

THEY CALL US



Edition 2

Summer 2020

OUR VOICES ARE OUR WEAPON



Artwork: Pretty Face by Kailah Peters

A NOTE TO OUR READERS

This magazine centers around themes of :

*body objectification
toxic relationships
body dysmorphia
fat shaming and fat phobia
beauty pageant trauma
eating disorders
and others.*

It also contains mentions of:

*sexual harassment
sexual assault
and rape.*

If any of the above are sensitive topics for you, please pay attention to the colored pages: the darker they are, the more triggering they may be.

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 also be hard to hear. Above all else, please take care of yourself.

Thank you for reading.

WITH WORK BY:

Morgan Kail-Ackerman
(she/her/hers)

Caitlyn Schork
(she/her/hers)

Sarah Pobuda
(she/her/hers)

Kailah Peters
(she/her/hers)

Katie Himes
(she/her/hers)

Aaliyah Scimone
(she/her/hers)

Lisa Farver
(she/her/hers)

Dylan Cohen
(she/her/hers)

Meredith Bowen
(she/her/hers)

8 She
Bends
**ONE OF A
KIND 10**

12 DOES THE
GALAXY HAVE
STRETCH MARKS?

NATURAL
BEAUTY **15**
16 LET DOWN
YOUR HAIR

*Ode to My
Belly* **20**

22 PARTY TRICKS
THIS 24
WOMANHOOD
THE CURSE OF A
GENERATION 26

ON WHOSE
SHOULDERS
DO I
STAND 30
32 In The
Public Eye

ARTWORK BY:

Jacquelynne Faith,
Bekka Bjorke, &
Cherrity Patt

Grace Juracka
(she/her/hers)

Ksenia Finogeeva
(she/her/hers)

Kailah Peters
(she/her/hers)

Richelle Canto
(she/her/hers)

Cover and Layout by
Arran Bowen



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

The purpose of art is to create change, so They Call Us works to unite womxn and artists to tell the stories of those that are normally silenced.

Our goal is to ignite conversation and encourage womxn of all ages, race, sexuality, nationality, ability, 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 womxn who have felt helpless and lacking a credible voice.

A STATEMENT ON WHAT IS NOT WRITTEN BUT MUST BE DISCUSSED

Our edition was drafted and planned in mid-March, right before the COVID-19 global pandemic officially put the United States on lockdown. Our launch for They Call Us Theirs was, for a lot of our staff, the last event attended before we began social distancing from the rest of the world.

While social distancing, we were rattled by the news of George Floyd and public cries to abolish the police. Though the murder of black people in police custody hasn't stopped since Black Lives Matter launched in 2012, the death of George Floyd reignited the conversation. Police brutality and systemic racism have always been on the minds of Bipoc (black, indigenous, and people of color), but recently it has been brought to the forefront for everyone. Though we were already in the final stages of planning this edition, cabin fever and general anxiety over the state of the world encouraged our staff to take more action in the fight for equality.

Although They Call Us Flawed does not directly address the pandemic or police brutality, it is still there in the background. Some artists struggled with inspiration because of the mental burden of COVID and fear for their safety. Even though COVID-19 is the prominent factor in our lives, our fight is not forgotten. Feminism is not just about gender equality, but equality for all races, ethnicities, abilities, and people. For more direct resources to aid with COVID and/or protest-related anxiety, follow us on Instagram @they.call.us.

SHE BENDS

By Lisa Farver

folding her body awkwardly
into yogasanas
because she wants to be a better person
And be one with the goddess
tucked somewhere within
the one she's heard whisper
from time to time
The one who's shown herself
spontaneously.
Unexpectedly.
and then dissolved like every reality
or unreality
tends to do
and as she bends
out of the corner of her eye
she sees her
reflection in the dirty window of the stove
in her kitchen
a woman's place
and her cellulite
is illuminated
by overhead lights
dim enough to be forgiving
but just bright enough
to highlight all
that she loves
and hates
about herself



the thick hips that she can't blame on motherhood
the firm ass that
is too often unappreciated
but too often objectified
a tool she uses
when she wants
something
and she bends
to the easy transaction
of being a momentary doll
with posable limbs
and she remembers
that he said
he'd never seen anyone move like her
when she bent
into downward facing dog
spontaneously
and hovered
over his body
like a goddess unleashed
revealing herself
spontaneously
unexpectedly
unwelcomely
and then dissolving
like every reality
or unreality
tends to do
Like time and space.
Bent.





LITTLE MISS FATTY

By Dylan Cohen

In the spring of 2010, she trudged her way into the family room and declared that she would be running for the local beauty pageant for the second consecutive year. She was met with faces of dread and a sharp intake of air from her family. No one wanted to see her get hurt again, but they knew the confidence in her voice was dead-set and immovable. She was definitely one of a kind, but not in the way that judges would compliment a contestant's wardrobe.

She was not a titleholder, but she held many, many unique titles such as most overweight, quickest wit, and sharpest bowl cut. Her uniqueness didn't quite bode well for pageants, but this year was going to be different. The proud Pokémon trainer (card AND console) would

strut down the stage incognito, disguising herself and walking away with more than a participation trophy and a medal for "funniest girl". See, analyzing what was wrong with her was half of the battle. In order to prove to just the judges, and certainly not boys who asked her out as a dare, family members who pinched the skin of her arms a little too tightly, and directors who never cast her as a character who experienced love, she knew that she had to become the antithesis of herself. For the judges.

Her interview was adorned with perfectly polished answers; she had learned to edit herself. She claimed her favorite song was the theme to "Hannah Montana"—a show she did NOT watch—instead

of the unanticipated “Move Along” by The All-American Rejects. Her favorite activity was now “making new friends” instead of the curt and honest “reading fanfiction on DeviantArt”. She was cookie-cutter, performing the qualities of an American Girl Doll and doing it with a smile. Her intentions were to prove that she could assimilate despite having a body that dreaded its annual critique from the Pediatrician. And she executed. When she walked out on stage and felt the heat of the lights, she was there: focused, poised, and finally competing to be beautiful.

.....
She was not thin, she was not blonde, she did not have straight teeth.
.....

Despite her efforts, the judges praised her quick wit once again with a medal for “funniest girl”. She winced, accepting the slight with a clenched fist and a tight smile. The smile remained taught for five excruciatingly long minutes as they crowned her neighbor Little Miss Suburbia. She’d taught her neighbor the staple pageant walk, and now she watched as it took the crown farther and farther from her fat fingers with every heel-toe. Her eyes stung for days.

The only difference she could draw between how the two of them conducted themselves were physical attributes, reconfirming what she had already told herself over and over again. She was not thin, she

was not blonde, she did not have straight teeth. For the second year in a row, she walked away with a plastic participation trophy that, to her, read “you are the joke.” It didn’t matter what she said, who she is will always be louder. She was so loud that it felt like people drowned her out before she could even speak.

Fast forward seven years later to receiving the “funniest girl” senior superlative. She laughs, knowing that most people’s understanding of her will end with that association. She also hurts. In her heart, she knows she will never be competitively beautiful, but her resentment towards people who embody those attributes was not serving herself. It was stretching her lungs out to make room for the water. That overweight, quick-witted, bowl cut-sporting tomboy was listening too carefully to people who didn’t know her. To people who didn’t know how generous she is.

How intelligent she is.

How inspired she is.

How she hid away so much of herself for so long because that’s what she had learned to do.

She received her first and only crown at her senior prom. A piece of plastic signifying to her peers that she was one of a kind. It broke on the bus ride home, and she laughed--her sense of humor has never changed. What has changed is the conscious practice of being beautifully herself. She is still practicing, breath by breath.

DOES THE GALAXY HAVE STRETCH MARKS?

By Kailah Peters

Alexis is mad because her thighs are bigger than the girth of two hands. She says her boyfriend is going to leave her for a skinny bitch. She says she'll never be small enough to deserve love.

I laugh, and I know that's wrong, but I laugh. No one wants a smaller sun! The North Star doesn't sit jealous of those in Orion. The moon isn't seething because she can only reflect light.

Alexis asks me if I ever fear that I'm a bad writer. I tell her no, but I've accepted that I'm not the best. This confuses her because why do something if you can't be the best? Again, I laugh. Can you name the best star? Could you pick between the moon and the sun? Is any raindrop better than the last?

Alexis looks down at her thighs. I can see her comparing her waist to the rings around Saturn. But I'm not a star, she complains. Yet again, I laugh.

Artwork: Self Portrait by
Grace Juracka





NATURAL BEAUTY

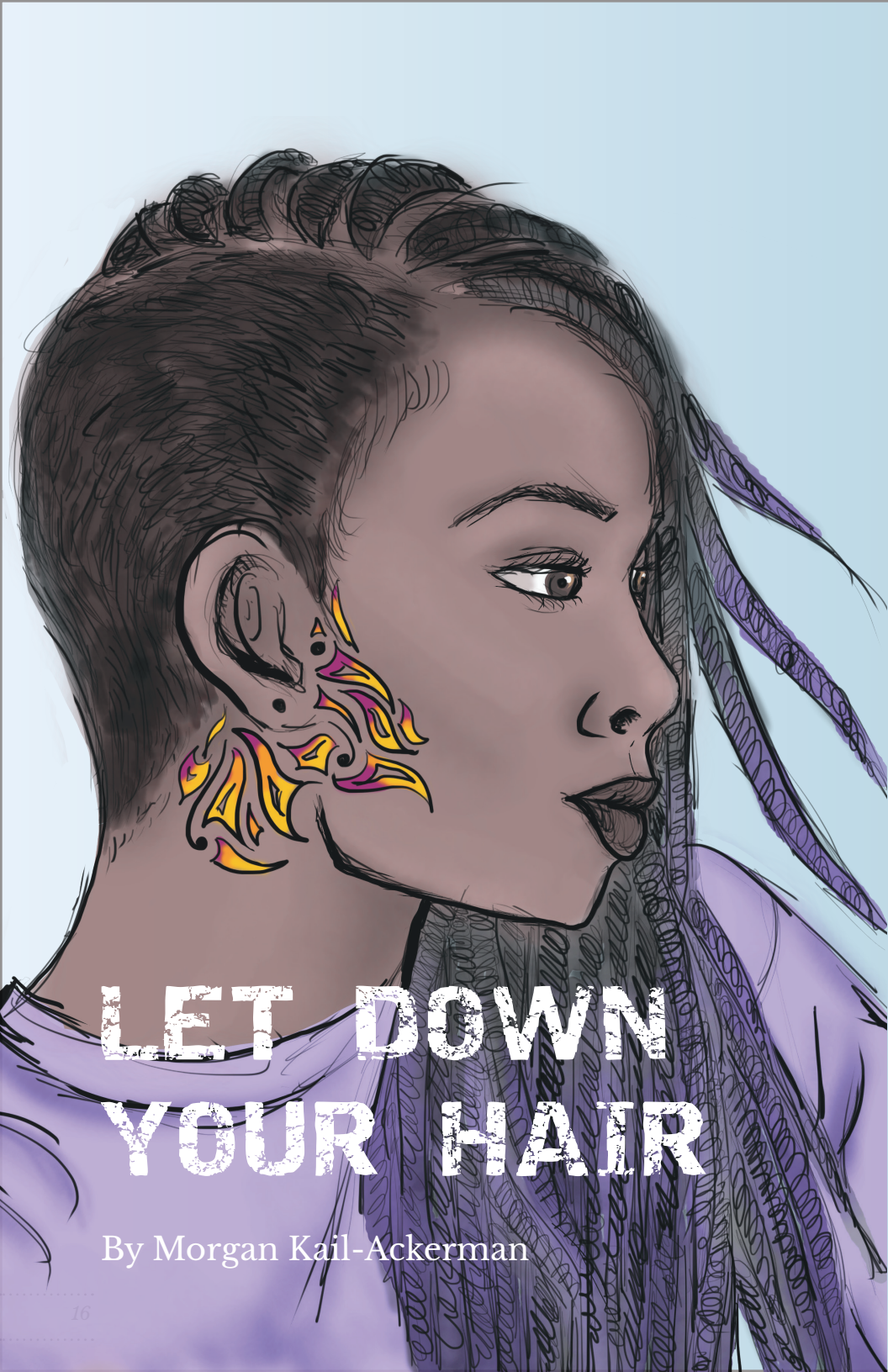
By Caitlyn Schork

i'd love to hear my name through your teeth as a song like breath
that floats into me
instead it pours heavy like blood between my crooked
front gaps
spilling and staining my chin

your words, "you would look better if..."
circle around my insecure and shapely body
the extra swirls that create my silhouette
the lightning bolt stripes that line my arms, legs, and stomach
they remind me of those words
if you could squeeze me smaller and pinch my impurities to dust
you'd see me lovely and speak my name daintily

but now quite possibly the sound of my own name from my own
voice is melodic
my lightning bolts jolt strength and intense passion into my limbs
my swirls are painted beauty on a natural canvas
i now take your judgment like it is nothing at all
i think that i was created perfectly by nature

Artwork: Dream No. 13 by Ksenia Finogeeva
Arcylic on Canvas



LET DOWN YOUR HAIR

By Morgan Kail-Ackerman

Zel heard voices all around her. Through the ceiling, she heard her neighbors watching television. Through her roof, she heard someone on the phone. She was surrounded by voices she could never reach. She was forbidden from leaving her apartment. The only interaction with the outside world she had was through a little peephole in her door. The people were contorted, but there were still people. Some kind of interaction with the real world.

When she was bored, which was often, she would play with her only friend - her hair. Zel's mother told her it was what made her special, but really it was just a nervous tick.

Zel sat in the corner of the room. She closed her eyes, concentrated hard, and felt the warm electric feeling rise inside of her, the feeling of magic. She imagined lavender buds, growing in the grass, and willed the color to overpower her dark hair.

.....
When she was bored, which was often, she would play with her only friend - her hair.
.....

Her beautiful braids loosened, untwisting by themselves. In a few seconds, her russet brown hair became an ombre of color, dark in the roots to a light violet color on the tips. After a minute, Zel could feel the exhaustion setting in. Her hair transformed back into her natural hair, thick box braids down her back. Zel liked her hair, but it was always fun to be something else. To be someone else.

She thought of an amazing character idea while playing around with her hair.

She got out her notebook and began to write, fantasy plots unraveling onto the page.

That's when Zel heard the doorbell. Springing to her feet, she was almost done with hiding her notebook under the bed when her mother threw the door open.

"Why are you under the bed, Zel?" Griselda barked, her voice projecting throughout the entire apartment.

Nervously smoothing down the dress she hated, Zel rose, a tentative smile on her face.

"What kind of greeting is that? Give your mother a squeeze," Griselda said, holding out her bony arms. Her face did not change from its perpetual grimace. Zel walked over to her mother and gave her a hug, her skin contrasting harshly against Griselda's sickly ivory tone.

"How have you been, my little pearl?" Griselda held Zel's face in her hands, looking at the beauty in front of her. Zel felt like a pearl. A small bright gem in the darkness of an oyster, waiting for an opening to bust out of the shell she was stuck in.

"Been writing more stories. This time my main character Charles traveled to a new world with his partner Joey," Zel said. Ever since she picked up a pen and started writing stories, her mother always seemed to be in a bitter mood.

Griselda grabbed Zel's wrist, a little more aggressive than Zel was used to, and brought her over to their green chairs. "That's why I came home early, my darling."

"To talk about my fantasy stories?" Zel said, becoming more hopeful. Fiction was



the place where she could escape. She could obey her mother and still dream about the possibilities.

Griselda stopped for a moment. "Show me your power, my beauty."

Zel's eyebrows furrowed and her hope winced. "What does that have to do with why you're home?"

"I just love seeing what you can do," Griselda said, reaching out and stroking her hair, a ravenous glint in her eyes.

Zel could feel the hope inside of her leaving.

She imagined the cropped hair of her main character Charles. Zel's dark braids shrank, disappearing into her scalp. The sides of her head became bare, but the top of her hair was full of tight curls.

Griselda looked at her daughter, now with her short hair. Her face convulsed in an ugly snarl. "That is not beautiful. Let down your hair, Zel. Beauty does not look like that."

.....
"I don't know who gave you the impression," Griselda said, unable to make eye contact with Zel, "that it was okay to look like a man, but it's not."
.....

The concentration dropped immediately from Zel's head as she heard her mother's insult. The short hair grew, returning to the braids she knew too well. She tried to speak, but her voice was gone. She liked her short hair.

Griselda's face hardened. Zel had never seen her mother look this way. She could almost be a stone statue in a garden,

poised and cold. "I don't know who gave you the impression," Griselda said, unable to make eye contact with Zel, "that it was okay to look like a man, but it's not."

Zel shrank into her chair, becoming smaller.

"I have raised you as a lady. I will accept nothing less." Griselda finally made eye contact with Zel. It felt like Griselda's purple eyeshadow enveloped the whole room with malevolence. "You are no longer allowed your pen. I forbid these stories you're writing."

Zel was terrified. Her mother had never been this frank to her. All she cared about - writing stories - was taken away from her. She hoped the pearl would stay hidden in the oyster forever.

There was silence for a moment. She saw her mother looking down at her in awe, with soft eyes. As soft as daggers could appear.

"You're a thing of beauty, Zel. I don't want you to be changed by the world's harsh reality," Griselda said tenderly, stroking her cheek, like an owner would pet their prized show dog. "You are pure. You are just a girl. Life can be so damaging and I want you safe."

What was safety without danger? thought Zel. In that moment, she made up her mind. She needed to be the person she wanted to be, not what her mother thought she was. Without her stories and her imagination, she felt numb. She had to leave. To be free.

"I don't need you to keep me safe. You've been gone most of my life anyways," Zel said, moving away from her mother.

Griselda whipped her head around, shocked at what she had heard. "Excuse me?"

"I want to look this way. I like my short hair," Zel said, a fire lighting in her eyes. Her heart was beating too quickly; she had never spoken out to her mother before. And it was exhilarating.

Griselda came over to Zel and then broke down in dramatic tears. She sat down next to her. "Oh, I've tried so hard to protect you."

Zel felt scared. She had no idea what her mother was talking about.

"The world is full of people who won't understand you. I want to save you from those who will judge you for what you look like," Griselda said, wiping tears out of her eyes. It felt disingenuous.

"I can handle them. I know who I am and I'm ready to face these people," Zel responded.

"I'm not ready."

Zel didn't know how to respond to that. She always thought that her mother kept her locked away in their apartment because she was trying to protect her.

It didn't matter. What Zel wanted was more important. "Mom, I want to leave this house," Zel said.

Griselda stood up, her tears now dried. Her face grew cold and she stared down at Zel without any feeling. "I'm not letting you leave."

"I can't live without my stories," Zel said, her voice cracking. "Please don't stand in my way."

Griselda took a deep breath. "I don't care what it takes, but I will not be alone

again. You're staying here." Griselda was standing between Zel and the door. Zel quickly ran over to her desk. She concentrated and made her hair as thin as possible. The braids grew out, becoming more pliable. With a quick swipe of her scissors, she chopped off all her hair.

"No!" Griselda yelled.

Zel stared at herself in the mirror. She couldn't help but smile at what she looked like. She finally appeared like what she had always wanted. She closed her eyes and imagined her braids. Her hair didn't move, but instead stayed the short length she had cut it to. It was choppy and rough, but it was perfect nonetheless.

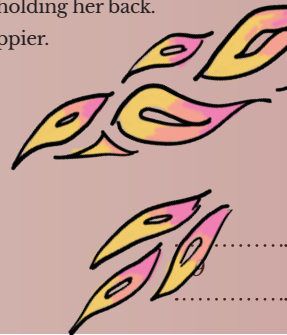
"What have you done?" Griselda said, her hands shaking. "You were special."

"I'm not special because of my powers but because I am special."

Griselda tried to grab her but Zel held out the scissors as a weapon. "Mom, don't try and stop me. I'm leaving this apartment you've kept me hostage in," Zel said, holding the scissors out strongly and circling around her. "I need to see who I am outside of you and your poison."

Zel got out of her bedroom and quickly shut the door, locking it tight. Griselda banged on the door, trying to get out, and yelling profanities. Zel grabbed whatever she could find in the living room. She ignored all the cries from the bedroom.

She was now ready to start a new life as herself, without anyone holding her back. And Zel could not be happier.





ODE TO MY BELLY

By Sarah Pobuda


This is an apology, and a hope for reconciliation.

For every time I pinched you.
Every moment turned sideways in the mirror,
wishing you away,
praying you away,
puking you away.
I'm sorry for those times.

For the compulsive inhales
with no exhales,
when I tried to choke you
into becoming what I wanted you to be.
I'm sorry for those times too.

You see, I'm trying to stop
hating you. To keep my eyes
open when you are kissed
and let both of us be relaxed,

I'm trying to start loving you
properly. To take pride



in your lamb's ear softness,
and pat you nicely,
as a thank you for
protecting my organs.

I read an article recently,
that said it is normal for women
to have a roundness to
their bellies.

You are normal.

It is important for the womb to
have this natural cushion.

You are important.

I hope that you will
consider my apology;
that we may become
used to one another again.

Artwork: Dream & Memories by Ksenia Finogeeva

Arcylic on Canvas

PARTY TRICKS

By Meredith Bowen



I remember other girls and their party tricks. A gymnast doing a back handspring in the grass during gym class. A dancer doing a split leap. A diver doing an armstand dive at a late summer pool party. I didn't have any talent like that. My hobby didn't work like that. Being able to make a twelve hundred pound animal do whatever you want with your ass and four fingers only looked cool if there happened to be a twelve hundred pound animal nearby. And only if that twelve hundred pound animal happened to be acting up a bit. There is a lot of fuss made in movies and books about how people who work with horses seem to live in a state of constant majesty and slow motion. With the wind whipping through their hair and the sunlight glinting off their muscular backs. But, in real life, it doesn't look like that. Equestrian sports can be wildly perilous. But until then, they are pretty boring.

My first time on a mechanical bull was in college. In a salty, sweaty dive bar with crusty dollar bills and fake IDs plastered on the wall, a game of Buck Hunter in the corner. I don't remember much. I don't remember what I was wearing, just that the guys seemed to like it. I don't remember how long my thighs stretched around the slick leather, just that everyone was impressed. I don't remember what I was drinking, just that I didn't spill it. And I remember that rush, that feeling of being the center of attention. Of having a party trick. I was proud. I was ten feet tall. I puked in the bushes.

A few years later and a little less hammered, I found myself in a similar bar in a land-locked state. Those bars always look the same though. They always have Buck Hunter. The guy spinning the bull that night was ruthless, knocking white-collar frat boys on their asses left and right. An odd form of feminism but I'll take it. I was eager for the challenge. But soberly I made a new realization. When my turn came, there were no fast spins or last minute ducks to stick through. Men don't watch women ride the bull to see themselves outdone. They want to see the bull gyrate.

.....
*And I remember that rush,
that feeling of being the center of
attention. Of having a party trick.
I was proud. I was ten feet tall.*
.....

Did you know the bull gyrates? Not for the men though, just the women. I've been on a lot of out of control animals in my life, but none of them gyrated. The challenge isn't sticking on through the pitches and spins. It's sticking through the degrading experience of learning just how many of your body parts can jiggle for someone else's amusement. They don't care if you want to impress them with your party trick. They want to see you jiggle in all the right places.



THIS WOMANHOOD

By Katie Himes

These red bruises on my soft skin are not for you to gawk at
like some rightful prize for taking something off I didn't want removed.

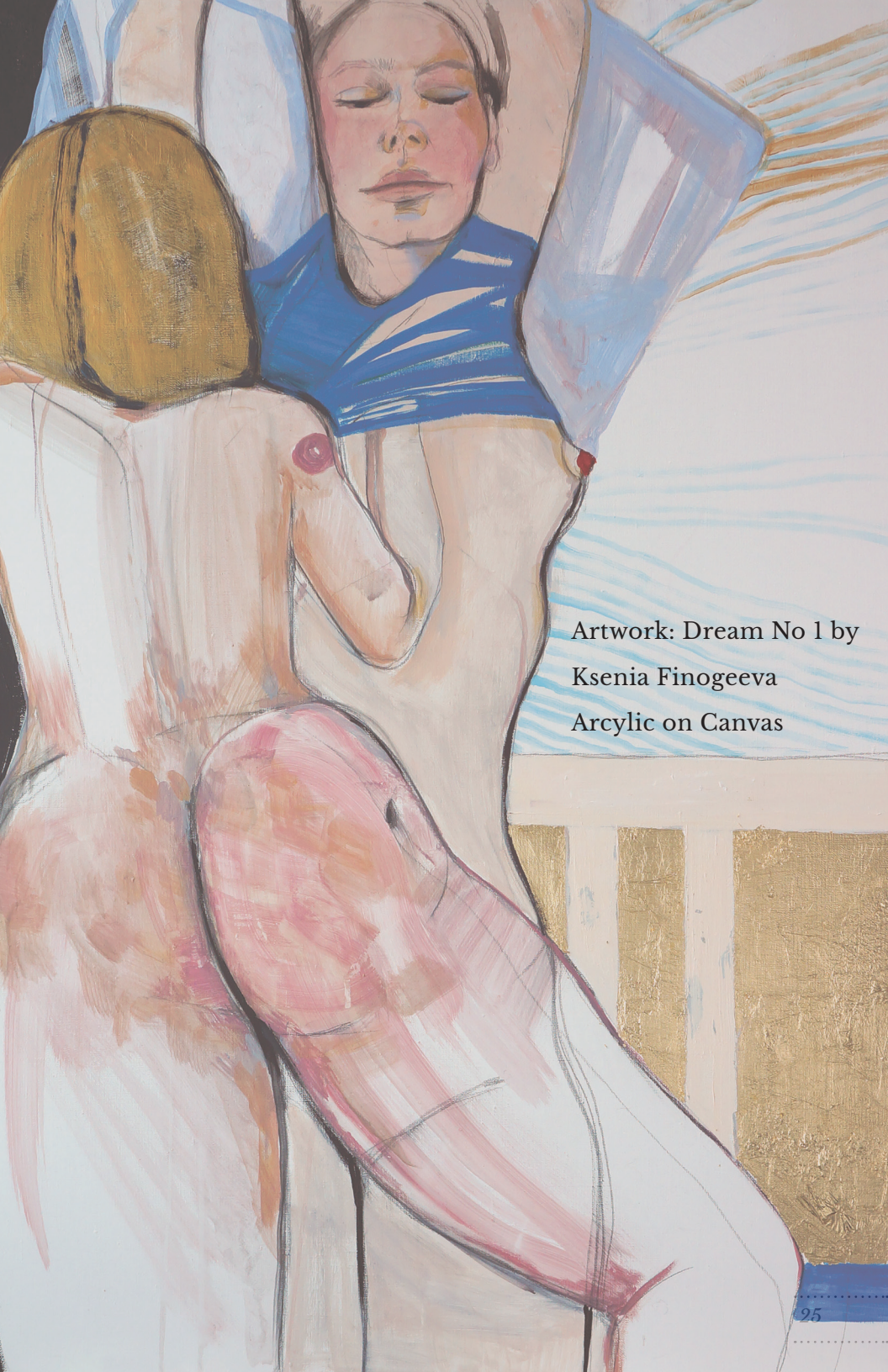
Dug deep into my flesh,
they do not come from itchy elastic and rounded underwire.
Too weighty to be carried on your back,
I have no choice but to bear it on my front.

Somehow it is my fault that you touched me there
and it is my fault that I can hear you whistle from down that crowded street
and it is my fault that I exist in this body.

These strips are like blotches and birthmarks I never wanted
but the pressure on my chest remains unnoticeable
for all I need is to tighten the straps,
branding these marks like cattle raised for slaughter.

This thing I carry, this toxic thing we entertain
decides
for us
what's expected
of us
instead of leaving us a place at the table
to decide for ourselves.

My aching shoulders tremble under suffocating anticipation;
Don't fumble with the clasp to make up for what you've put here,
taking it off only makes this womanhood feel heavier.



Artwork: Dream No 1 by
Ksenia Finogeeva
Acrylic on Canvas



THE CURSE OF A GENERATION

by Kailah Peters

Samantha grew up 6ft tall and thick boned. Besides basketball, she considered herself good for nothing. That is until she met her step-daughter Amy. Amy had always been one of the bigger girls. Her face was puggy, and her thighs rubbed together when she walked. As far as Samantha, her step-mother, knew, this had never bothered her. Amy wore bikinis to the beach and admired her ass when shopping for jeans. She was 16 and the most confident woman Samantha knew. You can imagine her surprise when, after 3 months of tying up loose ends, she moved into her new house in Georgia and found Amy a different girl.

The new house belonged to her husband's late mother. When they received the home through her will, Amy and her father moved to Georgia and waited for Samantha to join them. The roof tore into the sky and tall windows peered out onto the lush garden. The rooms were filled with stale air and Amy had taken to repainting everything. The day Samantha arrived, she had finally finished painting the house.

"Where is my beautiful family?" Samantha yelled into the home. Amy dashed down the front stairwell and rushed to embrace her step-mother. Samantha tried to stifle her gasp as she looked at her step-daughter.

.....
*What was once thick legs
now seemed flimsy and frail.
Samantha wondered if those
legs were even strong enough to
hold her beloved daughter up.*
.....

Where her face used to curve, it now concaved making sharp angles and edges. Her chest had flattened and her waist folded in. What was once thick legs now seemed flimsy and frail. Samantha wondered if those legs were even strong enough to hold her beloved daughter up.

Amy stepped back, "I know, right?" She

boasted and twirled to show off her inverted curves.

"It's, um, a change. What happened, Amy?" Samantha wasn't appalled by her daughter's new figure but disturbed at how fast and drastic she changed. In just three months, Amy lost over 50 pounds. Side by side, Amy now looked like a doll and Samantha a giant.

"It's the voices in the house!"

This response baffled her. "Voices?"

"Yes! Grandma always had comments about my body. It used to make me so mad. Then, we moved in here." Amy gasped and grabbed her step-mother's hand. Her bony fingers poked into Samantha's fleshy palm. "Let me show you around." As she tugged Samantha through the house, Amy said, "At first, it was like she was in the walls. I could hear her whispering snide comments. Oh, my child, my child," Amy mimicked her grandmother in a haunting whisper. "Look at her thighs, oh why?"

Amy showed Samantha the kitchen and dining room, then the sitting room, and her father's library. "Then, at night, I could feel her fingers all over me," Amy continued. "She was pinching my belly and arms. I would shoot up in the middle of the night, swatting at the blankets. I'd flick on my lamp and be aghast that the room was empty and I was alone."

At the top of the stairs, Amy dragged Samantha to a door at the end of the hall. She swung it open and revealed a room stolen from a 40s home magazine. The walls were painted a soft blue and all the furniture was covered in the same floral fabric. The windows were draped with lacy curtains that matched the white skirt around the bed.

"Then, after a week of unrelenting fever," said Amy, "it happened. Sure, I was sick to my stomach for days on end but then I woke up skinny."

Samantha spun around and faced Amy

with a concerned look. "You threw up?"

"That's putting it crudely."

Samantha was furious and distraught. Her beautiful and confident daughter had changed. She was sick. Samantha wracked her brain for what to say. How could she compassionately tell Amy what she thought?

Samantha sat on the bed next to Amy and tried to begin her motherly speech when she was distracted. In the vanity mirror across the room, Amy's reflection was off. No, it simply wasn't Amy. The skin sagged and wrinkled. The eyes were too dark and narrow. Samantha gasped in horror when she recognized the reflection. Amy was possessed by her grandmother and it was making her sick with self-hatred.

The fear pushed Samantha to her feet.

"What's wrong?" questioned Amy.

"I... I," she stuttered, unable to express a full thought. Suddenly, she was overwhelmed with a bone aching chill. The evil intent of the grandmother's spirit filled the air. Like a cramp in her side, Samantha could feel the insecurity and self-hatred that emanate from the walls of that haunted house.

Just as fast as the chill arrived, it disappeared. Amy looked at her stepmother with dead eyes, "So, I guess you figured it out but there is nothing you can do about it now." Amy's voice cracked and echoed as she talked, "As long as my granddaughter is in my house she will be under my influence."

Samantha staggered backward. With the health of her step-daughter at risk, she found a way to stand tall and ignore the fear filling her veins. "You underestimate a mother's love. I'll not only save Amy from your generational curse of insecurity, but I'll exercise your soul from this house. She may be in your home, but she is under my care. I'd rather die than let her live a life with you rattling around in her hollowed-out corpse."



Artwork: Lineup by Ksenia Finogeeva

Arcylic on Canvas



ON WHOSE SHOULDERS DO I STAND

by Aaliyah Scimone

I went to the river
where my ancestors laid.
I set across the street from the tree
where my ancestors were slain.
I went by my grandmother's porch
where her daughter had been raped.
I went down South
where my ancestors were taped
and exploited.

I took a piece of cotton
and I rubbed it across my face.
I thought, maybe,
I could rub the scabs away.
I went down to the church
where my grandfather would pray for us
and my great grandmother would sing to us
hymns of the Lord's day.

I went outside to play
where I thought it would be safe
to shed the weight of the world
from my shoulders
but the load weighed heavier,
from my head to my shoulders,
the bones grew bolder
and the memories were the sewer.

Artwork: Ornament by Richelle Canto





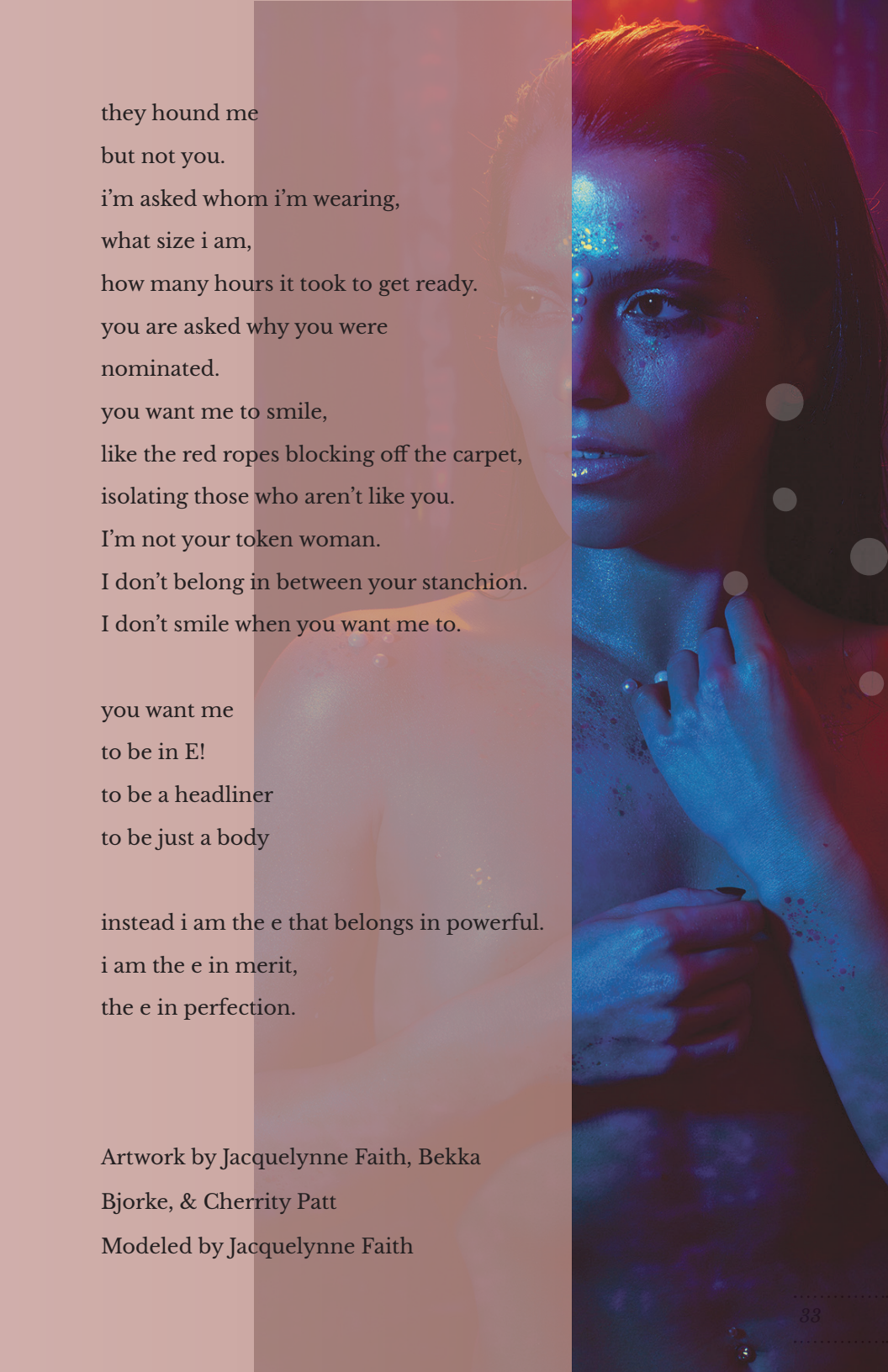
IN THE PUBLIC EYE

By Morgan Kail-Ackerman

you want me to be your needle,
to painstakingly hand-sew that famous red
carpet
beneath your feet.
but you forget that needles are sharp
we fight back.

the red carpet unspools,
sewn from crushed hopes and ecstatic wins -
it tears again.
you ask me to mend it
but i refuse.

the flashing cameras
outline my every flaw.
they blind me.
i can't tell if the paparazzi or camera
harasses more.
you think the camera helps
but they scar



they hound me
but not you.
i'm asked whom i'm wearing,
what size i am,
how many hours it took to get ready.
you are asked why you were
nominated.
you want me to smile,
like the red ropes blocking off the carpet,
isolating those who aren't like you.
I'm not your token woman.
I don't belong in between your stanchion.
I don't smile when you want me to.

you want me
to be in E!
to be a headliner
to be just a body

instead i am the e that belongs in powerful.
i am the e in merit,
the e in perfection.

Artwork by Jacquelynne Faith, Bekka
Bjorke, & Cherrity Patt
Modeled by Jacquelynne Faith

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 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.

Annabeth Thorsen

Natalie Grace

Lauren Wilmore

Wynante Charles

Abby Oberick

Erin Krebs

Grace Juracka

Gabby Henderson

Regan Desauntels

OUR TEAM



Morgan Kail-Ackerman
Master of Fiction



Kailah Peters (KP)
Master of Poetry



Meg Harris
Master of the Media



Arran Bowen
Master of Design



Caroline Schlegel
Master of Art

We would like to thank Caroline Schlegel for all her hard work with us over the last few months as she has been absolutely instrumental to the team. She is stepping down to focus on her studies in the DePaul School of Design. We'll miss her dearly, and we are so proud of her achievements. We know that whatever she puts her mind to will be fantastic.

If you're interested in submitting work for our next edition, please email us at theycalluszine@gmail.com

RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DREAMGIRLS

RAINN (Rape, Abuse, &
Incest National Network)

Call: 1-800-656-HOPE

Chat: online.rainn.org

Info: rainn.org

GLOW (GLORIOUS WOMEN OF WRESTLING)

National Domestic
Violence/Abuse Hotline

Call: 1-800-799-SAFE

Info and Chat: thehotline.org

<http://guerrillafeminism.org>

THE FEMALE PERSUASION BY MEG WOLITZER

<https://thebodypositive.org>

BREAK YOUR GLASS SLIPPERS

BY AMANDA LOVELACE

<https://www.sistersong.net>

Love Is Report-
National Dating Abuse
Hotline for Teens

Call: 1-866-331-9474

Info and Chat:

LoveIsReport.org

Text: LoveIs 22522

IN THE NEXT ROOM

by Sarah Ruhl

STYLELIKEU.COM

SAMHSA's National
Helpline

Call: 1-800-662-HELP

BET ME

BY JENNIFER CRUSIE

<https://www.rookiemag.com>

To Write Love on Her Arms

Twloha.com

@twloha on instagram

THE THING AROUND YOUR NECK

by Chimamanda Ngozi

Adichie

What Do Womxn Want

by Breena Kerr

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/14/style/womxn.html>

[com/2019/03/14/style/womxn.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/14/style/womxn.html)

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT SWEETIE

By Sandhya Menon

**CRISIS TEXTLINE
TEXT: HOME TO 741741**

@I_weigh on Instagram

NOT HERE TO MAKE FRIENDS

by Roxane Gay

True Style is What's Underneath:

The Self-Acceptance
Revolution

by Elisa Goodkind and Lily
Mandelbaum

**THEY CALL
US FLAWED:** A
PLAYLIST ON SPOTIFY

Artwork: A Trans Body by Kailah Peters
Modeled by Hannah Radeke

Artwork: Flower Girl by Richelle Canto



THEY
CALL
US



@they.call.us
theycallus.com