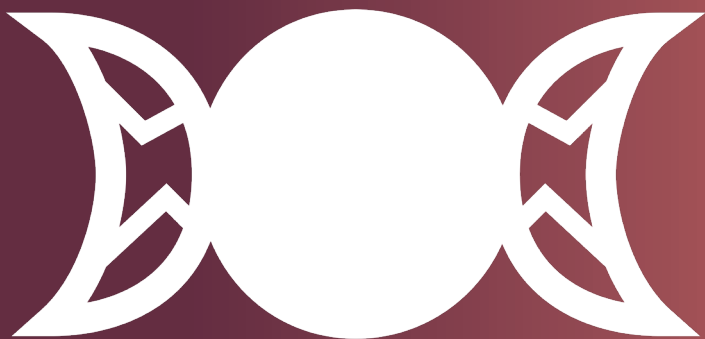


THEY CALL US



SLUTS  
PRUDES

Edition #5 ————— Winter 2021



# THEY CALL US

They Call Us is a literary magazine created by powerful women and gender minorities wanting to empower other women and gender minorities. Using media, art, and literature as a means to inspire, They Call Us wants to tell the everyday struggles of women and gender minorities from around the world.

The purpose of art is to create change, so They Call Us works to unite artists to tell the stories of those that are normally silenced. Our goal is to ignite conversation and encourage people of all ages, races, sexualities, genders, nationalities, abilities, and the like to share their stories. They Call Us wishes to diversify the messages we see online and change the dialogue to give credibility to all of us who have felt helpless and lacking a credible voice.

# A NOTE TO OUR READERS

This magazine centers around themes of:

*Drug and Alcohol Abuse*

*BDSM*

*Sexual Assault / Rape*

*Domestic Violence*

*Sex Work*

*Profanity*

*Nudity*

Due to the nature of this particular zine's content, reader discretion is advised if you are under the age of 18.

If any of the above are sensitive topics for you, please pay attention to the trigger warnings listed before relevant pieces.

They Call Us seeks to tell the stories of any and all who wish to share them. Sometimes these stories, while important to listen to, can be hard to hear. Above all else, please take care of yourself.

Thank you for reading.

WITH WORK BY

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SPEAKING FOR EDVARD MUNCH'S  
*THE SIN*

PROMISCUITY

MY EXCAVATION #2

GET ON YOUR KNEES

HUNGRY TONIGHT

LOVE SPELL

REVEALING THE ABUSERS

RECOMMENDATIONS

## ARTWORK BY

Lindsey Cherek Waller  
(they/she)

26 Cheryl Caesar  
(she/her)

27 Alexandre Nodopaka

28 Jacques Salerno  
(they/them)

31 Jessica Payne  
(she/hers)

32 Maria Cristina  
Cerminara  
(she/her)

34 Alexis Kail-Ackerman  
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36 Catherine Walker  
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Ana Snceringer  
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(she/her)

Cover art and  
illustrations by Asko  
Skladany (they/them)

Artwork by Stavrialena Gontzou

# FOREWORD

By Kailah Peters

I lost my virginity at 16 with my first boyfriend in the bathroom behind the baseball fields at my high school. I was a slut. For three months right before we broke up, I didn't want to have sex. I didn't even want to be touched. I was a prude. In college I was a slut on tinder and a prude when I didn't want to hook-up at a party. Sometimes I wanted to send nudes and sometimes I didn't. Sometimes I wanted him to walk me home and kiss goodbye at the door. Sometimes, if the night was right, I wanted to invite him in. Most of the time, I'm wobbling on the thin blurred line between slut and prude. At 23, I've decided to straddle them both.

There is no male equivalent to a slut, prude, tease, or jailbait. Nor is there a word for a woman who has the right amount of sex with the right amount of people. Our language forms and is informed by the way we view the world. For centuries women have not been recognized as creatures of desire, at least not sexual desire anyway.

In a heteronormative world, this means there is no way for men to displease us in sexual ways. We are not hungry for them, we are the delicacy they feast on. This view diverges in two polar opposite ways.

On one hand, you have the slut or the woman who does have a sexual appetite. If we trace back the etymology of the word "slut", it did not always mean a woman with loose morals.

At first, it just meant something that was dirty, no sexual connotation involved. Over time, this word morphed to mean a woman with the morals of a man. To enjoy sex, to find pleasure in a touch, to seek out these positive sensations was something solely reserved for men. A woman doing this was dirty and a threat. By having her own desires, the woman refutes her objectification. She is no longer the thing to be feasted on, but the thing feasting on you.

Furthermore, the slut challenged the patriarchal order of the family. By sleeping

with as many men as she chooses, the slut broadens the paternal possibilities. Meaning cis men had no way of knowing if the child they cared for was really their own. Since these men played no role in birth or pregnancy, the only way they could assert control and assure their paternal claim was through the control of cis women's bodies. The slut is condemned because she intimates and threatens the patriarchal order of sex and family.

On the other hand, you have the prude or the woman who doesn't let you have it. Despite how this word is used today, prude was never intended to be an insult. It originates from the Latin phrase *prudefemme* meaning "good woman."

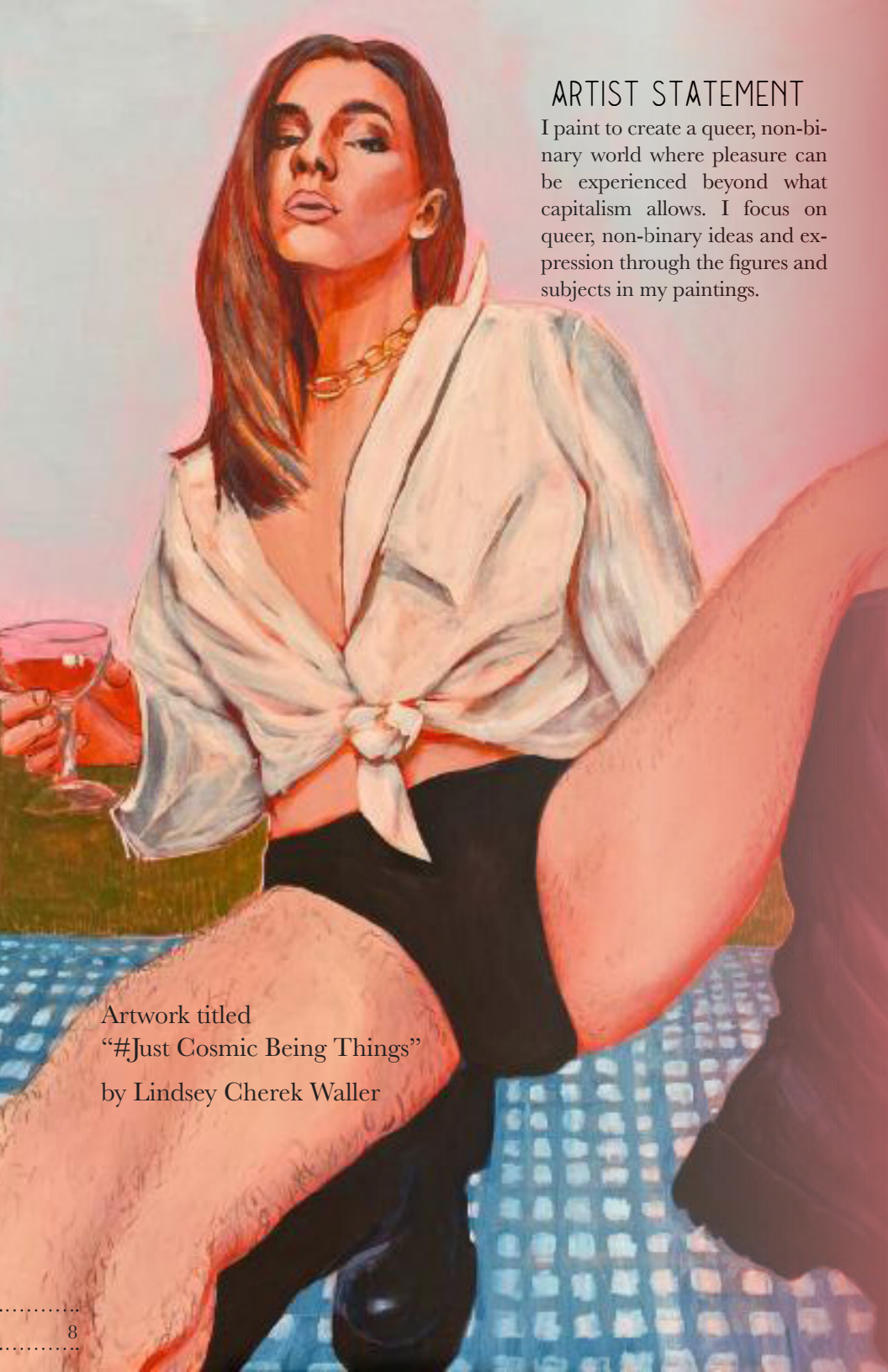
A prude was a woman who upheld the religious morals imposed on her. She did not give in to the temptations the slut did, and maintained her traditional role. She enjoyed sex no more than was expected, thus wanting it no more than was allowed.

Overtime, views on sex changed. Men began to feel entitled to the pleasure they found in women and the connotations of prude shifted. Today, a prude is not a good woman but the woman you can't have. She tempts men with her simple existence and tortures them by being unattainable.

The only things these opposing words have in common is their relation to men's experience of sex and their assertion of dominance over it. The slut wants sex more than is comfortable for men and the prude less. But there is no magic right amount! In this patriarchal world, women can be nothing but sluts and prudes. This edition is designed to challenge that. Imagine a world where we are all free to reject or enthusiastically accept sex without judgement. Where there were no morals placed on your desires or lack thereof. A world where no one gives a fuck about how much you fuck.







## ARTIST STATEMENT

I paint to create a queer, non-binary world where pleasure can be experienced beyond what capitalism allows. I focus on queer, non-binary ideas and expression through the figures and subjects in my paintings.

Artwork titled  
“#Just Cosmic Being Things”  
by Lindsey Cherek Waller

# SEX, DRUGS, AND ALCOHOL

By Cathy Wittmeyer

*Content warning: drug and alcohol abuse*

*Then, are we to believe that Eve,  
still damp in her drying, understood  
the reptile's tongue—having never seen  
a snake before just naming one?*

When still Catholic and virgin,  
she feared sex, drugs, and alcohol—  
strangers until her first stepping out  
passing on the bong, the beer,

fake laughing at dumb jokes.  
While they toked, her mind  
searched for a ride home  
& the room got spinny,

the wallpaper pattern crawled  
upstairs to sinning—again.  
They wouldn't wash off—3 sins—  
not in her parents' shower—4—

before Sunday Mass—again—5—  
without confession the stain grows  
red at the edges and burns her  
blame on her choice to go out.

*And shall we think that Adam  
still clay-lunged and parched  
did not ask for a drink  
of apple—sweet or tart?*

Now, drink is easier than narcotic—  
legal tonic of priests and nuns—  
she still passes the bong and hits.  
She declines with peace signs instead.

She says *yes* in bed, to men.  
*Yes* to selection—*no* to some,  
*yes* to others. She prefers  
the power of *Yes, I will*.

*Wasn't Sarah the voice on Moriah  
who spoke sense into Abraham:  
God gave him a choice—boy or ram  
& Sarah didn't birth him for nothin'?*

She is making her choices now,  
who, where, and how—much & often.  
That one mickey slipped in her glass  
rendered her set on redemption.

*Who seduced, who murdered,  
who severed the head on the wall?  
Bethulia is a small town, scared  
and she only wanted to save it.*

Today, they thank her on the hill  
while her enemies flee afraid from  
the place she hides sins' offspring  
—forsaken, kept, or slain.



# SEX AS THE COMMON DENOMIATOR

By Chad W Lutz

an expectation  
to be lived

5% to 15%  
of all couples

ignore  
the promise  
of something  
often seen  
rarely heard  
occasionally felt

so why do we?

itching  
inside our  
skulls & privates  
are the DNA  
triggers for  
attraction  
reaction

who dates  
& doesn't have sex?

me

Artwork titled “Portrait of Frances Perkins”  
by Cheryl Caesar



## ARTIST STATEMENT

This charcoal sketch is a tribute to Frances Perkins, first female cabinet member and a founder of the New Deal. Frances succeeded by using the “prude” option, dressing in plain black or navy suits and tricorner hats because, as her biographer notes, men were less threatened by “matronly” women. This portrait is based on the photo on her official website. I think I’ve captured a younger, more open side to a very capable and self-assured matron.



Artwork titled "See Through"  
by Ana Sneeringer




# UNSOLICITED ADVICE FROM A LIBERAL ACTIVIST WITH A NOSE RING

By Eve Lyons

Previously published in *The Avenue*

after Jeanann Verlee

if you feel like walking across the room to kiss him, do it. if he won't look at you after making out with you all night, there's something wrong with him, not you. if you kiss three different boys in theater camp that doesn't mean you're a slut. if you're a slut that's OK too. if he treats you like you're fine china, there's something wrong with him. if he plays the guitar and makes you mix tapes, make out with him as much as you can. if he gets you wet, it's OK to go ahead. if you're ready, it's really better to get your first time over, there's so many more interesting kinds of firsts ahead and a lot of them are less likely to give you HIV. if he invites you to a beer garden for your first date after you've already fucked, dump him. if he doesn't seem threatened by gay men that's a good sign. if he won't look at you after making out with you every time he sees you, there's something wrong with him, not you. if he's hanging around a college and he isn't in college, run away. if he invites you to watch him stuff money in his pants while he strips his way through college, he's probably gay, but it's OK to make out with him anyway. if he has a boyfriend, that's not your fault. if you live with him don't kiss him at all, it's not worth it, not even if he already has two girlfriends who are OK with it. if you find a strange man in your friend's kitchen after your friend has already taken someone else to her bed, it's OK to fuck him, but that might mean you're a slut. if you're a slut it's still OK. if he thinks your first kiss means you're destined to be together forever, dump him. if he's just gotten out of jail in Missouri for graffiti and you've picked him up hitchhiking it's ok to kiss him. if he kisses your friend too that's still ok. if you're having dreams about her for weeks it probably means you should let yourself explore that too, you've pushed those feelings down long enough. if she winds up with a man afterwards that doesn't mean what you had meant nothing. if she's threatened by you having sex with men, dump her. if he's depressed he needs a therapist, not you. if she disappears to Minnesota it means she's in trouble. if she winds up with a man afterwards that doesn't mean what you had meant nothing. if you make out with eight different men in one night that doesn't make you a slut. if you're a slut that's OK too, but they were probably more into each other than you. if she's still in college and you're trying to unionize your workplace and figure out how to make time for writing and pay your bills, she's too young for you. if you can't keep your hands off each other when you're first dating but she also plays a mean game of Scrabble, she's probably the one for you.



Artwork titled  
“Crack in Mother Earth”  
by Alexandre Nodopaka

## ARTIST STATEMENT

I like to step outside the boundaries of what is deemed commonly pretty. My motto is, if it's pretty it's not worth a second look.

These sculptures were created over the course of several years. Most of them were difficult to swallow but I continued in spite of those opinions.



# PRONOUN ENVY

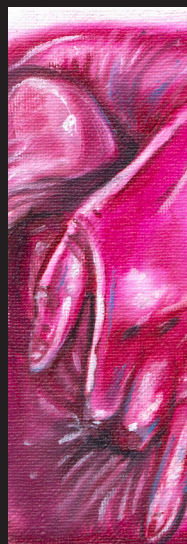
By Gayle Lauradunn

for Ann Lee, the Female Manifestation

I dreamed that I was God  
and Christ gave birth  
to Mary  
that Gabriel was Gabriella  
and Satan Satania  
that heaven was rainbowed  
in ribbons  
and mankind was personkind.

As God, I threw out  
all the he's him's and his'  
and stitched up the holes  
in the clouds.  
I polished the rust  
off the heavenly machinery  
but the store was out of oil  
and the hand crank was irreparable.

I began to cry  
and the tears woke me up.  
At times, I thought, there is  
a falling apart of things  
but God is androgynous  
so all is right with the world.



by Jacques Salerno

Artwork titled "Unidentified Hand Study"

## COLLARED

By Aimee Nicole

When you click the collar  
around my neck,  
shake it twice...  
be sure it holds.  
Metal fits me better than  
my favorite pair of jeans.  
Hugs my veins as I twist to test...  
how I tempt  
with the ruse of flight.  
Why would I  
escape  
your hold?  
All my mistakes held  
with a fist,  
release every broken promise  
with a whip,  
say it's ok to fall—  
how I don't have to  
fail alone any longer.

*Content warning: BDSM*

## MINING

By Aimee Nicole

Allowing myself  
to cum on fingers  
that dig into  
the cavern of me  
—like a mine  
full of jewels—  
is the ultimate act  
of submission.



# JESSIE'S GIRL, REDUX, 2017

By Sandy Longhorn

~after Rick Springfield

She's got a phone full of selfies, tats  
out in the open. One for Jessie that healed  
two months before the birth of their baby boy,  
three months before Jessie legged it  
to the next town over. She's got the names  
of all three of her babies shining  
on her skin, but nothing more to signify  
their daddies. At work she spends her break  
on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat,  
scrolls through her contact list for the number  
of another man who might be willing,  
her need for another body to witness  
her body, to confirm she is alive,  
driving every thumb swipe and message.  
She drops the kids at her mom's,  
where they spend three nights a week,  
nearly every weekend, too, and Jessie's girl  
straps on her heels, slathers on the red, red lips  
she knows Rick can't resist, flicks open  
one more button and heads to town.

# ANOTHER WAY

By Joanna Michal Hoyt

I'm still figuring out how to respond constructively to people who think I must be miserable, incomplete, or defective because I am celibate. "Some-day your prince will come..." "With a little work on your face and figure you could be attractive, you could find someone..." "Just get off the farm and get a real life..." (Farming strikes me as obviously real, but their real means "including sex.") "I'm a psychiatrist, so I know: young people who don't experiment with sex or drugs are seriously neurotic." "I keep hearing that people are concerned about your unnatural lifestyle, and don't want to be associated with it."

As my fortieth birthday approaches, I've been puzzled by the use of "forty-year-old virgin" as a laugh line or insult for online foes. Googling this phrase, I found reviews for a movie about a man finally and happily getting over his virginity. I also found a *Psychology Today* article entitled *Are There Really 40-Year-Old Virgins?* which explained that "The real world of older virgins is... a world of shame and isolation, a world where people feel seriously stuck, handicapped, and not part of the adult world." I thought about Elizabeth I, Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Avila, and other celibates recognized as important parts of the adult world. I also thought about my own life, which is not what the *Psychology Today* author described.

I don't have a professional career or a sex life, but I still work and love. I've been a farmer, writer, and community volunteer for twenty years. I've grown food to share with neighbors, delivered stuck goat kids, translated between English and Spanish speakers, written bylaws for a nonprofit corporation, completed three novels and found a publisher for one. I've held other people while they cried (and I've been held in turn). I've sung and laughed with old and new friends until my throat hurt. I've prayed and talked with people who named God differently but shared the joy and struggle of trying to live faithfully. I've advocated for people struggling to get the help they needed from the medical system or the social-service system. I've marched for good causes, spoken out at town meetings, and had quiet, intense conversations with people who have very different political convictions. I've danced with friends and strangers late into the night. I don't feel stuck - I feel free. I chose this path, and I still choose it.

My choice of celibacy is partly shaped by my Christianity. I know women have sometimes been taught to be ashamed of their bodies and desires in the name of my faith. My experience was different. I grew up knowing myself to be made by God in God's image, indwelt by God, beautiful and beloved. When my hormones came roaring in, I understood that this also was part of how God made me. I was still disconcerted by sudden surges of desire



in the midst of woods rambles or book discussions with friends. I was more disturbed on the occasions when I felt attracted to people who were married or much older, or to people I didn't respect or trust. But amidst these perplexities, I also enjoyed a new exuberance.

I was unschooled and went about trying to understand these new desires more or less as I'd tried to understand history and economics. I read a wide range of books, talked with friends and mentors with very different views, and tried to discern my own right response. I decided that I would either refrain from sexual activity or enjoy it as part of marriage and a fully shared life. In the meantime, I practiced recognizing and enjoying my desires without feeling ashamed of them and without acting them out. Sometimes this felt very difficult. But there was also a power in it. Desire came with a new and vivid awareness of the beauty of other people's bodies and my own, and also of the whole living world. Desire added delight to dancing with friends, to lying alone in long grass under the summer wind and the full moon, and to praying. It also brought a surge of energy that could be channeled into work, play, communion, or creation.

Before puberty, I'd imagined that perhaps I'd only feel sexual attraction and fall in love once, with someone who was clearly the right companion for my life. After seeing how easily I felt attracted, I thought again. I'd noticed that some couples seemed unhappy because they valued fundamentally different things. I knew the work and life I valued. I decided I would marry only if I met someone (of any gender) who shared my vocation; who was single; whom I respected, liked, and found attractive; and who felt the same way about me. That hasn't happened. That's all right.

Some writers have observed that women aren't truly free to say *No* to sex until we are free to say *Yes*—that when we are taught to be ashamed of our desires and to always say *No*, a heartfelt *No* may be misconstrued as unwillingness to admit we want to say *Yes*. This rings true to me. I grieve the harm that has been done by shaming women for their bodies and desires. I think the converse is also true: we aren't truly free to say *Yes* until we are free to say *No*. I have heard too many women my age and younger describe sexual experiences shaped, not by their love or desire or even curiosity, but by their felt need to prove that there wasn't something wrong with them—that they weren't unattractive, frigid, neurotic, lesbian, or otherwise unacceptable. This seems to have left some women weary or wary of sex before they had much chance to feel and respond to their own desires and principles.

What kind of people might we become, what kind of society might we create, if we stopped trying to prove that we're good enough? If we truly believed that we are good enough and that there are many good ways of living with the fire inside us—with our hunger for love, connection, joy, and justice? If we listened to our bodies, hearts, minds, and souls and followed our deepest desires (while considering the rights and boundaries of the people around us)? If we looked with respect, caring, and curiosity, rather than defensiveness, at women who chose paths different from our own?



Artwork titled "Inner Thoughts"

by Jessica Payne

## ARTIST STATEMENT

This piece was completed in a series of 8 other drawings showing the female form in its most vulnerable state. I designed this series to counter the sexual way many nudes of women are drawn. A body is not inherently sexual and should not be viewed only that way. While I cannot stop someone from viewing my work in a sexual manner, I hope to convey in my work the raw emotion and vulnerability of experiencing life as a woman.









Artwork titled "Double Soul"  
by Maria Cristina Germinara



## ADAH AND JAMIE'S NEW ROLE

By Anna Citrino

*Content warning: sex work*

### ARTIST STATEMENT

In my latest work, I explore how women's bodies are perceived as sensual yet still oppressed by misogynistic cultures. We are either sluts or prudes - not humans.

With plush carpets, telephones, fine leather furniture, elevators, mahogany finishing work, marble floor, and private baths, Cheyenne's Prairie Hotel was an elegant establishment, attracting wealthy patrons. When Gerard finished painting rooms there, officials asked him if he knew a woman who could "manage the girls who entertained men at the hotel." My work at Sheridan's Hotel and supervising laundresses at the air force base got me the job. Intent on keeping our laundry work at the base, the hotel owners agreed my sister Jamie and I could share the management role.

Thus, our new work began, and we met the women. A voice like butter, and head with thick curls, Irene loved music. Lillian was sharp-witted and wore rich colors, with moods flickering like fire. Wrists jingling with bangles and eyes pools of dark water, an elusive scent of spiced rose trailed Grace wherever she went. A paradise walled off in a distant time, the women's dreams reached beyond those I imagined—to play the violin, own a clothing store, travel to New York—their work a means to find a life they wanted while dealing with daily life and desires men didn't want to wait to find release from.

People sell furniture, food, and clothes made with their own hands, think nothing of selling their labor, as my father and brothers do—working twelve hours a day, sometimes more, their efforts given over to men far wealthier, while my family labors to put shoes on their feet, food on the table.

Women work the entire day and into the night chore after chore, task after task, their labor expected, needed, though often without pay.

Lillian, Grace, and Irene didn't create the boundaries that refuse to give them better options to sustain their lives. A woman sells her body's delight, and the world believes her evil, blames her behavior as debased while men line up to enjoy her pleasures yet remain untarnished, guiltless.

This land is full of wind's tempestuous gales and desolate force. I've known that wind all my life. What the soul is, what is precious and pure, is difficult to understand in a world that appears to be flat outside the window, though invisible barriers rise like mountains when a woman rides out into the wilderness of trying to make her way, working out her salvation.

I recall the story in Genesis where Tamar used her body and her wit to take charge of her own destiny and claim her rights.

Jamie and I were helping women do just that.



# MISTER X EXPLAINS

By CJ Muchhala

*Content warning: sexual assault/rape*

*The Press Quotes the Honorable Mister X  
On Recent Charges Brought Against Him*

Tomcatting—goes like this: mouse  
always claims cat pounced first  
caught my tail, batted me around  
like a hockey puck  
tried to carry me off

yeah—like a trophy

But the cat, see  
the cat says, Aw shucks  
I was only playin’ . . .

and mouse went  
along

*Mister X Further Explains to the Press  
What Really Happened*

If she cries *No*  
it’s a game, see  
a love game, or sec-shu-al (he shrugs)—

even getting that red dress off her  
shoulda seen all those spangles  
flying—

she says *rape*  
it’s a ploy  
rich as I am  
white as I am (he shrugs)  
you DO know WHO

I AM

*Woman in Red Dress with Sequins*

I cried *No*  
I say *Rape*  
again and again and

White or Black  
they don’t—  
won’t—  
hear me

I am “Sistah”  
I am “Bitch”  
I am “Cunt” for which  
I stand accused

i am

invisible



# THE STOP SIGN

By Cathy Wittmeyer

*Content warning: sexual assault/rape*

The day I woke tangled in unfamiliar sheets,  
a potpourri of sweet smoke, earth, acrid man,

I tiptoed cautiously into my boots, my jeans,  
my sweater—my bra missing, forsaken

rinsed my mouth with a stranger's toothpaste  
my stale breath cleansed in a dirty sink

snuck out a torn screen spring door  
that slammed closed to a back alley

sweated last night's poison walking  
in a direction I hoped was home

swatted madly at a scolding fly  
the buzz of his taunt, I told you

pieced together shards of yesterday:  
green eyes, chocolate lips, elevator doors

saw flashes of a filthy floor and broken glasses  
my blackened jeans and sweater accounted for

smelled incense and felt bile rise  
vomited in a ditch of cattails

raised my face into the gaze of a spider  
strung between stop sign and stem

caught that irksome fly in my fingers  
and fed him into the web.

# SPEAKING FOR EDVARD MUNCH'S THE SIN

Artwork by Asko Skladany

By Hiromi Yoshida

I am your sin  
long-haired woman  
coiling serpent  
praises round  
your throat: I cling  
to you like the fragrance  
you wear compulsively  
without my consent.  
I am the carbon  
monoxide your rattling  
ribcage exhales; the jeweled  
oxymoron; thorn in the flesh  
of your Achilles heel,  
your frailty housed  
in treacherous nunnery  
dark after vespers  
evaporate a catacomb  
stench of bones &  
memories of how  
you masturbated on full  
moon nights like a silly  
bleached vampire.

Darling, I am  
your wide-eyed sin—  
growing unkempt  
secrets behind your  
eyelids, the dirt in your  
fingernails, the piss in your  
pants, the garlic  
nymph reeking  
formaldehyde.



# PROMISCUITY

By Trish Hopkinson

Originally published in *Almost Famous* (Yavanika Press 2019)

just like young men

I knew what  
I wanted and how  
to get it—

trying to rise  
from beneath  
their mothers'  
hems

gorgeous young men my age  
*out of my league*  
older svelte men  
simple quiet men  
all the men

from nurture  
to their fathers'  
flat palms  
patted their backs

I sewed them  
under my skin  
whip stitched them  
gullible pinned them  
like campaign buttons

I too set out  
to sew wild  
added a stitch  
to my belt  
with each boy  
I charmed

wore them open and  
strong until  
my pulses

but my mother  
did not grin  
and slug my shoulder  
did not hand me my first

returned  
  
then I ripped them  
from the seams  
and plucked them  
from my chest

cold one

ironed patches over  
what was left

she sobbed

# MY EXCAVATION #2

By Rachel Larensen

*Content warning: domestic violence*

we remember the neighbor's  
gray marbled hand that clutched  
her small wrist  
pressing the tiny fist  
into the exposed jellied crotch  
she didn't understand  
her confusion smelled  
of old sofas and Windex  
she looked away until it  
stopped

we still remember the probing  
pubescent fingers that played  
a new game  
she thinks his name was Roger  
the babysitter's son  
the game tickled  
she was only interested  
in her new white patent leather boots

we remember her first affair  
how "the boys" called  
her "Virgin Mary"  
made a bet amongst themselves  
how white roses persistence slick purpose  
won  
how she was the prize  
how she thought  
she was in love with the winner  
who also had a wife

we recall how she was  
never any trouble  
she smiled  
never forgot  
never talked about it



we watched her excavate  
her life always digging  
we saw her unearth  
herself  
wipe the tarnish away  
reveal the shine

we  
watched  
the past  
cycle  
back to  
haunt  
how she finally could get angry  
and wept

when we speak  
she believes our truths  
she applauds our painful anger  
and when we weep  
she knows our courage  
she celebrates our release  
from the gray marbled prison  
of silence  
we join her in the  
shine



Artwork titled "Rear View"  
by Alexandre Nodopaka





Artwork titled  
"Bittersweet"  
by Jacques Salerno



# GET ON YOUR KNEES

By Emily Hawkins

I can see you  
on your knees  
committing to adoration.  
The beauty of  
that black and red rosary  
hanging in your hands.  
I want nothing more  
than to wrap the three  
Hail Mary's around your neck.  
She needs to make  
a lasting impression.

It is not for me  
to forgive you.  
God must decide.  
“Hands are for praying,”  
the poster read  
as you wrapped yours  
around my hair  
forcing my jaw open.  
I sighed because  
it was the only way  
that I could breathe.

# HUNGRY TONIGHT

By Maya Hersh

i am driving home from a long night of  
unrequited pursuit  
of a beautiful woman  
while the radio is playing peter and the  
wolf.

i slow down for yellow lights to catch  
the ending  
but by the time the duck is swallowed  
whole

and the wolf is strung up by his own  
tail

i have arrived.

i reluctantly turn it off  
and go inside.

the story says  
that for years after, you could hear the  
duck  
still quacking in that bad wolf's stom-  
ach

because he ate it so fast,  
it didn't have time to die.  
this is supposed to illustrate how evil  
wolves are  
but all i hear is stomach gnawing,  
empty muscles creaking,  
self digestion from the inside out,  
call me evil on days when i am so starv-  
ing to be touched  
it doesn't matter  
if i like it or not.

the big bad wolf blew down the pigs  
house  
because he was taunted,  
and because bacon is delicious  
even if you have to pick the straw out  
of the gristle.  
the big bad wolf ate red riding hood's  
grandmother

because she was there, and easy pick-  
ings,  
because there was a huntsman out,  
all gun and hatchet and unforgiving.  
it is unreasonable to expect soft from  
teeth  
when they have to fight off men like  
him.

we are so quick to vilify hunger,  
to equate the ache with lack of self  
restraint  
like you should just know how to bear  
all this empty.

little pig, little pig,  
all flutter and invite,  
all squealing response to any bite,  
tonight, i want to swallow you whole  
so fast  
you will struggle forever  
in my stretched tight stomach.

just call these fishnets wolf fur,  
these heels claws,  
call me a big bad wolf on the hunt  
tonight,  
call everyone around me sitting ducks,

because i am so hungry  
lately,  
so still night still alone still yearning  
for your pulse beating against mine in  
the dark,

i am so uninterested in safety  
lately,  
so ravenous when you look at me like  
that,  
like you could eat me alive.



# LOVE SPELL

By Chelsea Fanning

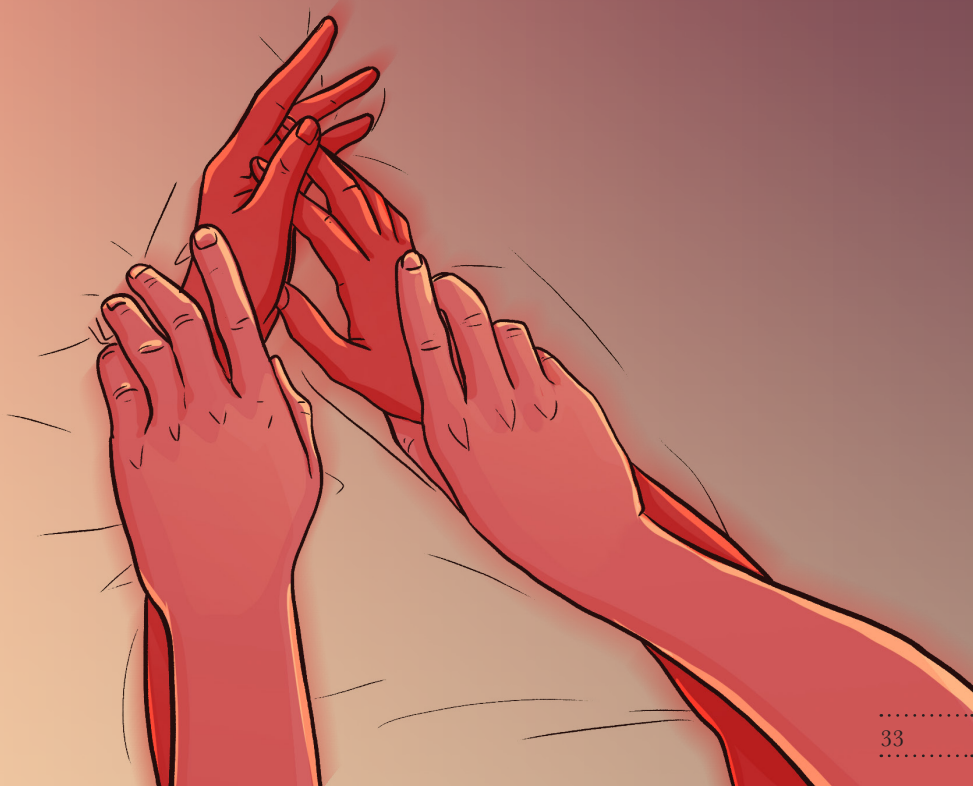
Artwork by Asko Skladany

Last night I dreamt we shared an uptown tryst,  
your mouth hovering over my worried *oh*,  
our limbs falling in familiar patterns.

Hands retraced jaw, hip, thigh, ass until –  
you emptied my body like water running  
from a basin. Harried, I tried to hide

my sneakers under my crumpled shirt, afraid  
someone would see where I'd been,  
the last salient droplets of you leaving

water spots days after drying in the sun



# REVEALING THE ABUSERS

By Ruth Weinstein

*Content warning: sexual assault/rape,  
domestic violence*

*for the poet Jenny Molberg and every woman ever abused or shamed*

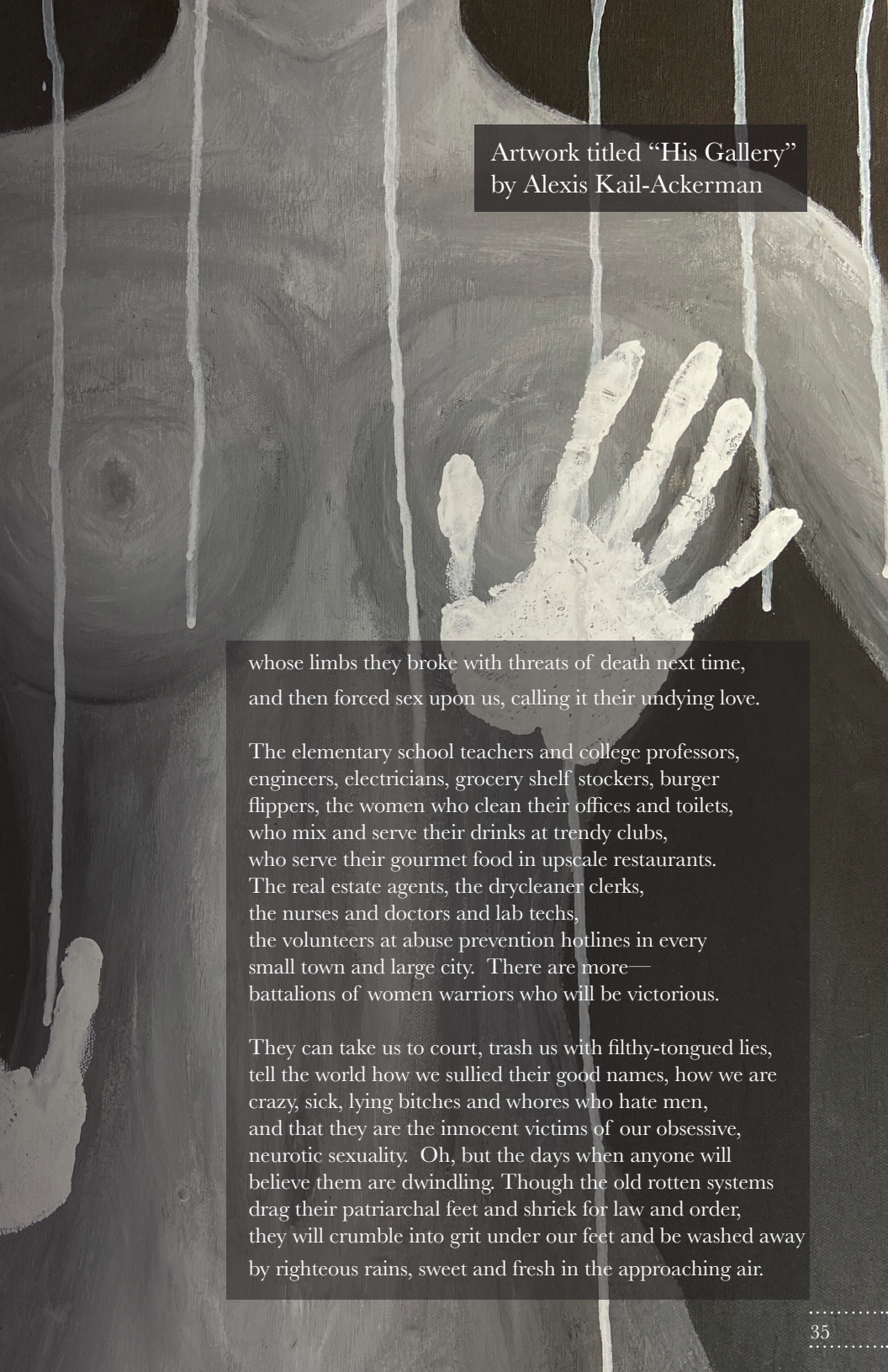
If only they would just call us sluts and prudes,  
but, no, their shaming words the final lacquer  
they apply to the boxes they would lock us in,  
where they would display us as freaks of nature.

I don't know their names, the hundreds and  
thousands of male names women still say with  
shadowy fear though we have, finally, slow-  
simmered away our shame, shame for falling in love,  
for staying, for taking the abuse, the beatings;  
for applying thick concealer over our own black eyes,  
for pulling long sleeves over our own bruised arms;  
for parroting excuses, for believing ourselves  
guilty provocateurs and slanderers when we  
decide to out them in public, to lift our lips in  
a snarl/sneer as they revel in their perpetually  
adolescent humor against us, to point our fingers at  
the cowardly crap and pathetic swagger of their male  
fame and the stench of their manipulation of once  
frail female psyches stripped of all but naked need.  
They cannot hide behind degrees, behind titles,  
behind the prominent pillars they pose as  
in the communities that look the other way.

We are here, the women who watch and speak:  
crones who were once young and, perhaps, shamed  
and abused; mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, friends;  
writers leaning in at tables over dinner and wine,  
artists at easels layering paint, at wheels shaping clay,  
at machines stitching fabric, at benches carving wood.  
Singers and songwriters, musicians and storytellers  
will uncover and trumpet sins against every woman  
whose ribs the abusers cracked, whose bellies they kicked,  
whose breasts they punched, whose throats they choked,  
whose temples they held guns to, whose necks felt knives,







Artwork titled “His Gallery”  
by Alexis Kail-Ackerman

whose limbs they broke with threats of death next time,  
and then forced sex upon us, calling it their undying love.

The elementary school teachers and college professors,  
engineers, electricians, grocery shelf stockers, burger  
flippers, the women who clean their offices and toilets,  
who mix and serve their drinks at trendy clubs,  
who serve their gourmet food in upscale restaurants.  
The real estate agents, the drycleaner clerks,  
the nurses and doctors and lab techs,  
the volunteers at abuse prevention hotlines in every  
small town and large city. There are more—  
battalions of women warriors who will be victorious.

They can take us to court, trash us with filthy-tongued lies,  
tell the world how we sullied their good names, how we are  
crazy, sick, lying bitches and whores who hate men,  
and that they are the innocent victims of our obsessive,  
neurotic sexuality. Oh, but the days when anyone will  
believe them are dwindling. Though the old rotten systems  
drag their patriarchal feet and shriek for law and order,  
they will crumble into grit under our feet and be washed away  
by righteous rains, sweet and fresh in the approaching air.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Artwork titled “Melodramatic Moments of Purpose”  
by Catherine Walker

## MOVIES AND TV SHOWS

JENNIFER'S BODY

THE VIRGIN SUICIDES

THE DIARY OF A  
TEENAGE GIRL

SEX AND THE CITY

EASY A

BLUE IS THE WARMEST  
COLOR

SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT

FOR A GOOD TIME  
CALL

SEX EDUCATION

CRASHING

THE LITTLE HOURS

## PODCASTS

WE ARE HAVING  
GAY SEX

with comedian Ashley  
Gavin

CALL HER DADDY

with Alexandra Cooper and  
Sofia Franklyn

THE SEXUALLY LIBERATED  
WOMAN

with sex writer Ev'Yan



THE ETHICAL SLUT

By Dossie Easton and Janet Hardy

PROMISCUITIES  
THE SECRET STRUGGLE  
FOR WOMANHOOD

By Naomi Wolf

THE SECOND SEX

By Simone de Beauvoir

BARBARA THE SLUT AND  
OTHER PEOPLE

By Lauren Holmes

THE EDIBLEWOMAN

By Margaret Atwood

THE FEMALE OF THE  
SPECIES

By Lionel Shriver

MEN EXPLAIN THINGS TO  
ME

By Rebecca Solnit

HOW TO DATE MEN  
WHEN YOU HATE MEN

By Blythe Roberson

QUEENIE

By Candice Carty-Williams

COME AS YOU ARE

By Emily Nagoski

GIRL SEX 101

By Allison Moon and  
KD Diamond

NAKED AT OUR AGE

By Joan Price

THESE ARE MY EYES.  
THIS IS MY NOSE.  
THIS IS MY VULVA.  
THESE ARE MY TOES

By Lexx Brown-James

# COVEN CONGRESS

The concept of a witch originated from a societal fear and hatred of independent women. Any woman who dared to challenge societal order, to not have children, to take up work outside the home, to think for herself was tortured and burned. Though the punishment is less explicit, the hatred of the witch remains.

In defiance of this stigma, we are reclaiming the word. We are witches and the Coven Congress is our little sabbath. For each edition, we gather witches from all walks of life to talk about our experiences, opinions, and ideas. Next, we let the discussion inspire content included in *They Call Us*. Coven Congress allows us to amplify the voices of a variety of women and gender minorities so the world can hear and learn from our tales.

Special thanks to our Coven Congress participants, for bravely sharing their stories and allowing us to use them as inspiration, and for pretending to put pants on after a long Zoom work day so we could safely debunk beauty standards from the comfort of our homes.

# OUR TEAM



Morgan Kail Ackerman  
Editor & Designer



Kailah Peters (KP)  
Editor & Treasurer



Meg Harris  
Communications



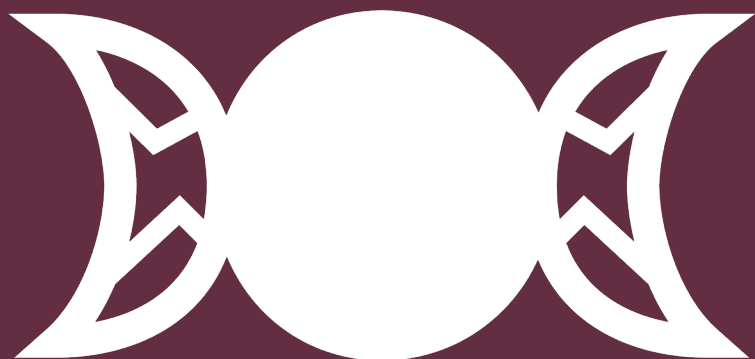
Asko Skladany  
Illustrator

# OUR PATREON

They Call Us is a not-for-profit organization. To fund our magazine, we've created a Patreon page and a merch shop. By donating through Patreon you will receive exclusive invites to Coven Congress, Patreon only merch, sneak peeks into upcoming editions, and access to a feminist only discord group. Please consider donating on our [Patreon](#), purchasing merch [online](#), or just sharing this magazine with friends.

They Call Us is a passion project for our team members and, although we do not make any money through the zine, it helps our organization to host events, donate to other feminist causes, and support our contributing writers and artists.





# THEY CALL US

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theycallus.com

If you're interested in submitting work for our next edition, please email us at [theycalluszine@gmail.com](mailto:theycalluszine@gmail.com) or visit our website at [theycallus.com](http://theycallus.com).

Thank you for reading!