



# LESBIANS are MIRACLES

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The Issue of Love

NO. 2



# Lesbians are *Miracles Magazine*

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# THE ISSUE OF LOVE

Our goal for this issue was an ambitious one: to put together a collection of work that represented love in its seemingly infinite forms and permutations. We sought queer-centered writing, poetry, photography, and visual art that explored deep love, committed love, fleeting love, unrequited love, transformative love, love lost, love found, love celebrated, and love mourned. We looked for work that not only portrayed love, but problematized love, troubled love, navigated love, reflected upon love, meditated on love, and grappled with love. And our contributors delivered.

We are proud, excited, and deeply humbled to publish this collection of work by queer artists, writers, photographers, and activists from around the world. The work collected in this issue defies, subverts, and reinvents genre, boundaries, and binaries, while still holding love as the central theme, the constant against all other variables. Thank you for bearing witness to these pages, for holding space for the possibility of love, and for welcoming love in all of these manifestations.

With all of mine, and all of ours,

Lia Ottaviano

*Lesbians are Miracles*



**Josefine Aspvik**



**Shaina Rose Woolley**



**Erin Flynn**

# To Be Women

by Loan Tran



I am six years old. My hair is cut into a short bob and I am wearing a white t-shirt and striped shorts in a peach orchard. I lean back and smile at the camera before climbing the tree with my leather strapped sandals. The women all around me are laughing under the shade with small peeling knives in their hands; separating skin from fruit. For a moment their hands are soft, peach fuzz smoothing at their callouses from days and years of piecing together fabric at their sewing machines. They enjoy each other. I reach for my own peaches and later I stand in the back of my family's green pick-up truck waiting for someone to weigh our baskets filled to the brim. I hold my hands behind my back, small and shy, watching a woman shift and re-arrange the crates. I am awkward and can't stop staring. She smiles back only at me.

I am eight and spend most of my days after school with my dad at the billiards hall where he plays cards and jokes in the backroom with his friends. I make my own friends with the domino sets, the wobbly coffee tables, and the woman who works there. She has long black hair, just like mine, though kept much better. One afternoon she tucks me gently into her arms as we sit on the hood of an old Cadillac. Everything bright: the car, her pants, her smile. I am small and still shy, hair longer, and with the reasonable fashion sense of an eight-

year-old; pink leggings sticking out from under my khaki uniform pants, matching my pink shirt. I am wearing sneakers and she, a pair of black stilettos. She cares for me in absence of everyone else and I never feel like a burden.

I am lucky that from a young age, the women around me, if I paid enough attention, allowed me a life to claim, to call my own. They offered a recognition that I mean something. I've learned that women make a conscious choice to love—not in a reductive way; not in the, we are ok extracting feminized labor kind of way. But in a way where time and time again, I have seen the women in my life deprived of respect in a world hellbent on their punishment for not being man, or white, or able-bodied, or straight, or cisgender still root in dignity and regard for other human beings. I am lucky for the persistence and clarity of women's regard.

“Woman”—with its complexities, contradictions, and its constant dance against/with/for colonization, white supremacy, patriarchy and transphobia, and capitalism—is not a matter of biology. It's instead the active choosing of the relationships, connections, desires, acts of care and love we are trained to cast away and make invisible. Women's regard is what makes me the dyke gender non-conforming person I am. It is what gives me the conviction to be on testosterone and feel confident that I can be a woman of a different kind.

The women who make me woman are the women who have clearly defied all odds to be their own, in a terrifying and heart wrenching world which takes from them everything: their bodies, their joy, their love, and their care. The ones who have been called failed women, because of their skin, desire, shape and size of their body, or ability of their body. The ones who have strapped guns to their backs to harvest the field and have written poems at wartime; whose strongest political directive, whose clearest tactical skill comes from a place of deep knowing that the care we have for each other allows care for ourselves, and that is what gives everything in this fleeting lifetime meaning.

To be women, in the morning:

I wake up and question the width of my own hips or contest the shape of my chest, wondering if it is meant to look this way. I wonder where else this body could have hair and why don't I have it there. I argue with myself in the mirror; on today's menu of misogyny, do I want to be seen first as a man and then a woman or a be seen first as a woman and then a man? I try to accept that when I leave the mirror, my want won't matter. I clean my skin with an alcohol pad and inject testosterone into my body. This is one year and not much

has changed. I cringe at being called “sir” for my voice and mustache as much as I cringe at being called “ma’am” for my hips and breasts. I am anxious that what I believe lovers love about me is different than what they may actually love about me. I am worried about love. I wait still for the moment of “discovery”; for when someone claims I have lied about myself and that somehow that is more offensive than lying to myself to comfort them. I get good at redirecting the self-negating thoughts. This body hollows out on command when I am misnamed. I get ready.

And in the same morning: I wake up and feel desire and heat in my bones for a woman. I imagine the skin of my arm touching my face to be the skin of another woman. I find tenderness with a certain name I can press my tongue into, so softly, without hesitation, as if that name were my own. I smile to myself imagining the full depth and gravity of the lives of the women around me. I read these women. Adrienne Rich writes: Without tenderness, we are in hell. And Toni Morrison said: It is more interesting, more complicated, more intellectually demanding and more morally demanding to love somebody, to take care of somebody, to make one other person feel good. And my body eases in the middle of a world on fire. I remember to keep caring, to smooth the callouses, to enjoy the fruit. I get back to the ground, to the earth, to my own body that women make possible; whether with piss your pants laughter, unashamed crying in public, or the caring nudge of a plate of food in my face: eat, you have to eat. So then I look in the mirror at myself and think: Oh, there she is. There’s the woman I’ve been looking



for. There’s the woman I am choosing to be.

The most significant relationships in my life have been with (other) women, somewhere on their journey – whether across borders, lifetimes, bodies, or binaries. We bear a kind of witness for each other that tells me that I can’t separate my gender and my desires. Who I am is who I want is who I want to be. No more flattening, no more making the parameters of this life small, the possibility of this life small—when our lives deserve to be big, complex, ever-changing, bursting at the seams with the invitation to constantly become what we are seeking of and in each other.

For a long time I have seen this body as nothing more than a failed project. This body: Viet, survivor, migrant, gay, gender non-conforming, girl, weirdo, woman, freak. I learned early that my body would not be my own unless I fight for it. I have been fighting for it for a very long time. And I love it just a little better now, having given myself permission to belong to this body and to remember womanhood is something ever expansive.

I choose woman for myself because I want to honor my own pain and misery and heartache and joy and pleasure; because I want to be like those women in my life who have a steady generosity to stand witness for the pain and misery and heartache and joy and pleasure of others—as friends, family, and lovers.

I am ten years old and the only way I am speaking to the world is through a composition notebook drowning with badly written and very sad poems. My dad has gone to jail and I feel utterly alone. In my yearbook, my English teacher, Mrs. Roberts wrote: Keep writing, you’re good at it. So, this is for me, for the women to whom I owe my life and belonging. For the women who have given me the chance to choose and to be. And to be of them. ♦





# Role Models

by Wendy Tooth

Bert drives a taxicab in Provincetown.  
She's a woman of a certain age,  
of gruff voice and gruffer haircut  
a generation whose cousins "cuss"  
and hawk spit out minivan windows.

"You'se stayin' for long?" she grunts  
so curt a question mark feels wrong for punctuation;  
it wilts, embarrassed, skitters off the page of plastic sheeting  
that hangs between us in her car.

"Do homophobic lesbians exist?"  
My girlfriend whispers.  
But later, transit-desperate, we redial the  
LAVENDER TAXI.

The van returns ungainly  
sloshing from side to side like bilge in a barge  
Bert's hand the hunk of mariner's rope 'twixt us and certain  
doom.

Another day, another button-down  
and the same sour monologue:  
small-town-U.S. by way of Brooklyn,  
tourist-turgid pricing,  
and the perennial lateness of the "girl" she picks up from the  
Portuguese bakery.

We've been holding hands the whole time  
swapping "honeys" at New York volume  
all but pleading for a knowing wink, a smile, a story  
"Lotta cute boys around here," she rasps;  
I panic.

In the subsequent silence I think about a lot of things  
Mostly, who will field the impending questions about hus-  
bands,  
What new American names I'd like to protect my girlfriend  
from,  
Whether we should run for it right now in the middle of the  
marshes –  
When the van rolls towards the beach I fray my knee joint  
hurdling out  
But at sunset we need a ride home.

"You said you two were sisters?"  
"Girlfriends," I swallow hard –  
"A couple?"  
"Yes," I nod for emphasis,  
gripping the seatbelt like a scabbard.

I can't hear her reply over the thrum of my own escape plan  
But when I snap back into it she is asking  
if we have been to John's Foot Long at the pier.  
"I order a pair of foot-long chili dogs," she boasts (détente!)  
"Bet I could eat two plus a hamburger," I breathe  
"Doubt that," she sputters, spits us out the door at our motel  
"Nice meeting you."

In the subsequent silence I think about a lot of things  
Bar raids where cops showed up and shouted, "Hands up,  
pants down"  
Parents who tore up baby photos and put you out in the  
street  
Schoolboys who stuffed your head in toilets, or worse  
Fistfights with your lover's lovers,  
factory work,  
and silence.  
Her mouth a puckered well of wisdom  
But no one wants to know these stories,  
They just want to eat ice cream pops and be happy  
To a Madonna song.

She lives in another world I can't imagine  
Kind of like how, for my girlfriend,  
Walking around braless just feels like walking around bra-  
less,  
Not like having two pendulous fleshpots strapped to the  
front of your chest and straining to disarticulate your shoul-  
der joints.

Or maybe she doesn't  
We were both fed on hearty slices of the American lexicon  
She grew up eating "pervert," "bulldagger" for breakfast  
I, "lesbo," "carpet-muncher."  
Later, she chose "stone,"  
and I chose "femme."  
Maybe the terse dread in her car is the only commonality we  
share  
Maybe it isn't.

What I know is that I've had to overcome a lifetime of shame  
to admit  
that she looked magisterial seated, steering  
Like Pauline Oliveros,  
A broad-cut Steinian statue.

What I know is that I'd like to have role models.



Sammy Bennett

# Every Summer There's a Fire For Summer Orr

by Julian Guy

After work, I lie on the balcony of your sister's apartment,  
camp shirt stuck to my shoulders with sweat.  
You stand barefoot in the kitchen, wash dishes as the dog  
licks your feet. I think of you glowing in the yellow  
ash-soaked light of fire season. Behind you, a crusade  
of children catching lizards.

How I, too, want to be small  
and belly'd up in your palms.

Everything with its home. The children, tucked into car seats  
toted to the rich parts of town far from where we live. Us,  
pouring Rolling Rock down our throats like water.

The rodeo blares its lights across treetops.

This is how things always are, Summer. Some fire  
lit bright and dangerous too far to see and us,  
sharing beds. It looks like nothing, Summer,  
my lying here under brown stucco,

but my throat is a wet sunflower stalk,

swollen clouds and electricity,

the thundering promise of water in desert,  
every animal afraid, every foot howled  
toward something not burning. I swallow them

as you lie next to me.

(and what have you to say,  
wind wind wind—did you love somebody  
and have you the petal of somewhere in your heart

nuzzle of the sea

doting

fingers of

tide and death



stars and the

moonlight

the night utter ripe unspeaking girls.

# On Being Seen

by Sarah Perry

We sat on a bench at the end, beneath the canopy of trees of Eastern Parkway. It was a few weeks before Halloween, but some of them were hanging on, clinging to wrinkled leaves turned brown by the descending light. The sun barely touched them anymore, but they could not give up, not yet.

Seven days before, as you'd turned to go to your apartment, leaving me to walk to mine, you'd said, "I'm not going anywhere."

Now you'd asked me to meet for coffee, but the shop was too busy, and anyway, it was 4 p.m. on a Sunday. I didn't need coffee, and neither did you. We walked to the parkway along narrower streets, and as we walked, you told me it was over. I'd yelled one too many times, forcing my words through the air because it seemed you could never hear me.

The thing that was hardest for you to hear was no. We'd once stayed in an Upper West Side apartment with a wide-windowed kitchen, twenty or so feet from a turn in the building where we could regularly see a family, children. At night with the lights burning, we were on display, the children's playroom so close across the small block of dark. No blinds or curtains to pull shut. The apartment was borrowed from a friend; we were keeping an eye on it for her. We didn't belong there, although the doormen were kind to us.

You loved cooking, and in the kitchen, you'd get amorous. One night, you kissed me and pressed your taller body to mine, backing me up into the granite slab of counter. You reached between my legs with your long fingers, pressing against the gathered seams of my jeans. I kissed back, body warming to your attention, but then pulled away. I did not want the family to see us. "No," I said.



You laughed and kissed me again. "There are kids," I said. You picked me up and put me on the counter. You pressed your pelvis into me, moving in your rhythm. I said no again, less committal. The laugh that came out of you sharpened its edge. A "let them see two women" challenge. I was sure it wasn't about us being women, but not sure enough. I didn't want you to think I was ashamed of us. Later, after, my bare thighs on the cool stone, I did feel ashamed. At first, I had looked over your shoulder, then I'd shut my eyes against seeing who might see us, who might see my pliancy and mistake it for intent.

This was one of the things I yelled about, during that final fight, the day you said you wouldn't leave. "If you'd been a man," I said. My fury exploding from the pressure of delay. "I said no," I said. "You didn't listen," I said, as loudly as I possibly could, not caring who might hear.

But now, a week later, I was quiet. You were resolute and yelling would do nothing. We sat down on a bench and cried in the chill wind of early October, holding hands, clinging to the final moments of warmth. A man came up to us, bare hands wrapped around the green, closed leaves of a palm. "Excuse me, are you Jewish?" he asked. When we looked up, really looked at him, we saw how young he was, almost still a child. He couldn't see what was in front of him. "No," we said, "we're not Jewish." Even if we had been, we couldn't imagine he'd really want to call us in, two queer women mid-breakup. Still, a small part of me longed, in that moment, to pray with someone, to be held and seen by someone outside of our tight, tortured circle. The week between our last meeting and this one had been Sukkot, a time of joy and celebration for so many around us, community and warmth so close, yet inaccessible. A contrast to our coming grief, the creeping cold.

The young man went away. We kept crying, telling each other what we'd miss. Your smile when you awake in the morning, like sunrise. The fuzz of my undercut on your palm. A few more minutes passed, and again we were approached. "Excuse me, are you Jewish?" "No," we said, now laughing. And again. Three times they asked us, and three times we denied them, falling into hysterics, finally, at our invisibility, in this of all moments. Beneath my laughter, a great sadness: I had the feeling that once I went home to my apartment, we wouldn't have existed at all. These boys joined by all the people over the years who'd thought us sisters, or straight women on an adventure, performing heat for them. Contrasted with all the people who'd clocked and welcomed our held hands, the bemused Boomers with gentle smiles, the other queer women on the street with frank, conspiratorial faces. The guy who'd tried to fight me in a bar, because I told him to back off you, his aggression almost welcome, a strange form of validation. Now I would be invisible, a figure alone, hidden under increasing layers as winter approached, belonging to no one, my "no" now guaranteeing my solitude.

After the end of days, it is said, all will celebrate Sukkot, the question of identity swept away. I wait under the bare trees past the end, to belong to someone again. ♦



# THE LOVERS

Ayshe-Mira Yashin

# Mildew

by Ayshe-Mira Yashin

with longing I ache for your lips to my breast  
for your spit growing over my skin like mildew

the lack of your touch on my skin to me feels  
like an August twilight which I cannot sleep through

the pink scars like berries you left on my neck  
are fading away into purple and blue

I touch them again and pretend that they're fresh  
and that yesterday they were placed on me by you

# Tenderness

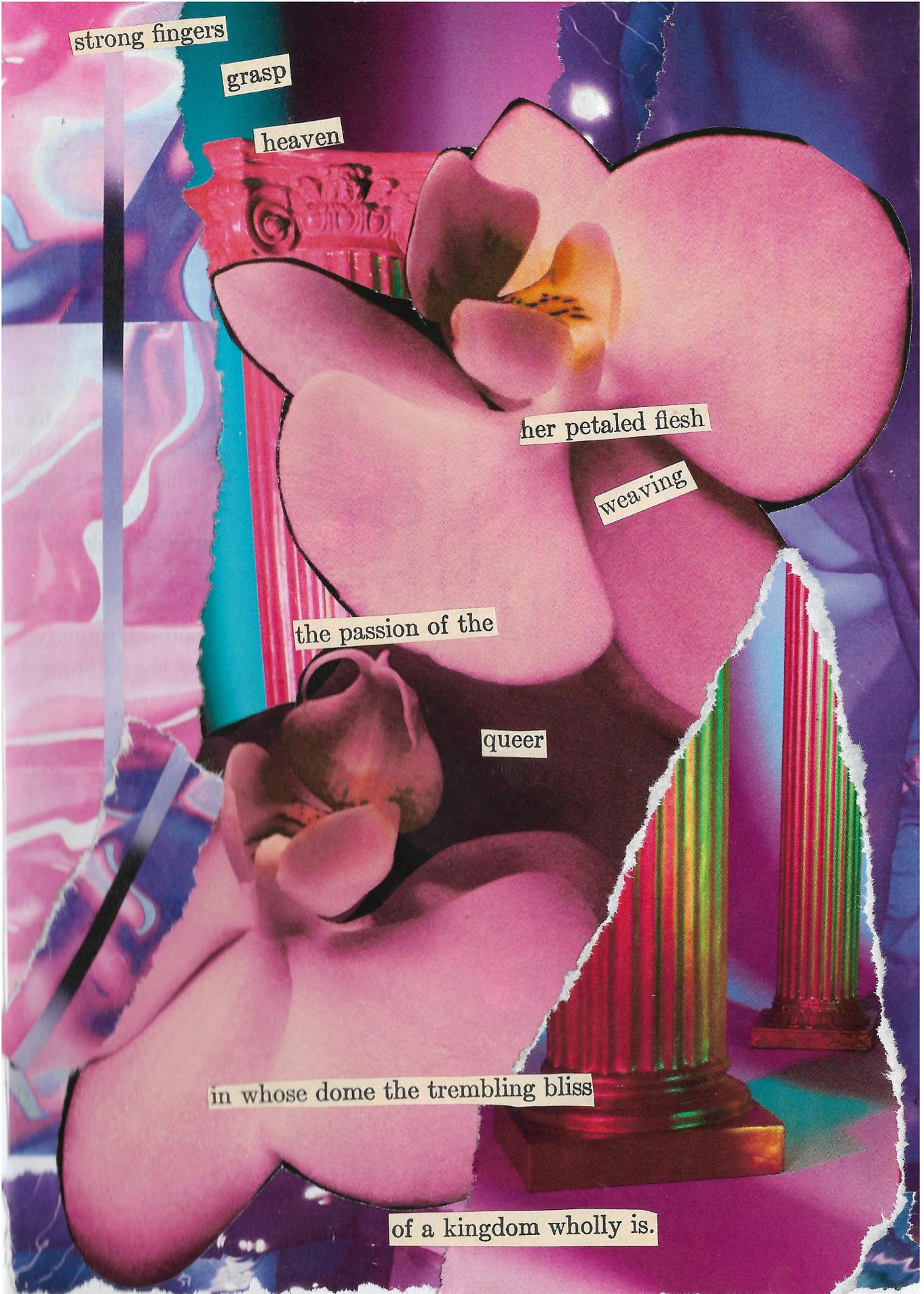
by Ayshe-Mira Yashin

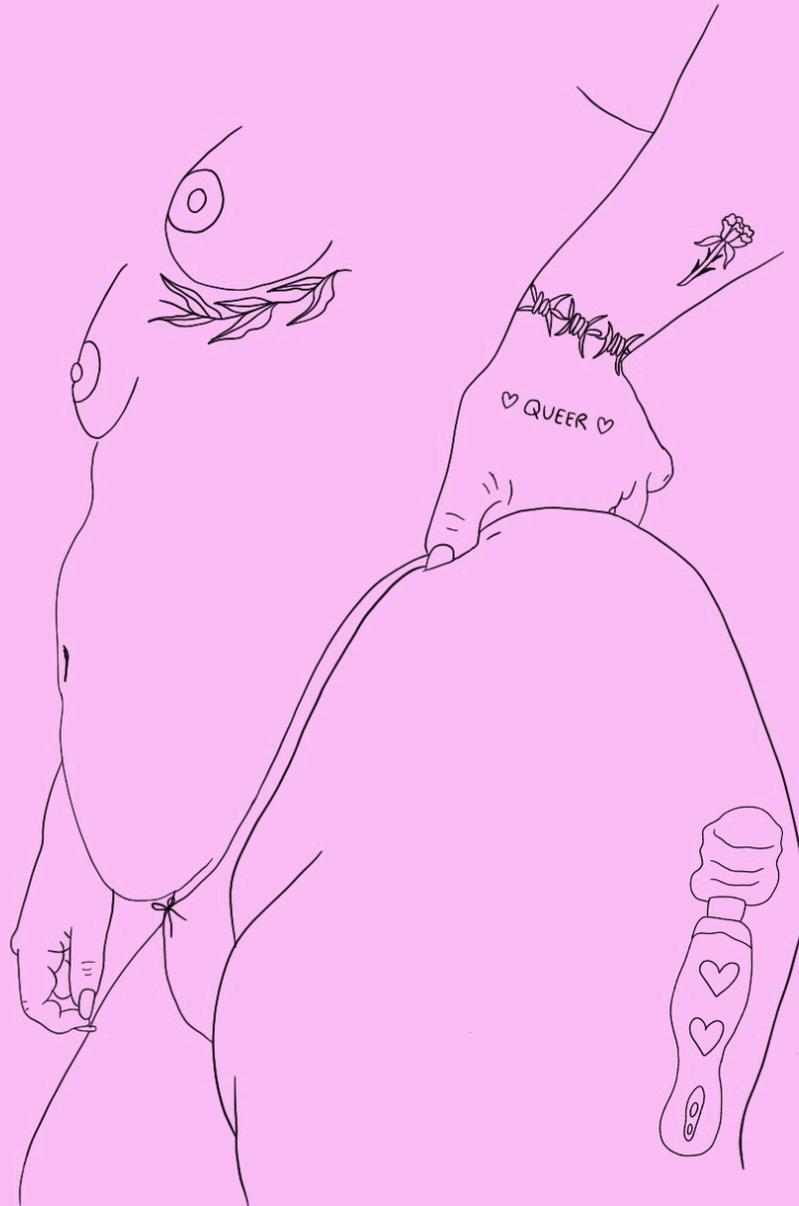
I'm trying to attain it, that tenderness  
with which your eyelashes once fluttered  
at the force of my breath

Might I approach you with that tenderness  
if you might allow me once more  
to be back into your close proximity

To be in your close proximity  
And to find your eyelashes scattered  
across the bedsheets

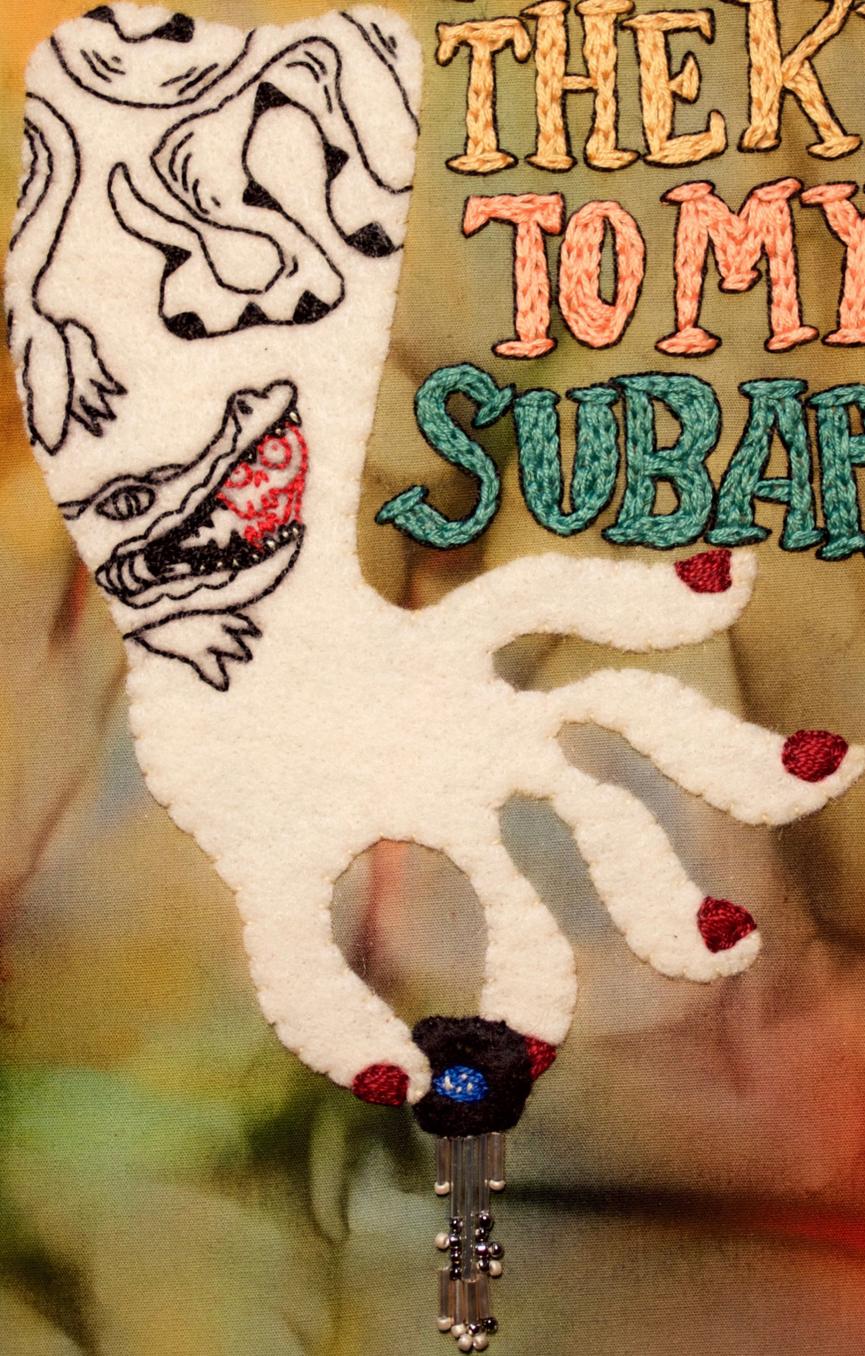
That tenderness of which I was lacking  
causing you, like a stray cat away from my father  
to flee







GIVING YOU  
THE KEY  
TO MY  
SUBARU.



# ON LOVE

Lisa & Trevania | Laney & Candice | Kelli & Jacqui



# Lisa and Trevania

## *Describe each other in three words.*

Trevania: Patient, fierce, loving.

Lisa: Big Dick Energy. (PG version: ambitious, confident, grounding.)

## *How has your relationship changed over the past year?*

Trevania: Lol, how has it not! We understand each other more now beyond any walls.

Lisa: It's gotten easier to tell the truth and harder to lie.

## *Describe a ritual you practice together.*

Trevania: We cuddle every morning before we begin our day. I even have an alarm designated for our cuddle time. It's my favorite part of the day.

Lisa: We meditate and pray with each other. We give each other affirmations. We also go on daily walk in the park. We both love taking time to be in nature. It helps to ground us.

## *How does where you live (your city/town/state) shape or impact your relationship?*

Trevania: We live in Brooklyn right by Prospect Park. Walking in the park has been the biggest blessing. It has kept us sane.

Lisa: Also, the diversity of the neighborhood means that we feel seen. We add to the diversity just by being here.

## *What has been something you've overcome in your relationship?*

Trevania: We've had to overcome the idea of expecting to find ourselves in each other and instead learn to accept each other for who and how we are.

Lisa: I would also say I've learned not to recycle my old coping mechanisms from past trauma.

## *What do you need the most from each other?*

Trevania: Love, support, and understanding.

Lisa: More intentional time to be with each other separate from work.

## *In what ways do you create together?*

Lisa: Honestly, we are constantly creating together! We are both

artists and we complement each other with our work.

Trevania: When I need photos or need something filmed, she is always ready and willing to help. When she needs a second camera op or someone to hold the boom mic or just a second eye when she is editing, I am there. It's one of my favorite dynamics of our relationship.

## *What has been one of the most unexpected joys within your relationship?*

Trevania: How quickly we adapt. No fight is a dealbreaker.

Lisa: The biggest joy is the cuddles! It never gets old!

## *What's your favorite memory of each other or your time together?*

Lisa: Any time I get to see her with a new reaction to a new experience.

Trevania: When I planned a surprise birthday party for her and had a Fifth Element cake (her favorite movie) made for her. Her reaction to seeing her friends and the cake is hands down one of my favorite moments.

## *What's the biggest strength in your relationship?*

Trevania: The way we support each other in everything we decide to do, and how we encourage each other to grow.

Lisa: We aren't afraid to call each other out—we do it in love, of course. We also know that in those moments it's just an opportunity to address an issue and make an effort to change for the better.

## *If you could see into the future, what is one thing you'd want to see?*

Trevania: I would want to see us both as successful boss ladies running our businesses and pursuing our careers as artists.

Lisa: Doing something we've done with people that we've always wanted to work with.

## *What do you love most about being in a relationship with another woman?*

Lisa: We could have a sleep over and no one would think twice.

Trevania: I love the emotional intelligence that comes with being with a woman. That I can talk about what's going on with my body and she can actually relate. Also the softness of her skin on mine when I wake up is the best feeling ever! ♦

# Laney and Candice

**Describe each other in three words.**

Laney: Fierce, brave, and caring.

Candice: Joyful, hilarious, and thoughtful.

**How has your relationship changed over the past year?**

Laney: I have a better understanding of time. And of the importance of slowing down. I had been going so fast for so long that it almost killed me. I never slowed down. And I took things for granted, until this year.

Candice: I know more about Laney than I did before. I know her better. Knowing her better makes it easier to trust her. My awareness has grown. And my patience, too. I'm more appreciative of the time that we have together because I've realized how quickly that can go away.

**Describe a ritual you practice together.**

Both: We take a bath together every night.

**How does where you live (your city/town/state) shape or impact your relationship?**

Laney: We live in East Texas. Not only are we surrounded by Trump supporters but a lot of people don't understand our relationship, period.

Candice: You could be talking to another gay person, even, and say, "This is my wife," and they look confused. And we have to say, "No, we're legally married." That's still a weird thing.

Laney: People don't take our marriage seriously. For instance, when I was in the hospital with COVID,



Candice couldn't easily get a hold of me. The nurses and doctors said, "You really have to be her immediate family." And she said, "No, she's my legal wife." For the people who understand, like family members, it's okay—but, you know, they still don't understand completely. They don't really take it seriously. And so it makes it awkward to be around people.

Candice: It's awkward to be open around people in East Texas because they're so close-minded—and now, even more so because of the Trump administration. That four years set us back almost twenty. And you can feel the tension, and you can feel the stares. You know people are talking about you. When we're out at dinner, and Laney reaches over the table to hold my hand, we know people are talking. I've always been a who-gives-a-shit kind of person, until Trump. He made a huge impact, to where you don't feel safe anymore. And I didn't appreciate how unsafe I could be, how quickly I could become unsafe by just being myself with my wife, until the Trump administration. Because I think he gave people permission not to be accepting.

Laney: You have to be very protective and you have to be very aware of your surroundings.

**What has been something you've overcome in your relationship?**

Laney: We've overcome a lot. I feel like me and Candice have moved mountains. When things got hard, we asked for help.

Candice: I've learned to be more transparent with her. I tell her exactly how I feel.



***What's your favorite memory of each other or your time together?***

Laney: Horseback riding when we first met. And when she met my Granny. We sat there for hours in her living room. And she got us both a Coke.

Candice: We got to share our grandson's birth together.

***What's the biggest strength in your relationship?***

***What do you need the most from each other?***

Candice: Communication is a big thing for me. And honesty is huge. And I've noticed that I need her ridiculously positive attitude about things. It makes me more relaxed. I need that for me not to be so hardened by life. And to learn not to take things so seriously all the time.

Laney: Words of affirmation are important to me. Tell me my butt looks juicy. Candice knows me, and she sees me. And she feels me. And I need her patience. Patience keeps me grounded.

***In what ways do you create together?***

Laney: When do we not create shit together? We create puppy lives together. We create meals together. I taught her how to landscape last year. We plant together. We do a lot of gardening together. We create our grandson's toys together.

Candice: Our grandson is the epicenter of our creativity. We create a home together.

***What has been one of the most unexpected joys within your relationship?***

Both: Traveling together.

Both: Our love for each other.

Candice: It brings us back to each other. There's an unconditional love that I have for Laney. Our love is our strength.

***If you could see into the future, what is one thing you'd want to see?***

Laney: Sustainability. Peace in the world. I don't know what the future might hold, I don't know what's going to happen, but I want to know that we're going to be okay.

Candice: To see Laney with our grandson's kids. To see Laney keep evolving as a mothering, nurturing being.

***What do you love most about being in a relationship with another woman?***

Laney: Being in a relationship with another woman has liberated me. A woman's touch and a woman's ability to take care of somebody is what I love the most.

Candice: Boobs. And If I wasn't with a woman, I would not feel like my authentic self. I wouldn't feel comfortable in my own skin. ♦

# Kelli and Jacqui

## *Describe each other in three words.*

Kelli: Patient—and I know that you're especially patient with me. Incredibly pragmatic. I've never been loved by somebody the way you love me, so I don't know how to describe it, but you give me unconditional love. I feel so seen and heard. So, whatever that is. And a doer. You're a doer, you really are. If it's for the people, you're gonna do it.

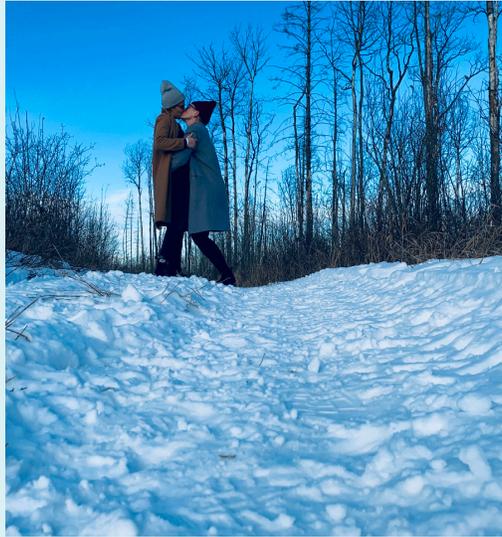
Jacqui: Kind of laissez-faire. Kind of fly by the seat of your pants, which is admirable, because I have to be very scheduled and super rigid, and that can be very stressful. Creative. In your life, in your discovery about self, in your storytelling, in your work, in everything, you're just very creative in how you do things and how you go about life. And then for anybody who actually knows Kelli and/or Miss Kelli—probably the most loyal person I've ever met in my life.

## *How has your relationship changed over the past year?*

Kelli: It has been literally the best year of my life, because I've really been able to be on this journey—and it's been a friggen journey—with my best friend. And also, the person I want to do. And find so hot and sexy, and every day I find you more attractive. You have started to teach me to love myself. That doesn't mean you love people less. And now things are becoming more beautiful to me. Our relationship has grown. We're healing. It's been awesome. I feel like we need to normalize meeting the love of your life in your mid-30s. I've had to do a lot of healing, and I'm still healing, and I'm doing it with someone who gets it, and is doing it, too, and is on that same path. It's hard when someone's trying to get right and heal and the other person's not.

Jacqui: For sure. I think you and I have been in many relationships where we've been the other person who didn't want to heal, and our partners did, and we were kind of left in the dust. It's challenging to be in that space.

I think that this is a really great question, and I would just like to say that our relationship hasn't really changed but our relationship has evolved, and it has evolved in this beautiful and organic process where we really decided to not let time and societal views dictate the speed of our relationship. Which is, I think, really important. Because we did buy a house together, we did get engaged, we are moving forward in what could potentially be starting a family. We did a lot in this year, and especially during a global pandemic. But we did it with the



intuitive, gut feeling of love. And there was never a question or a hesitation or a, "What will somebody else think?" We had such confidence, and we were so sure.

## *Describe a ritual you practice together.*

Kelli: We have quite a few. In the morning, we do this thing where when one of us leaves first, the other person has to wait at the door and wave until the person is still driving and you can't see them anymore.

The other one that's the best is every night no matter what, when we go into bed, we like to put on a show on our iPad. We always play *Law and Order* [SVU]. Always. Even though we've watched every single episode, we've seen every single season, we know everything, we can close our eyes and be like, "Oh, Olivia is wearing the brown pants." We do interpretative, contemporary dances to the theme song. We could be half asleep before the episode has even started and we do full-on movement, every time.

Jacqui: We'll make this one super quick. This ritual is actually guided by *The Daily Stoic*. So, every day we read a passage from that book.

## *How does where you live (your city/town/state) shape or impact your relationship?*

Jacqui: We live in Canada, Alberta, Fort McMurray. Rural Alberta. Four and a half hours from any major city. I think that it certainly brings us—I'm going to look at this from the lens of the positives. It's cold. That's hard on our relationship. But there's some really magical things about what some could interpret as negatives. The other thing too is that we don't have a lot of resources here, so for someone who is creative like Kelli, and someone who is a doer like me, we can create whatever we want and be able to do it in this community. We can create things from the ground up. And that's really important work for myself and I know it's really important for Kel, too—that grassroots stuff. There's really beautiful opportunity, and we're starting a really great endeavor here now, and I do believe we wouldn't have this opportunity if we weren't where we are now.

Kelli: There's not a huge queer community. So that part would be nice. We've tried to make one. I sit on a Pride Committee board and I'm a drag king, and the people that are doing the work are doing the work. But it's just a fly in fly out town.

There's not a lot of restaurants—there's like three. But that's good because we cook a lot. I would love to live somewhere where live music was happening more—we don't really have much of that—but there's plusses and minuses to all of it.

***What has been something you've overcome in your relationship?***

Jacqui: I mean, I believe you are caregiver, in my opinion. You live with someone who has mental health challenges. So, I think we've overcome my bouts of slippage, when I fall into depressions and things like that. That's not easy to come out of, we could go further into those disputes and arguments and fears that I'm running from, but we don't. We come through it. We fight through them. And we do it together. So, I think that's a continuous thing for us, and I hope that things stay at the level that they are. But I feel that we have really great tools, that we're able to be vulnerable and be honest about it but also like, you know, tell me to fuck off and call me on my shit when I'm not being fair. And I think that that's important. So, I think we're always overcoming things.

***What do you need the most from each other?***

Kelli: What I need, you give me. And what I need is to be loved. To be hugged and to be told, "I love you." Intentionally. I can be a really independent person. So, I don't need a lot. But I do need that.

Jacqui: I need to be needed by Kel. I need you to need me to do the Jaddy Jobs. I like feeling needed by you.

***In what ways do you create together?***

Kelli: We create on the daily. We create in the kitchen. Wanting to re-do a room. We're kind of creating our most exciting little project of our adult lives.

Jacqui: I think it's a project that has forced us into some pretty epic edge work—teetering on some pretty uncomfortable spaces, and then of course, being here to catch each other when we are slipping, which is really great. Being vulnerable—we've combined our passions, and now it's out there to the universe, and who knows what could come at us. But the beautiful thing about that was there was never a hesitation of, are we going to be okay? It was, we're in this together no matter what.

***What has been one of the most unexpected joys within your relationship?***

Jacqui: I ended up liking two small dogs. ;)

Kelli: Jacqui comes with two pretty cute little cuties—a niece and a nephew here in town. And we get to spend time with them, and that's been joy. To be an auntie—so that's been kind of an unexpected joy in our relationship. We allow joy.



We celebrate the tiny victories. I think that we both come from backgrounds where we didn't think we were gonna make it this far, so we're celebrating everything.

Jacqui: Unexpected joy just in the amount of joy that we feel with each other. When we have kitchen dance parties, I can be a kid around you. And find joy in just movement and song and not feel like you're standing there judging me. There's always joy.

***What's your favorite memory of each other or your time together?***

Jacqui: When you splashed in the bathtub. I'll never forget that.

Kelli: Jumping on the bed in Mexico.

***What's the biggest strength in your relationship?***

Both: Communication. Stamp it, close it.

***If you could see into the future, what is one thing you'd want to see?***

Both: A family. A baby.

Jacqui: We would love a baby, but—a family. And however that presents itself to us, absolutely we cannot wait for that.

***What do you love most about being in a relationship with another woman?***

Jacqui: I do believe that there's a deep connection between women. As we mature and realize we are actually responsible for our own feelings and our own shit, and then finally come together in our mid 30s, women can connect on a pretty deep level. Which is super beneficial to a lesbian relationship. Also, vagina and boobs.

Kelli: I love women. I love that Jacqui is a woman, just beautiful in so many ways, strong and powerful. ♦



**Sammy Bennett**

# Strike, or a Sestina for Quarantine

by Lisa Krawczyk

Your first attempt splinters the wood. Again, *whoosh!*—  
to achieve fire. The combustion strike,  
the reaction and its smell reminds you of fourth of july fireworks, the matches  
of competitive beach volleyball, sand between your toes. Summers spent on  
beaches; the sun shines down. Hot box  
your winter studio apartment. It is not summer. The

summer escaped you in quarantine. The  
summer. It feels so long ago. The time went *whoosh*  
like this match you try to light, the box  
does not want to cooperate. Strike  
me, or don't. I want to feel some contact skin on  
skin. The aroma lingers in the air. What matches

the loneliness of quarantine? The matches  
total 32, enough for a month or so, the  
little sticks have so much touch. Light another one,  
another day gone. Heavy like the rest. *Whoosh*  
for flame, like you so queer. Strike  
me, did you yet? My ass in the air is ready. Boxes

litter my apartment, months after inhabiting it. Hold the small box  
between your fingers. The match  
in your other hand. The part you strike  
strangely textured. The  
winter melts on your tongue. *Whoosh*  
the wind in your ears, a chill on

your mask. Go back inside. Watch something on  
TV. You're still in quarantine. Box  
yourself lovingly in. Make a *whoosh*  
light a candle. Touch your own skin. Kill a match  
and make it ash, place it gently in the  
sink. The twin bed awaits as you prepare for the strike.

Strike  
on  
the  
box  
matches.  
*Whoosh!*—

The strike is swift  
*whoosh* on  
a box of matches.





Queerantime is a photo project documenting LGBTQIA+ pet families during the Covid-19 stay-at-home orders in Los Angeles since August 2020. As queer folks, we have a history with isolation and we already know our pets can be lifesavers, so I'm documenting what that looks like during the pandemic in the community. Queerantime represents all types of LGBTQIA+ families and individuals living in and around Los Angeles with any kind of pet. Dog and cats mainly, but I've photographed a goat, some fish, and even a tortoise! Proceeds from donations made to the project have been donated to QTPOC in need. So far, I've photographed over 100 portraits. I hope to continue and expand this project by bringing it on the road in 2021 to safely travel to other areas on the West Coast in a camper and van, eventually printing a book of each city I visit.



# Queerantime

by Sorrell Scrutton





# Jacquie O

by Darla Himeles

was a Venice Beach drummer, blond curls  
a halo of springs

that swayed as her palms coaxed  
calfskin into rhythm

that summer night she taught me  
& my nine-shots-of-Cuervo-scorched

tongue how women make love.  
Social Distortion

spun outside the velvet curtain  
that divided

her checker-floored  
studio—& Jacquie O

rocked a sweet ocean beneath  
my clumsy tongue

before a sour wave swelled & crashed  
through my lips in chunks

across her cotton sheets. Some sexpot  
I seemed then,

whimpering, as I was, before her  
blurred nudity,

& what did I know, really, about tenderness  
before Jacquie O gathered

& sponged me like a mother or daughter  
in her shower?

Even now, her slow skilled hands  
draw a clean white towel

over my hair & body,  
& in her remade bed, then,

she cradled me.

I mumbled thank you  
in the breathy hours

of night & dawn  
until Jacquie O kissed me off

& never again  
did I see her, so ashamed was I,

& grateful.



**Shaina Rose Woolley**





# Emily, From New York

by Jessie Katz

Emily and I had been broken up for ten days when we chose to still go on vacation together for my 35th birthday. This last breakup, our second, had been gentler than the one before. We had given it a second shot; the old problems – my reticence to be all in, her yearning for an intangible more – still persisted and late one night as we were climbing into bed, an argument about how I hadn't bought us tickets to a Harry Potter screening became a siren song calling back all the issues we had been avoiding all summer. Agreeing that neither of us could change, we called things off for good – everything but the trip to Cape Cod we had planned, and both still very much wanted to take.

My friends immediately sounded the alarm on our plan, positive that Emily would misconstrue my intentions for us, or that we would end up undoing a smart decision. But as Emily slid into my car to head east she seemed not at all nervous to be going away together, and the more we chatted about everything-but-the-breakup the more I relaxed about it, too. Once we were humming along I-95 Emily absentmindedly reached out and ran her fingers through my hair. The air caught in my lungs and she realized what she was doing. "Is this okay?" she asked, her fingers hovering above me mid-stroke, ready to resume or retreat. "Of course," I said, fighting back butterflies I wasn't supposed to have anymore.

At that point only my parents and younger relatives knew I had started dating women; after I accepted my aunt's invitation to come stay at her summer house with "a friend," I let my cousins inform their mom that it was actually my girlfriend who'd be joining me. Some of this information quickly reached my grandmother via the Jewish family grapevine, of course. "How do you know this Emily going to the Cape with you?" she asked me. "Um, from New York?" I responded lamely, as if the city had formed her out of its ether. This was in a way true; though we had met on Tinder, and Emily was a California girl at heart, we had enjoyed such an immediate easiness

with each other that it felt as if she had probably always been one twist (or swipe) of fate away.

We arrived in the muggy pitch black of the Cape in August to a warm greeting from my aunt. The three of us sat in the living room drinking wine and catching up on family business: my grandfather's funeral; my uncle's reconciliation with his death, and mine. Emily nodded along as if I had already shared all this with her; I started to realize that I hadn't. My aunt excused herself to bed and Emily and I followed suit. At the top of the staircase we looked left and right at the empty guest rooms, and after a few whispers of "what do you think?" and "what do you think?" we fell into the same bed. It felt like a casual decision, an epilogue fling, but it would become much more. It was our breakup honeymoon.

The next day we ate lobster rolls and strolled along the bay. An impending storm over the ocean had cast an eerie, iridescent light over everything. Emily hugged my arm as we walked and said sadly, "This reminds me of 'San Junipero.'" I remembered that was an episode of *Black Mirror* she had asked me to watch, and only later would I understand the connection she made between us and that story of time-traveling, queer romance. In a way we were time traveling – we were having a relationship in reverse, with an end comprised of firsts. With nothing at stake, we had nothing to lose. So we took a shower together for the first time. We browsed a sex shop together for the first time. And, for better or worse, we said "I love you" for the first time.

It happened on our third night there, after going out for a proper Cape date to seafood dinner and live music at a beach bar. On the dance floor, New England bros in polo shirts and Sox hats took stock of the lesbian couple from under their curved bills. We left their glances to go play pinball; the light from the machine lit Emily's face so beautifully that I took a picture and posted it on Instagram. I think it was the first picture I ever posted of her, too.

Back in our room, wine drunk and tinkering with my new Polaroid camera, I said something that caused Emily to start crying for reasons I didn't understand. "Do you even know what you said?" she demanded. I did not, as had often happened when we were dating, so I just held her as she cried, and as I did I felt a swell of emotion that I knew I should bury as deep as I could. Instead I did the worst thing I could: I told her, for the very first time, that I loved her. It wasn't just the first time I told her that; it was the first time I said that to anyone I was dating. My first girlfriend, though no longer. She said it back, but barely. I think she knew better.

I woke up the next morning with Emily's naked back to me, a tattoo of the female symbol etched between her shoulder blades. I remembered waking up to that same image after the first time we ever slept together. It had been four days after Trump was elected and as I gazed upon my sleeping new lover I was amused by how revolutionary, almost defiantly patriotic it felt to be in bed with a woman in the face of the new administration. Emily would later tell me she had worried that our new relationship could never survive it.

On our final day we made the obligatory pilgrimage to Provincetown, the gay mecca of the East Coast. After careening through narrow streets crowded with queer couples and children wearing "I love my moms" tees, we parked beneath the Pilgrim Monument where I made Emily pose in front of a sign reading "This way, out," which I found hilarious – maybe because in P-town we were finally able to be so very out. So out that, strolling back to our car after dinner, we stopped outside a bar where we could hear a band inside playing "You Don't Know Me" and slow danced in the street. When we got back to the house, Emily told me in the dark: "It doesn't really help to say it, but I want you to know that I do really love you, too."

And then it was time to go home. As we made our way back to Brooklyn, we struggled to keep intimacy trapped inside the car with us for as long as possible. Things we talked about: dream jobs we lusted after. Whether or not we could ever date men again. Things we did not talk about: the girl I met before Emily, who had briefly but permanently led me unblinkingly out of the



closet. Her weight on us finally felt undetectable, though I wondered if she had seen my Instagram post.

I suggested we stop for New Haven's famous clam pizza, looking for any excuse to delay our return. As I turned off the car Emily kissed me and we began making out, then furtively having sex, barely taking the time to unbuckle our seatbelts. It was hot; it was a desperate last act.

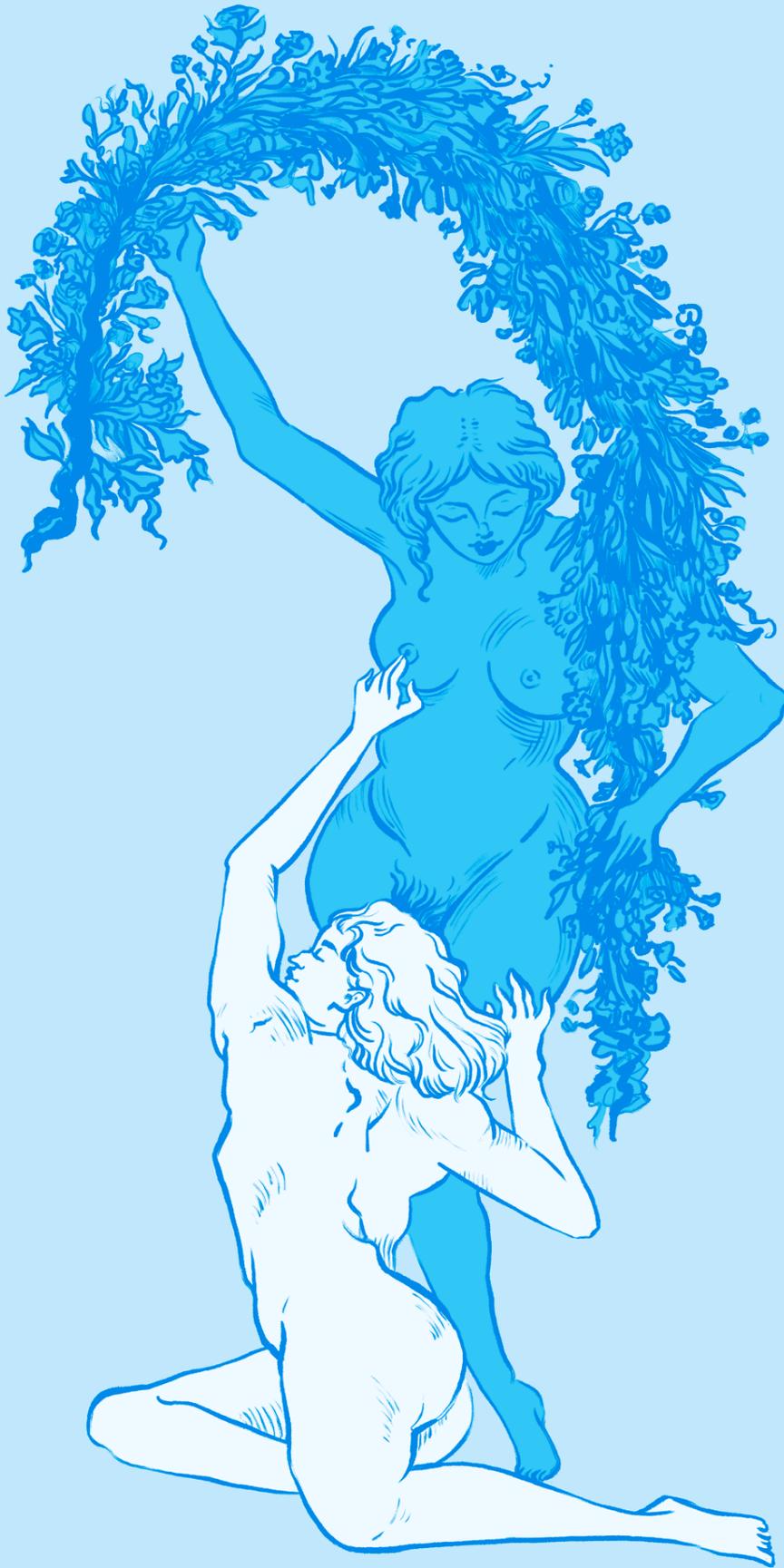
After dinner I stopped in the bathroom and sat in the stall anxiously wondering what would become of us in two hours. I pulled out my phone, which I had neglected for most of our trip. There was a text from a girl I had gone out with once while Emily and I were broken up the first time. She wanted to hang out again. Sensing a lifeline, I sent her a flirty text back and immediately felt ashamed.

Back in the car, each mile closer to home brought fewer words spoken between us, and when the city skyline finally appeared we weren't speaking at all. Emily gripped my hand in hers. It didn't feel like the past few days we spent holding hands, soft, playful. This time they were frozen in place.

We pulled up outside of Emily's building. I started crying as Emily watched, dry-eyed. Another first.

"You know I'm here for you," Emily said, her hand already on the door handle. I nodded. Cardi B's "Bodack Yellow" came blaring out of a car parked just up the block and we were back in the grips of the city. Summertime in New York always held on for as long as it could.

But Emily was ready to let go, and I swallowed my urge to never let her. ♦



# Ophelia's Eulogy, as Delivered by the Pond in Which She Drowned

by Rachel R. Carroll

You are not the first I have seen  
mistake an act of love as a cry for help.  
The language of flowers  
is not one in which to write a suicide note.

It is hard to balance hearts on riverbanks,  
easy to lose footing on muddy slope, brittle bough  
when fathers and lovers have been binding you in  
nutshells.

(I'll tell you a secret, my child:  
Infinite Space already has a Queen,  
and she has bad dreams, too.)

Men  
will pour over whether or not  
you are deserving of a Christian Earth  
to swallow the tragedy of you  
down to the bone,

will argue over  
who loved you enough to wield the shovel  
even as the smell of your rot  
grows at their feet.

# In Which Queer Sex Is an Abomination

by Liana DeMasi

My pussy pulsates in the mouth of my lover. My clitoris is  
a Minotaur, a thing demonized yet prophetic, and I feel I  
might be able to count its nerve endings against her taste  
buds. We whisper thank you in unison because, however  
in brevity, the shame hanging in the air is masked by sex  
and pre-cum.

I am thirstier than I've ever been.

I want to worship her body, but what I mean to say is, I  
want to appreciate it with a ferocity that attempts to heal  
it. But what I mean to say is, I want to lie with her in dis-  
traction. For the power of a person will always be limited  
by the very fact of their existence.

I am not a goddess of any element. My skin is not elas-  
tic, and I will one day be ash. But the moments in which  
our bodies root in ancestry while becoming boundless,  
two souls indeterminable from one another, I can count  
the teeth in her mouth with my womanhood, and I am  
victim to nothing but my own weakness.

To be thirsty and quenched at once.

I promise there is reproduction here. Every time in the  
arch of a back and the bite of a lip and the shudder of  
a body wracked with pleasure. I see colors and shapes  
when I close my eyes, a slack line tying my feet to a tree. I  
am nature, a Minotaur atop a hill. I will find pride in my  
demonization, as you light fires beneath my feet.

I am the color of rage, the blue hue of warmth in the pit.  
My legs part to reveal the sea, men-less and beckoning.



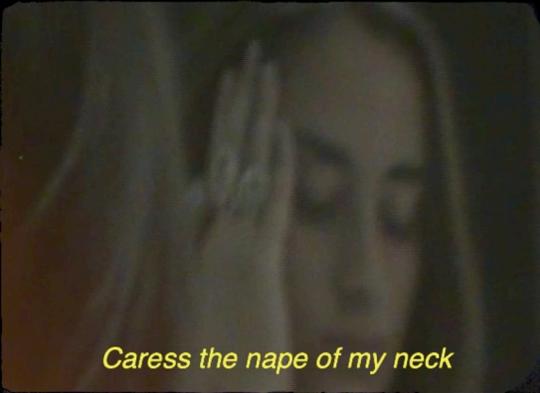




*I try to emulate little gestures of love*



*I hold my own hand*



*Caress the nape of my neck*



*Just like you used to*



*And for a second I can fool myself that it's you*



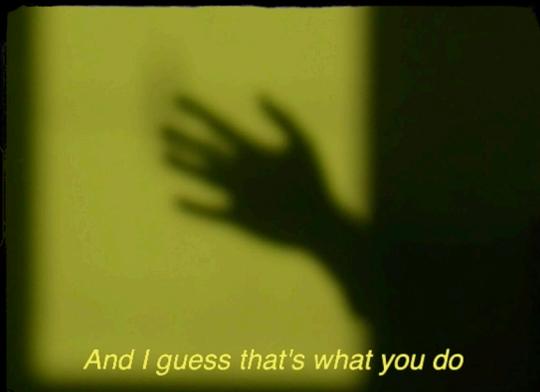
*And that you're right there with me smiling*



*I can always picture your smile so vividly*



*Almost like I can hear it*



# Behind the Scenes of BLOCK

Filmmaker Carrie Brennan gives us an intimate look into the making of her new film and offers advice for queer creatives wondering where to start.

*Talk to us about how BLOCK came into existence.*

I can still remember the moment I sat across from my therapist. It was our fourth session since I'd come out to her, and she asked me how I was doing. I quipped back, "Oh, fine. Just dandy. I feel like I have a 30-pound cement cinderblock on my chest."

The idea came out of desperation to describe how I felt on the inside when I was first coming out.

Even though I knew, at least on a surface level, that I'd have some support, I still experienced so much exhaustion, anxiety, lack of sleep—real, tangible issues from this internal struggle that was going on in my own head.

I couldn't believe how something that I was struggling with on the inside could have such a direct effect on my life and yet go completely unnoticed to others. I thought to myself, "Well, shit, if I'm struggling this much and no one even knows I'm going through this, how many other people are out there struggling silently, too?"

*What was your inspiration to tell this story?*

It's two-fold, really. I remember wanting so desperately to put a face on the weight of the mental struggle that I was experiencing. But on the other side of the coin, I wrote it to inspire people to face their own BLOCKS.

On a very deep level, I knew I was gay around age 13. I was nowhere near accepting of that within myself, but the clues were always there—that tight feeling I'd get in my chest when my friends would joke that I looked like a "lezbo" in whatever outfit I was wearing. The discomfort when my gay aunt would ask if I was seeing anyone. The pang in my heart I'd feel when talking with a girl I had a crush on about her boyfriend. It was like a million tiny cuts. I was constantly controlling my emotions and manipulating myself. Even despite those moments, I hadn't so much as kissed a girl until a decade later. Throughout those teenage and early-twenty years, I convinced myself that I was fine staying in the closet, because coming out meant risking the friends, family, and relationships I cared most about. My wall of fear was so high, I couldn't see what life could be like on the other side. So, I told my-



self that life was good as it was. Hooking up with guys was... fine (?!).

But in coming out, I realize now that the beauty and the freedom and just general euphoria of living life on the other side of that fear is the greatest feeling ever. I think everyone has a right to experience the wonder of what that feels like. That's what I'm here to do. That's why I told this story.

*How does the storyline of BLOCK parallel or overlap with your real life?*

Aside from the whole cinderblock thing (I didn't actually believe a cinderblock was following me around) a good amount of stuff that happens in the film really did happen in real life. I took certain characteristics, experiences, and traits from certain people (for instance, the character Abbi is a combination of my brother, my best friend Maddie, and my sister) to represent certain themes that served to move the plot along. Regarding the scenes themselves, I took a significant amount of stuff from my real life.

*What are the major themes in the film?*

The major themes that are portrayed in the film are mental health, sisterhood, shame, internalized homophobia, coming out in 2016 with seemingly accepting friends and family, how we cope, therapy, and self-love.

*Can you describe the collaborative process of making BLOCK? How did you choose your crew? How did everyone work together?*

I chose our crew based on other indie film sets I'd worked on in the past. Honestly, my OG production crew consists of some of my closest friends. Our director is my best friend from high school. My production coordinator and I were in the same sorority in college—I started hanging with her when I moved to Brooklyn because she didn't want me rolling up to Cubbyhole alone. Tori (who plays my sister in the film) and I were roommates in NYC together when we went to the same acting school.

One of the most grounding things that allowed our team to work well together was creating a mission statement early on that spoke directly from our hearts. Ultimately, when we would come to

an artistic disagreement, our mission statement helped to take our egos out of the equation. It was never about who's right or wrong, or who wins or loses, but, "What is ultimately going to best serve the mission? How best can we inspire people to see the best in themselves and love themselves? Option A or B?" And then we'd go from there.

Also, we had a No-Assholes-on-Set policy, and a kickass, female-lead production team. That was very dope, as well.

### *What was the biggest challenge you encountered in bringing BLOCK into the world?*

I remember how I felt in seventh grade when I first saw the way Callie looked at Erica on *Grey's Anatomy*, right before they kissed. I didn't know on a conscious level what was happening, but in my heart, I just knew that they mattered. Looking back now, it was like Life Itself came down and offered me a little snippet of what I could be someday. That I could be gay and successful. That I could be gay and in love. And married. And happy. And alive.

COVID was of course a real BLOCK to our in-person premieres, originally planned for June 2020. But I think in the end, this was always how it was meant to be delivered to the world. Right in people's homes, just like how I received that lifeline back in 2007, standing in my parents' kitchen, holding a bowl of ramen. It was never about red carpets and huge movie screens. It was always about accessibility and reaching people who need to see this the most, no matter where they live. It was always meant to be virtual.

### *What do you hope people take away from the film?*

I hope people can walk away with a sense of inspiration. That that big, scary, ugly thing they don't want to even look at is actually there for a reason. And that they have the capacity to walk towards it (maybe with a friend by their side) and speak to it. And "walking towards it" can come in the form of so many different things. Of talking with a therapist. Of taking a slow day. Of practicing a new form of self-care. Of journaling. On the other side of that fear is a gift greater than anything you could imagine. The bigger and scarier and darker it is, the bigger and brighter and more fucking amazing the light on the other side.

### *What is your advice to queer creatives who want to start a project like this but don't know where to begin?*

First: Go to therapy.

Second: The more personal, the more universal. Unfortunately, our most powerful stories often come from the darkest, lowest, scariest, most embarrassing times in our lives.

Start there. Tell the truth. Be as honest as you possibly can. And remember, we need you. We need your voice. Because people need to know that they're not alone. Queer people experience

more shame than any other group of people—because the one thing that shame thrives on is the false belief that you're alone. Start at the scariest, ugliest parts. I promise, you will bring the light in.

### *What did you learn about yourself during the making of BLOCK that you might not have known before?*

I learned that I'm in love with the process. I'm in love with discovering the stories along the way. I'm in love with trying to make something out of nothing. I learned that all people want is to be seen and heard and to know that they matter. That what they say matters.

Life can be devastating. It can be horrid, and mean, and unfair. People leave. Friends bail. To live is to experience that truth over and over and over again. But I think to wrestle with these problems doesn't mean you're wrong or broken or unfixable—it means you have a life. As I've grown through making this film I've realized that there's no escaping that fact. But when it's all said and done, what matters most is how we love ourselves through the never-ending shitstorm.

### *Can you talk about love in relation to the film? In what ways does the film deal with the subject of love? What did making the film teach you about love?*

A lot of people think that Kit's BLOCK is that she's gay. But in the end, her BLOCK isn't that she's gay. It's that she doesn't love herself.

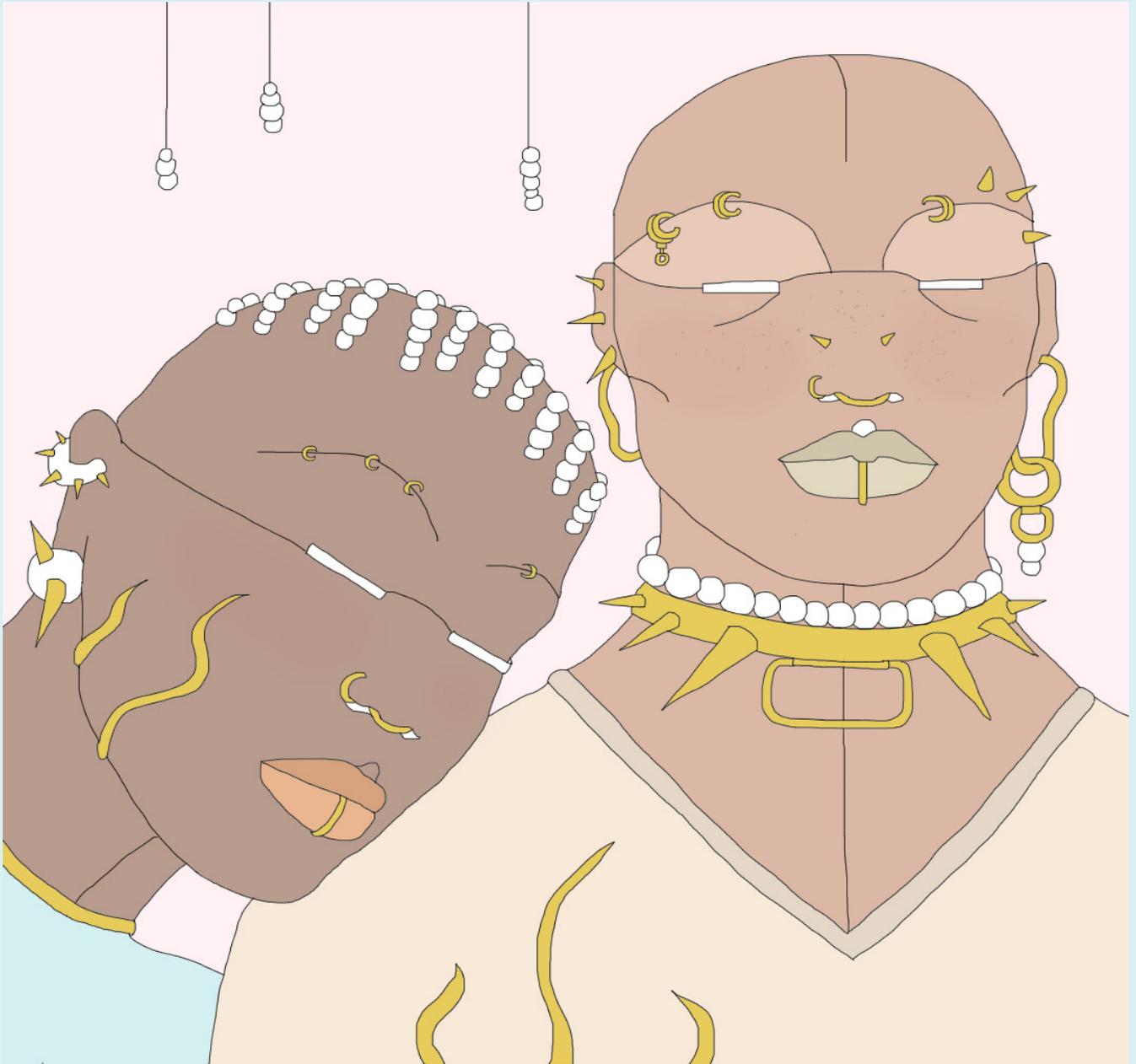
The film deals with love in the sense of, how do you love yourself, regardless of what other people think? What ways do you try and silence that mean voice that tells you you're not worthy enough? How do you love yourself fully, and truly, with all your flaws and bad shit you've done and insecurities and phobias and allergies and sleep habits and shortcomings and everything? How do you do that? This is a love story about someone coming out because she loves and accept herself, for herself. It represents Kit's journey from shame to acceptance.

The process of making this film over the past few years in and of itself has been an act of love. From the script, to the cast, to the themes, to the locations, to the set design, to the songs in the soundtrack. It was made entirely, fully, completely, through love. Love in the form of sacrifice, and hard work, and nights without sleep, and tough decisions. It's a story about love, but it was made with love. The essence of it is love. There are millions of little stories twisted into this film. The people I've met because of this film. The things and people I've fallen in love with in the making of the film. I regret nothing. Everything served its purpose. It's all love.

### *How can our readers view BLOCK?*

On March 4th we are virtually premiering for one night and one night only! 7pm EST! Tickets are on sale here: <https://www.blockthefilm.com/tickets>. ♦

Photo by: Sophie Kietzmann



**Josefine Aspvik**



**Josefine Aspvik**

# MISS

by Lucky Christie

Poet kid jaguar inhale analyst decrease pink update miss coyote ozone margin  
Scabslasher  
Poem about darkrooms and bathrooms  
Ur hand a dry rope against my clit  
Obstetric lube mare  
Eating media  
I loved you for so long  
Your tits were my best friends

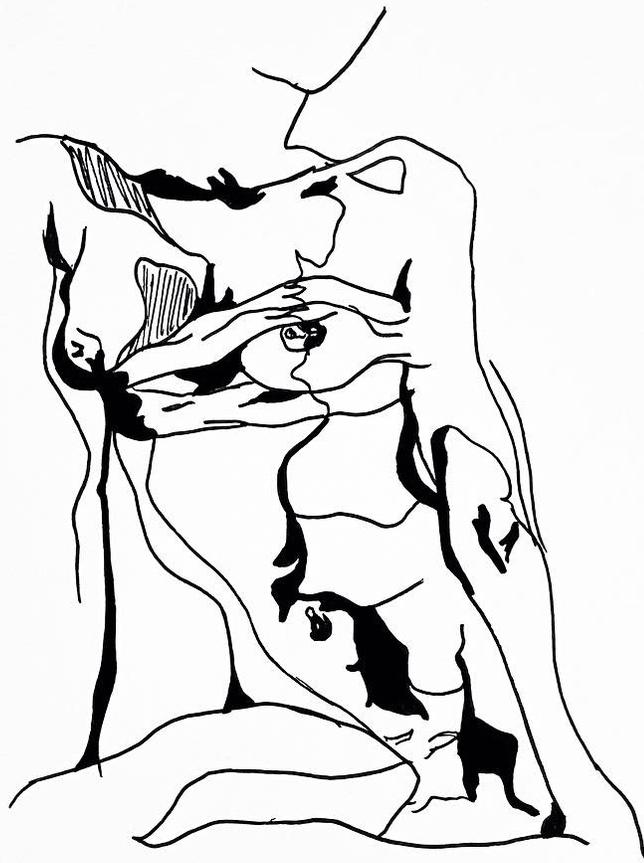
# NEEDLEWOMAN

by Lucky Christie

You are the needlewoman  
I need help  
You put me back together?  
You like to see me apart  
Give me a stitch  
You make me laugh  
You look for shards on the floor  
Of the chocolate the cats ate and became very ill  
They had small drips in their arms  
And globes of very black charcoal in their whiskers to clear  
The contents of their stomachs  
When the small one was smaller  
She was spayed  
And you stitched her up  
Now she is a wonder  
Give me the same



Chanel Samson



Chanel Samson

# ELK

by Lucky Christie

Grim

In the morning like slaps against the mist

Too elegant to moo

Too warm to be quiet

Alive enough to be victim to your speed and drive

You grip the barrel.

Your resumé a list of dead and missing

Nordic thrill in my pants

I loved you, I was a fruit fly in the wine of you

# THE PARK

by Lucky Christie

Every time I walk through nature it feels like goodbye

Feeling grass be

Over there

And knowing it will be gone soon

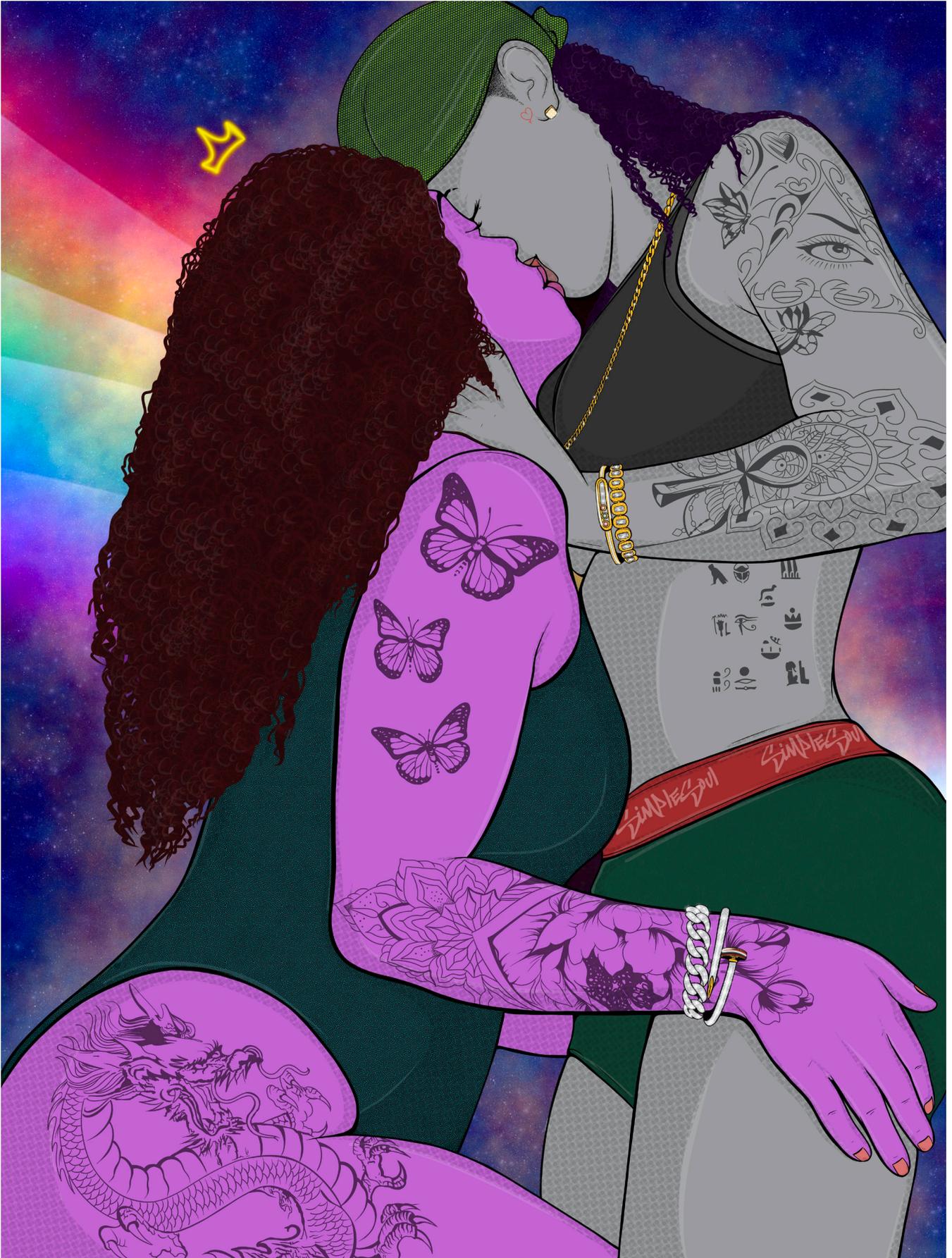
The future holds forensic herbalists

Metal instruments

An earth that is an autopsy wound



**Nicole Bonasoro**



Nat Burke

# Suspension

by Steph Carlin

somewhere between sleepless nights  
and vivid dreams,  
i wait for you.  
in the seconds after sunset  
'til the first ray of daybreak,  
i collect each moment  
of stillness for you.  
tucked in the pocket  
of my heart's inner locket,  
i'll keep your dreams safe  
should you lose them some day.

# Early Morning Hour

by Sue (@420oldfatlesbians)

I watched her chest rise  
up and down.  
The final breath left her body,  
a body I had cared for the last eleven years,  
the body which gave me life.  
Her soul danced now  
like only an imagination could ponder.  
Her journey,  
our journey,  
here on this Earth had ended.



Ash Donnelly

# This Past Third of May

by Rachel Smith

this past third of May  
was not just Grandma's 94th  
birthday, nor simply two days  
after my 32nd - it was also  
the 2nd birthday Laura missed  
because she is dead -

She and I were never able  
to celebrate the proximity  
of our births, save in  
loose plans and longing smiles -

we were for a time  
coworkers in an independent  
bookstore - a collected roof  
for wayward dreamers - I  
was a recent college grad  
with grand ambition and a  
blind dream -

to write and to have  
a relationship with a woman,  
with Laura -

she was the dyke  
of my dreams - not just  
as a romantic companion  
but for bravely embodying  
that which I couldn't,

the self i was  
too afraid to breathe life into -

days before she died  
she liked one of my  
instagram posts -

a barbed wire fence  
Under the enormous  
south downs sky -

I remember being pleased  
that Laura and I were in touch -  
despite the years  
and thousands of miles -

that she approved  
of my lens on life,  
if only digitally -

days after she died  
I reread the blog she kept  
the year we left Providence -

I flew to London while -  
she drove from RI West  
across the US -

a journey I desire  
to make but have  
never taken -

scrolling through her  
words provided comfort  
and melancholy, like  
a goodbye fuck -

love and loss - present  
and pluperfect -

in many ways, I now  
resemble the Laura I remember -  
dark brown and bleached blonde hair,  
coffee-stained eyes  
curly kohl armpits  
a tattoo sleeve around  
a beloved woman -

I hate using the conditional  
tense with you, Laura - Mulley -  
but you know you will live  
on in me, as long as I draw breath -



Cass Rinsler

# we love our Contributors!

**Josefine Aspvik** (she/they) is a Berlin-based queer illustrator from Finland. They have created an illustrational platform for unconventional queer beauties in order to break the toxic world of gender roles, norms, and beauty standards as well as fighting to normalize mental health issues. Her work is quite personal since she is a part of the LGBTQ+ community herself and has suffered from the damage caused by prejudice against her for her gender expression and for simply not fitting into the norms of society. Therefore, they have dedicated their work to destroying those norms, illustration-by-illustration. Follow Josefine on Instagram @josefineaspvik.

**Sammy Bennett** (he/him) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Born in Michigan, he earned his BFA from Kendall College of Art and Design and his MFA from Michigan State University with a focus in painting. He was awarded the Stanley and Selma Hollander Graduate Fellowship in Studio Art along with two Summer Research Development Fellowships. Bennett has exhibited locally and internationally, including The Eli and Broad Art Museum, The Centro Villa of Mostoles (Spain), Amos Enos Gallery (Brooklyn), International de Graficia (Venice, Italy), and CODA Gallery, amongst others. Follow him on Instagram @sammy\_frannett.

**Nicole Rose Bonasoro** (aka NRB) (she/her), originally from Boston, moved to NYC ten years ago to pursue art and design to the fullest. She considers herself a jack of all trades visual artist and creates experiences in print, digital, and mixed media. The art piece she contributed to *Lesbians Are Miracles*, titled, "Electric Love," is from her #100daysoflyricsbyNRB series, which includes song lyrics created in various mediums, ranging from sharpie to hot sauce. Follow her on Instagram @nicolebonasoro.

**Nat Burke** (she/her) is an independent, self-taught artist and graphic designer from Manchester, UK. She has been drawing for over five years offering various custom artwork, clothing, and canvas prints focusing more on lesbian love and romance. Inspired by the universe, she draws whatever she feels and tries to create artwork other souls can feel, too. Follow her on Instagram @simplesoulart and visit her on [www.simplesoulart.co.uk](http://www.simplesoulart.co.uk).

**Sam C.** (he/they) is a nonbinary artist from the UK. Their work is usually based on dreamlike, pop art fantasy scenes, celebrating diversity in people, and celebrating the queer community. Their Instagram is

@lungfriend and their humble website in progress is [www.lungfriendart.com](http://www.lungfriendart.com).

**Steph Carlin** (she/her) writes poetry and takes photographs as a colorful escape from her often black and white day job in finance. Steph lives in New Jersey with her wife Emily and two kids. Follow her creative account on Instagram: @bourbonandbitters\_poet.

**Rachel R. Carroll** (they/them) (Ray if you're nasty) is a non-binary poet who is also hard at work on their first novel. Their work has appeared in *Polaris Magazine*, *The Gravity of the Thing*, and *SUGAR Magazine*. After studying Creative Writing and Gender Studies at the University of Southern California, Ray moved to Brooklyn, where they have worked as a bookseller and special educator. When not busy pursuing their masters in middle school education, Ray can be found reading compulsively, maintaining their snail mail correspondences, or desperately trying to establish trust with the colony of cats living outside their bedroom window.

**Lucky T. Christie** (she/her) is a poet and writer in Berlin. She has written for *3AM Magazine* and *The Quietus*. Follow her on Twitter @tr3tinoin.

**Liana DeMasi** (she/her/hers) is a queer writer and creator living in Brooklyn, NY. "In Which Queer Sex is An Abomination" is an excerpt from her poetry book, *In Which She Takes Multiple Lovers*. Find more information about her work at [www.lianademasi.com](http://www.lianademasi.com) or at her Instagram: @lianademasi. Her words can be found in *The Boston Globe*, *Tinder's Swipe Life*, *GO Magazine*, and others.

**Ash Donnelly** (they/them) is a 29-year old queer/non-binary multidisciplinary artist and educator based in Brooklyn, NY. Their work revolves around themes of depicting and glorifying queerness both individually and collectively as part of a community. Follow them on Instagram @ashdonnellyceramics and visit them at [www.ashdonnelly.com](http://www.ashdonnelly.com).

**Erin Flynn** (she/her) is a Brooklyn based queer photographer and filmmaker who creates character-based work, drawing from a narrative mindset. Erin mainly shoots on film but also appreciates digital and loves video editing. Vintage advertisements, retro street photography and her favorite films are a great source of inspiration for Erin's work, but it's still very much its own inspiration. Follow her on Instagram @erin\_flame.

**Julian Guy** (he/they/she) is a queer and genderqueer writer born in the West. Julian loves swimming, eating cotton candy while roller skating, and gossiping in the park with his friends. They split their time between their hometown Reno, NV and Brooklyn, NY and can be found on Twitter @lizard\_blitz.

**Darla Himeles** (she/her) is the author of the chapbook *Flesh Enough* (2017) and *Cleave* (forthcoming, 2021), both with Get Fresh Books. Darla is a poetry editor for *Platform Review*, and her poems can be read in recent issues of *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Atticus Review*, *Off the Coast*, and *Talking River*. She holds a PhD in English from Temple University, where she works as the assistant director of the Writing Center, and lives in Philadelphia with her wife and daughter. Tweet her @darlaida or find her at darlahimelespoetry.com.

**Jessie Katz** (she/her) is a podcast executive living and remote working in Brooklyn with her dog-turned-coworker Alvy. Former host of Billboard's *Soul Sisters* podcast and *The Female Gaze* podcast, Jessie has also created web series, short films and music videos under her production banner Piano Factory Pictures. Follow her on Instagram @thejkatz.

**Lisa Krawczyk** (they/them) is a queer, neurodivergent poet. Their poetry can be found or forthcoming in the *West Review*, *Intangible Magazine*, *The Ice Colony*, *In Parentheses*, *Defunkt Magazine*, *the Wisconsin Historical Society Press*, and elsewhere.

**Leeza Lakhter** (they/them) is a queer, self-taught artist from New York City. Leeza's mission and artwork centers around spreading awareness for mental health, body and sex positivity, LGBTQIA+ empowerment, and gender issues, just to name a few. Leeza is best known for their tattoo artwork, drawings, graphic art, mixed media, and photography, highlighting the importance of self-love, acceptance, and mental health. Leeza has a safe and comfortable space for their clients to get tattooed in—open to all bodies, races, genders, aliens. Follow Leeza on Instagram @letmepokeu.

**Alina Gerrish MacLean** (she/her, they/them) is a Boston-based illustrator, educator, and tattoo apprentice. She received her BFA in Illustration from Lesley University College of Art and Design and has been teaching there as an Adjunct Professor in Illustration since 2018. Her work is experimental and interdisciplinary, but primarily explores themes of queerness and the natural world. Follow her on Instagram @gerrishmaclean and explore her work further at www.gerrishmaclean.com.

**Chelsea Muscat** (she/her) is a Writer/Director/Cinematographer/Photographer born and raised on the island of Gozo in the heart of the Mediterranean until she was nine, where she recently relocated

during the pandemic. She's spent her teen years in NYC where she studied filmmaking at SUNY Purchase. Her biggest focus is on directing/writing and cinematography. She often explores themes of love, abandonment, and isolation in fiction, documentary, and experimental film as well as in her photography. Visit her at www.chelseamuscat.com and www.vimoe.com/chelseamuscat, and find her on Instagram @sinkingsun\_ and @storyofmymother.

**Ciara O'Neill** (she/her) is an Irish artist and illustrator based in Dublin and former NCAD student. Her work commonly centres around themes of sexuality, gender and politics. She is currently a member of Medusa Collective, a collective of illustrators looking to raise awareness and funds for victims of IBSA (image based sexual assault) in Ireland. Visit her at www.ciamakesthings.com and follow her on Instagram @ciamakesthings, on Twitch @ciamakessteams, and on Twitter @ciaraisfabb.

**Roman Pace** (they/them) is a Berlin-based non-binary lesbian artist. They question madness and queerness through collage, poetry, and photography. Their work explores the divine feminine, spirituality, magic, monsters, and hyperobjects such as climate change. You can find their work on Instagram @roman.pace.

**Sarah Perry** (she/they) is a memoirist and essayist who writes about love, gender-based violence, queerness, and the power dynamics that influence those concerns. She is the author of the memoir *After the Eclipse* (Houghton Mifflin, 2017), an account of her mother's life and eventual murder in 1994. She holds an M.F.A. in nonfiction from Columbia University and is currently a member of the Tulsa Artist Fellowship. Originally from Maine, Perry spent ten years in the South before making her home base in Brooklyn, New York. She is working on a second memoir, *The Book of Regrets*, which will contain a lot more romantic love and sex than her previous writing. For pictures of her roundish wobbly cat, Ziggy, follow her on Instagram @sarahperry100, and to read more, visit sarahperryauthor.net.

**Res** (they/them) is a queer artist and curator working primarily in photography. Born in Paterson, New Jersey, Res holds a BA from Smith College and a MFA from the Yale School of Art, where they were awarded the Fund for Lesbian and Gay Studies Award. In 2018 their book, *Towers of Thanks*, was a finalist for The Lucie Photo Book Prize. In 2019, they were commissioned by NYCgo to make a body of work commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising and was an artist in residence at Atlantic Center for the Arts. In 2020, their oeuvre was profiled in Aperture's "Introducing" series. Res' artwork is represented by Ziet Contemporary Art, New York, NY. Follow them on Instagram @restagram.

**Cass L Rinsler** (AKA Cass or Castle) is a multidisciplinary artist focused on creating works based on the ideals of altruism and care—within oneself and towards those around us. Cass lives and work in Brooklyn, often aided by their better half, a brilliantly talented writer. Cass is currently focusing on a long-term installation-based project dealing with the body and the many ways we can find gentleness for ours. Follow Cass on Instagram @castlerinsler, @subtle\_art, and @tactilemovement.

**Chanel Samson** (they/them/theirs) is an artist of many trades including fine art, music, film, and performance. During quarantine they have been drawing people's nude selfies as a way to connect. Follow them on Instagram @chanelandthecircus.

**Sorrell Scrutton** (they/them) is a queer photographer based in Los Angeles. Originally from Toronto, Canada, they opened a portrait studio in Downtown LA 7 years ago. Specializing in animal photography, they also take professional portraits of humans occasionally. Trying to create space for LGBTQIA community, their projects include Queer Headshots (in collab with Gina Young (@ginagenius), Chosen Ones (in collab with Jenn Forde), and their current project Queerantime (@queerantime\_project). You can see their work on billboards at Wag Hotels SoCal locations and on the Pasadena Humane website. You can view past and current work at sorrellscrutton.com and follow them on Instagram @queerantime\_project, @petsbysorrell, and @francis\_mcdogmand (Sorrell's dog).

**Rachel Smith** (she/her) was born in Providence and raised in Hope, Rhode Island, Rachel currently resides in London. She is an archivist at Bishopsgate Institute. *Words & Pictures* is her first collection of poetry and photographs, which she self-published. *The Love That Dares* is her first work of non-fiction. She is also an award-winning screenwriter. In her free time she enjoys cinema, coffee, knitting, her dog and her wife. Follow her on Instagram @smiffsonio.

**Janie Stamm** (she/her) was born and raised on the edge of the Everglades in Broward County, Florida. She is a craft-based artist currently residing on the western banks of the Mississippi River in Saint Louis, Missouri. Her work focuses on preserving Florida's environmental and Queer history in the face of climate change. She uses a craft-based practice to tell these stories. Janie has shown work throughout the country including Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, and throughout the Saint Louis regional area. She recently was an artist in residence at ACRE in Wisconsin, at the Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris, and Aquarium Gallery in New Orleans. Janie was a teaching artist-in-residence at the Contemporary Art Museum in Saint Louis until the COVID-19 lock downs began. Follow her on Instagram @glitterpuppies.

**Sue** (she/her) 420 Old Fat Lesbian, currently resides in Maine. She is semi-retired and enjoys travel and living in the woods.

**Wendy Tooth** is an unregenerate recluse. She is independently indigent and probably the ghost of I.A. Richards, just a poem in a bottle washing up on shore. She exists at the intersection of occultism and tax fraud and is gay, gay, gay. Had she written a book, she would call it *The Idiot's Guide to Wielding a Dustbuster*.

**Loan Tran** (they/them) is a Durham, NC-based writer and organizer, who has the honor of being a southerner by way of Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. Loan has spent over a decade building social movements for the freedom of all people. As a writer, they have been featured in *Black Girl Dangerous*, *Waging Non-Violence*, *NYTimes*, *Gendered Lives*, *Young{ist} Magazine*, *Workers World*, and more. A dyke of the U.S. and global South, they are obsessed with, committed to, and fortified by telling the truth of our beautiful, complex, and worthy lives. You can follow them on IG: @beaverfuzz or Twitter: @ntranloan.

**Shaina Rose Woolley** (they/them) is a non-binary, Jewish filmmaker and photographer located in LA. Shaina's work focuses on the positive and colorful aspects of queerness to move away from the trauma-centered stories we most often see about the queer experience. Their creative style blends strong color palettes, kitsch, and vintage aesthetics with a queer lens. Their surrealist short film, "Reasons To Stay," is currently in post-production. Outside of film, Shaina co-produces The Secret Circus LA, wants to go outside more but is addicted to animal crossing, and loves their two cats, Momo and Remy, very much. You can find them on Instagram @shainarosewoolleyart.

**Ayshe-Mira Yashin** (she/her) is a lesbian artist and poetess from Istanbul, Turkey and Nicosia, Cyprus. She makes feminist, body-positive and sapphic art revolving around themes of the occult and spirituality. She is currently working on her tarot deck, as well as a series of illustrated poetry zines. She sells original bookmarks, stickers, necklaces and art prints on her independently managed shop at www.ayshemira.com, and is also open for commissions. Follow her on Instagram @illustrationwitch. ♦

