

# SAD GIRL REVIEW



Writer divya iyer  
on making idols



Artist Cierra Rowe talks  
painting & inspiration



New art + poems  
about various fandoms

Claire Geddes Bailey / @spool\_\_oven / Fangirl Cake

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contemporary art & text to bring you down

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# MUSE, HEROINE, & FANGIRL

issue 06

WE ARE ALL HISTORIANS OF OUR OWN NICHE INTERESTS.



## EDITOR

Amber

## FEATURED ARTIST

Cierra Rowe

## FEATURED WRITER

divya iyer

## PLAYLIST CURATOR

Ashley Cline

## ARTISTS

@arkstraveller, Caitlin Helinski, Caroline Dinh, C.D. Phillip, Claire Geddes Bailey, CzarovskiKristal, Elisha Hamilton, Jenene Ravesloot, Maggie Hinbest, Mary Anne Molcan, Matthew J. Fox, Sonia Beauchamp, Sophia Myers

## ESSAYISTS & OTHER LONG-FORM WRITERS

Alison Cornell, Asenath Rose, Eleanore Studer, Gwyneth Butchart, Laura Jane Round, Lizette Roman-Johnston, S. McKiernan, Sydney

## POETS

Alessandra Nysether-Santos, Cade Leebron, Chelsea Margaret Bodnar, Isabella J Mansfield, Jordan E. McNeil, Kate Rogers, Kendra Nuttall, Lauren Busser, Meg Smith, Megan Cannella, Milena Bee, Nicola Kapron, Savanna Scott Leslie, Selena Cotte, Susan Alexander, Vamika Sinha, Yuu Ikeda



**content warning.** this issue mentions the following: COVID, erotic fanfiction, sex, sexual assault, celebrity death, and self-harm. None of these concepts are graphically described but they do appear as key ideas in several works. Proceed with care.



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by @spool\_oven

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##### AT THE END OF THE WORLD

by Ashley Cline

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divya iyer

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## A Few Words Before We Begin...

### #LANDBACK & TREATY RESPECT

Issue 6 was produced on Snuneymuxw territory. Hay ce:p 'qa', Snuneymuxw. A small donation has been given with gratitude to Coast Protectors to continue Indigenous-led efforts to protect the Salish Sea.

### LOVE IS LOVE & BYE-BYE GENDER BINARY

LGBTQ2S+ lives and creativity are celebrated here. A small donation has been given to Trans Lifeline.

### BIPOC LIVES MATTER

Black, Indigenous, and people of colour should always be safe, supported, and heard. A small donation has been given to the Support Network for Indigenous Women & Women of Colour.

### ABLEISM & AGEISM BE GONE

SGR is a creative space that includes all ages and abilities. We are committed to eliminating abelist language within these pages too. A small donation has been given to Clay Tree Society.

### BUT ALSO

Despite all of our best intentions, we might be unaware of an experience that isn't our own. Get in touch if you have another perspective to share:  
[editor@sadgirlreview.com](mailto:editor@sadgirlreview.com)



image by @caitlinhelinski.

**“IT’S WRONG TO IDOLISE  
PEOPLE SO COMPLETELY,  
AND I TRY NOT TO PUT  
PEOPLE ON THAT PEDESTAL,**

**BUT  
IN THAT MOMENT,  
THAT SINGULAR,  
DEFINING MOMENT,  
HEARING HER SONG  
MADE ME FEEL  
LIKE I MATTERED.”**

— Laura Jane Round,  
*Praying (Thank-you Kesha)*



@SPOOL\_OVEN

created a cake for Issue 6: Muse, Heroine, & Fangirl.





# fangirl cake

## TRIBUTE TO SUGAR

a statement by @spool\_\_oven

Making cake has always been an outlet for my fangirl tendencies. For a friend's birthday, a cake is an expression of my uncalculated love for them – of my being a fan. It's a chance to lean into the fun facts of a person – favourites and birthdates. As @spool\_\_oven, I become a fan of every prompt; every cake is fan art.

When Amber (Editor of SGR) gave me 'fangirl' as a prompt for a cake, I thought about gestures of adoration, and how much I love sugar. Sugar gets a markedly similar bad rap to fangirls – overindulgent, even 'dangerous'; a symptom of uncritical taste. Sweet drinks are labelled "girly" and derided. In the grand scheme of 'good taste' gatekeeping, sugar is at the core of things seen as too simple and loved by girls to be good. But sugar is delicious, and even though it's not a health food, it nourishes another part of us – the part that knows indulgence and joy is essential to life and friendship. And since cake is made to be admired and eaten in a state of together, sugar also nourishes community.

My tribute to sugar takes its form in funfetti cake. Cut strawberries, a fruit I've always been a fan of, make the shape of a star on top. Strawberry buttercream covers and fills, made with freeze-dried strawberries I devotedly gleaned from a box of *Special K*. Lovingly torn, blood orange covers all sides like heart stickers on an idol's photograph. A whole orange sits on top as a gift and extension of height, held there by a birthday candle. Together, the cake takes its shape from a star-shaped candle I keep on my shelf and burn, occasionally, for Sophie.





**@SPOOL\_OVEN** is a baking project by Claire Geddes Bailey, taking place on instagram. Anyone who commissions a cake is asked to send a prompt; a lateral step is taken from prompt to cake. Claire lives and works as an artist and curator on the territory of the Snuneymuxw.

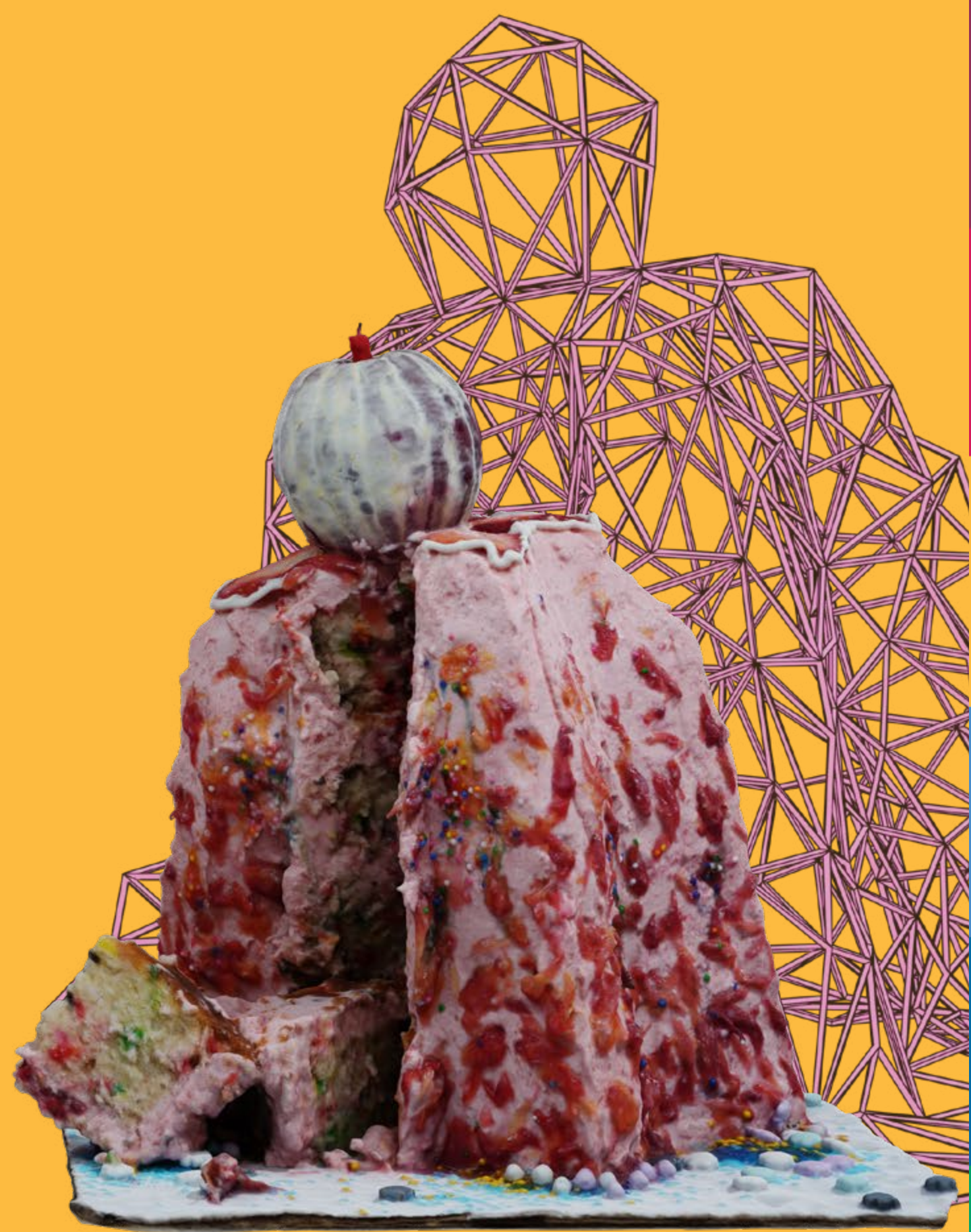






## FANGIRL CAKE

Claire Geddes Bailey  
[@spool\\_\\_oven](#)



## 3D MODELS

Matthew J. Fox  
See the cake in 3D on SketchFab: [before](#) & [after](#)



# MUSE

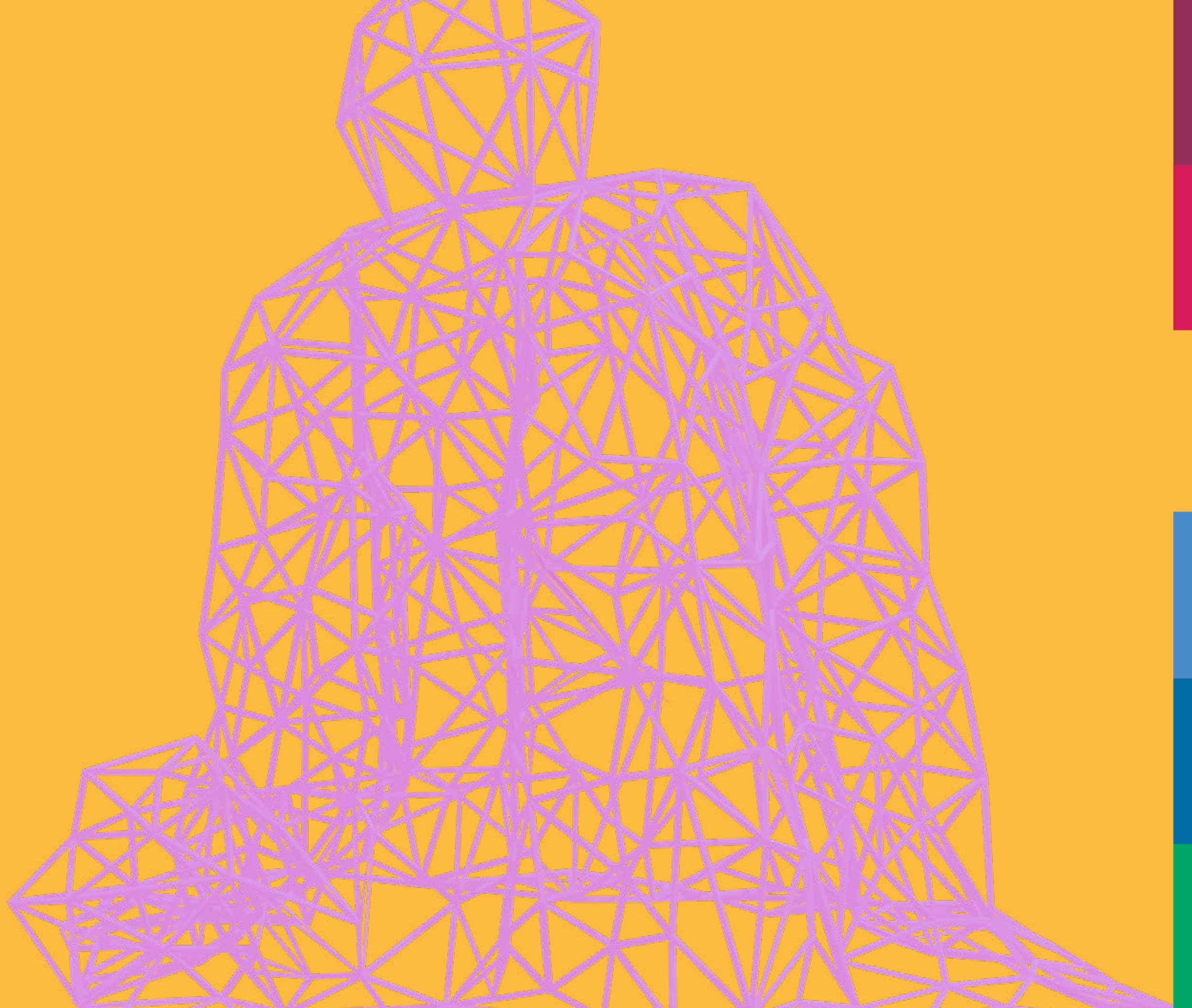
person or power which inspires a poet, artist, or thinker.

# HEROINE

A woman who is regarded as a role model or an ideal for their special achievements, qualities, or personal qualities.

# FANGIRL

an obsessive female fan, especially of comic books, science fiction, video games, music, or electronic devices [and/or](#) to demonstrate intense excitement at the mention or in the presence of a particular celebrity, film, product, etc., especially one associated with popular culture or technology.





# fangirlldom

## & THE MAKING OF SGR ISSUE 6



Several artworks in which the editor comes to terms with some of her more questionable favs from years gone by.

Top: Amber after Tamara de Lempicka's *Woman in Red* by Matthew J. Fox (digital painting, 2021)  
 Left: Amber & Cat after Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss* by Matthew J. Fox (ceramic mounted on wood, 2016)  
 Right: Amber cosplays as Ramona Flowers from *Scott Pilgrim*, 2015

Welcome to **Sad Girl Review Issue 6: Muse, Heroine, & Fangirl**. This theme came about one day when I found myself musing on why I was prone to fangirl tendencies and it led me to wonder if other creators thought about this too. Why are we driven to dwell on a certain TV series, or boy band, or a rare genre of indie folk music? Why does our internal aspiration grow by seeking external inspiration?

In a way, this issue is an ode to the complicated energy of the fangirl. Often ignored and unfairly dismissed, she studies and fixates on her topic of choice until she is an expert. She becomes a historian of her own niche interest through visual analysis, research-creation, and speculation. The fangirl's obsessive spirit pulls us into a world of escapism and intense curiosity, and more broadly, she is all about discovering the potential of what it means to make art about other art.

Sometimes our favourite things lead us to new ways of thinking deeply about what we love alongside a community of like minded people, and other times our favourites may become marred by exclusivity, gatekeeping, and appropriation. Sometimes our heroines teach us strength and courage, and other times they disappoint us by being flawed, fallible, or unredeemable. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, we just get pulled into our desires too much and too quickly and this dedication has consequences to other facets of our lives.

The benefits, drawbacks, and complexity of being a fan are the inspiration behind this issue because our influences fundamentally shape us and our creative work. Throughout these pages there are art and stories about original characters, TV shows, anime, musicians, artists, and more. Threads of nostalgia and simple joy are woven together with larger personal questions such as:

- ♥ Where do we look for inspiration?
- ♥ How do we share what we love with others?
- ♥ Who makes the art we love and what motivates them?
- ♥ How do the narratives within our media shape our perceptions of ourselves and others?
- ♥ Can we talk back to the stories we are told, perhaps even add to them and change their meaning?

So grab that t-shirt with your favourite band on it, cut yourself a piece of cake, get nestled into your pile of stuffed toys, and come stan with us. Maybe we'll find some answers after a marathon of *Sailor Moon*, *Supernatural*, or *Schitt's Creek*?

— Amber ♥  
 @sadgirlreview & @ambervisualartist

cowabunga! yours  
AT THE END OF THE WORLD

Fuel for your escapist whims.  
Find the playlist on Spotify, [here](#), or search Ashley Cline.



**ASHLEY CLINE CREATES PLAYLISTS.** She also writes, and her poetry has appeared in 404 Ink, Landlocked Magazine, Parentheses Journal and The Lumiere Review, among others. An avid introvert, full-time carbon-based life-form and pop music scholar, she crash-landed in south Jersey some time ago and still calls that strange land home; while her best at all-you-can-eat-sushi is 5 rolls in 11 minutes. Her debut chapbook, “& watch how easily the jaw sings of god,” is forthcoming from Glass Poetry Press, and she is much too Online for her own good—shouting about Carly Rae Jepsen, always, and “She-Ra and the Princesses of Power,” currently. Twitter: [@the\\_Cline](#). Instagram: [@clineclinecline](#).

#	17 SONGS, 1 HR
1	<i>Crumbs</i> Jordan Dennis, Blush'ko
2	<i>Road Less Known</i> The Yves
3	<i>Listen!!!</i> Aly & AJ
4	<i>Dance Alone</i> Tayla Parx
5	<i>Change for Me (With Samm Henshaw)</i> Brasstracks, Samm Henshaw
6	<i>Wait a Minute!</i> WILLOW
7	<i>Runner - Mitch Krebs Remix</i> From Indian Lakes, Mitch Krebs
8	<i>Trying Not to Love You</i> Caroline Smith
9	<i>Fast Car</i> Tracy Chapman
10	<i>Love Again - Bonus Track</i> Carly Rae Jepsen
11	<i>Fit N Full</i> Samia
12	<i>Celadon &amp; Gold</i> Maggie Rogers
13	<i>Whatever I Owe, I'll Pay It Back</i> That Dream Was Our Life
14	<i>What Happened To Us?</i> Shura
15	<i>Don't Stop Now</i> Daniel Rojas, Michelle Gonzalez
16	<i>Fall In Love</i> Caroline Kingsbury
17	<i>All Good</i> Samm Henshaw



F A N  
A R T



F I N E  
A R T



**selected artwork by** Caitlin Helinski, Caroline Dinh, C.D. Phillip,  
Cierre Rowe, CzarovskiKristal, Elisha Hamilton, Maggie Hinbest, Mary Anne  
Molcan, Sonia Beauchamp, & Sophia Myers.

THERE IS  
LOVELINESS  
TO BE  
FOUND AND  
HARVESTED  
AND SHARED  
— Cierra Rowe



**Cierra Rowe** is an artist from rural Kentucky, USA. You can view her work at [www.artbycierrarow.com](http://www.artbycierrarow.com). Find her on Facebook and Instagram [@lightsinadarkplace](#) and on Twitter as [@BreathofFreesia](#).



## IN CONVERSATION WITH ARTIST CIERRA ROWE: WHERE DOES INSPIRATION COME FROM?

Cierra Rowe's approach to painting is vivid and visceral: she often makes use of rich, buttery impasto strokes with intense swirls of colour. She paints landscapes, animals, flowers, and people that may or may not be imagined. There is often no outline to separate her figures from their settings. The lack of distinct edges creates the sensation that all of the elements in the composition are blending into one another, yet through colour and gesture the defiant forms hold their ground.

Cierra maintains an active but low-key presence on social media. She enigmatically poses with flowers and her artworks, carefully choosing what to reveal and what to conceal about her life and work. We caught up with Cierra in December 2020 to learn a bit more about her and to talk about the way she approaches her artistic practice and where she finds inspiration.



**SGR:** What draws you to painting? What is it about a brush and canvas that appeals most to you? Do you create other types of artwork?

**CR:** I think that it is the tantalizing idea of being given a clean slate, a new beginning and control. Painting, for me, is like seeing my reflection in the mirror, after wiping away the fog: It feels new, yet familiar and hopeful. I am not the girl that I once was and my artwork shadows this. I feel that my canvases are like time capsules, they hold what I am seeing within my mind, on a particular day, month or year and painting permits me to cherry pick that which I want to remember. I have certainly dabbled in other mediums. Prior to this, I've enjoyed spending time illustrating and collaging with my husband, before my focus turned to painting. My illustrations are grossly sexual in nature and my collages are a way of laughing at pain. Both of those mediums were used as a way of coping with and healing from abuse and self harm. This year I released my book of illustrations: *Sex, Madness & Mayhem : Collected Illustrations by Cierra G. Rowe*.



Womb for Two, Acrylic on canvas.





*A Walk Among Pumpkins, Acrylic on canvas.*

CIERRA G. ROWE

**SGR:** On your website you mention that you've always lived in rural Kentucky. How does this impact you and your work? Is it more difficult to obtain supplies or is it tricky to show your paintings? What are the benefits of living rural that some folks might not understand?

**CR:** Airy skies and whispering fields of the countryside will grow on you like ivy. Rural Kentucky has a special sort of silence that serves as the perfect backdrop that I need to paint with focus. I enjoy nature, fresh air and clean open space. The quiet narrates the beauty that lingers here. It is right there, waiting to be painted and explored. Surrounded by December's chill and sunlight piercing the cold air, I have space to appreciate what the years have built. Although I do struggle to show my artwork here, especially during this Covid situation, but I don't find it hard to obtain my materials. If I can't find what I need a town over, I can usually go online and buy from reputable sellers.





Leaving the Darkness, Acrylic on canvas.

**SGR:** Where does your inspiration come from: your own experiences, the landscape around you, your imagination, a combination of multiple sources, or something else entirely?

**CR:** Depending on the day, it could be all of those things. Everyday inspirations seem to change and sometimes ideas and “visions” come out of the blue and I have to be sure not to lose them. There is loveliness to be found and harvested and shared and there are good moments that encourage me to express.

I am trying to paint good things now. I focus on nature and what makes me feel good but I was not always the painter who did these things and thought this way. At one point and for a very long time, I was a very tortured person. There are still echoes of that and I am still fighting them off. There is nothing romantic about being ‘the tortured artist.’ You suffer until you wonder “why?” and “what have I done to deserve this?”

The sexual abuse, the bulimia-nervosa, the cutting, the miscarriages, the issues with identity, the inability to cope with why I thought about certain things and couldn’t seem to stop hurting myself or be “ok” all fueled a very sad fire that I warmed myself by. It is like being friends with someone who belittles you constantly and convinces you that you are nothing. I fixated on every bad thought, every nightmare and every moment of melancholy and it ate at me until I had a complete nervous breakdown. I realized afterwards, about 2 or 3 months later (I lost time and have trouble remembering things sometimes), that the good outweighs the bad and the best way to be the artist that I want to be is by being myself and allowing my artwork to reflect my growth. That is why I like painting trees, because they grow in a way that no one can predict. They grow so tall and strong and branch out in a way that makes it hard for people to reach them and so people leave them alone.

**SGR:** Do you listen to music while you work? Do you have any recommendations for us, like a favourite song or genre?

**CR:** Absolutely and that’s probably due to my enjoyment of dancing and watching ballets. Sometimes I can’t tolerate anything but classical music while I paint: Prokofiev’s *Dance of the Knights*, Hector Berlioz’s *Dream of a Witches’ Sabbath* and Dmitri Shostakovich’s *Waltz No. 2* are a few of my favorites. In a way, nothing compares to classical music. It is so there and yet so far away, like a low moon, just out of reach. It takes you places, while notes and strings seem to vibrate throughout every brush stroke.

**SGR:** Do you keep a sketchbook or a notebook?

**CR:** I don’t, actually. I tend to jot down notes on a napkin or whatever I can find in the moment and I use those notes as a way to remember what I want to paint. I really don’t like losing ideas and it can be hard sometimes depending on what is going on during the week or holidays.

**SGR:** Are you influenced by the styles of other artists or pop culture?

**CR:** My influences tend to remain personal, so I can’t honestly say that I am influenced by anything outside of my history and surroundings. Though my artwork is often compared to artists like Munch and Van Gogh, I am perplexed because I would like to be given fair credit for my style and effort without being compared to another artist. I do not feel good about it and find it a bit disappointing that as a female artist, I am often compared to male artists that I had not heard of, as if they have played a role in my growth as a painter or share my personal experiences or something. There are beautiful artworks created by amazing artists everywhere, why can’t artworks be appreciated individually instead of being compared to others?

Every painter who paints a swirl is not channeling Van Gogh and every artist who blurs features on a face is not inspired by Munch. Artists are all different, their life experiences and perceptions and many other things shape how they paint.

Since I was a small girl, I have always liked experimenting with color and form, merging them together and painting in a way that is intimate and allows me to capture things in my own way. I am not influenced by other artists and I think that I have earned the right to be proud of that. Despite all that I have said, I do not think that this will change. I think that artists will always be compared to one another, no matter their art form. It is sadly just the way of things, but I am confident in my abilities and have never sought validation for my passion.



**SGR:** What is one thing that you wish people understood about painters or painting?

**CR:** I cannot speak for all painters but it would be nice for people to understand that painters all come from different backgrounds and those backgrounds do play a role in how their art styles develop, and that no painter or artist is identical to another.

One artist can't live another artist's life, they live their own and that shapes their personal decisions in creating. Like handwriting, an artist's style is unique and leaves hints of their identity or personality for the viewer.

**SGR:** That's a wonderful analogy. Lastly, do you have any advice for people that are inspired to try painting?

**CR:** What are you waiting for, huh? WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR!? Seriously, you can do it. Stop overthinking or obsessing about the outcome and just go for it. There is no harm in trying new things and no reason to fret if it doesn't turn out the way that you wanted it to. Paintings don't always happen over night and everyone paints at a different pace. There is no right or wrong way to do this. You are your own worst critic.

**Website**  
**Facebook**  
**Instagram**  
**Twitter**

artbycierrarowe.com  
@artbycierrarowe  
@lightsinadarkplace  
@BreathofFreesia



Stonehenge, Acrylic on canvas.

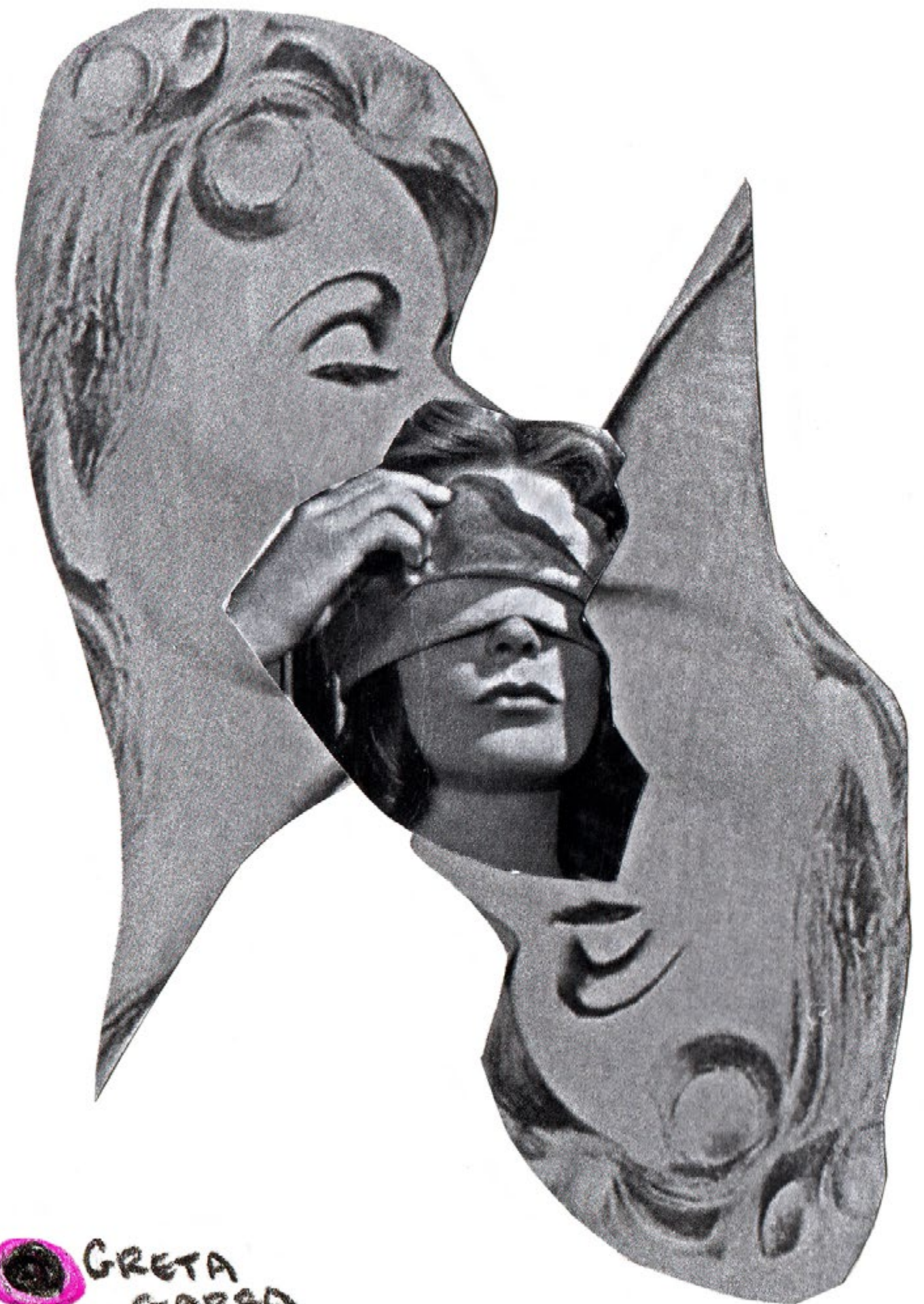


WHEN YOU  
ARE ALONE  
WHO IS  
THERE  
WITH YOU?

By: CAITLIN  
HELINSKI

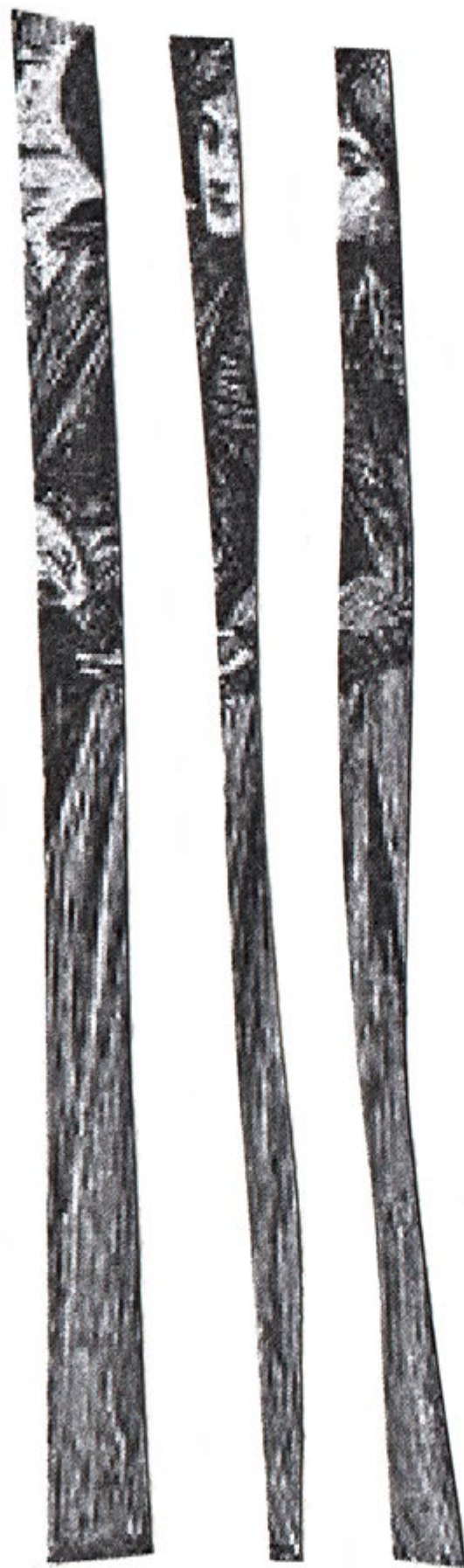


**Caitlin Helinski** is a queer poet based out of Barrie, ON. She began creating collages out of a need to make art and an inability to cut straight lines. Her work can be seen in publications such as Pink Plastic House Magazine, The Northern Appeal, and Blank Spaces Magazine. You can find more of her collage work at her own tiny Instagram zine [@therememberingroom](#).



 GRETA  
GARBO





JANE  
EYRE



ELLA  
FITZGERALD

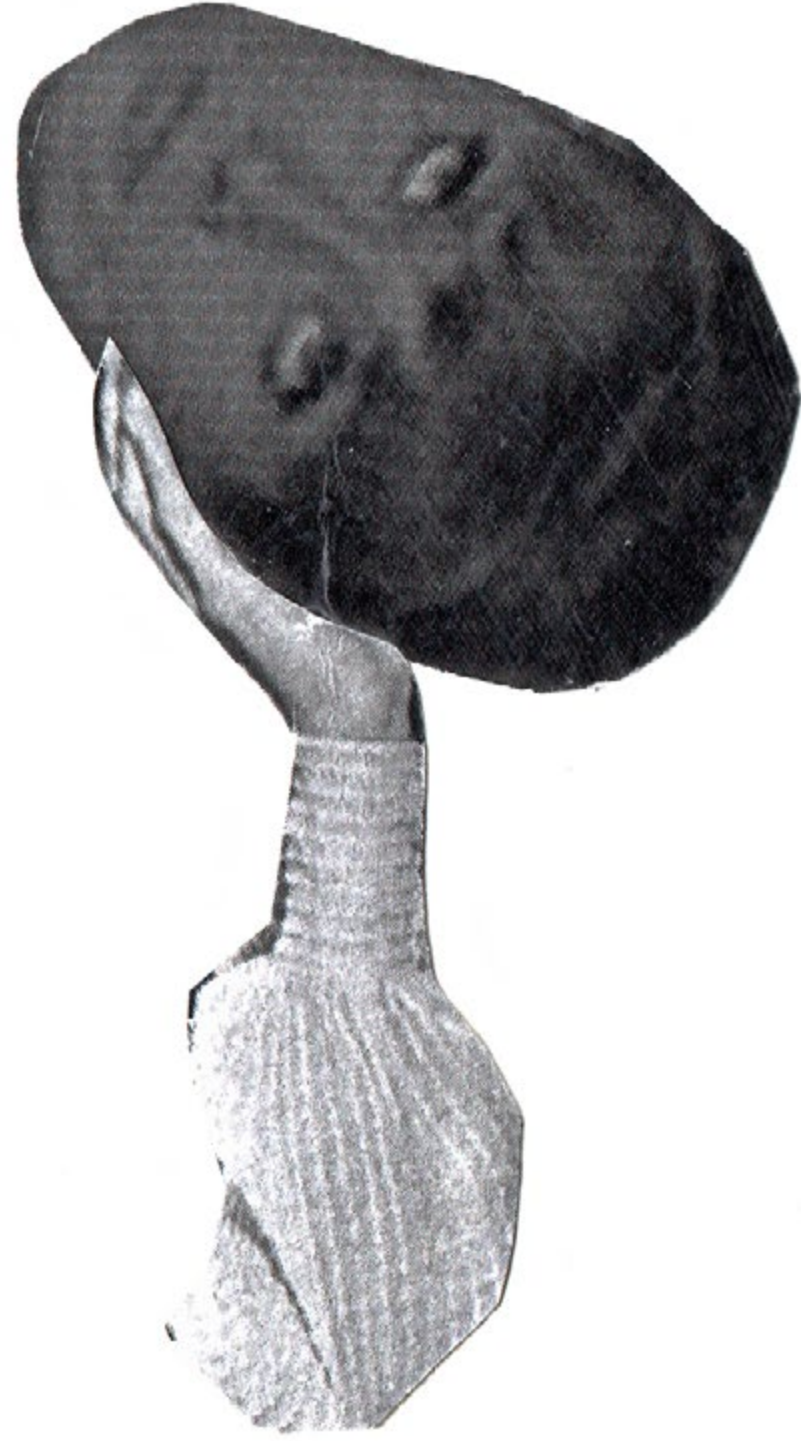






 REGINA SPEKTOR

 AUREY  
HERBURN







SAILOR  
MERCURY



- ① GRETA & TOM MOVIE NIGHTS, LEARNING TO LAUGH.
- ② JANE & THE VALUE OF KNOWING ONESELF IN THE FACE OF LOVE.
- ③ ELLA & HER MAGIC. A VOICE THAT SOUNDS LIKE HOME.
- ④ REGINA & HER POETRY. A PLAYWRIGHT WHO ONLY NEEDED A KEYBOARD.
- ⑤ AUDREY & HER ELEGANCE. HENRY HIGGINS IS STILL JUST WAITING.
- ⑥ SAILOR MERCURY & HER BRAIN. THINKING THINGS THROUGH SAVED HER.



***Robin Song* is a linocut reduction print by artist Mary Anne Molcan. It is inspired by forest walks, thoughts on hope, and the characteristics of light.**



Mary Anne writes: "After creating this work, a friend mentioned that it bore the resemblance to work by Hilma Af Klint. Hilma Af Klint was an artist at the turn of the century, who created a body of work exploring the possibilities of abstraction years before Kandinsky, Malevich & Mondrian, who are the acknowledged fathers of abstraction. As I looked into her work and her studies, I realized I see the world in the same way she did. She became for me a true heroine and champion of the invisible, the unnoticed, and the impermanent. As a visual artist, I endeavour to make the invisible visible and will continue the journey toward the light of discovery."

**FACEBOOK: [WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/MAMOLCAN](https://www.facebook.com/MAMOLCAN)  
INSTAGRAM: [WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/MARYANNESTUDIO](https://www.instagram.com/MARYANNESTUDIO)**





# COVID MISSED CONNECTIONS

COLLECTED FROM A VARIETY OF CANADIAN  
CRAIGSLIST 'MISSED CONNECTIONS' ADS  
MARCH 2020 — NOVEMBER 2020



Maggie Hinbest

Maggie is inspired by the poetics of craigslist missed connection posts. She is a graduate student at Concordia University, Montreal, where she studies contemporary Canadian art history. She currently works as the Online Events Coordinator for Inuit Futures in Arts Leadership: The Pilimmaksarniq / Pijariuqsarniq Project. She lives with her partner and their cat Noodle in Vancouver, BC.

## CUTE BLONDE AT PITT MEADOWS SUPERSTORE (PITT MEADOWS)

We both parked next to each other and walked in separately. I walked to the pharmacy to pick up my prescription and while I was waiting I saw that you were standing behind me. You looked super hot in all black with cut up black jeans and a cool mask. I wanted to say something but things are more awkward now with masks on.



## **I GAVE YOU HAND SANITIZER ON SKYTRAIN (RICHMOND)**

Last Saturday night around 9:30 pm. You were standing and touching the railings. Gave You sanitizer for your hands. You weren't dressed enough for the cool temperature. Hope you made it home.

## **YOU DON'T LIKE CINNAMON (HASTINGS SUNRISE)**

You were at Pennyroyal coffee just now. I tried to smile at you ... you were choosing a baked good. But the smile didn't work (mask).



## **WE MET IN BEST BUY (SURREY)**

We met Thursday Oct 22nd around 4:00 pm. We chatted for a bit. We even exchanged names. You were very sweet and kind and I would really like to talk more with you and get to know you. I'm hoping you feel the same way. I'm sure you remember our conversation, why you were there, and possibly what mask I was wearing.

I know this is a long shot, but I have to try.

## **LONDON DRUGS, COQUITLAM CENTRE (COQUITLAM)**

Today, You (f, straight dark hair, wearing mostly black) got my attention and complimented my mask. I said thank you and told you where I purchased it from and how the store likely doesn't sell them anymore. You then proceeded to compliment my outfit. I really wanted to tell you that you're stunning and that you have beautiful eyes.



## YELLOW TUQUE AND SCARF (VICTORIA)

You wore a cheerful yellow tuque and scarf, as you walked south on Chester St. towards Oscar St, near Cook Street Village, Friday Nov 6th. I told you (from a distance) I liked your tuque and scarf; you understood, despite my face-shield. It would be lovely to connect, while complying with all relevant social health measures until the eagerly-awaited vaccine is available. Thank you.





## SOCIAL RESISTANCE, FEMININITY, & QUEERNESS.



Sophia Myers is a queer feminist textile artist. They are a settler creating primarily on the unceded Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Musqueam territories. Sophia has been embroidering since the beginning of 2020 and has found it to be a deeply expressive and meditative medium.

INSTAGRAM: [@SWEET.RAINS.EMBROIDERY](https://www.instagram.com/sweet.rains.embroidery)



In the name of the Moon!



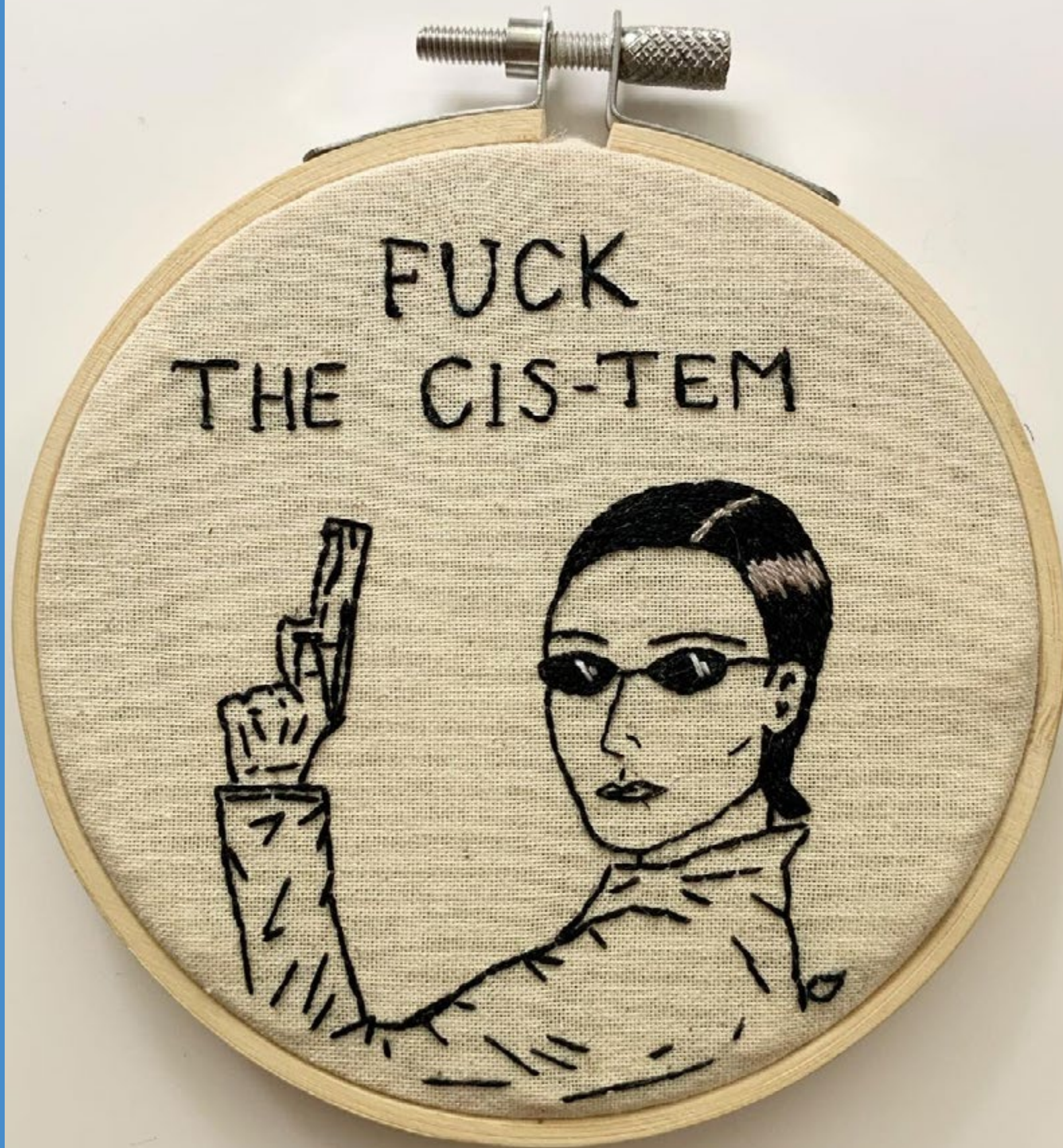


Medusa.



Scully from The X-Files.





Trinity from the Matrix.

“The Wachowski sisters created more than one of the best sci-fi movies of all time, they created a world which challenged the cisnormative oppressions they lived within as creators and as trans women. Imagining worlds beyond the binary and the body are an incredible contribution to feminism and pop culture.”



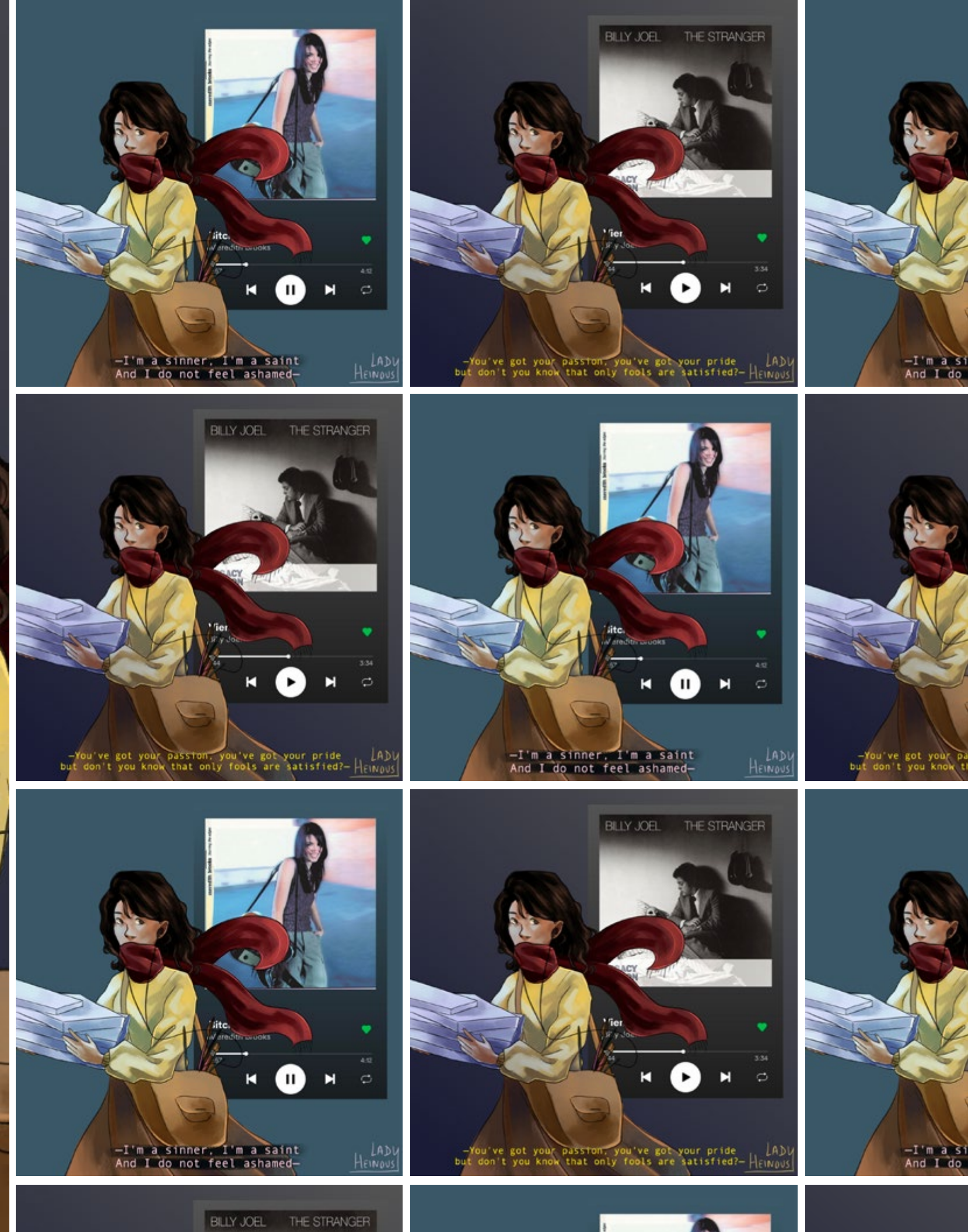
– Sophia Myers,  
@sweet.rains.embroidery



## Untitled Caroline Dinh

Caroline Dinh is a Vietnamese American writer and artist. She is the founder of Backslash Lit and has work forthcoming in Honey Literary, Strange Horizons, and Flash Point SF. She's mildly obsessed with leitmotifs, hackathons, and the color cyan. Visit her online at <https://cyborg48.github.io>.

Caroline shares two digital illustrations of her novel's main character. These pieces feature lyrics and cover art from the songs "Bitch" (lyrics by Meredith Brooks; photography by John Dunne, Shelly Peiken, and Robert Zuckerman) and "The Stranger" (lyrics by Billy Joel; photography by Jim Houghton).

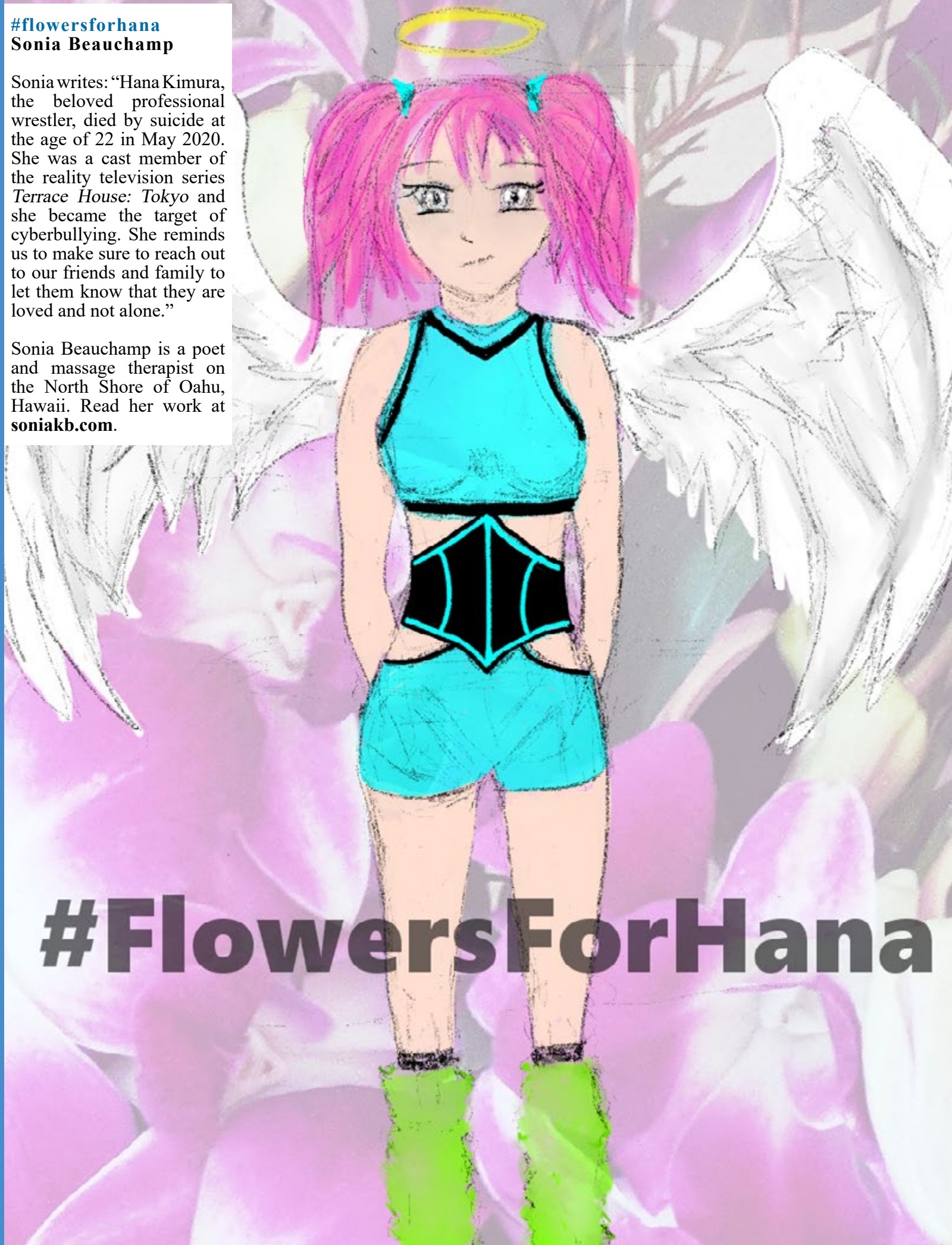




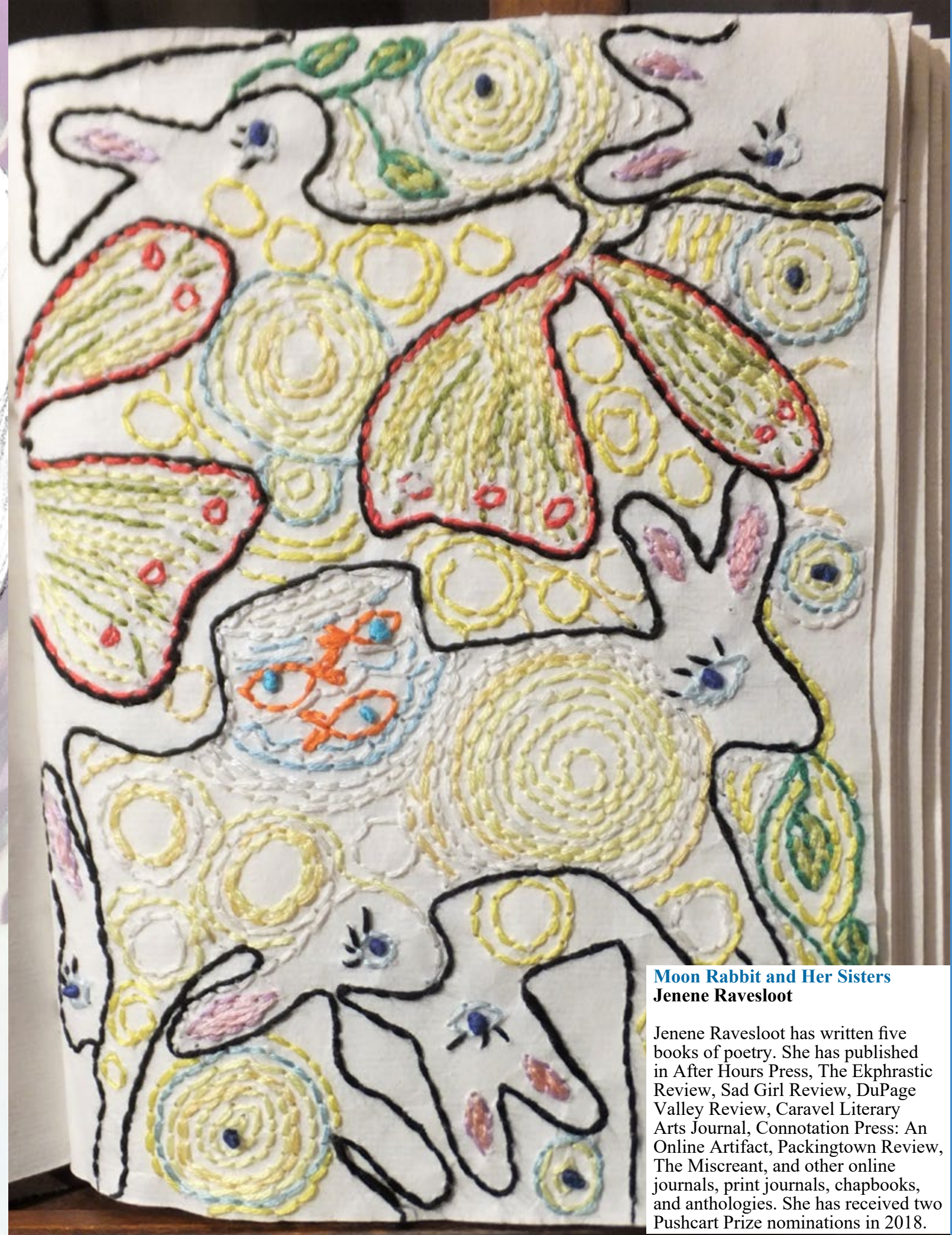
**#flowersforhana**  
**Sonia Beauchamp**

Sonia writes: “Hana Kimura, the beloved professional wrestler, died by suicide at the age of 22 in May 2020. She was a cast member of the reality television series *Terrace House: Tokyo* and she became the target of cyberbullying. She reminds us to make sure to reach out to our friends and family to let them know that they are loved and not alone.”

Sonia Beauchamp is a poet and massage therapist on the North Shore of Oahu, Hawaii. Read her work at [soniakb.com](http://soniakb.com).



**#FlowersForHana**



**Moon Rabbit and Her Sisters**  
**Jenene Ravesloot**

Jenene Ravesloot has written five books of poetry. She has published in *After Hours Press*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Sad Girl Review*, *DuPage Valley Review*, *Caravel Literary Arts Journal*, *Connotation Press: An Online Artifact*, *Packington Review*, *The Miscreant*, and other online journals, print journals, chapbooks, and anthologies. She has received two Pushcart Prize nominations in 2018.



**Bev'rage Beauts**  
CzarovskiKristal

*A Coca-cola inspired  
Filipiniana Art  
Nouveau poster.*

Czarina B. Capulong, otherwise known as CzarovskiKristal, is a Manila-based painter. A traditional artist by trade, she dabbles in digital art and poetry. Find her videos on **Channel Czarovski** and discover more of her art on **DeviantArt**, **Behance**, **Facebook**, & **Twitter** as **@czarovskicaps**.



**White Spell**  
Elisha Hamilton

*Shouichi from  
Katekyo Hitman  
Reborn!*

Elisha is an all 'round queer geek and fangirl of the anime/manga, video games, select sci-fi/fantasy, and figure skating varieties. Occasionally an artist. Collector of way too many enamel pins, foxes of all sorts, and so many art prints that their walls have become galleries.





**Decepticon Holiday**  
(we're going to need a bigger banana boat)  
C.D. Phillip

C.D. is a prose writer based in Liverpool. They are a soon to graduate creative writing student, adept in both creative non-fiction and fiction writing. Find them online: [cdphillipwrites.wixsite.com/cdpwrites](https://cdphillipwrites.wixsite.com/cdpwrites) & @Cdphillipwrites.





# ESSAYS & OTHER LONG-FORM WRITING



**selected writing by** Alison Cornell, Asenath Rose, divya iyer, Eleanore Studer, Gwyneth Butchart, Laura Jane Round, Lizette Roman-Johnston, S. McKiernan, & Sydney.



H Y P E R -  
F I X A T I N G  
T H I S   W A Y  
I S   S A C R E D

— divya iyer



**divya iyer** is an overthinker, writer and social worker in the making. Her work has been previously published by Homology Lit, Barren Magazine, XRAY Literary Magazine, Moonchild Magazine, clavmag, and others. They're easiest to find on their twitter [@divwhine](#), but can also sometimes be found on instagram [@ivymouth](#).



# A STUDY IN MAKING AN IDOL OUT OF SOMEONE ELSE

(or, i talk excessively about  
penn badgley, *gossip girl*, and you)

It begins with a phone call. I text my best friend from high school, and say, half-joking and half-serious, hoping she will while also hoping she won't, "Stop me from writing about Penn Badgley for this thing." I just need a nudge in either direction; someone else to make the choice for me.

She doesn't stop me – in fact, I end up verbally outlining a whole creative non-fiction essay with her over the phone at one in the morning. She says something along the lines of, "If you see a prompt and it sparks an idea so naturally, don't let go of that."

It's a valid point; all these concepts and emotions are coming together quickly, naturally and almost seamlessly. At the same time...

"I've been talking about him to too many people."

I have, in fact, reached out to her because she's one of the people I haven't had this conversation with yet, so her opinion will be relatively unbiased compared to the people who I *have* been having this conversation with – a friend from high school, two of my college friends who I know watched *You* and loved it, friends who write fanfiction and welcome my inability to stop talking, and my little sister, who is unfortunate enough to live with me and gets unfiltered nonsense from me on a daily basis.

The problem for me has to do with the acute awareness of parasocial relationships, and how they function – there are people we don't know, but feel like we do, so there's different stakes, different impact. To me it feels very much like there needs to be that caution in fangirling, the clear drawing of boundaries. Do whatever you want in your space, but don't make the person look at it, whatever.

I mostly keep the feeling to myself. Like having a crush on a popular kid in high school, hyperfixating this way is sacred, something that comes with its own thrill. It's fun, most of the time, like having an inside joke with yourself, a collection of arbitrary memories; things that comes to your mind randomly, at the strangest of times – "*this reminds me of what Penn Badgley said in that one interview*" – but at the same time, for me it comes with the knowledge that people are, by default, unknowable. I've been stabbed in the back by enough best friends to know this. However well you think you know a person? There's always more about them that you probably don't know. What about when you don't know the person at all, but they're famous so you can listen to them share their opinions on a hundred and one things?

He's got a really good voice, which just makes everything easier. I listen to Penn Badgley's ASMR video and oddly and inexplicably enough, it takes me back to high school, the memory of sitting next to someone in the chem lab, on those stools that were tall enough to be barstools, someone whispering in my ear while I try to keep a straight face, to maintain that I am listening. It's comforting, and it's strange how comforting it is, given that I don't actually know him. Of course he has a nice voice, I'll rationalise to myself. He was in a band.

This doesn't start with the phone call though; I lied. It starts with me, bored during coronavirus isolation hours. I need something to distract me from the fact that my life isn't the thing I'd been hoping and dreaming and longing for, for years. I'd waited for my twenties all through my adolescence, wanted things to get better so badly... and they have, coronavirus be damned. I have real friends now. I got into my dream college. I feel better about being a person than I have ever felt in my life.

Still, I am stuck in this house; this house I have been counting down years to get out of. I'd waited to be able to live alone, to move out, and here it is, some sort of cosmic fuck you directed at me. I'm spending too long mourning the place I wanted to be at this stage in my life, and I need to do something different with myself. So, to get my mind off it, I find myself watching *Gossip Girl*.





It works too well. Dan is immediately my favourite character. I tell my sister this, happily, and she gives me a wary look along with a warning along the lines of, “Don’t get attached to him, he’ll do things you won’t expect from him, and it’ll break your heart.” It’s a good and necessary warning. Still, like I do with media that brings me joy and then tries to dampen my happiness, I pick and choose what to retain from it.

But this isn’t an essay about *Gossip Girl*, though that would be easier. I tell my friend that on the phone. “If I’d looked at this prompt earlier, it would be about a fictional character,” I reflect. She tells me that it’s cool that I’m *not* doing that, and that the angle I’m taking will give it an edge.

Anyway, I finish *Gossip Girl*. Somewhere in the middle of it, I begin to watch *You*, too. Sounds strange, because that show’s tonally the opposite of whatever *Gossip Girl* is. That’s why I watch it; to me, it feels like they neutralise each other’s drama and intensity. I listen to a ton of interviews by Badgley, stuff about how accountability and holding white men responsible for the harm they cause, and I think about abusers, how they’re often charismatic and seem nice in a way that absolves them from responsibility, a way that makes it easy for them to deny things, a way that is inherently manipulative but sneaky and insidious enough for them to get away with it. I’m still not done watching *You*, and I scare easy, so I’m taking my time with it, watching episodes whole weeks apart, but so far, Joe’s getting away with practically everything.

It is definitely because of how good Joe is at acting charming and sweet, like abusers do in reality. It is also probably, like Badgley jokes in interviews, because of how attractive he is. Penn is actively playing Joe to seem charismatic and trustworthy despite all the terrible things Joe’s doing, and it works! He’s cute! He has a smile that says, “Please trust me.” How can people resist that?

I see a gifset on Tumblr from episode 4 of *You*; Joe and Beck on the bed with sunlight streaming around them. It’s such an aesthetically pleasing gif. The sunlight spilling into the room, lighting everything up, making everything seem warm and vivid and close enough to touch. It’s not supposed to be the sort of moment that you stare at and admire the beauty of – it’s a sex scene. Maybe it’s supposed to hit differently, I don’t know. It feels warm.



*You* is a great show. Even my embarrassingly limitless aesthetic appreciation for Penn Badgley can't take away from the solid and painful crux of it; the abuse and blatant disregard that Joe shows people when it comes to achieving his singular goal; how he gets rid of everything in his path and feels either no remorse, or a shallow mockery of the thing.

I don't find Joe attractive; if I met him in real life I would walk past him very fast and not meet his eyes, but I do sometimes pause the screen, when the camera angles are a certain way. Light framing the bones of his wrist. The slope of his jawline. Him lying on the couch in the therapist's office, looking like an oil painting because of how perfectly executed the expression of innocent despair on his face is.

Joe Goldberg is terrible, grotesque, horrifying, but Penn Badgley is beautiful, and there's a line in my head separating them. *You* is so very out of my comfort zone. I usually don't watch shows like that; heavy, dark, handling themes of trauma and abuse, unless I've heard really good reviews from people whose judgment I trust on these topics. Despite that, *You*'s something I've always doubted my ability to watch, because of how it centres the abuser. Watching it now, I find that that's what's compelling about *You*. It makes you really think about these themes. It's designed in a way that doesn't necessary allow for superficial watching; you *need* to introspect.

**Ultimately, the most interesting thing that's come up in interviews and analyses is that *Gossip Girl* and *You* both do similar things: you see a person being built up into something bigger than they are and it rarely ever ends well for them. Both Serena van der Woodsen and Guinevere Beck are just ordinary people who are then conceptualised into an unattainable fantasy, something that one person can never be.**

In some ways, being a fan is an act of doing that, too. We aren't entitled to celebrities, and we don't get all of them, either. We will never know them entirely, and there is safety in the unknowability. I can listen to Penn Badgley's ASMR interview and send one of my friends gifs of his face and it doesn't necessarily mean anything, because that's the world we live in. Consumption is a natural thing.

And yet, there are still strings attached. Being attracted to people can still be a thing to be ashamed of, as a queer person of colour – that's a part of it I can't possibly not mention. I still remember how, back in high school when I was navigating being

queer, the awkwardness and shame and secrecy a crush would come with, regardless of who I was attracted to. Attraction felt like a dangerous thing, no matter how unreciprocated the crush was, a “don't touch this” zone; a *this will explode, and take you with it* warning sign.

Halfway through writing this essay, I think to myself, “this isn't even a crush, not really.”

It's more like a question I'm asking myself, but one in which I've stumbled upon the answer, first.

**Penn Badgley is attractive, but something about the shows I've watched with him starring in them make me wonder, if someone panned the camera on *me* at those angles with the lighting like that, if I smiled with the knowledge that it would work out in my favour in the end, if I didn't flinch at my own awkwardness, if I dressed like season 5 Dan Humphrey, if I remind myself that I am the protagonist and the love-interest of my own life . . . if I do all those things, would I have that impact, too? Would you? Would anybody?**

When it comes to who is really attractive and how we define it, I think all of us are, really, in some way or the other. It just depends on who's looking, on what they're looking for. I will never be a cis white man, but that doesn't actually matter, in the end. It's about being a star. It's about the energy you embody. And it's also, maybe, about having really nice hands. I think my hands are nice. I've stared at them long enough to convince myself, at the very least. That's enough for me.

Somebody in the comments of one of Badgley's interviews attributes his energy to being a Scorpio sun. I don't fully understand what this means, but maybe it doesn't matter. I'm a Scorpio rising, after all. I like to pretend that it means something. Then again, I like to pretend that a lot of things mean something. What do you learn about yourself, when you find someone attractive and are fascinated by what they have to say? I guess it really depends on what you want to see.





# UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF HEROINES

## ELEANORE STUDER

This is an excerpt of an essay that was originally published on Eleanore's WordPress blog in 2016. [View the full text along with her accompanying illustrations and images here.](#)



**H**er name was Kaea (an obvious crib from “gaea,” yet more carryover from *Escaflowne*, a favorite anime series). She far outlasted any other character I ever conceived. She first began to appear somewhere midway through high school, but she can still be found as far on as in the margins of my latest notes in college, up to eight years later, possibly even a bit later than that. As my style evolved with time and more extensive art study, so did she.

Originally she was far more Japanese in style, but as I grew older and studied graphic novels more broadly, she took on a more hybrid look somewhere between Japanese and American styles: still large, though not as large, eyes; more prominently defined nose and lips; a less pointed and angular, smoother face; less spectacular hair, in both color and length. She also aged with me; in early drawings she is clearly intended to be a teenager, but once I was in college, her face had elongated slightly; she seemed to have become older, too.

**Looking back, though I didn't realize it as I conceived her, she was everything I wanted to be. In many ways, her creation and sustained presence through my creative development and life stands as the most protracted and intricate example of escapism for me.**

She was, like me, a tall girl. In her story, she had a male love interest (something I never had) who was unconventionally shorter than her, as all the boys I knew then were. She had long hair like mine, but it started off wildly, ridiculously colorful. She dressed similarly to me; a bizarre hybrid of tomboyish baggy pants and more girlish, fitted shirts. I'm sure I even drew her a few times in a long, black trench coat, my lone signature clothing item throughout high school. She was more beautiful than I could ever imagine I would be.

She was also braver and stronger than me — the tough one; the rescuer and aggressor — but simultaneously a loner with few close friends, just as I was. She had a strange, tragic backstory to explain her unusual personality and various neuroses, which I had (and still have) no such convenient excuse for, yet almost longed for, in that shameless self-mythologizing manner of children. Like me, she was bitingly sarcastic, and fond of raising one eyebrow to intimidate or communicate bemusement. She had secrets of the sort we all wish we had, rather than the secrets we live with.

**She may have been a strange outsider, but — unlike her perpetual misfit creator, who fit in nowhere — she had a destiny, and when you are a young dreamer with an overactive imagination, that is everything.**

Some incarnations of her, at various points in her ever-growing mythos, had wings (a *Sailor Moon*-esque aspect). She had weapons: originally a gun, until I grew uncomfortable with them, later replaced by a sword, but ultimately replaced yet again by, inevitably, some form of staff, tied to magical powers. Why? You know why.

*Sailor Moon* is still extraordinary to me, whether viewed as a product (and outlier) of its time, or on its own. Created by a woman, it describes a universe almost entirely composed of women. Powerful women. Soldiers. Badass ladies guarding, fighting for, saving the goddamn universe. The main male love interest is the one who constantly gets brainwashed or kidnapped, requiring rescue, because his own powers are what might be considered traditionally feminine (healing, psychometry) and significantly weaker than his girlfriend's. When I drew one of my longest standing favorite images of Kaea and her own fellow, she is the primary focus; he is standing behind her. Thanks, *Sailor Moon*.

**[READ MORE ABOUT KAEA & SAILOR MOON  
ON ELEANORE'S BLOG ...](#)**

**ELEANORE STUDER** is an artist, publisher, writer, and longtime photographer living and working in Los Angeles, California. When not spending her down time putting books together for her indie press Afterword Books (@[afterword.books](#)), she works among her fellow music and movie nerds at Amoeba Hollywood, reads obsessively, and hangs out with her black cat Buster.



# TOP KISSES I STREAMED IN SHUTDOWN

## ALISON CORNELL

**How to watch:** Vicariously. Wine-stained teeth and/or lukewarm hot chocolate in a dirty mug. Limp hair and greasy face and clothes that make you feel bad when you catch a quick glimpse of your reflection in the kitchen window, getting up to refill your Cheese-Its. Not quite the headspace to drastically cut your own hair in the bathroom, but close to it. Second night of your period is - *chef's kiss* - just right.

**5. New Girl S02E15 “Cooler”** – This kiss needs no context. Every kiss on this list is the culmination of episodes of build up - sidelong glances, missed opportunities, repartee; a long, hungry shared look broken by a roommate barging in or a friend calling with a crisis. This kiss is no different, but you don't need the build up to understand it. The kiss speaks for itself. Their whole bodies are in this kiss. They are wearing soft pajamas and they're completely comfortable with each other. There's huge risk, but also huge trust. At the end they just breathe, and the intimacy of a shared breath in the space between your mouths when your foreheads are touching is palpable. To be honest, sometimes I just crave this kiss the same way I crave Taco Bell. Nothing else will hit the spot.

**4. Pride and Prejudice (2005 movie)** – I've seen so many hot takes about covid turning life into a Jane Austen novel (Good evening, I hope this email finds you well. And your family? I hope they are all in good health?). Even so, every time my fingers brush the gloved hand of a grocery store check out employee, my mind plays the entirety of that scene where Darcy helps Lizzie into the carriage and then flexes his fingers. They do kiss in this movie, but I keep replaying the hand flex - the electric jolt of fingers touching. It's such a simple connection, but it feels enormous in the moment. The shutdown's got me considering two seconds of hand holding to be so passionate it's on a list of kisses.

**3 & 2. Lucifer S05E05 “Detective Amenadiel” & S05E06 “BlueBallz”** – A tie between two episodes with two very different kisses. I'm obsessed with this ridiculous show. I can't pick one.

S05E05 is a sweet, emotional, passionate kiss. Just before their lips meet a second time, Lucifer looks at her with so much surprise and gratitude that it made me break into tears - not the sympathetic tears of a viewer lost in a story, but the sharp, bitter tears of a 33 year old single woman who is on four dating apps. Jealousy snapped me out of the story so hard I got whiplash. This kiss made me instantly aware of my own life in a way few pieces of media ever have. I didn't rewatch this kiss right away (I wanted to see if they bone in the next episode), but I went back to watch it again, and again, and again, just to feel the knifeblade of envy deep in my chest like prodding a bruised knee.

They do, in fact, bone in S05E06, and while they're making out on the piano you can see Lucifer's tongue slip between their mouths, wet hot & slow.

**1. Schitt's Creek S03E13 “Grad Night”** – The problem I have with dating apps is that there's no space for build up. There's no foundation. What does having shared meme humor prove - we've both seen movies from the 90s? They're just as Disgustingly Online as I am? With online dating, every one of our faults stands on its own, magnified, with no other personality traits to tower above it and hide the flaw in their shade. I might be okay with someone who takes Christopher Nolan movies super seriously if they were also unerringly loyal to their friends or keenly felt injustice or were always kind to children. But we've sent fifteen texts & came in 3rd place at trivia night & I don't know them at all, and listening to someone explain Inception makes me want to tear my hair out. Even before covid I can't remember the last time I had genuine flirtatious banter with someone I'd met in person. And now the rift just seems overwhelming.

The first time I saw this episode I rewatched their kiss so many times that I still have the whole conversation in the car memorized, down to the timing of David's head ticks. The way his expression moves through hesitation, then determination, then joy, cautiousness, self-protection, and hope. Their seatbelts are still on. Never watch this kiss by itself. Rewatch at least the previous 3 episodes. This kiss needs the build up. This kiss holds all their banter in their mouths.



**ALISON CORNELL** is a poet & tour guide who lives in Philly with a calico cat. “Cutting down screen time” has been her new year's resolution for the past six years and counting. You can find her at [psmartyr.tumblr.com](https://psmartyr.tumblr.com).



I'll have to start from the beginning, the *Tiger Mountain Peasant Song* beginning. Was it an accident, a cruel mistake, that a video was caught of you and your sister Klara singing together? Suddenly you were no longer just two sisters, two little girls singing a song in the woods who sometimes fought and sometimes laughed. You became the 'Singing Soderbergs,' First Aid Kit.

Johanna, I imagine you convinced your father to let you record the video and put it on Youtube. You, specifically. You've always seemed like the ambitious one. You wanted to shoot your shot on Youtube so you did and then...

What did it feel like to notice that Klara was the *Poet* and you were just *you*? I've had those moments before, too. When you realize you aren't an *Emmylou* or a *June* and you should consider capitalizing on your alto skills. Those moments you start picking up a bass and heading to the side of the stage. I picked up the bass on Saturday. You're right: it is a gloriously ugly instrument.

I've always liked your outfits and I still try to copy them. What's that one recorded concert of yours? I wanna say in California? You're in jean cut off shorts, and a sparkling silver cowboy boots, tights, and shirt ensemble. You like eggs benedict and you call yourself mean right in your Instagram profile. I'm sorry so much of this revolves around social media. You live in Sweden, we're in 2020, there's just no other way.

**This was all just to say that I think you're one of the coolest people on earth, in the way only a 15 year old talking about her favorite band's favorite member can feel. It's just I also wanna understand what the interviews never get at.**

After *Tiger Mountain Peasant Song*, *The Big Black & Blue* comes out. Did you get to write any of the songs? The ages change in interviews, but you're usually 16 and your little sister is 14. Did it feel wrong for her to be the center of attention or had it always been that way? I feel like it might've been you once, you're both beautiful and intelligent.

You start going on tour. You haven't yet picked up the bass and your dad's still playing it on your albums. Klara is probably her fantastic, artistic self and singing new songs into her voice recorder. In interviews, you two always clarify that you don't party, you just play board games in your hotel or whatever. I have a hard time believing you wanted that and I guess you can't correct me, can you?

Then there were the years First Aid Kit was almost big. These were the years when the gray was going away and maybe just maybe, it could *Stay Gold*. I like to imagine you helped with *Emmylou*. Did you edit it? Did you write the bridge? That would fit your personality, I think. Alto and editor go together, along with bass. I think you must've started playing bass around then.

Here's the part I really wanted to talk about: you two are finally getting big. The interviews concentrate on Klara, but it's fine. You get to be you. You go on the Ellen Show and the Late Night Show and you get to be America's Swedish Sweethearts. But then Klara says she's burnt out.

Did it burn you? I heard you fought in your hotel room. It wasn't fair because you were going where you'd like to go and she wanted to slow down. To stop. She got her way because you can't have First Aid Kit without Klara. Then what did you do? You lived a country away from her. You tried to learn a new language. You never did a solo concert. You never had drama.

**Then there was *Ruins* after Klara has a major breakup.**

**What about you, Johanna?**

You had your baby a month or so ago. You didn't name her Emmylou, though Emmylou Harris did sing a song for her at your baby shower. Do you ever think back on Paul Simon and Emmylou Harris crying at your performances? I would.

You have your partner now and he plays keys. You played a solo concert recently. Johanna, if Klara needs a break again, keys are a good backup instrument. I've even heard a great bassist can play the lead. I say this with love, as just another alto, bassist, editor, and maybe even a Poet.



**ASENATH ROSE** is a teen from the East Coast with deeply cliché New York City dreams. She writes poetry but favors songwriting. She plays guitar, bass, ukulele, lap steel, and banjo. Her favorite things include rainy days, coffee with a splash of milk, and blazers. Rose has recently put out an album of her own: listen to *Bone Flowers* on Spotify or wherever you get your music.



# PRAYING (THANK-YOU KESHA)

LAURA JANE ROUND

I remember exactly where I was when ‘*Praying*’ dropped on BBC Radio 1. I was sat in the truck, bundled up in overalls to protect myself from the oil, dust and general grime of my job. The sound crackled a little as they announced Kesha’s “comeback track”, the engine still running.

And then it played. Piano – I’m a sucker for piano, always have been. And then, crucially, she began to sing.

The track wasn’t written by her, that’s true. But what was true was the strength, the power behind every syllable. These words had become her own. She sang them even though at times it sounded like a desperately painful thing to relive, and I like to think that she did it for us. She did it for everyone who had someone tell them that they weren’t good enough, and she did it for everyone that has been violated and kept caged in a cycle of stifled creativity.

I’ve always listened to Kesha – never a superfan, but I always defended her from ridicule, and in return I got ridicule for appreciating songs about parties and boys when I was a scrawny nerd with tiny, pink glasses. Her music lit something in me that meant I was free from the school hierarchy and other peoples’ wandering hands. I was safe, empowered, able to explore my sexuality and gender in daydreaming playlists. I felt like the assured bisexual woman I now know I am when I listened to Kesha.

Hearing about her abuse and lawsuit when I was older broke my heart, but there wasn’t many people I could talk to about it. To a lot of people she’s still the “trashy party girl” narrative that the execs cooked up. What was vitality and life to me meant an opportunity to slutshame for others. There was a deep wound festering inside of me, and hearing things like that only exacerbated my problems.

It’s wrong to idolise people so completely, and I try not to put people on that pedestal, but in that moment, that singular, defining moment, hearing her song made me feel like I mattered. And it made the confused kid who used to listen to her every day after school on her iPod cry and cry.

**My body was mine, her body was hers, and I was both agonised and soothed, chastised and absolved. I felt better than clean – I felt like I was never dirty to begin with.**

The rain hammered against the windows as we pulled away from the scrapyard, and I managed to hide my tears. I was slumped in my seat but my heart was soaring. ‘*Praying*’ set me free.



**LAURA JANE ROUND** is a bisexual writer and performance poet from the Midlands of England. She has a BA in Creative Writing from Liverpool John Moores University. You can find her work in places such as Peach Street Magazine, the Beyond Queer Words Poetry Anthology, and the Overhear Poetry Project. Find her on Instagram: [@laurajaneroundwriter](https://www.instagram.com/laurajaneroundwriter).



# WHY BLOSSOM IS THE BEST 90s SITCOM (NO SPOILERS)

## S. McKIERNAN

As a lonely nerd born in the very early 2000s, I watched an incredible amount of television, and being born this close to the beginning of the 21st century I consider myself as well versed in 90s TV as I can be. I understand that I am not a 90s kid, (and I'm glad because while I have respect for those who came before me, I'm happy I grew up with gay rights, the chickenpox vaccine, and lunch boxes made of fabric and not metal) but as a recovering TV addict I say with good authority that *Blossom* was the best 90s sitcom.

Running from 1990 to 1995, 5 beautifully crafted seasons, 114 thought provoking episodes, Blossom Russo (played by Mayim Bialik) was the smart, funny, introspective, female protagonist we have all been sleeping on for almost 3 decades.

For those who have never seen the show let me break it down for you. *Blossom* is a situational comedy and it begins as such: Blossom Russo, age 14, lives with her single father Nick Russo and her two older brothers, Anthony and Joey, after their mother leaves the family. Anthony (the oldest) is a recovering alcoholic and drug addict, and Joey is the handsome, athletic, popular, and unintelligent guy at school who is there to tease and annoy Blossom till kingdom come. All three men care deeply for her and their family bond is the cornerstone of the entire series.

Blossom's brothers are walking PSAs: Anthony goes to AA meetings and Joey slowly gets his act together and realizes there are more important things than hair spray and "massive hooters" (that's slang for 'big boobs' but from the 90s.) They're young, Joey is only a year older than Blossom and Anthony is in his 20's, and they're still figuring things out but that just makes their success so much sweeter.

Nick Russo is a piano player and musician who writes jingles to support his family rather than touring and playing shows like he once did. Their mother moved to Paris to become a singer and we see her now and then, but Nick is Blossom's primary parent and the most competent man to ever bless a 90s sitcom, thank you very much. He's also the 'cool' Dad. A literal hippie before he became a father, Nick wears his one earring proudly. He's played with Jager, The Stones, you name 'em, and it's not his fault that cat food ads are more substantial for family life.

The men on this series truly gave me a different perspective on men in general.

“sometimes I feel like life is an evening gown and I’m just a pair of white socks”



There are no excuses to be made when everyone is held to the same standard, and Nick's standards never waver for any of his children. Blossom is not treated like a helpless child because she's a girl and Anthony and Joey are not expected to be neanderthals because they are boys. When they were Blossom called them out on it! Every time! It was not a one episode special about treating women with respect, the show was *Blossom*, and she demanded respect.

Blossom is a studious, compassionate, feminist with interests in music, writing, and academia. She also deeply fears change due to having her life abruptly move in a completely different direction than how it was going. This trauma shows itself as she grows and the other characters perceive this to be teenage angst, and sometimes she even says she is a bit irrational, but everything about her makes perfect sense. When she makes rash decisions it's not to move the plot along, it's because of her own deeply embedded insecurities and fears.

**Her being the protagonist does not make her flawless. It is satisfying to see her grow, as if the heartache and turmoil of youth are worth it for the good moments you see her have. For those of us who are mortified by our childhoods it gives a sense of hope.**

If you're sick of the mushy stuff I can't relate, but you'll be glad that *Blossom* had sitcom-esque features like the 'best friend' character. Six (yes, her name is Six; her father said that's how many beers it took) is an equal match for Blossom. The fashionistas they both are, they share clothes and their iconic hats constantly. As they get older their better formed personalities complement rather than reflect each other. She is the friend we all wish we had and who some are lucky enough to still have from our youth (sup Jill, hey Allison). Six stood by Blossom through bullies, boys, breakups, all the *b* words you can think of.

**Six once said "*sometimes I feel like life is an evening gown and I'm just a pair of white socks*" and I think about that at least once a week.**

And Blossom's boyfriend Vinny, well... Blossom and Vinny are the romantic ideal, what a relationship could be and should be to me. It was never rushed, no trepidation in either character, and when there was a problem there was a discussion, and when there was good news there was a celebration. They trusted and cared for each other. Vinny was the bad boy, he rode a motorcycle and wore a leather jacket. Nick hated him. I will not

spoil where the relationship goes but I can say the characters experienced the most genuine fictional love that could be written and they were better off for having that love in their lives.

I have spent more than my fair share of nights, hunched in front of my computer, smiling at season 1, laughing over season 2, biting my nails over season 3, gripping the edge of my seat over season 4, and spiralling over the ongoing crisis that was season 5. It doesn't matter how many times I watch it. I know all the jokes, the gags, the special episodes, the dance moves, the outfits, the guest stars, it will never be any less exciting, nerve wracking, hilarious, contemplative, self aware, depressing and uplifting than the first time I watched it.

***Blossom* taught me more than 10 years of school ever could. I learned so many lessons like it's not "feed a hangover and starve a cold" it's don't get a hangover, you need to brush all your teeth (not just the ones you like), and most importantly: not to give a hooping funt about what other people think! (See you would understand these brilliant references too if you just WATCHED THE SHOW.)**

In all seriousness though, what did I learn from Blossom? I think I learned to live a life I can be proud of and to be myself in the face of critics. I learned to appreciate the things I have but that it's okay to grieve them when they're gone, and I learned that change is inevitable but that it doesn't have to be a bad thing. Most importantly though I learned quick wit, a denim jacket, and people you can rely on are really all you need to get by.



**S. McKIERNAN** is an 18 year old college student and writer/poet. S. has been published in Analogies and Allegories Literary Magazine, Feed Us With Words, and Square Wheel Press.



# HARD FEELINGS

## GWYNETH BUTCHART

What most surprised me about love was not how powerful it is, but how powerful falling out of love is. It does not happen all at once; it still holds the grace that got you into love in the first place. You find yourself waking up one morning with the last taste of how it felt on your lips and you wonder how it left. You are left sitting with the odd memories of when you first felt it. You are a bittersweet tear stricken nineteen year old, hopelessly spitting love out hoping it wasn't a mistake.

It wasn't a mistake.

Then you start to find the bits to solve the problem. Maybe the issue was as simple as a spark leaving or as complex as never learning how to trust love. When love leaves you must take as much time as you need. Turn off the music, open a window. Fall in love with the noises and sounds outside. Dance to the beat of the ocean waves. Wake up at 5am and scribble love notes to yourself in the middle of a quiet park full of flowers. Take yourself out for dinner. Drink the bottle of wine by yourself and traipse home to your bed, to the one person you know will always think of you fondly. Light a candle and sway in the flickering light until you crumple up and fall asleep.

I have learned I am an acquired taste. But I don't break into pieces about it anymore.

I am my first love. I am as beautiful as the sunrise and as alone as the sunset. I am an ending and a beginning but I only live for the middle of it all. I fall too hard and too fast and far too often. I am naive and young and have yet to learn how to hold grace while breaking someone's heart. I am a wild fire unsure of how to cross oceans. I fall in love like a natural disaster; that is to say you can't miss my feelings for you. You will definitely feel my feelings.

Love will make you hold on too tight for too long to something that has already fallen apart. Love will keep you up at night wondering if you've waited too long. Maybe you can fix it all if you just talk to love.

I know that there will be a day in the future where you will wake up at 11:30am on a Sunday with the love of your life, and you'll make some coffee and pancakes that I showed you how to make, and I'll be alright. Our cherished time found a way out and slipped past the enviable heartbreak as much as it could. I will think of you when I'm driving and the wind picks up my hair. I will think of you at our beach and on the drive to it. I will think of you in forests and small coffee shops. I will think of you on cold nights in the summer and when the sky sparkles like your eyes did.

**I will be alright.**

I will take these hard feelings and present them in galleries. I will project them and move to them and appreciate them for what they are: the hardest feelings I've ever had to let go of.

Just like you.



**GWYNETH BUTCHART** graduated from Vancouver Island School of Art in 2018 with a Certificate of Visual Arts. She has decided her love of making things can transfer into becoming a carpenter and is currently a carpentry apprentice. Gwyneth is a fangirl of many things but her love for sad songs and heartbreaking lyrics are above any other (in fact, this work was inspired by Lorde's album *Melodrama*). When she's not writing her heart out, Gwyneth is busy cooking up her favourites in the kitchen or spending time with loved ones and cute cats. Follow her on Instagram: [@gwynnsartinsta](https://www.instagram.com/gwynnsartinsta).



# One Direction **AND OTHER MEDICINE**

BY LIZETTE ROMAN-JOHNSTON

I remember when I let myself fall in love with One Direction. My family was touring Wesleyan University, where my sister would attend college, in my home state of Connecticut. I was lying across the seats in the back of my family's gold minivan while my mom, dad, and sister continued exploring the brick buildings, green lawns, and streaking students. I had two years before I'd get acquainted with the liberal arts experience. Until then, I had more important things to do, like watch (and rewatch) One Direction's *One Thing* music video.

That was the first time One Direction had lured me away from reality, which was, in this case, the reality of needing to think about my life after high school. It was hard not to think of high school as a place in which I'd be stuck forever.

I remember coming home that day, still sweating from being curled up in a car in the middle of August. Once the soles of my white converse hit the driveway asphalt, I was in trudge mode—trudging through the garage littered with old softball gear, trudging through the kitchen (not without patting the heads of my two dogs), trudging up the staircase lined with staged family portraits, and finally trudging into my room and shutting the door, leaving any visitors with the image of a black and yellow “KEEP OUT” sign I designed on Adobe Photoshop.

My walls were coated with the shiny faces of Justin Bieber, Big Time Rush, Taylor Lautner, and the Jonas Brothers. I had crammed all of my (*championship!*) softball trophies on my ceiling-height bookshelf to remind myself I was a winner. Meanwhile, my bedside drawer housed a box of matches (sometimes I'd burn my school notebook paper just because) and a breadknife I had swiped from the kitchen (I didn't want to cut deep, just enough to make marks). But that night I didn't need fire and knives to feel alive.

I stayed up until an hour unreasonable for a sophomore in high school. It was 2012, and I had two years of YouTube videos to catch up on since the band formed on *The X Factor UK* in 2010. I learned that, each week of the competition, “the boys” would record a video diary from a set of stairs in the contestants' shared house; they would answer fan questions, talk about their *X Factor* journey, and touch each other an alarming (yet delicious) amount. Soon enough, I got a feel for each member's role.



**NIALL WAS**  
*the cute one*

**ZAYN WAS**  
*the mysterious one*

**LIAM WAS**  
*the responsible one*

**LOUIS WAS**  
*the funny one who  
stared at Harry a lot*

**HARRY WAS**  
*the charming one who  
stared at Louis a lot*



Niall was the cute one; Zayn was the mysterious one; Liam was the responsible one; Louis was the funny one who stared at Harry a lot; Harry was the charming one who stared at Louis a lot.

### ***Tumblr Search: one direction***

I figured I had to find people online who shared my tingly feelings; I was scared my very few local friends might've stopped talking to me if I kept gushing about Louis Tomlinson's eyelashes (they're so long!). So I bounced from YouTube to a place where everyone was proud to be a fangirl.

In the *Before 1D Times*, I was on Tumblr for more general thrills, like sad girl poetry and Bad Luck Brian memes. Soon I started to notice "fandoms" sneak their way into my dashboard. It was the golden age of The Nerdy Television Series: *Supernatural*, *Doctor Who*, *Sherlock*, basically anything that girls with side bangs and purple jeans watched in high school.

**Then, like an anthropologist who had left her beige, rusted VW van in a patchy field to wade through a leafy path in pursuit of a world she had only seen glimpses of in dusty books, I discovered the lush utopia of the One Direction Tumblr community.**

I was rich now with photos, GIFs, videos, and text posts to fuel my newfound love affair with five rowdy boys from the UK. Mindless scrolling on my laptop revealed close-ups of Louis' blue eyes, Harry's chocolate curls, Zayn's intricate tattoos. The fans weren't shy about their lust for the five dreamboats—shirtless photos were often captioned with "MY BODY IS READY"—and they weren't shy about being in love with a popular boyband altogether, despite the ever-present looming of judgmental music fans with *more refined* tastes. That shamelessness was something I needed.

In my day-long deep dives into the One Direction tag on Tumblr, I began to notice what I recognized as fanfiction. It would start out with a title, often a lyric from a One Direction song (i.e. *Stole My Heart* or *Gotta Be You*), then maybe a blurb like: "Niall needs a summer job. Will the rich family down the street with the smoking hot daughter reward him enough cash for his hard, sweaty labor so that he can afford a new pair of Jordans?"

I started reading short pieces like these—"smut oneshots"—in which the sole purpose of the story was not to move the reader with its thrilling plot and character development (*What will Niall learn about self-employment in this piece?*) but to give young girls that newish tingling and warmth in their stomachs and in between their thighs.

Some of these stories fell under the category of Y/N (Your Name), which describes fanfiction in which you mentally insert your name wherever it says "Y/N" as to imagine yourself as the object of the boys' affection. But instead of "Harry bit his lip and said, *fuck, Lizette, you're so hot*", I couldn't help but hear it as "Harry bit his lip and said, *fuck, Your Name, you're so hot*."

It was even harder to imagine someone like Harry Styles lusting after a six-foot, acne-ridden, depressed high school girl like me in the first place. And that's when I realized there may be a medium better suited for me—one that avoids clunky wording, one where both main characters are sex symbols, one that completely excludes me from the narrative. And then I found it: One Direction homoerotic fanfiction.

It wasn't hard to imagine intra-boyband sexual tension. For example, given how touchy Harry was with Louis—how his gaze would trace the lines of Louis' lips during interviews—I could easily imagine them giving each other blowjobs, and that changed my life.

Gay fanfiction gripped me more than any other piece of literature had, especially books I was being assigned in high school (I've never read *The Great Gatsby*, only Gatsby-inspired 1D fanfiction). I would devour multi-chaptered fanfiction in a matter of days and some sleepless nights. Meanwhile, when my mom would get on my case for not reading my school books, I'd say, "I'm just not a reader, can't get into it." But of course I slipped naturally into the world that didn't remind me of wrinkly-faced, tight-mouthed teachers who all seemed to wonder why a bright girl like me would come into class ten minutes late only to spend the whole time scribbling nonsense in her notebook.

### ***Tumblr Search: Larry Stylinson Fanfiction***

When I was too anxious to eat lunch in the school cafeteria, I would sit in the locker room, nibble on the peanut butter/nutella/banana sandwich that my dad would make me every day, and melt into whatever universe Louis and Harry (Larry Stylinson) seduced me into. Maybe they were high schoolers like me, Louis on the "football" (soccer) team and Harry in the school play. Maybe they were in "uni" (college), Louis a radio DJ and Harry a musician. Maybe Louis was a fashion designer, and Harry was a "proper fit" (sexy as hell) supermodel.

**As long as Louis and Harry were the protagonists of my daydreams, I didn't have to be. I didn't have to be anything—just an invisible observer with a secluded space and smartphone.**



What I really was, to my dismay, was a teenage girl who had isolated herself from her peers. A girl who found the cafeteria so overwhelming that she ate lunch in the locker room nearly every day, buried in ripe gym socks and abandoned bananas. I escaped into the One Direction fandom the way girls with side bangs and purple jeans escaped into sci-fi shows, the way girls with glasses and messenger bags escaped into *Harry Potter*. Looking back, we were all the same. Life as it was did not please us. In fact, it wounded us.

### ***Tumblr Search: sad***

I had some friends in high school, mostly a few of the less *popular* girls from my sports teams, but soon they'd branch out and join exponentially growing, co-ed friend groups—the kind that'd watch scary movies on the weekends or walk to the deli after school or lose their virginity to each other. I had removed myself from that possibility. I considered myself too busy imagining myself in an angsty pop-rock music video—slowly strutting through a downpour, mascara streaming from my eyes, giving the camera a cold and broken stare. I couldn't help but think that everyone else at my school had it easy. These kids ate lunch in the cafeteria. They didn't have matches and breadknives in their drawers. To put it in teen terms: *They didn't understand!*

The Fandom understood. Our feeds were flooded with young people posting about depression, abuse, self-harm. Those with a substantial Tumblr following could post things like *Idk if I can do this anymore* and receive an overflow of supportive messages.

***You are strong and wonderful, and we need you in this world!  
Please don't hurt yourself bb we love you!!!  
The boys would want you to be strong. Stay alive for them.***

I had always been a writer, ever since my kindergarten teacher would have us attempt to free-write about what we did the previous weekend—back when I'd spell *of* as *ove* and *from* as *frum*. I remember writing stories, some of which are still archived in the yellowed pages of journals in my childhood home. But by the time I reached high school, nobody was prompting me to write creatively. It was all five-paragraph essays on *Romeo and Juliet* or chemistry lab reports with data I'd copy from classmates who were mentally present.

One day in AP Gov, once I had surrendered whatever academic drive I had left, I started scribbling fanfiction in my purple five-subject notebook. The first story I wrote takes place in a café, where Louis and Harry meet—Harry a barista, Louis a customer. I titled it *Louis Tea* because Louis, the protagonist, is adamantly

pro-tea (anti-coffee), and his last name, Tomlinson, begins with a T.

I never finished it (maybe it was never meant to be finished, only started), because I got distracted by the intoxicating realization that, wow, this is a thing I actually care about! The ideas kept pouring in: Louis and Harry play tennis, Louis and Harry get pedicures, Louis and Harry fuck on a beach. I'd soon graduate to more complex narratives: Louis, captain of the university *footie* team and president of the literary magazine, despises Harry, the barefoot, ukulele-caressing freshman who wants to join the lit mag (Spoiler alert: Louis ends up riding him in an empty classroom).

My work had gone from my notebook to the inboxes of a few supportive internet friends, and then to the world wide web for the whole fandom to read. And they did read.

***Total Pieces: 18  
Total Comments: 320  
Total Bookmarks: 1,279  
Total Likes: 4,561  
Total Hits: 154,306***

If I could talk to my teenage self, I would tell her that she did it right. She was dramatic and grumpy and irresponsible, but she invested in worthy things: friends who knew what it was like to have knives and matches and trauma tucked in their bedside drawers, boyband members whose laughter and music and love gave her something to look forward to as she began to realize just how sad she was, and an environment that encouraged her use of creativity as one of the few healthy coping mechanisms she had.

Still has.



**LIZETTE ROMAN-JOHNSTON** grew up in New England and graduated from Skidmore College in 2018. She now lives in Berkeley, CA and will receive her MFA in Creative Nonfiction from Saint Mary's College of California in 2021. Lizette is obsessed with pop culture, her cat Stompy, and the internet (you can find her on Twitter @zettercakes and Instagram @rizbot). Her personal essay "Drinking With Family" is published in the Oakland Arts Review and her satire piece "**What's In Harry Styles' Junk Drawer?**" is published in **The Daily Drunk**.



# LIFE LESSONS EXTRACTED FROM (Y/N) SYDNEY

1. When you find your one true mortal enemy and the dry, sarcastic banter spits from both your tongues like lightning to the horror of everyone else in the room, accept you will be married by the end of the year.
2. Do not, under any circumstances, reveal your reaction to *that* fic in public. Especially do not react as you sit crouched in the backseat of your parents' car on a seven-hour road trip. The less context given, the better for everyone involved. Become the master of poker faces, though your blushes might betray you, and avoid eye contact.
3. No matter what the online booking says, the hotel room you're splitting with your "colleague" will only have one bed. Come prepared with real pajamas instead of a baggy t-shirt and lace underwear. (or don't ;) ).
4. Exist unapologetically in this world that looks down upon unfiltered joy and refuse to trade your softness for armor. Shroud yourself in the comfort of imagination on the days you feel alone. Search for the place where fictions manifest into reality.
5. It's okay to mourn things that never happened (at least in the traditional sense), to allow yourself to get swept away in emotions for a vision of a person we've constructed in our minds. Others laugh at love for figments of imagination but forget they've done the same. We all need escapism sometimes.
6. Remember you will always be (y/n), fluid and caught between worlds, a creation infused with the things you love most and qualities you long to see reflected back. Dare to write yourself into the story you want to live.



**SYDNEY** is a wallflower and occasional writer, last spotted lurking around the Nashville area. She serves as the creative non-fiction editor for Ample Remains, a literary magazine she built with her two dearest friends. You can find her political ramblings, midnight shower thoughts, and fierce opinions about YA media on Twitter: [@literatesydney](https://twitter.com/literatesydney).

Fresh Prince of Morioh  
**CzarovskiKristal**  
Channel Czarovski





# SELECTED POETRY



**poems by** Alessandra Nysether-Santos, Cade Leebron, Chelsea Margaret Bodnar, Isabella J Mansfield, Jordan E. McNeil, Kate Rogers, Kendra Nuttall, Lauren Busser, Meg Smith, Megan Cannella, Milena Bee, Nicola Kapron, Savanna Scott Leslie, Selena Cotte, Susan Alexander, Vamika Sinha, & Yuu Ikeda



IF YOU  
REWIND /  
YOU CAN  
ALWAYS /  
MEET HER /  
AGAIN //

— Chelsea Margaret Bodnar



**Chelsea Margaret Bodnar** defines herself as sardonic & chthonic & as a lame fangirl of many things. She is the author of the chapbooks *Basement Gemini* (Hyacinth Girl Press) and *OUR HOME CAN BE A DANGEROUS PLACE* (Grey Book Press), proving that there is a niche audience for poetry about horror movies & BioShock. She is also one of the editors of the digital literary publication *Everything in Aspic*.





# **MIAMI VICE**

# **POEMS**

BY CHELSEA MARGARET BODNAR

black Ferrari / with the top down // the beach /  
as crimescene // candy-colored / station /  
absent / blood // against all odds / the handgun  
/ bullets / hit // connected with / the helicopter  
blades / and spun it out // it didn't help // the  
killer / got away // birdlike / millionaire / with  
paper skin // the goodguy's / violent outburst /  
smoothed over / between episodes // what  
strings / were pulled / to keep / them on the  
force // was it / the old / lieutenant // well-loved  
/ heroic / long since bullet-hailed // who drove  
/ the closeted detective / out / to kiss / his gun /  
goodnight // was it / your favorite / character /  
who burned / the village / down / to ash / and  
turned his back / with no civilians / left / alive ///



we ask / a payphone / if it was for real // we  
aim / the camera / near the wheels / and watch  
them turn // sell the bag / of artificial sugar / in  
the warehouse / for a laugh // and we can  
splash / the sand / florescent // this week's girl /  
is still / a victim // overdosed / or gunned / to  
puddle // but very / beautiful // if you rewind /  
you can always / meet her / again // watch / her  
sweat / like a daiquiri glass / and not feel bad //  
macguffin / with a whitecapped / grin // a one-  
time / sweetheart / deal // it was very real // you  
bet // before the downer / shouldered in / and  
spoiled your high // but you're too busy // can't  
just / die / in byproduct / of blood and /  
grenadine // horizon / a double-exposure of  
blue // the sunset / spilling gold / into the waves  
///

instead of being / fully gone / your ghost /  
replays / the same old / narrative // attempts /  
to get it / right / in lockstep / with / bad faith /  
and fruit / of poison tree // suspended / pending  
inquest // but where are you / when you're not /  
on display // without the bare bulb / strung over  
/ your chair // a shotgun blast // a clue / on  
microfiche // slap / in the face / to shake / you  
out of it // anything / can happen / here // neck  
deep in crimewave // stinger missile / cradled in  
your hands // smoke muffling / the exit sign //  
while a lounge singer / pulls handgun / midway  
through / rendition / of an old standard // you  
can't / just stop / to learn / what it's about //  
bodies / crowd / the saltwater / canals / gutshot  
/ and bloodless // our scenery / slurred and /  
hysterical // this bird of paradise / in alligator's  
teeth ///



## RESTORATION (ISTANBUL, TURKEY) VAMIKA SINHA

at 21, i visit istanbul for the first  
time. palimpsest  
city. in the hagia sophia, i try to stop  
thinking about a man. i do.  
the building is a site  
how a body is. in repair.  
she wears time. why

is a woman defined  
by the architect? he builds her  
into clock. myth. muse. eye  
sore. canvas. country. sight.  
temple. every thing but  
just a woman. i too fall  
prey to how time has bent  
prostrate on my body. there, among the stains  
made of glass, light  
gentle as fingerpads, scaffolding  
surges like smoke: aftermath  
of hands. somebody  
burned her, snuck  
under her skin & left  
ruin. when i walk in  
to the building, fingers  
carrying the stink of the dying  
body of a cigarette, sophia  
stretches before me, scars  
& constructions, tattoos & light  
coming out her gap teeth, isn't she just

asking for love –  
like me. like me too.

## ODE TO THE EASY BAKE OVEN SELENA COTTE

Easy Bake Oven, you were the one  
who bridged me into power  
I don't think any recipe worked  
maybe I didn't read the manual  
but the mere satisfaction  
of possibility  
of creation  
& responsibility:  
I can cause a result  
I can bake a cake  
and burn myself too  
God bless the potential danger  
of a heating element  
& corn syrup  
you were part-toy, part-appliance  
a lesson from a distance  
& feminist critique aside  
thank you for teaching me  
about agency  
my actions have consequences  
& I will never know another like you.

**Vamika Sinha** is a writer, editor, photographer, and magazine journalist currently based in the UAE. She holds a B.A. Hons. in Literature & Creative Writing from NYU Abu Dhabi. Vamika is the co-founder and editor-in-chief of Postscript Magazine. Her work has been published in The Independent, The Bangalore Review, and KGB Bar Literary Journal, among others.

**Selena Cotte** is a poet, journalist & shapeshifter living in Chicago by way of Orlando. Her poems are published or forthcoming in journals such as Peach Mag, Columbia Poetry Review, HAD, Taco Bell Quarterly & others. She can be found online @selenacotte wherever you think that may work.



## LAY MY GORGEOUS CUDGEL DOWN

SAVANNA SCOTT LESLIE

I wanna be like Sailor Moon:  
peak Cancer energy,  
the power to bring a squad together,  
and 92-kilowatt healing vibes  
despite extensive mommy issues  
and too many crushes to withstand.

I wanna turn my foes to crystal  
and sublimate them into light  
with a Christ-like pastel magic  
that makes forgiveness violent.  
My fatal flaw & only strength  
will be lavender, girl-power wrath.

I wanna cry in public  
and sow my bisexual heartache  
for lesbian dreamboats  
(they are NOT cousins)  
and dark-lipsticked popstar enbies  
who come, like me, from outer space.

I wanna level up at regular intervals  
and I want new trinkets every single time,  
not only to impress viewers  
but also to tally the chic monsters  
my cool best-friends have uppercut.  
(Between parfaits, we'll prowl the night.)

I wanna be allowed to crumble  
at great expense to everyone around me,  
and I wanna have permission  
—even and especially  
in a B-plot non sequitur—  
to lay my gorgeous cudgel down.

I wanna turn my  
foes to crystal  
and sublimate  
them into light  
with a Christ-like  
pastel magic  
that makes  
forgiveness violent.

**Savanna Scott Leslie** writes fiction and poetry. Her work has appeared in Canadian journals—such as *Room*, *Broken Pencil*, *Canthius*, and *The Maynard*—as well as US and Scottish publications. Currently based in the Okanagan Valley, she has a master's degree in creative writing, with distinction, from the University of Edinburgh. Find her work online: [www.sscottleslie.com](http://www.sscottleslie.com).



## TO TELL YOU HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU

ALESSANDRA NYSETH-SANTOS

*inspired by matthew and Cat Power*

sea of love  
matthew  
come with me  
i wanna tell you  
about that  
Craigslit ukulele  
do you remember  
(you couldn't possibly)  
the gold-leafed little white bible?  
i wanna tell you  
how it became a  
replaced window pane  
come with me  
look, i used to sit on  
the roof  
thinking about how i want to tell you  
i love you

## POEM FOR NATALIYA

MEG SMITH

*Nataliya Medvedeva, 1958-2003, was a Russian model, singer, and journalist.  
In North America, she was perhaps best known as the cover girl of The Cars' first album.*

I praise you in your  
red lipstick and fingernails.  
I was reaching to womanhood  
and your smile  
was the lightning strike.  
I have followed, cried,  
and cast out everything  
from the Cold War -- music in secret,  
the crumbling of walls,  
letters in dark drawers.  
We will wander our way back tonight.  
We will hold close our own songs.

**Alessandra Nyseth-Santos** is a Brazilian-American poet, activist, and high school English teacher in North Carolina. She likes to lie down on the ground when she gets anxious. Feel free to join her in the damp, dew-sprinkled grass (or on Twitter) [@donotdiscover](#).

**Meg Smith** is a writer, journalist, dancer and events producer living in Lowell, Mass. Her poetry has recently appeared in *The Cafe Review*, *Trouvaille Review*, *Poetry Bay*, and many more. She is the author of five poetry books and *The Plague Confessor*, a short fiction collection. She welcomes visits to [megsmithwriter.com](#), on Twitter at [@MegSmith\\_Writer](#), and Facebook at [facebook.com/megsmithwriter](#).



**TEA WITH VANESSA**  
**SUSAN ALEXANDER**

I'd like to have tea with Vanessa Bell.  
You know, the artist. Virginia's older sister.  
Virginia Woolf.

I'm counting on her being the nicer one,  
the one who wouldn't serve me up later in her letters  
to Lytton and the other Bloomsburies. Or, God forbid,  
in her journal, my vapid conversation to be mocked  
by undergraduates for eternity. I'm curious  
about sibling rivalry. Like Virginia's insistence  
on writing every morning standing up to keep even  
with her sister at the easel. Vanessa, somehow  
less serious maybe because she was more beautiful,  
more like her pre-Raphaelite mother I think.

She'd arrive late in a geometric print she designed  
in the Omega Workshops. Hands clean, but paint  
still on her elbows. Rose madder and chrome yellow.  
She'd have the children with her without warning me.  
They'd rampage through the house, breaking things  
and each other, run in screaming with bloody knees.  
And she would kiss them and hold them on her lap without  
losing the thread of that last thought. She'd tell me  
she was ecstatic to get out for once, so many freeloaders  
loafing around the Charleston farmhouse. All of them  
brilliant, but would anybody lift a finger to help?

They'd happily critique her latest, trying to outdo  
each other, but they'd never think of buying a painting  
to help pay for the groceries they were eating, to say  
nothing of wages for the unpaid kitchen maid.  
Men and women always coming up behind her  
when she painted – yapping and pawing her as if  
she were some kind of open invitation. I'd ask  
if she'd read the review of her posthumous exhibition.  
She'd chuckle, deep in her throat.

*A bit late,  
don't you think? All that acid about being underknown  
compared to my lovers and my sister. Those glossy pages,  
experts selling themselves, you know. Do they care  
about my work – or want more about sex or dirt on Ginia?*

*Now she loved my creations – read them like short stories.  
Caught the wit and satire. God I miss her.  
I tossed out my devils, hurled them against canvas.  
Hers never left her alone.  
They used her own words to pull her under.*

**Susan Alexander**

is the author of two collections of poems, *The Dance Floor Tilts*, 2017, and *Nothing You Can Carry*, 2020. Her poems have won awards, appeared in anthologies and literary magazines in Canada, the U.K. and the U.S., ridden Vancouver buses as part of Poetry in Transit and even shown up in the woods around Whistler. She lives and works with gratitude on Nexwlélexm/Bowen Island, B.C., Canada, which is the traditional and unceded territory of the Squamish people.

They'd happily  
critique her latest,  
trying to outdo  
each other,  
but they'd never  
think of buying  
a painting  
to help pay for  
the groceries  
they were eating ...



## SPARROW CHECKS AND RECHECKS

JORDAN E. MCNEIL

the lock on the front door, even if she watched her mother lock it. She'll lay awake in bed until she feels the lock under her fingers, closed and cold and safe. She's afraid her girlfriend will leave the oven on, watched too many clickbait videos about house fires, has to check the old plastic knobs before she leaves, before she sleeps, has to text Raven *did you turn the oven off?* until she replies. In high school, she stepped between her friend and the boy harassing her, yelling and yelling at him in the hall until the teachers came out and took all three to the principal's office. While they sat in the uncomfortable plastic chairs, her friend whispered *thank you* with so much fervor, Sparrow replays it in her head at night instead of counting sheep.

**Jordan E. McNeil** [she/her] writes fairytales, rages at videogames, and takes selfies with goats. Her work can be found (or is forthcoming) at The Arcanist, Arsenika, and Liminality, among others. She can be found on Twitter, [@Je\\_McNeil](#), and at [Patreon.com/JordanEMcNeil](#).

## ASSASSIN'S CREED 2

CADE LEEBRON

I don't know. I'm looking at lingerie while you play.  
Every straight girl has the kind of ex who'd say

*do you want to play* when he meant sex he thought  
it was like the hottest possible thing to say. That's not

the vibe. I don't know what the hottest possible thing  
to say is. *Don't send any more work emails this evening.*

*Be more human.* Any sentence after *Radical honesty?*  
*Don't apologize.* I have been to too much therapy.

Really we are just looking at different screen girls  
wearing different corsets. Mine are hotter than yours.

**Cade Leebron** is a disabled writer. Her work has appeared in the New York Times, Electric Literature, and elsewhere. She exists online at [mslifeisbestlife.com](#) and on Twitter [@CadeyLadey](#).



## WAYWARD SIBLINGS

### MEGAN CANNELLA

You are the reason I cry during *Supernatural*,  
and that alone is probably unforgivable.

When we were little, during thunderstorms,  
you needed me to bring you downstairs to Mom.  
I was your safe passage, down the stairs,  
and through the dining room, lit only by a single nightlight.  
But that was decades ago,

and now, we're not talking at all.  
You tell me all the reasons I don't love you,  
all the ways I've let you down.

I try to respond,  
but I'm not sure we're talking about the same me.  
You blame her for things I don't understand.

I say I can fix it.

Just like when I held your hand on our way to Mom on the loud,  
scary nights when our basement would flood,  
and all we could do is just wait it out.

You tell me no.

I watch *Supernatural*,  
and I see these siblings  
coming back to each other  
over and over again,  
literally to hell and back.

With all their grudges,  
all their forgiveness.  
the Winchesters can't  
take themselves seriously,

but serious is all we have left.

And I sob during *Supernatural*,  
like a goddamn weirdo  
because I miss a you  
who I think  
is maybe  
not you anymore.

**Megan Cannella**  
(@megancannella)  
is a Midwestern  
transplant currently  
living in Nevada. For  
over a decade, Megan  
has bounced between  
working at a call  
center, grad school, and  
teaching. She has work  
in or forthcoming from  
Versification, The Daily  
Drunk, (mac)ro(mic),  
Taco Bell Quarterly,  
and Perhappened.

I watch *Supernatural*,  
and I see these siblings  
coming back to each other  
over and over again,  
literally to hell and back.

With all their grudges,  
all their forgiveness.



## SPECIAL AFFAIR

MILENA BEE

controller of my heart, absolute ruler, Aphrodite  
slumbers in bed of marriages past, defiled  
by the sea spray of her birth.  
undisturbed. Adonis,  
guardian of two-thirds  
and nevermore, guards her soul.  
safe-keeping, the pride in his heart  
mutually assured destruction  
my assumption and my downfall.  
in my heart, utter disrepair.  
in her sleep, ever after  
a thousand suitors.

suitors  
blessed by love  
yet damned in one fell swoop.  
left for the hand-off, well worn,  
between Hermes and Persephone.

a golden space  
between her and me. netted disdain  
through the brush of skin  
over the rise of the morning sun.  
gone away again,  
to the darkest corners of night.  
my perfumed heart laid bare.

## IT'S TIME YOU KNOW THE TRUTH

THERE'S A HOLE IN THE EARTH

princess  
hiding in the tower,  
fair dragon guard held steady  
illustrious illusion, one and the same  
same as  
dread queen, and fair maiden.

Persephone unhinges her jaw, draconian force of nature  
akin to a tsunami, the broken crack of the earth splitting open to form  
charybdis.  
preternatural anatomy  
passed over by loving grecian studies, priestesses to  
Kore drape themselves in corn shuck sleeves, giving thanks to the earth  
avoiding snakes  
in the grass

one bite at the ankle  
enough to prove  
yet  
Persephone's jaws remain empty  
bloodless bloodletting  
for deeper spirit  
trapped in the earth.

hatred transparent as  
force falls  
just short  
of empty grave.

**Milena Bee** is a mythologist, poet, and general hermit based in Los Angeles. They're the co-editor of **All Guts No Glory**. This marks their second time appearing in Sad Girl Review, and they couldn't be more delighted. Find them on instagram: [@beenymph](#).



**KILL YOUR DARLINGS**  
**ISABELLA J MANSFIELD**

Kill your darlings, but  
don't destroy them

You and I both know  
there is no you and I

Sylvia Plath personalized everything  
and I take everything personally

I'll never write a novel  
because I am terrible at endings

I don't know how to stop  
Even this needs an end

(That you and I both know  
We are not ready to face)

Sylvia Plath  
personalized  
everything  
  
and I take  
everything  
personally

**Isabella J Mansfield** writes about the many faces of anxiety, body image, intimacy, and the human condition. Most notably, Mansfield has performed at The Oberon Theatre, Cambridge, MA, Nambucca London, U.K., and at various readings and open mics across the US. In 2017, she was a Brittany Noakes Award semi-finalist. She won the 2018 Mark Ritzenhein New Author Award. Finishing Line Press published her Pushcart Prize nominated chapbook, *The Hollows of Bone*, in 2019. She lives in Howell, MI with her family. Follow her on Instagram and Facebook [@isabellajmansfield](#).



## LOVE? OR DEATH?

YUU IKEDA

The sense like the moment of falling asleep  
The sense like the release from everything

Stars fall onto me,  
and celebrate me  
Stars that are bored with shining in the sky  
fall onto me, one after another,  
and give me applause

The sense that I'm wrapped in a blanket and I don't need to think anything  
The sense like I'm frying in the sky  
The sense that I'm freed from connection of blood

This is ... ?

**Yuu Ikeda** is a Japan based poet. She loves writing, reading mystery novels, and drinking sugary coffee. She writes poetry on her website. <https://poetryandcoffeedays.wordpress.com/>  
Her published poems are "Sinful Silhouette" in <Rigorous>, "Broken Pieces of the Truth" in <Briefly Zine>, "A Flickering Light" in <Kalonopia>, 3 sonnets in <The Minison Project>, and more.

## A SUMMONING SPELL

LAUREN BUSSEY

If space folded in on itself, I could slip away. Another version of me would take my place. My body vibrates with the sense that something else is there; occupying the same space and time; a thin veil between us. I think she's been here already; slipping into my flesh and displaying a more refined self to the world around me. The kind that meticulously shapes her eyebrows, sculpts her hair into slovenly waves, paints her nails and lips in a vixen shade of red. Evidence of her arrival is on my vanity; rouge to chisel my cheeks into contoured shapes sharp enough to cut glass; eyeglasses secured in a holder instead of the crown of my head; a gold bullet of lipstick in my bag, used just enough so the sheen of the tip has worn off. I wish I could conjure her forth, relent my body to her so she can morph me with her magic. I imagine with her machinations I could be confident, gliding about like a swan does on water, but she doesn't stay; and maybe she's right not to. My skin is pale and blemished, and my lips pink instead of red as I collect her detritus, shove it into the drawers. She's a part of me, but not the real me.

**Lauren Bussey** is a writer of fiction and nonfiction. She spends a lot of time watching and writing about television for Tell-Tale TV where she is an Associate Editor. When she's not writing she's obsessing about the apocalypse, thinking about how likely it was she was burned at the stake as a witch, baking, or knitting. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Best Small Fictions, StarTrek.com, Popshot Quarterly, Cease, Cows, and others. She tweets at @LaurenBussey and shares photos of dogs, knitted objects, books, and baked goods at @madamedefarge on Instagram. You can find more of her work at [laurenbussey.com](http://laurenbussey.com).



## WOMAN IN A BIRD MASK, NEW YORK CITY 1967

(AFTER DIANE ARBUS)

KATE ROGERS

She peers at the camera  
through shiny, satin slits,  
past the dark pointed beak,  
lolling alongside her  
pert nose. This disguise,  
the sacrifice of the bird  
transformed into  
feathered-hat-mask  
far less important  
than attracting  
a mate; this voyeur.

A ten-carat choker,  
diamonds in jagged settings,  
hangs heavy against  
her larynx. The stones'  
weight divides her throat  
with lines deep as a scalpel's  
cut.

At the bird refuge  
where I walk, warblers  
stud spring's blood  
red dogwood thickets:  
plumage topaz,  
sapphire  
blue. They flit  
through sunlit glades,  
gorging on gnats  
after winging thousands  
of miles to nest  
in our northern woods.

My sad friend, with your face  
framed by golden bird  
of paradise plumes—  
the bird's display  
when it danced to lure  
a lover—how many times

did you wear the bird mask  
to a costume ball?  
Did it hang from a hook  
in your walk-in closet gathering  
dust after its debut?

In my crowded closet, teaching blazers  
jostle each morning—  
pink wool tweed shoulders  
past orange corduroy to attract  
my searching fingers.  
How many jackets can I wear,  
teaching online, only a few  
hours a week now? I cannot meet  
my students' eyes  
on ZOOM, catch their gleam.  
I miss our banter  
during breaks. Tired of staring  
at their own image, my talking  
head, most turn off  
their cameras midway.  
By the end of each class  
my limbs weigh more. I stumble  
back to bed.

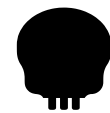
Woman in bird mask,  
did you become notorious  
on the streets of Manhattan  
in that disguise—the woman  
wistful for wings?

**Kate Rogers'** poetry is forthcoming in the anthologies, *The Beauty of Being Elsewhere* and *Looking Back on Hong Kong* (CUHK Press). Her work has appeared in the *Trinity Review*; the *Quarantine Review*; *Poetry Pause* (League of Canadian Poets); *Voice & Verse Magazine*; *Understorey Magazine*; *World Literature Today*; *Algebra of Owls* and *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, among other publications. Her pronouns are she/her. Kate's work can be viewed at: <https://katerogers.ca>.

My sad friend,  
with your  
face framed by  
golden bird  
of paradise  
plumes ...



## LESSONS LEARNED FROM J-HORROR ONRYO



Nicola Kapron

Nicola Kapron has previously been published by Portal Magazine and in anthologies from Nocturnal Sirens Publishing, Rebel Mountain Press, Soteira Press, and Mannison Press. Nicola lives in Nanaimo, British Columbia, with a hoard of books—mostly fantasy and horror—and an extremely fluffy cat.

### I. SADAKO

Girls can be lost.

Do not expect to be understood.  
You are a puzzle, a riddle, a code.  
These self-taught cryptographers will,  
with the best of intentions,

trample over the dark  
and secret places  
of your heart.

Dead is dead.  
But still, remember  
the feel of being cherished  
before it all

fell

apart.

Your mother loved you once.  
Maybe only once,  
and never as much as she loved herself—  
or rather, the person

she wanted  
to be.

You weren't a monster until  
a man you trusted  
tore off  
your skirt.

Chromosomes say nothing.  
They weigh the same  
as the bruises  
on your neck.

You are a woman.  
You were always a woman.  
Nothing, not strangling hands  
or whispered slurs

or dank well-water  
can change that.

They cannot take your story away if  
your rotting body still draws  
breath and truth bleeds  
through the screen.

Come back from the dead  
if you have to.

Just live.  
Above all else, live.



## II. KAYAKO

Girls can hurt.

Don't keep it in,  
locked tight in your chest.  
Open your mouth  
and scream.

This is how you make sure  
you are remembered.

If he hits you,  
leave him.  
Slip away under the moon's  
unblinking eye and halt

this story  
in its tracks.

Or don't. It's still  
your choice.  
It may be the end  
of everything.

Love your children.  
You cannot save them,  
but you can hold them.  
Death is two hands on a stairwell,

one big,  
one small,  
clutching each other  
tight.

If you can't walk,  
crawl.

Grudges are power.  
Be careful.  
They live longer  
than you.

Spite can keep you alive.  
Hate does nothing  
but kill.

There's no end to it.

## III. OKIKU

Girls can be betrayed.

They will retell your story over and over.  
Line up all the pieces  
and make it look like  
an accident.

You will still be dead,  
and he—

Well.

He is wealthy, respected,  
a grand lord.

Nobody reads this story  
to find out  
what happened  
to him.

Counting helps.  
But there are other ways to cope  
which may not kindle  
bad memories.

It wasn't you who broke this  
like an expensive plate.  
He had the power  
and he used it.

Scream  
like the water is closing  
over your head.  
You can do nothing else

to remind him  
of what he has done.

Do not expect justice.  
Girls like you aren't laid to rest.  
Like a foul smell,  
they linger.

Vengeance is for dead women  
Whose wrongs could not  
be righted.

You were a good girl.

You did not deserve  
him.

END.



## DEMI LOVATO SINGS AT THE GRAMMYS

KENDRA NUTTALL

See John 11:35.

Is it a tear or a universe?

Why do I hurt.

When Lizzo nodded.

The A/C is broken.

My dog knows.

Dogs know everything.

The A/C broke a long time ago.

The universe is still here.

Jesus wept.



Is it a tear or a universe?

**Kendra Nuttall** is a copywriter by day and poet by night. Her work has appeared in *Spectrum*, *Capsule Stories*, *Chiron Review*, and *What Rough Beast*, among various other journals and anthologies. She is the author of *A Statistical Study of Randomness* (Finishing Line Press). She lives in Utah with her husband and poodle. Find her online at [kendranuttall.com](http://kendranuttall.com).



APPENDIX 1: SGR ISSUE 6 COMPLETE FANDOM LIST

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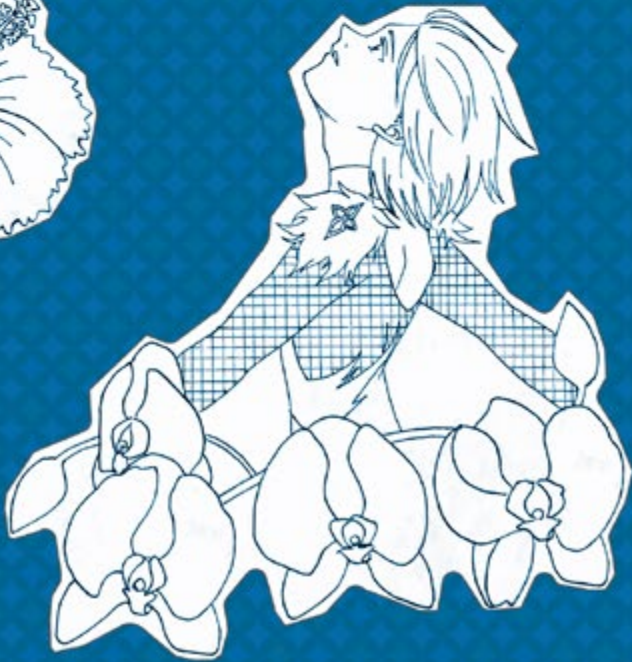
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