feels like the safest way. But that doesn't leave us safe from being ostracized by our society, whom we believe shares our definitions. Ostracization leaves us vulnerable to things that can kill us. And so we hide in the dark, like a monster.

Let me now offer some imagery: lips parting ever so slightly, so that a bright pink tongue can emerge, moist from the salivation of desire. The tongue undulates forward towards a round, sticky, red head that's just emerged from its enclosure. Saliva drips from the tongue, mixing with the fluids on the firm, fresh, warm mound of the head as it licks it clean.

You might be turned on after reading that. You might be disgusted. You might be both. It probably depends on what you've imagined the tongue is licking. It could be a woman licking the head of an erection. It could be a man doing the same thing. It could be someone of any sex licking the birthing fluids off of a newborn baby.

Some human mothers do feel this instinctual urge, a behavior witnessed by almost all of our mammalian brethren. But does reframing it that way shut down your turn-on or not? And what is causing the disgust factor? That such an act could involve sexual desire (rather than the platonic desire of a mother to

clean her child, aiding its survival)? Or simply the reframed image of what the fluids are that are being licked? Perhaps a mixture of both coming together in layers while digesting the description. For some people, however, this remains a sensual and erotic image. These are much the same fluids that might be ingested during oral sex after all, especially if the woman is menstruating. (...how does that image land for you?). What level of our sexual survival over disgusted survival dilemma is getting aroused in you?

Here's a freakier-deaky: Some of us undoubtedly want to name a monster here. There is a natural human urge to destroy that



which we believe will cause harm (that sexy feeling of being powerful, remember?). And most certainly when sexual desire is attached to any being that cannot consent, there is the potential for harm. But yet, we then step into the role of desiring something the other human being would likely not consent to. We would be causing harm to another being. We are the monster's monster - for we are coming for them. We want no place for them to hide. We're out for blood.

Now, imagine you've hunted down your prey; the great threat to you and your tribe. The rage inside you is surging with the thought of the harm they have done and will do again. And you've caught them. You've slit their throat, seeing it spread open, spewing it's juice. You've watched to make sure they were completely dead. You could see it in their eyes as the last place life drains from their face in the

***“When we’re stuck in our own knot of dilemma between sexual survival and disgusted survival, it’s so much easier to create demons than untangle the knot.”***

blood pool expanding around them. You’re safe. The tribe is safe because of you. Life can continue. And suddenly, there’s great relief rolling down through your body, still pulsing from the strength it took to commit murder. It’s quite possible you will now be incredibly turned on and ready to pounce on a different kind of prey. What dark desires get unleashed at this, your own doing? What of your own definitions have you obliterated?

There’s a final turn in the maze to consider here. If we didn’t desire the destruction of our monsters, giving them something to fear, and a reason to hide, might they be able to step forward and ask for our help? Let’s go backwards and say we live in a collectively defined human reality where we do not fear potentially harmful desires. We’ve never feared them. When we discuss what it is to be human, pain isn’t a scary concept (or it might not even be a concept at all). Where “monster” isn’t an idea that we’re aware of to define. Where we’re free to disembowel, play with, consume, and digest the human experience in all its complexities. That doing so allows us to safely, consentingly explore the uncomfortable sensations we relate to harm. There would be little, if any, place for monster-level damage to exist. So then, who is actually the seed of the harm?

When we’re stuck in our own knot of dilemma between sexual survival and disgusted survival, it’s so much easier to create demons than untangle the knot. And as we define these demons, will they not live up to our expectations? We will see and experience the stuff of our life as we have defined it: desirable, beautiful, grotesque, threatening. Perhaps our own vilifying of certain types of desires is the semen entering

the egg of our disgust, creating a monster. We have defined something that needs to survive, after-all. If monsters don’t survive, we’d have to untangle our knots. So we move towards sexual survival, it seems, inseminating ourselves with our own repulsive ideas of a threat. And there, inside of us, it grows, causing sensations we may or may not enjoy. Sensations that scare us. Sensations reminding us that we want to survive. And soon enough, it will push out, emerging, sticky and warm, the fruit of our loins. Will we lick it clean after it’s born? Or hunt it down after it suddenly spins round to face us? Either choice has the potential to create more monsters. We desire this to be so, for we are all the monster in some way to some being, and we desire to survive. ♦



# ***THE HAUTE WAIF//***

***Summer is Hot but we like it Hauter***

***Photographed by Lavender Katz***

***Modeled by Sina Al Qamar, Leaf Levy & Giani Jones***



















*FICTION*

***FACE  
OF THE  
COMPA  
-NY//***

*By Misha Brooks*



I woke up sweating on the floor of Jean's office with a feather stuck to my mouth. I could smell my own sweat instantly and I wondered if maybe that's what had jolted me awake. I wish Jean's office wasn't so hot. A lot of the interns slept in their boss's office, but most were cool and nice, and mine was hot and humid. I grabbed at the little hamburger clock on Jean's desk and smiled when I saw it was 8 am. I probably had a solid hour before she came in so I laid back down, stuffed a duck carcass between my legs, and tried to ignore the rain smacking against the windows. Rain used to calm me down when I was a kid. I think that was true for everyone. Now it's more like grandma's white noise machine. It gets in my head, messes up my ability to think. And these days it freaks me out, makes me think about Mom on the shore, waves lapping against her window in what used to be central Brooklyn.

Last year when grandma's house in Queens flooded, my parents decided to get divorced, which was all fine by me except it made my commute near impossible. Dad took Grandma back upstate, which was also fine by me. She'd become so depressingly mean in her old age, I couldn't stand to be around her. She would lie in bed, next to her incessant white noise machine and look blankly at me with senile eyes. And I'd sit across the bed from her 'cause I knew it made Dad upset when she was alone too long; I was just trying to do good by Dad and be a good grandson. But every time she looked like she had dozed off and I would go over to turn off the machine, she'd jolt awake and ask me something like 'why was I so short?', or 'did I have a girlfriend?.' And I'd shake my head or say no and she'd cough in disappointment and rest her head back down. So in a not-small way, I was pretty happy Grandma was gone. Talk about short and single, that woman couldn't even use her legs. I shouldn't say that, and anyway that's not the point. The point is: Dad went upstate and Mom moved to an apartment in Canarsie off the L, which nowadays barely runs. Even before DeBlasio got hit by that train, there was too much water for the trains to run with any real

consistency. So now, I usually sleep at work, and usually don't see Mom. But I shouldn't complain; lots of kids my age don't work, and even the ones that do don't have cushy jobs in The Shack, where no one bothers them when they fall asleep slumped over their boss's chair.

I woke up for the second time that morning to the hamburger clock crying out that 9am had rolled around. When I say no one bothers you for falling asleep, I don't really mean it. You can't sleep during work hours and you can't sleep if your boss is around, so I felt pretty lucky the alarm woke me before Jean did. I popped up and ran to the bathroom to run my shirt under the hand dryer.

Sometimes you forget you work at a fashion company until you're running coffee into a meeting and the designers kind of flinch when your sleeve brushes their nose as you hand them their latte. And then Jean pulls you aside and says you embarrassed her and that if you want to dress in your brother's hand-me-downs you might as well work with the guys who scrub the barnacles off the side of the building. So I make sure to dry off my shirt as much as possible, which actually isn't my brother's. I'm an only child and the shirt was a gift from Mom.

***“Kill the duck outside please, Lawson. You smell horrible.”***

When I got back to the office, I saw the carcass I had tucked between my legs was up and quacking around, which was no good at all. The ducks weren't even supposed to be in the building 'cause of health codes, but there was nowhere else to deal with them, so it was definitely a don't-ask-don't-tell situation. I grabbed the little rainbow hen by the legs and she screamed and kicked and bit me while I tried to get a good grip on her neck. I had almost wrung out the shrieking thing when the door swung open and Jean walked in. I expected her to shout, but she looked sad more than anything. she shook her head and said, "Can't you do that somewhere else?" I mumbled an apology and tried not to make too much eye contact.

"I have an early meeting," she gestured at the open door. I began to apologize again, but

she cut me off: "Kill the duck outside please, Lawson. You smell horrible." I walked out, duck-in-hand, as she closed the door behind me with a sigh. She wasn't too bad - not that mean most of the time, just kind of troubled. She walks around the office looking at the ground, getting snapped at by other designers and then snapping at the interns. I can't imagine she likes her life. I wonder if she has a family at home or maybe her mom is trapped far out like mine. Maybe she hasn't seen her in months and when she does it just upsets her. Maybe she spends her days picturing her poor mom squatted and scared on a wicker chair in the living room as water seeps under her door and vines crack through the wall behind her. Maybe, like me, her childhood home was also swept up by flash floods. Maybe she also watched her stuffed animals float down Flatbush Ave.

I spent the rest of my day killing ducks. That was my main job. Sometimes I brought coffee to meetings, but mostly I killed ducks. I don't know what exactly the ducks are for. It's something to do with their gland, a little pink orb we yank out from right at the base their necks. I only know that 'cause I'm the guy that yanks them out. Other than that, it's pretty hush-hush around here, a lot more secrets than you'd expect at a clothing company. At four, we broke for lunch. Sarafina, another intern, carted down a load of pre-sorted and pre-drained ducks, and began prepping our meal. Before Sarafina joined up, the interns just ate the allotted Shake Shack for all meals, but Sarafina changed all that. After her arrival, the ducks were transformed into po' boys and dumplings, confit and barbeque. She was pretty clumsy - always fumbling around with fabrics, tripping over her own clothes - but in the kitchen she was a genius. Today we prepared for Peking. I was slicing cucumbers into perfectly even batons as Sarafina instructed, when I saw Jean stepping into the elevator, bag in hand. We locked eyes and I saw her face shift to some dull expression of embarrassment: mouth turned down, brow furrowed. I smiled and tried to do it in a way that said, "It's OK that you're leaving work now. It's OK I've still got hours before I'm done. No judgment from me. I don't know your life." I don't really know if a smile can

say all that, but she didn't smile back. Her face just went blank and she dipped into the elevator.

After lunch, it was time for me to finish all of the work Jean hadn't done. Not the big stuff, just the things that I'm not even positive she knows she's supposed to do. I sat down at her computer and popped open her cluttered desktop. I cleared away one-pot recipes and crazy expensive apartment listings in uptown Manhattan, the only dry place in the five boroughs - I mean it still rains there, but most of the water runs down to Manhattan Valley. I cleared up the desktop for a few more minutes and started replying to emails with Jean's signature: "Sound's good! I'll get on it as soon as I'm back in the office... J." I try not to read the emails. I'm not interested in finding out if they're killing something worse than ducks, but sometimes things pop out like a word or something and that will catch my eye. This time the whole email caught my eye: "Model Casting: Men above 6 feet. Pay: 1000/day for 10 days, please bring headshot. 46<sup>th</sup> floor" Jean had been cc'd I guess so she could bring some clothing for the models to wear. I stared at the email for a few seconds thinking about what a thousand dollars would feel like in my pocket, rubbing against my thigh. And then I thought about those apartment listings uptown and hopping on a 2 train to visit Mom and removing the letter L from my life once and for all. I couldn't bear the thought of leaving Mom seaside when here I had a chance to do something about it. So I emailed back, "Sound's good! I'll get on it as soon as I'm back in the office... J," while I stuffed my shoes with printer paper (I'm 5'9) and took selfies on Jean's computer until I had something I thought might pass as a headshot. Then I speed-walked through the hall, stepping over dead birds with the most joy I'd felt in a long time.

I rode the elevator to the 46<sup>th</sup> floor and followed the signs to the holding room, which was a corner office with carpet that smelled nice and were duck-blood-free. It took me a little bit to realize the only real scent on the 46<sup>th</sup> floor was me—that besides being the shortest boy in the room, I was the smelliest and ugliest. The other guys there were big and thin with tired-looking eyes and sharp

jaws, but I tried not to feel discouraged. I wiped my armpits with the back of my hands and then wiped them on my jeans as a redheaded man much smaller than me called us boys in one by one to be seen. I was last because apparently everyone else had “signed-up” ahead of time. The little man anxiously swiped at his nose and squinted at me sitting alone in the office. “Come on,” he said and motioned for me to follow him. I looked at his beautiful, waterproof suit as we strutted down the hall towards large, wooden double doors. I had never seen clothes so nice. I mean I had seen them in Jean’s designs, but never worn by a real person. I always forget that this company is more than a slaughterhouse.

I felt pretty sick as the man pushed open the double doors and I stepped into a huge room with red plush walls and no windows. It had been ages since I’d seen a room without little green vines climbing up the seams of the walls. This looked like it was out of a movie. At the far end of the room was a little folding table with a woman sorting papers sitting behind it. She had curly, black hair up in a bun, and even though she was a good ways away from me, I could see a fat gap between her front teeth that calmed my stomach for some reason. The little man whispered in my ear: “What’s your name?” I told him, and he yelled across the room “This is Lawson!” Gap-tooth looked up and called me over.

“Have a seat,” she said. I sat in an old, metal folding chair and looked at my hands. “Do I know you from somewhere?”

“I don’t think so,” I muttered. I would have remembered seeing her before. Her nails were clicking on the table. Each a different shade of blue.

“I take it you’ve never modeled before.”

“I haven’t, no”

“But you think you’re right for our international campaign?”

“I – I don’t. I didn’t know it was exactly for an – “

“Lawson listen – I don’t mind someone who’s an amateur. There are thousands of beautiful men in New York City, I’m sure you’ve seen them everywhere. I need someone with personality. Someone who feels *real*. Do you understand?”

“I think I –“

“I remember where I know you from, Lawson,” she squinted her eyes. “You’re an intern downstairs on the design floor.” I was silent. I didn’t know if it was against the rules for me to be here. I certainly wasn’t supposed to read Jean’s email. She continued: “This is

exactly what I’m talking about.

We’ve been called out-of-touch. We’ve been called snobs, but we’ve never had someone like you. You’re a worker. You’re a little worker bee buzzing around this city, completely unaware of your potential. These other boys expect the world to be handed to them.

You know some of

those boys are fifteen! They don’t have a rain free memory. It makes them soft and stupid.

But you... you are different. I can tell.

Lawson, I want to make you the face of our company. How does that sound?”

I said yes, obviously. And the ten days for ten thousand dollars, turned into ten months and six hundred thousand dollars. Then ten years and eleven million dollars . I showered everyday, slept in real beds, and didn’t eat an ounce of duck the whole time. I traveled all over the country. I saw the tornadoes in the Midwest, and the hurricanes in the South. I saw fires burning in the West, and not once did I feel scared. My face covered billboards and TV screens. I went to meetings in Hollywood and Silicon Valley. I became a

***“I don’t mind someone who’s an amateur. There are thousands of beautiful men in New York City, I’m sure you’ve seen them everywhere. I need someone with personality. Someone who feels real.”***

fashion icon. I saw a paper compare me to Marilyn Monroe. I saw a magazine call me Marie Antoinette. It said that I'd turned my back on the place I came from, that because I was now so rich I had no concern for the plight of the average American, and I didn't recognize that the world had changed and that the climate would never return to what it once was, and I was wasting my time and stealing money from the poor by selling them things they didn't need. But if life is short like they say, why couldn't I be happy?

I met a girl in Chicago and married her. She was a Kennedy, so we attended Kennedy events like polo games, where horses sloshed through soaked fields as jockeys wiped rain out of their eyes. We bought a house in Chicago, and hung paintings by artists I'd never heard of and bought furniture that we couldn't sit on. I went to charity dinners and stole silverware as a joke. We had a daughter named Toni, and we fed her almonds and grapes and gave her little rabbits carved out of chocolate. We sent her to a nice private school on the North Side. She made friends with another girl named Sadie and I started working a little less so I could stay in Chicago and cook them grilled cheese when they got home from school. I took them to see Lake Michigan and the pier and I cried once as they swam in the shallow waters thinking that they'll never know a sunny day, a day without rain. Another time, when I was doing a shoot in New Orleans, I looked down from my hotel room window and saw camps of people spreading for miles from the base of the building. The tents were being battered by rain, and all I could feel was thankful it wasn't me down there, sucking the blood out of the neck of a duck, saving the feathers to make clothes. I was thankful I had the means to give Toni the life I didn't have when I was a kid.

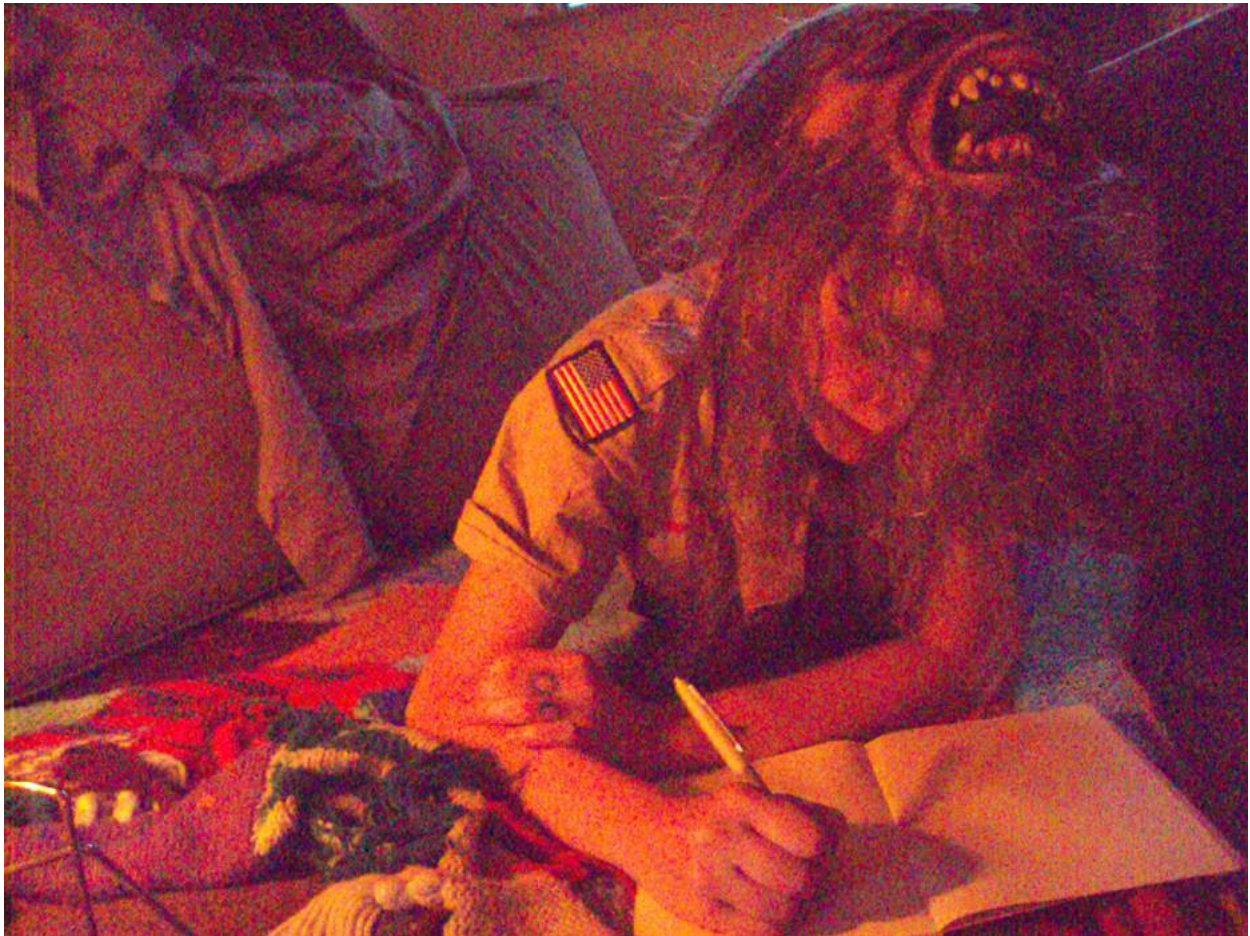
Then, in December, my wife and I went to New York to count down the ball drop on Dick Clark's New Year's show. As our plane dipped over Long Island and descended into JFK, I glimpsed Canarsie out the window. When we landed I kissed my wife and told her I'd meet up with her at the hotel. I hopped in a taxi and gave the driver my mom's address. We drove for awhile. I looked out

the window and saw how much had changed. The sidewalks had eroded. The manhole covers had rusted. There were vines of ivy everywhere. Kids played shirtless under the tracks of the L train, which by this point looked like it hadn't run in years. At some point, the driver stopped and said "this is as far as the car will go." I paid him and got out, and saw that this was as far as anyone could go. A hundred feet ahead, where Mom's house should've been, was just ocean - great, green-blue water, swishing and absorbing the pellets of rain that ceaselessly battered it. I looked out over all this and watched as seagulls landed on the L tracks jutting out into the great expanse. ♦

***NOTES  
FROM  
CAMP//***

***Modeled by Eliah Eason***



















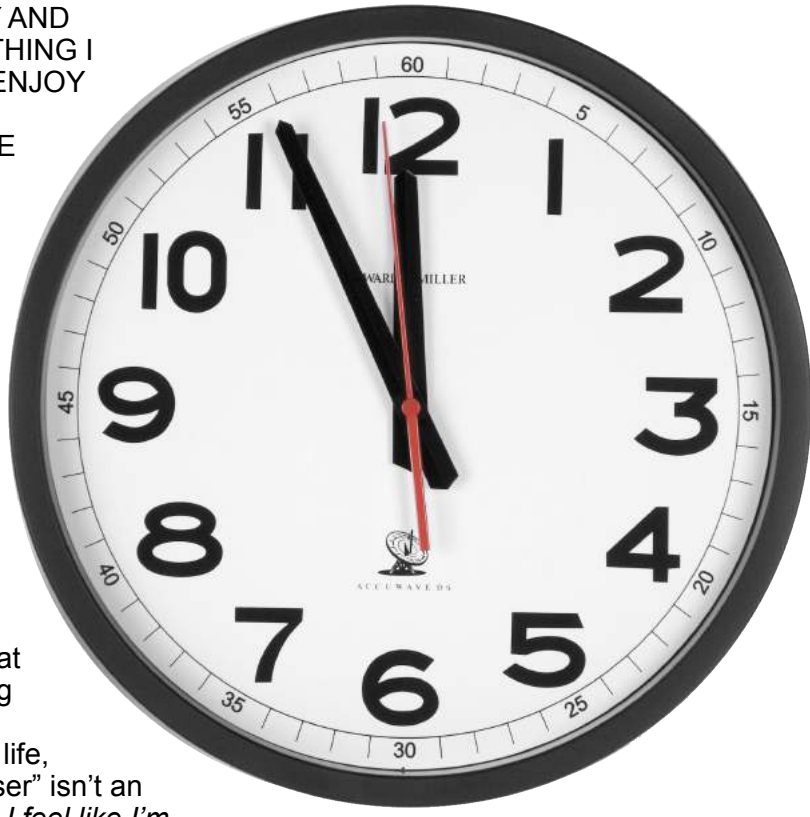
*OPINION*

***HOW MUCH  
FUN DO  
GRANDMAS  
ACTUALLY  
HAVE? //***

*By Karma Hasbach*

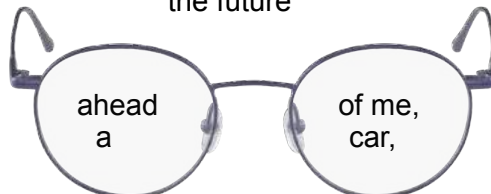
Realizing things sucks.

In the past four months I've begun to realize that TIME IS PASSING UNCONTROLLABLY AND LITERALLY EVERYTHING I KNOW, LOVE AND ENJOY IS ALREADY DETERMINED TO BE GONE AND OVER. This realization, as you can imagine, is a very uncomfortable thing to live with. I'm pretty sure this has a lot to do with growing. I have grown so much in the last two years that I can't even begin to comprehend how much I've changed. I have also realized that by growing I'm getting closer to the BIG MILESTONES of my life, although "getting closer" isn't an accurate expression. *I feel like I'm being pushed against my milestones, like the past is pressing onto my back and my face is crushed against the things for which I've been waiting my whole life.* But I'm not ready to welcome them, because they signalize all of the time I've lost without realizing I should appreciate it.



I feel like I'm disappointing my younger self, who thought that at eighteen I would be in a relationship, know what exactly I want to be doing with all the future

drive wine, talk to and boys ahead a without blushing and stuttering. Instead, I am a

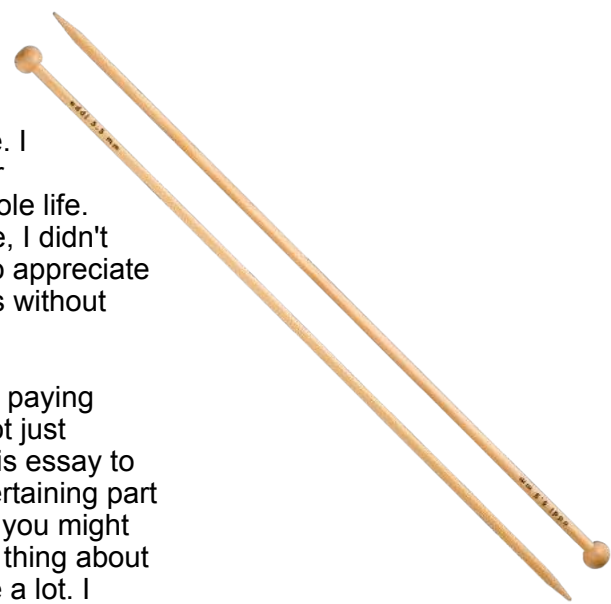
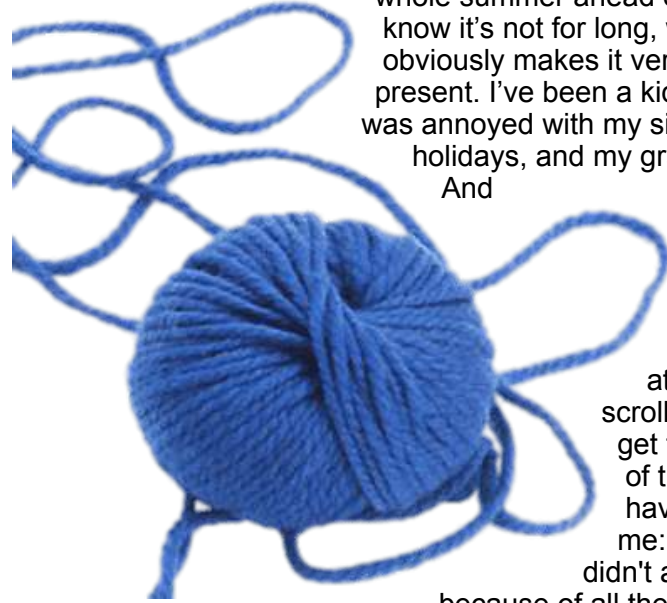


late bloomer with little partying experience who likes to stay in and isn't allowed to get a driver's license. I accept that I am a grandma. I like going to bed early, I enjoy cooking and keeping my surroundings clean, and I don't contribute to the discussions about "The Top 10 Sex Positions" held in my classroom. But I also like fun. And sometimes I just can't avoid asking myself

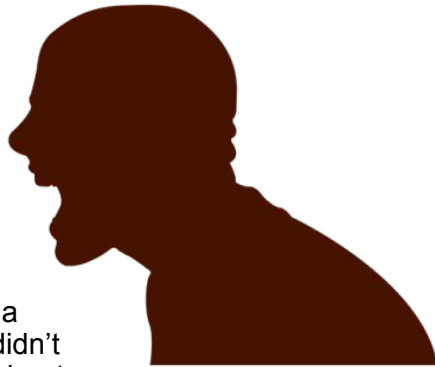
how fun do actually much grandmas have?

There is at least one situation every day that makes me realize that I will eventually have to say goodbye. This realization leaves me kind of numb inside. Like, I can't be sad because I still see my sisters every day, I still cook dinner with my mother, I still swim in the lake with my friends and I still have the whole summer ahead of me. But I know it's not for long, which obviously makes it very hard to be present. I've been a kid my whole life. I was annoyed with my sisters, summer holidays, and my grandma my whole life. And for a long time, I didn't know how to appreciate these things without being sad.

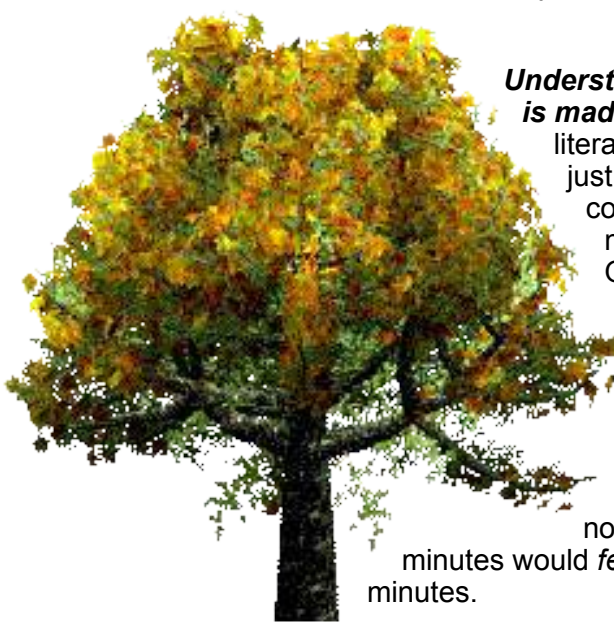
If you've been paying attention and not just scrolling through this essay to get to a more entertaining part of this magazine, you might have noticed one thing about me: I overthink life a lot. I didn't admit this for a while because of all the cringe-worthy quotes about overthinking I've stumbled upon during my time on the internet. Where other people see a simple situation, I see a hundred issues. Where other people just have fun, I think about how to, why, for how long, and if I should have fun.



While writing this essay, I had one of the best experiences of my summer. I went to a music festival with my friends, which I haven't done before. I never truly had the teenage experience of going there with people my age and having real fun, without parents, family friends, or siblings. And it was good. It made realize why people want to do all the things I usually frown upon, like camping, sweating, drinking, shouting and such -- because it's fun. But the reason I'm including this in here is that while I was there, I didn't think about the fact that I'm living a memory, and I didn't contemplate about how I'm going to feel about it in the future. I just enjoyed the moment and if a Deep Depressing Philosophical Thought™ popped up in my head, I let it go.

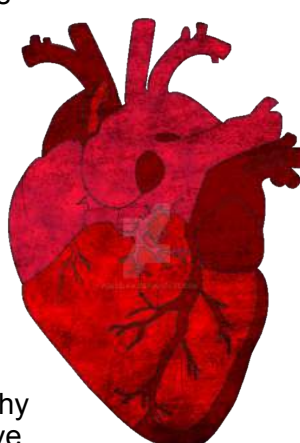


This small success made me realize I could actually turn this emotional but not really useful piece of writing into a short guide for people, well, like me. Because I am almost sure I'm not the only one who has these feelings. So here are a few tips from a professional on how to enjoy things that are temporary:



**Understand that time is made up.** Like literally, someone just started counting and now it's 2019. Of course, seasons change in nature and babies grow and all, but if you didn't have a clock, not all five minutes would feel like five minutes.

**Don't listen to your brain (all the time).** I used to think that focusing on my thoughts made me a smart person. In certain conditions, wandering away and coming up with theories is great, but if you are trying to be present, it's not smart at all. If you're having trouble ignoring it, try copying the environment with your inner voice. At a concert sing the melody in your head, in the train imitate the sound of the rails etc. And most importantly, remember why you want to be present and give yourself a push to be.



Being present makes me feel whole. It seems as if all of the contrasting aspects of my personality can exist at the same time. Freeing myself from the conceptualization of my life means I don't need to define myself all the time anymore, I just have to be. Not thinking about the different things I like and enjoy but simply liking and enjoying them has made the differences between them less frustrating. I still realize summer is going to end one day, and so is high school, childhood, youth and eventually life. I still feel like crying when I'm hugging my grandma sometimes. It still makes me sad sometimes. But now I know that by trying to explain to myself what I'm feeling and why, by observing all of the tones of my emotions, I won't stop feeling sad. I will just be more confused.



So now, emotional instead of getting all and philosophical, I realize summer isn't over yet, and neither is high school, childhood, youth or life. ♦



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