

LESBIANS *or* MIRACLES

NOSTALGIA





LESBIANS ARE MIRACLES

MAGAZINE

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No. 11

NOSTALGIA

Landlines, AOL Instant Messenger, waiting for your crush at her locker, Tumblr blogs, Live Journal, Lisa Frank, sleepovers, Britney Spears' debut on the pop charts, bucket hats, best friends, lava lamps, peace signs, Veruca Salt, Myspace Top Eights, cafeteria politics, flip phones, Trapper Keepers, Shirley Manson, snap bracelets, first concerts, first cars, first parties, first girlfriends, first kisses, first breakups, first heartbreaks, first triumphs.

This issue is a time capsule of our queer pasts, sentimental yearnings, wistful affections. We dedicate "Nostalgia" to the preternaturally cool, tortured, hopeful baby dyke in all of us. We see you, we love you, we are forever indebted to you.

*Lia Ottaviano
Lesbians are Miracles*









honeysuckle breath

by Billye Dotson

something sweet and strange as a peachcot kiss, holding hands in
the dark laying on the hood of her car, our secret. not feeling far from
the stars but there aren't any rivers in this town to carry us away. I can
hear the coyotes howl, and they howl for the rain to come and drown
this sagebrush summer that thirsts for the stir of dust, the smell of
earth, for something old and something new

she teaches me about the honeysuckle
did you know you can eat the middles? here, you take them like this
she took my hand in hers and pulled the flower from the earth,
then showed me with her tongue to pluck the petals from the stem
and watch your step around the edge because the nectar is delicious,
but the berries are poisonous

night always turns to day, eventually. and she did — to hands that
never meet and just miss, to long silences, to stale and tired coffee
breath, the loss of innocence, to a furtive stinging glance, and to an
unspoken understanding to pretend we never happened







Fleet Services

by Lauren Hurrell

I missed the morning, I often do
beyond the cherry tree sheltered table
beyond sliding doors, you craft breakfast
a band in aligned chaos, bacon finds me with the cat
we eat on Willow plates by July's dew-pearled grass.
This home not ours but we dream and you find
the child in me, this golden, sunshiny thing.

A fondness in your name grew from me
like a bluebell, your silhouette took shape
in smoke rings and woodsmoke, biting whiskey
That Spring dropped a pin on our map
the view from the passenger seat,
red plaid blanket strewn on the backseat.
I like it here, what's behind your eyes?

You remind me of nostalgic things
Your old-fashioned habits, bookshops, coffee beans
flannel shirts and Patsy Cline, the silk-soft hair of your nape
I soothe your callused hands
between my paint-speckled fingers
wishing I could heal your grazed corners
not to feel softness but so you will feel mine.

Read me the Judy Grahn, a symmetry
Our love language exists in multitudes
Of touch, toast, Hall & Oates and washed dishes
You compose flames that keep me warm
Pines line the motorway, we're Thelma and Louise
But its Fleet services and the A303
Besides, they both die at the end

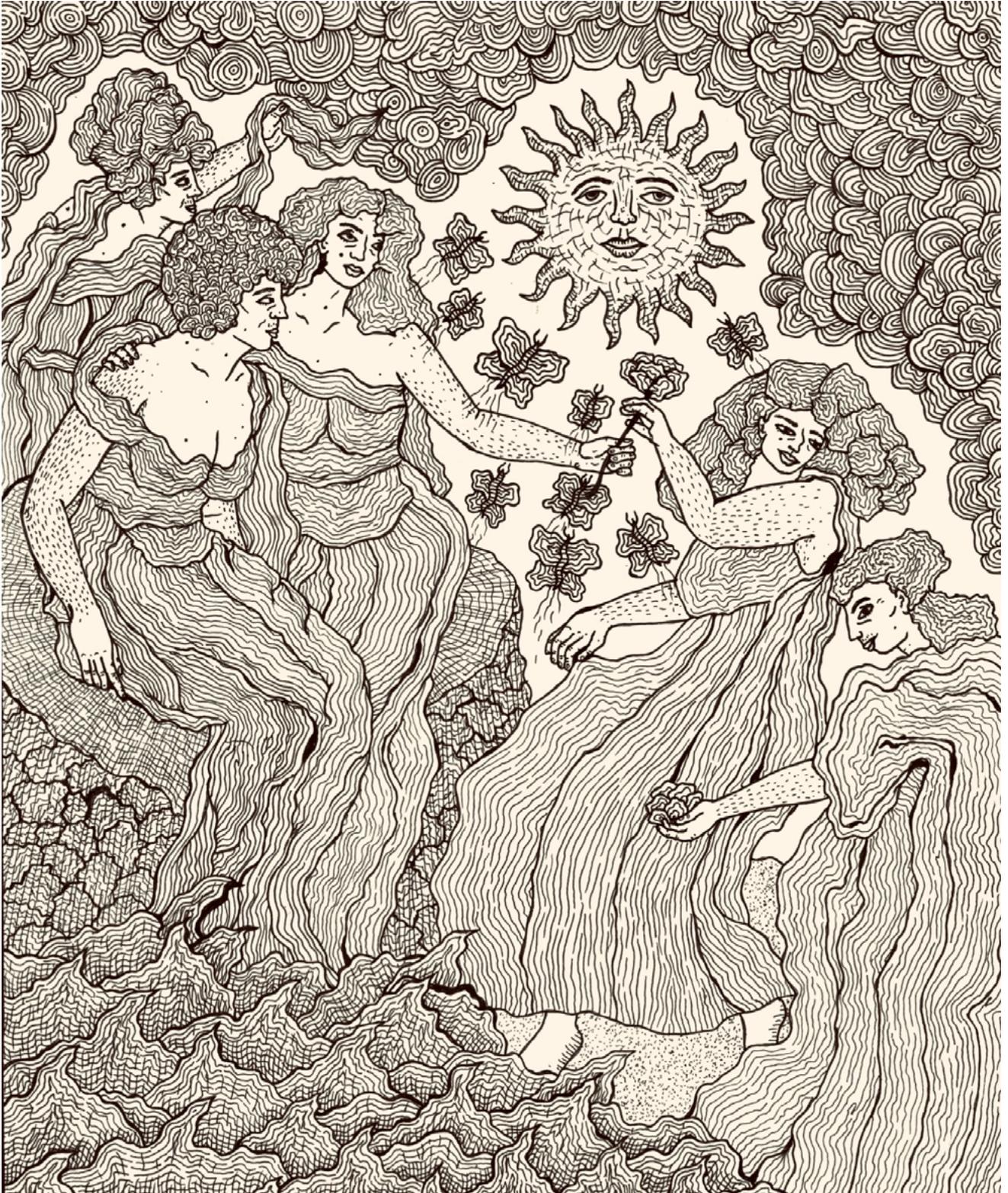
But between corn fields and butterflies
we split six hash browns over the gear stick
We do everything in private, this car our time machine
for music, for every women before us, to climb in
and the past, grief, our fears and our hungers
besides those we share in purple
disappear from us like money













Everything Shadowed by Roses

by Madeline Matheson

By any other name, she'd smell as sweet
With my hands in her hair,
I'm tangled in the deep
Folds of these sheets, and her soft, red lips
(A single rose, the best I've ever seen)
Are pressed against my shoulder.
We are not perfect. We are us
We live our lives in trust and shame
Hidden from the world, we lie
Together in this sinking bed
This is not love, not yet
But soon.



estoy 

ENAMORADA

De una

LENCHA

Han sido educadas en la creencia de que esa importante parte  ha de mantenerse secreta y marginada, incluso para ellas mismas.













Texas Sweetheart

by Sierra Kruse

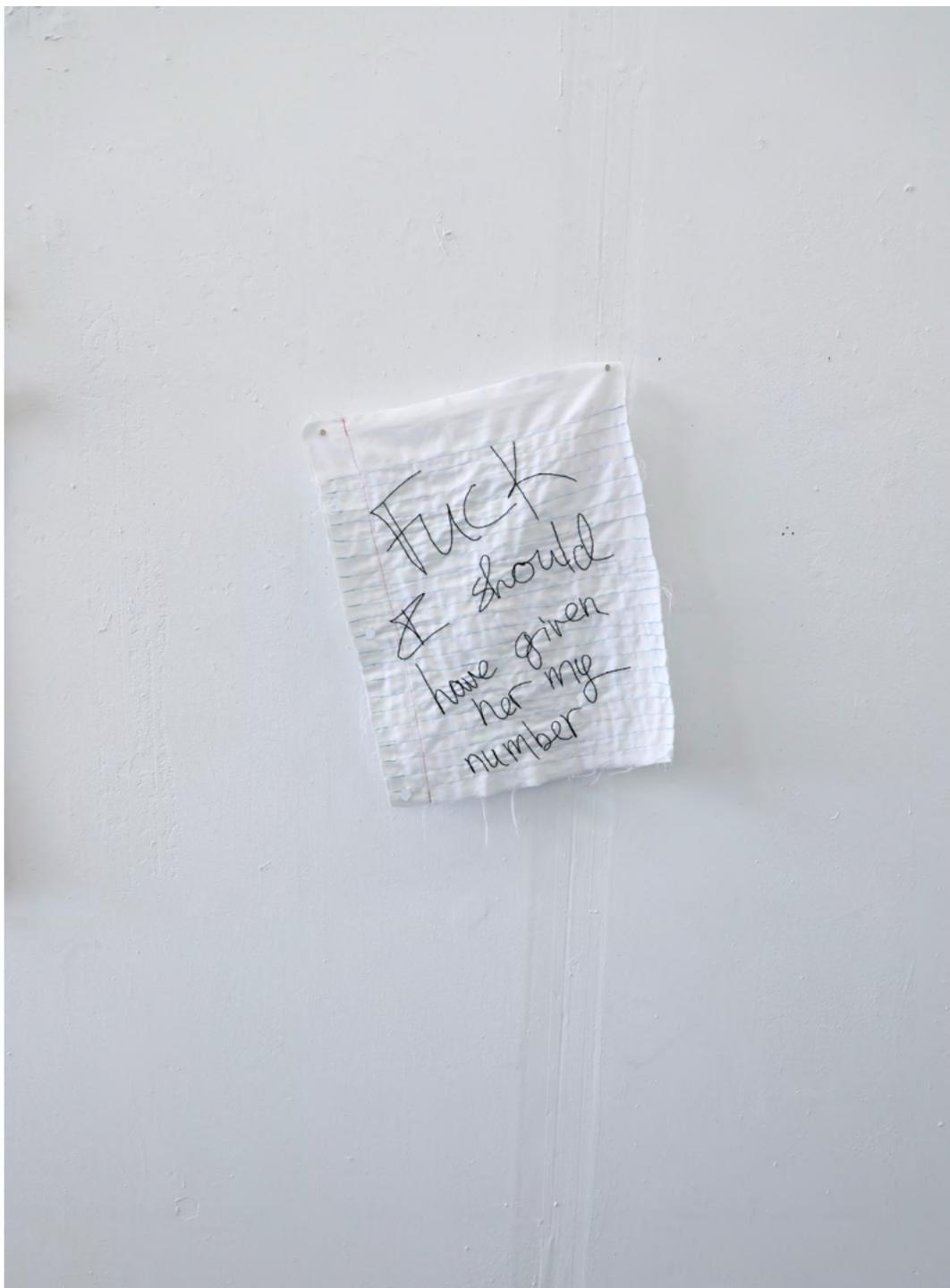
It's not — that im drinking at work and
want to be in love it's just this buzzing in
my pocket and when I pick it up it is
empty. It's that — I would like to be in love
with her. That this dizzy piece of
memories feels like the last time I saw
light. It's like — the last time I felt it coming
out my throat in the dead of winter.
Which in Chicago
— is March or April and the icicles are the
size of her but not as sharp. All lesbians
are caught in fishing nets cast across the
country. They smell like tackle and
honeydew. She is in Texas and on my
mind. Imagine the crossed lines. I write
poems when I can't love anymore.

Lauren Packard





Dani Lopez



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LOVE in Everything, Including

by Eva Lewis

Love. We darlined through the summer months. Driving for stretched hours, rain fraying the view. She wore Made in China & looked out of the window, a hound cracking the dawn with wolf fur. Her eyes plasticined me in miniature, wearing her iris as winter coat. How nakedness howled through remembering like ghosts dimming particles with their dust. How the wind undressed the trees & stained pavements as sheets reeking of our inside colours. When I asked she told me, she dreamed in Channel too, I was the one keeping breath with a park bench lozenged in each neuron, dreams an arson attempt. When she capitalised LOVE in bold blackening the page with my left heart, I started seeing LOVE in everything, including you, my love.







Frogtown

by Nuala Schoen

There are so many reasons why I chose to move to LA, but the one that feels most important is the one that has no external value. I moved to LA because it felt like a resounding yes. Even though I don't have existing connections here. Even though I swore up and down that I wasn't a "city person" like my siblings. Even though I love quiet and community and connection with nature more than almost anything else.

But do these things need to be in opposition?

In moving to LA, I felt like I was choosing this big, wild yes to my wild, queer self and the possibility of greater queer community over my connections with my existing community, with nature, with the waters, and the land.

Yet, somehow, I find myself in a house on a hill with four of the kindest housemates I've ever lived with. Creative, thoughtful people who have welcomed me with open arms.

Mostly our home is quiet. Sometimes I hear owls out my window at night. Sometimes I hear cars racing on the freeway. My housemate Linda, who has lived in LA her whole life, tells me to think of the freeway as a two-way river. And suddenly, the stream of traffic sounds a whole lot more like home.

There are hummingbirds in the backyard. A backyard filled with lemon trees, bougainvillea, moringa leaves, lavender,

hibiscus, agave, cacti, and a fig tree.

I thought I'd left hibiscus in Hawaii and fig trees in Asheville.

I thought I'd left rivers behind there, too.

On one of my first days in LA, errands took me on an overpass crossing the LA River. The "river" below looked like a puddle in a basin of concrete. My heart broke a little, but I reminded myself of the diverse people and opportunities in LA. I soothed myself with the knowledge that I could drive an hour or two in almost any direction and find ecological diversity, too.

Today, my first ever Bumble date took me 20 minutes from my home to the neighborhood of Frogtown. I drank tea at an outdoor café with signs leading to the "LA River." I stifled an eye roll when my date, a field biologist and avid birder who had promised to introduce me to some LA nature, told me we'd be walking the bike path along the river.

Outside the café doors, I saw an urban bike path along a concrete river basin. Yet, at the bottom of the wide concrete bed, I discovered a running river flowing steadily through a dense, verdant wetland. Lush and green. Alive.

Walking along the water, we saw an osprey, great blue herons, night heron, cattle egrets, warblers, stilts, killdeers, and



hummingbirds. Along the path, in addition to familiar desert dwellers, we discovered lilikoi (passionfruit) vines ripe with flowers and fruits, dragon fruit, and a persimmon tree. (The dragon fruit and persimmons were not yet ripe. I will be back.)

It felt like a kiss from God herself.

It's hard to articulate the value of sitting by a running river or the depth of nostalgia and meaning that these plants and birds hold for me. I mourned the loss of rivers and herons and fig trees and persimmon when I left Asheville. I made peace with my sacrifice and hoped it would be "worth it" in the end. I mourned the loss of hibiscus, lilikoi (passionfruit), and dragon fruit. I followed my love of the hummingbird and cacti and surrendered to these sacrifices.

To find myself sitting by a river with a kind new friend, watching heron and osprey and meeting new birds with borrowed binoculars, scoping out potential persimmon and dragon fruit harvests after sharing a freshly picked passion fruit, felt like a nostalgia-tinged dream.

To find myself living in a house where hummingbirds sip on the hibiscus while bees buzz in the lavender bush, under the dappled shade of a large fig tree, is extraordinary. The lemons on the young lemon tree have just started growing. They are green, small, and hard. I look forward to

watching them grow into juicy, yellow fruits. I have started researching medicinal uses and preparations of the moringa leaves.

There are aspects of this move that feel daunting. Lonely. Hard. But to find myself surrounded by my two favorite birds—the hummingbird and the great blue heron—and some of my favorite fruits and flowers feels like the most extraordinary blessing. It feels like I might be in the right place. It feels like a place that could become a home. If the hummingbird and heron can thrive here, it certainly bodes well for me.









Kate Wilhite





Megan x Graham

by Lorna Reaux

At our last sleepover, you introduced me to “But I’m a Cheerleader” as we entwined legs beneath your floral duvet. Before that night, we’d kiss each other goodbye in the hallways. We’d wear matching dresses. We’d walk home through the aqueduct together and post photos together on Tumblr. I put all my other friends on the back burner for you. You were my most genuine, vulnerable, and fastest friendship. At our last sleepover, we lost our virginity to each other — two weeks before we fell out.

Something changed. I never told anyone about that night. I became colder. I was nervous around you. I couldn’t be near you in our friend group, so I distanced myself from everyone. Two weeks later, I got a boyfriend. We graduated high school and lost touch. When my room is a mess, I think about how cluttered your house was. You were embarrassed by the disorder, but I thought it was fun, as if piles of treasure flooded the house. Your parents were so kind to me. I wonder what you told them.

I can almost convince myself our short and intense friendship wasn’t real and that our relationship was a fantasy created from my repressed sexuality, tasting air. With you, someone finally saw me as I dove out the deep end, gasping for oxygen.

Years passed, and the Atlantic Ocean separated us. A German girl wrapped her arm around my waist and pulled me close to her hips. She smelled like nicotine. I only smoked if it was with her. She’d roll shreds of tobacco between paper and seal it with her tongue. Our lips only indirectly touched before then.

She wore a denim jacket I let her borrow. She wore my clothes often.

Feeling her arm around me, I froze. I hadn’t touched a woman since I was seventeen. I was twenty now. I remembered what happened last time, and I was scared I’d panic and repeat the cycle. I couldn’t breathe. A buried memory resurfaced of your velvet pillow below my ankles as my hand brushed your thighs. I stepped back, far enough so that her arms couldn’t caress my body anymore.

How did I find you on another continent? She doesn’t look like you at all, but she reminds me of you. The effortlessness of our conversations. Our shared dry humor and indefinite feelings of not belonging anywhere. This pull towards someone else has only happened a few times with me. Even before you, my female friendships blew up because of some petty, forgettable argument. But you? I feel heavy over you the most, and I tried to get away from the weight.

As blissful teenagers in high school, we wore space buns and ran a Doctor Who Tumblr blog. These days, I’d never wear my hair that way, and sci-fi is my least favorite genre. I’m moved from you now, so it’s easy to act like our memories were fabricated, but the truth is, the last time I felt seen was with you. Our favorite movie exists, therefore you do, too. You were Megan and I was Graham, and I regret ever denying your existence, even only in my mind. I only told one person about us, six years later, and how I hurt my best friend. I’m sorry, Claire. ♥

Kate Wilhite





Maeve Brammer





Waltz

by Sierra Hatcher

Her hair bobs
above her shoulders,
almost grazing
curling collar. Blouse
neat, shoulder seams lie
smooth beneath
your hand, surprisingly
dry and
light like paper
wings you move together
swaying, feet
nudging each other.
Springy carpet
glows goldenrod dim
living room, curls
of cigarette smoke
crawl up amber
walls so warm
in her arms
you are slipping
ache coiling up, up
breasts close
to brushing
your lips burn where
love blooms.
This moment— you will
realize only
in remembering—
the closest
you ever held her.



Lauren Murrell





Evelyn Harris



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Libraryfantasy.com

by Asha Berkes

Me: in a dress the color of bricks in the sun
hair held up in the jaw of a tortoiseshell clip
You: in a stiff collared shirt that your body would make breathable
and one dangly earring doing twirls at your cheek

maybe I have on one dangly earring too
maybe we complete the pair
and smush our undecorated ears together to become
a double face
It sounds like the ocean
I'd say
You'd laugh out honey and plum juice

Tell me, again, why you love Anne Carson's experimental fiction
Send me pictures of you topless
I'll send you pictures of me
A still life of a love we might have been able to have
in a world that runs beneath ours

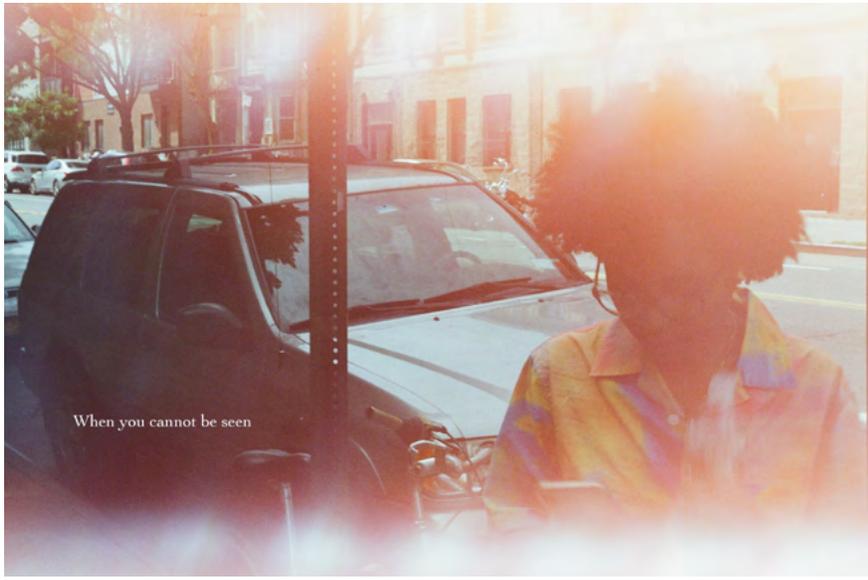
Library girl
pretend I just walked in
Library girl
pretend I just asked
Excuse me, could you help me find something?

Constance Smith





To be liked best



When you cannot be seen



Clearly



Lilies

by Joni Renee

Of course, lesbians have dreamt of this for years: sleeping in late, reading to each other, fretting over the cat, cooking, stretching, listening to jazz in silks. No parties to attend. A breeze scented by western red cedar lifts her hair to my mouth. I shouldn't pull away from what is good and true, but I do, just to check real quick. Yes, the morning media is personal, tragic, assaulting from all angles. I've been instructed to breathe. Most days, I mute the phones and kneel before her at the only thing still known and nameable. "Be here with me, baby. Be right here."

We've been working our way through a twenty-five-pound bag of flour. If epigenetic theory is true, my ancestral Irish brown bread and hearty colcannon should serve us well now. What got us through the famine should do just fine today.

We've been spring cleaning and uncleaning, wrist-deep, gliding slick from room to room — that smelly, transcendental sex. Frankly, the end of the world makes me horny. From my quarantine window, I can see tawny brush rabbits nibbling and tiny Pacific wrens singing their flowering songs. I've worked two jobs as long as I can remember. I've never been home to hear them. I take her in both of my hands and feel certain, mashing my slit onto hers, we could make something if we tried.

I went out. I did the dance with neighbors and at the curbside, this new choreographed veering that scuttles us in the aisles harsh lipped or with empty, apologetic half-smiles. Even back at the trailer park and later, on food stamps, I never saw an empty shelf. The reek of privilege is White and hot through my veins. I look to the loading dock, repurposed and triaged, and take in what authors and mothers have been telling us for years: these systems are untenable.

We did it! We halved global emissions overnight. Some reports allude to a net reduction of deaths. Is it true that by lessening pollution and workplace accidents, the industrial slowdown is sparing lives as well as taking them? I can't follow that logic to its reasonable conclusion. I only know what it felt like to start a garden, how it healed me to run at sunrise six feet behind strangers on the marshy, muddy earth, and how trillium, wet on the hill, burst to greet us. It's the season of re-creation, renewal in the bud. I find myself milling around the apartment, asking, "What else can burst?"

I called a trusted older friend who's lived through the worst of the worst: wars and threats of atomic bombs, devastating losses, not to mention the sexual abuse, both specific and generalized, that attends femmehood. "I've never been through anything like this," she said. That was the first time I felt the sting.



The most prolonged eye contact of the week is with my cashier, who skips his usual compulsory greeting and instead just looks at me. I want to ask him something real. As an autistic person, I've fantasized about a culture of direct speech, free from vague, meaningless niceties. No more, "How are you?", "Fine, and how are you?", "Fine, and how are you?" His eyes are storybook brown, New England copper brown, gleaming Appalachian chestnut brown, twine baling Missouri hay for America brown, brown like cocoa chips in the banana bread I made this morning. Everyone's doing it. I admit I want to be a part of something. If the predictions about global food supply chains are true, these might be the last bananas we'll eat for some time. "Are you okay," is what I eventually manage to ask him. I've stopped turning things up like a question at the end; the new world is flat and declarative.

"No state, no metro area, will be spared."
"This is a refrigerated truck for the bodies."
"War-ravaged Syria just reported its first COVID-19 death."
We're here. We're here. We're here now.

A few weeks before quarantine, I steamed and pressed pale peach twin-sized sheets for the first guest room I've ever had. It was supposed to be an artist residency. Our city was among the earliest to pass an eviction moratorium so, for the next six months, I am housed and physically safe. With so many of my friends in other states unhoused and

desperate, I wonder how the nature of this residency will change. Home as shelter. Survival as art. If and when they need to roll into town, I want to be there to receive them. By then, will I have to kiss them with my eyes, stand twelve feet away? In kink, there's a theory of fluid bonding: what you do with one, you do with another, and with their others. Who knew kink would show us the way? We could stuff a few more twin-sized beds in here. Endless sleepover. The ultimate residency: actually moving in.

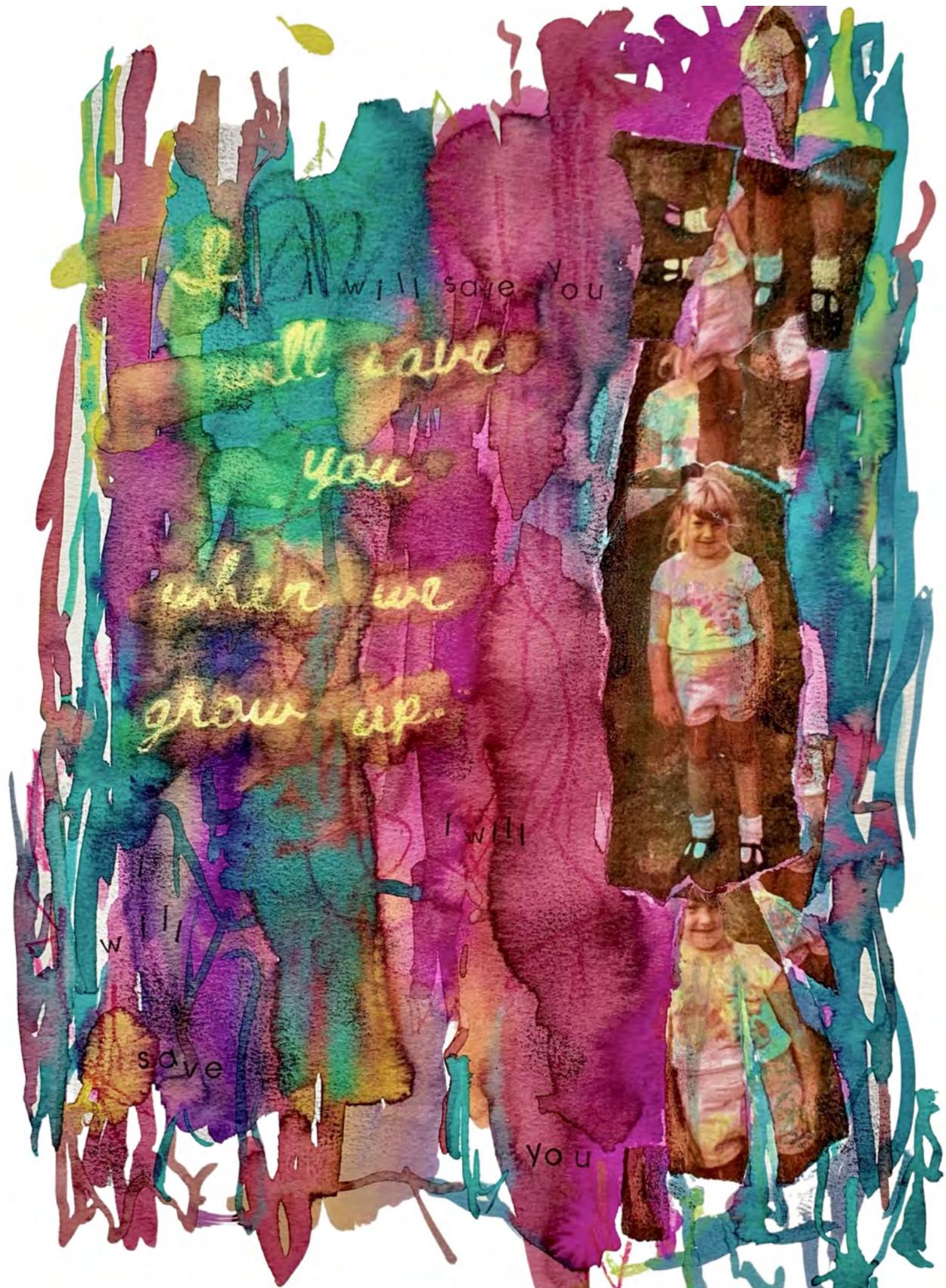
Some friends have returned to their parental homes and holed up with cartoons and mom's cookin'. For me, and for so many other queer kids, there has been and will be no homecoming. Home is the one I've scrimped to arrange here with the girl with lithe fingers. I close my eyes as she braids my curls. Of course I am afraid of what lies at the bottom of this bag of flour. Of course I am.

There will come a Monday. We are jobless artists in a nation that hasn't paid for art in years, if ever. Will society rise to meet us? Will there be a place for us in the new world order? Will I make something with both of my hands? ♥

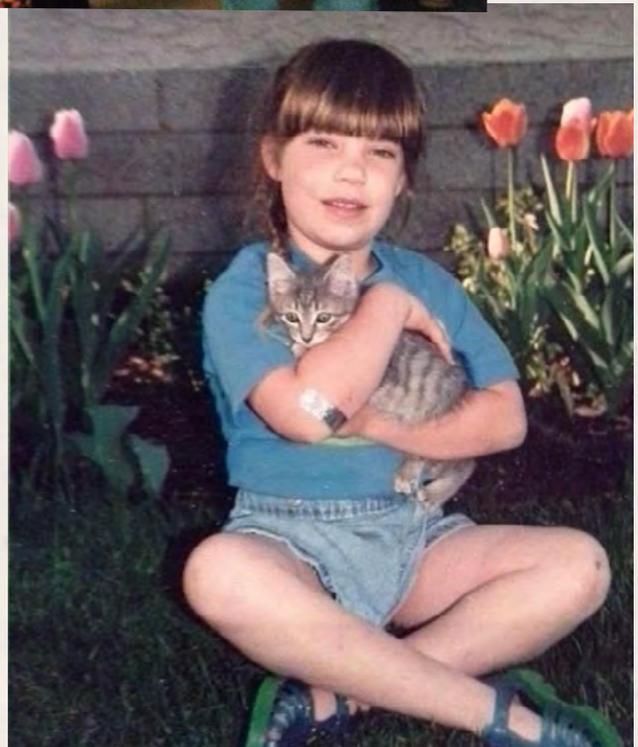
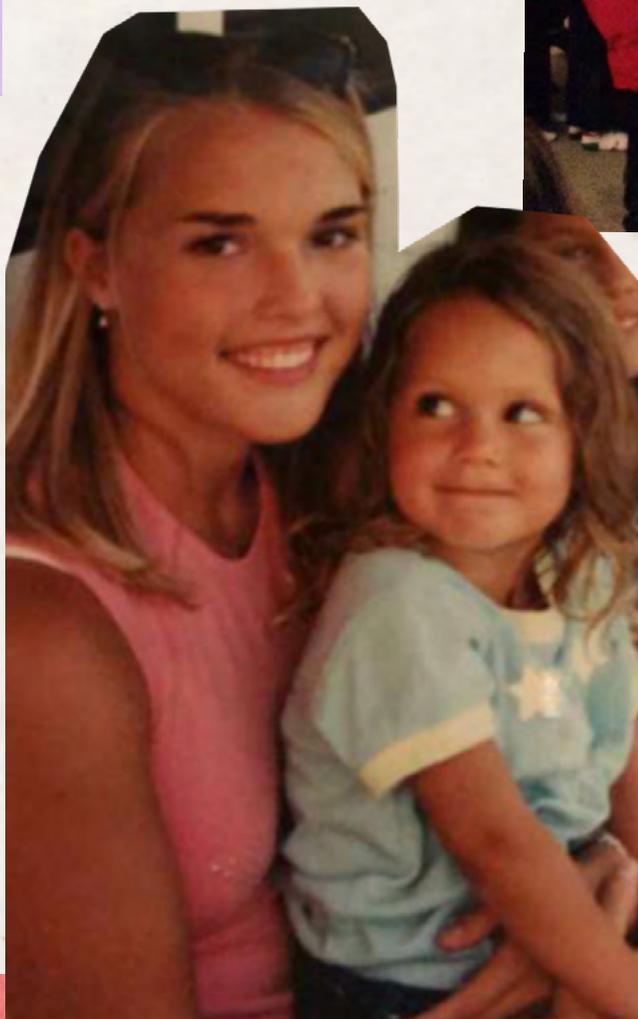
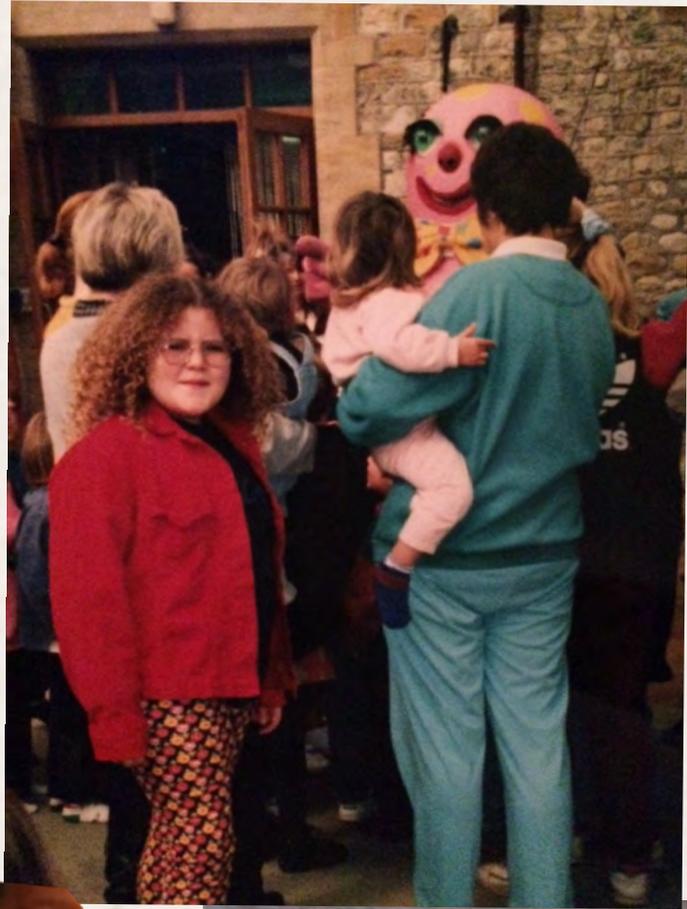
Eugenia Vasyukova



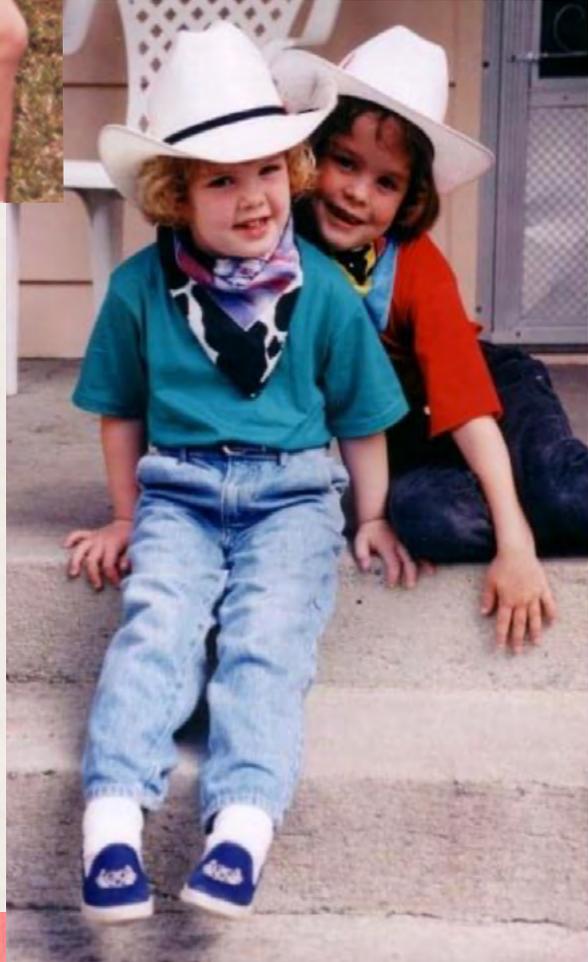
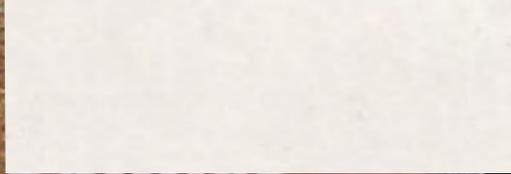
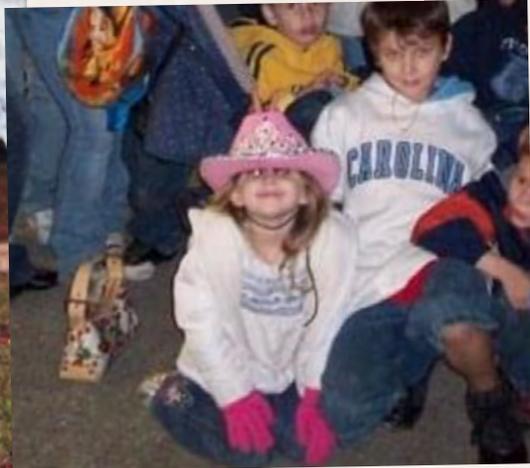
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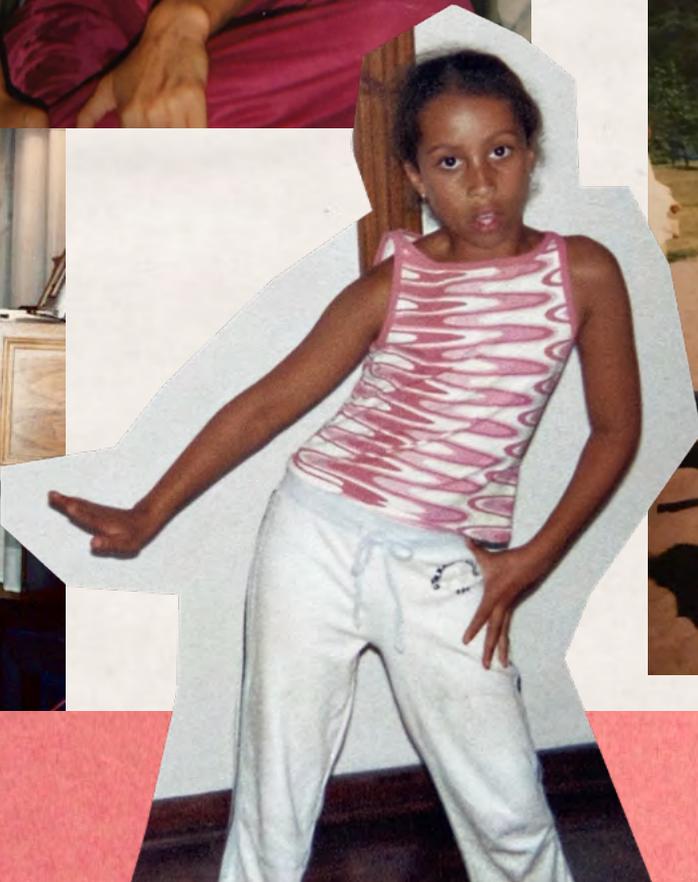
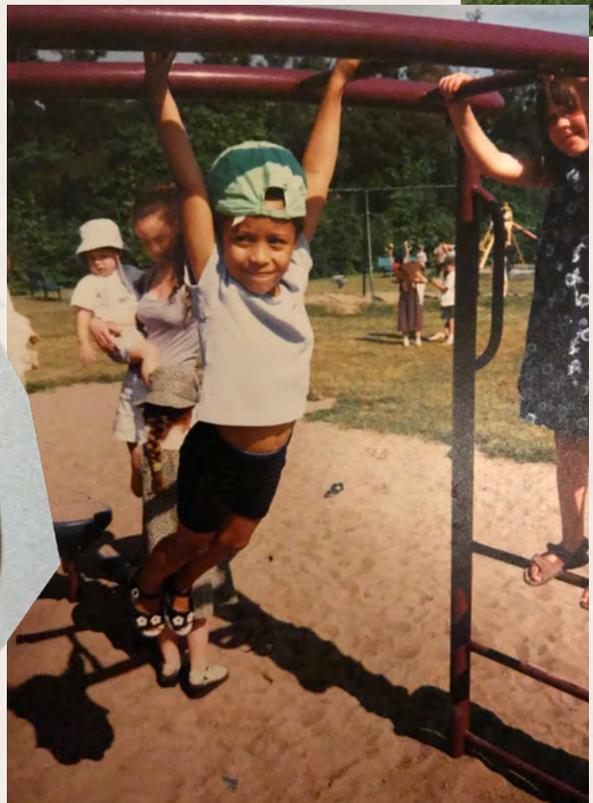
~ * ~ * ~ * *the way we were* * ~ * ~ * ~



~ * ~ * ~ * *year of the dike* * ~ * ~ * ~



~ * ~ * ~ * *like sands through* * ~ * ~ * ~



~ * ~ * ~ *the hourglass* * ~ * ~ *





WE LOVE OUR

<3 CONTRIBUTORS <3

:) :) :)



Asha Berkes (she/they) is a Jewish, lesbian poet from Manhattan Beach, California, currently living in Tacoma, Washington. She studied English, Gender and Queer studies, and African American Studies at the University of Puget Sound. During her time in undergrad, she completed her collection of poems “Lesbo Island” which was a finalist in Not A Cult Media’s 2020 Stories Award for Poetry. You can catch them posting pictures of their journal pages on Instagram at [@thursdaygirl99](#).

Maeve Brammer (they/them) is a writer and artist from Upstate NY. They’re now a senior at Amherst College, studying English and Practice of Art. They like standing in the front row at concerts and journaling in their backyard. Find them on Instagram [@partly.maeveb](#).

Mogoi Cynthia (she/they) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Kenya. The experience of being black, queer, and African informs how they approach art and the freedom they seek in the practice of making. They are interested in tending the horror and beauty of being, and finding/ creating soft landing places for themselves and their communities. Follow them on Instagram [@mogoi.mogoi](#).

Drawing is a way for **Geneviève Darling** (she/her, they/them) to capture precious moments and feelings, so they can explore and share them. Her artistic practice centers around themes of softness and connection, nature and joy, queer representation and, of course, cats. They strive to use images of tenderness to create a comforting atmosphere where queer people feel validated and safe to be themselves. She’s inspired by queer friendship and love, feelings, and nature. Sometimes we forget that as humans we belong to the natural world, and that nature inhabits us as much as we inhabit it. They hope their art reminds

you to take space to feel it all and not to be afraid to let your gay cat star shine!

Billye Dotson (she/her) is a lesbian English major turned barista. She grew up in the sagebrush desert of Idaho and currently lives in California, studying library and information science at San Jose State University. She is a poet, librarian, and witch in progress. And she is inspired by everything that makes this world so weird, but she keeps coming back to dirt. And really, won’t we all?

Evelyn Harris (she/her) is a self-taught visual artist, living and working in Atlanta, Georgia. She enjoys exploring modern impressionist, semi-abstract, and figurative painting. She works predominantly with acrylic paints, but also incorporates oil pastels, charcoal, and digital art. Follow her on Instagram [@evelynharrisart](#).

Sierra Hatcher (she/her) is a queer writer raised in the Midwest and living in Amsterdam. She has been writing poetry almost as long as she can remember. Her work has been published in *Parish Lit Up Magazine*. She is a member of the Amsterdam-based arts foundation 4bid — with a special attention to the bridge between performative and visual art. You can find her on Instagram at [@ghst.world](#).

Sierra Kruse (she/her) is a poet. She currently studies at Columbia College Chicago. Her work has previously appeared in *Hooligan Mag*, *Mid American Print Council*, and *Rookie*. Recently her words were showcased in the LOCUS: VI spring gallery show. In her work, Sierra writes socialist poems about sadness, girls, and summertime.

Leeza Lakhter (they/them) is a queer self-taught tattoo artist that practices consent and trauma

informed tattooing known as LETMEPOKEU. Leeza's goal is to make you feel as safe and comfortable as possible throughout this process and leave you with a beautiful tattoo that makes you feel amazing and badass! LETMEPOKEU has a safe and comfortable space for their clients to get tattooed in Brooklyn, NY — open to all bodies, races, genders, aliens. Follow Leeza on Instagram [@LETMEPOKEU](#) and visit them at [letmepokeutattoos.com](#).

Eva Lewis (she/they) is poet and essayist based in Manchester. Their poetry has been published with *Cape Magazine*, *SINK*, the *Y Gog Surreal North Anthology*, *Young Identity Ecosystems of Fury Anthology*, and is upcoming in the *Write Through This Anthology* and *Homecoming Zine*. Their work explores emotional inheritance, domestic abuse, mental health and gender and neurodiversity.

dani lopez (she/her) is a textiles artist working within weaving and fiber sculpture to explore queer desire, femininity, and femme identity. She received her MFA in Textiles from CCA and her BFA from the University of Oregon. At CCA, she was awarded two teaching assistantships and received a diversity and merit scholarship. At Root Division, she taught an embroidery workshop in Spring 2020. She has been featured in *Hyperallergic*, *Surface Design Journal*, and *Other People's Pixels*. lopez has shown at Bedford Gallery, Minnesota Street Project, Tropical Contemporary, Amos Eno Gallery, Patterson-Appleton Arts Center, and the Frank Ratchye Project Space. She recently attended a tapestry weaving workshop at Penland School of Craft on a full scholarship from Crafting the Future. She also received a mini-grant from the Bay Area-based organization, ARTogether, to continue working on the Dykes on the Dancefloor project.

Madeline Matheson (they/them) is a lesbian from England but lived in California for a few years for school. Follow them on Instagram [@m.c.matheson](#).

Frances Ngo (she/her) is a lesbian artist and bird enthusiast based in Salt Lake City. When she isn't wrangling wildlife, Frances enjoys writing about nature and trading postcards with friends. Her work draws inspiration from her scientific background and her experience with a mixed-race Chinese-Mexican

identity. Follow her artwork on Instagram [@tiny_zoologist](#).

Lauren Packard (she/they) is a mixed media abstract artist living in Brooklyn, NY. After undergoing brain surgery in 2014, she turned to paint to express what words couldn't. Lauren considers her work an extension of her inner thoughts and dialogue, both conscious and subconscious. Lauren's work explores and abstracts ideas and memories of queer identity, domesticity, repair, and dissonance through the use of materials and intuitive marks. Follow Lauren on Instagram [@laurenpackardart](#).

Julie Phoenix (she/her) is a lesbian writer and artist currently living in St. Louis, Missouri with her wife and kids (human and otherwise). You can follow her watercolor work on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Etsy [@thetwistedcycamore](#).

Kavel Rafferty (she/her) is interested in the female gaze, messing with the context. She plays with the objectification of women. She hopes to challenge stereotypes by cutting, redacting, and painting the source materials. In her most recent series, *Queer Flower*, she explores the artistic tropes of flowers to examine ideas of remembrance, sexuality, and censorship, reclaiming flowers from their somewhat domestic life by combining them with (soft) pornographic imagery of women. Follow her on Instagram [@kavelrafferty](#).

Corna Reaux (she/her) is a Latinx Scorpio moon from Westchester, NY. She loves all mediums of art and fiction writing. Follow her on Instagram [@pocalabia](#).

Nuala Schoen (they/them; she/her) is a somatic intimacy coach and writer. They live, work, and write on the land that is the unceded territory of the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples, in the city of Los Angeles. She loves exploring sex, love, and relationships through a queer and trauma-informed lens, and supporting others in reconnecting with their sense of authenticity and pleasure. You can find them on the world wide web at their website [nualaschoen.com](#) or on Instagram [@nualaschoen](#).

GIRLS

girls

GIRLS



