

THEY CALL US



Edition 1

Spring 2020

OUR VOICES ARE OUR WEAPON

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4 NO
MATTER
WHAT
7 WHAT CAN
I GET YOU?

8 *How To Make
A's When Your
Mom Has Lost
30 Pounds*

**LITTLE RED
RIDING HOOD
EATS THE
WOLF AT
THE END** **10**

11 FOR A
BLACK
GIRL
12 THE RECLINER,
A RIVER

*Adam
& Eve* **15**

17 INSIDE
THE STONE
IS JUST
MORE STONE
*I BELONG
TO YOU* **19**

21 Ten

**THEY
TELL
ME** **25**
26 "Safety"

*Chicago in
the Summer* **27**
29 SENSE
OF
SELF

31 OBEDIENT
33 YOURS
TRULY

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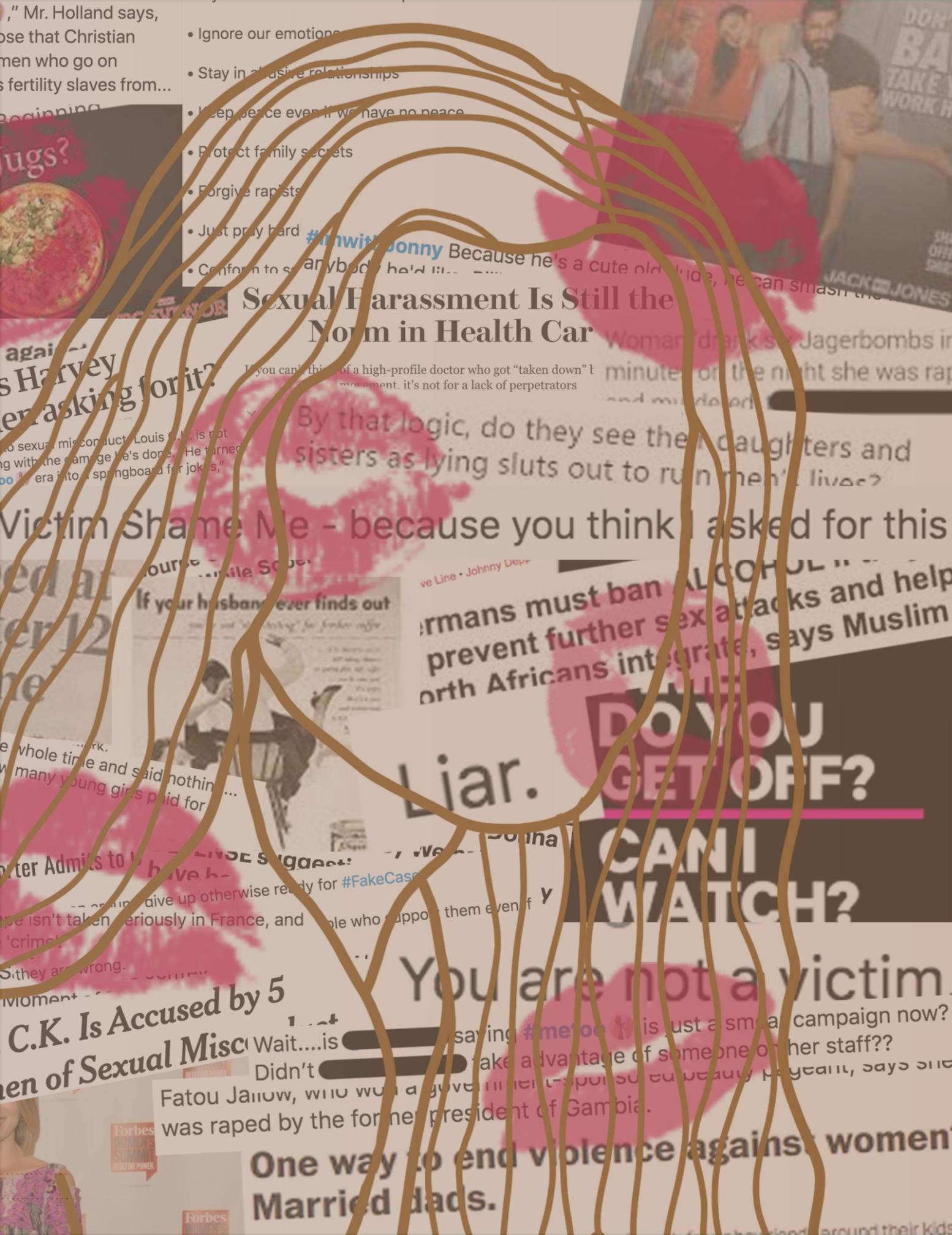
Artwork by Kendall Roth



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

The purpose of art is to create change, so They Call Us works to unite writers and artists to tell the stories of women that are normally silenced. Our goal is to ignite conversation and encourage women of all ages, race, nationality, ability, sexuality, and the like to share their stories of gender discrimination. 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.

We proudly present our first edition, They Call Us Theirs, to any and all who are willing to read it.



NO MATTER WHAT

Morgan Kail Ackerman
Artwork by Callie Hedtke

L Kaitlyn, exhausted and starving, needed food. She could only take so much law reading before her brain would start spouting a seed created by statutes and precedents, fertilized by jurisdiction. Slamming her textbook shut, she saw it was 7:30pm. Kaitlyn decided to treat herself; she deserved some deep dish pizza after a long day of cramming and class.

Her favorite pizza place was just down the block, right on the corner of two major intersections. She walked in her ratty sweatpants and a tattered coat. It was only a short walk; she didn't need to look nice. She got her pizza and headed back home, thinking about gifting herself a whole episode of Sex Education in reward. She could get back to work after a little break.

When she was heading home, she accidentally opened the restaurant door right when someone else was walking by.

"I didn't realize there was a door there!" the man said, smiling over at her. He didn't look menacing or anything out of the ordinary. Just a man who almost got hit with a door.

"So sorry," Kaitlyn responded, holding her pizza and smiling nicely at the man. She nodded to him and started to walk.

The man was walking forward too, but Kaitlyn didn't think anything of it. He was walking in that direction to begin with. Nothing to be worried about.

"I mean really," the man said, following on her heels. "It came out of nowhere."

Kaitlyn smiled again, clutching her pizza a little more tightly than before. "Yup."

The man was walking down the alley, away from where Kaitlyn was going. She sighed. That was a great sign. But he looked back at her. "A weird placement for a door, ain't it?" He smiled at her, but the smile did not seem friendly. There was something off.

Kaitlyn smiled curtly, walking faster. She thought about where her keys were, but they were at the bottom of her bag. She couldn't grab them and also hold her pizza.

.....
Her pulse was the downbeat in a rap song - loud and fast. She looked around to see if there were other people, any kind of solidarity.
.....

He said something else and she didn't hear what it was. Her pulse was the downbeat in a rap song - loud and fast. She looked around to see if there were other people, any kind of solidarity. A man across the street on the phone. Not what she wanted.

Even though the man was walking away from her, she heard a grumble in his throat. She whipped her head around to face him. "Fuck you, lady!" he said, angrily throwing his fist, whispering about some bitch.

She exhaled and walked quicker back to her home. Before she unlocked her door, she glanced around, making sure she was safe. Once she got inside, she could only eat one bite of her pizza. The food grew cold.

No matter what she is doing, she feels uneasy.

II & III.

Belle and Elle were both going home later than normal. Belle was out at a bar and Elle was hanging out at her friend's house. Belle decided to order an Uber and Elle was going to ride the train.

Belle was always nervous in ride shares, but she was more scared to walk home alone late at night. The second the sun went down, there was a fear something would happen. Like Little Red, she knew the wolf was around and he was hungry.

Elle was not that scared of walking home. She always called her sister while. Even though she lived in another state, Elle knew that if something happened, her sister would help.

Once she got in the Uber, Belle talked briefly with the driver. He was nice and friendly. She was still a little on edge.

On the train platform, Elle looked around and noticed that there were no women on either platform. The nerves wiggled around in her stomach like scared worms, ready to hide if anything moved. She clutched her bag tightly.

The Uber driver was starting to annoy Belle. It was a six minute drive, and yet he would not stop talking. The driver asked her something and she responded saying she did not like walking this late at night. He told her she was just being paranoid. Belle's face dropped and her eyebrows furrowed. What the fuck did that mean?

Some man on the train tried to talk to Elle and she glanced around again, looking for solidarity. There were no women on the train. Of course there weren't. Women don't walk home or ride the train this late. They took ride shares.

Belle was getting angry. She was not paranoid; it was dangerous to walk around late at night as a woman. You will be fine, he said. We're in a safe area. Women are so sensitive, he said. Belle wanted to tell him off but it was safer not to engage.

When Elle got home she texted her friend. She would

never take the train that late again. She would pay the extra money just to take a Lyft or something.

When Belle got home she texted her friend. She would never take an Uber with a man again. She would wait around to see if she could get a woman.

No matter how she got home, she would never be completely safe.

IV & V.

Mia felt confident. She finally had the time to do her hair, dress in her favorite jumpsuit, and finish her makeup. Bright red lips and full mascara. She was only going out to dinner with her family, but she felt great.

Madison felt exhausted. She was too busy with work to do her hair, makeup, or dress up nicely. It was sometimes just too much work. She wore ripped joggers and a men's XL shirt.

On Lincoln Avenue, Mia was walking with confidence. She was listening to her "Pumped" playlist, singing and dancing along. She ignored the world around her. Mia had not felt this happy in months.

On Lincoln Avenue, Madison was slouched. She listened to sad music, just because it felt appropriate. She texted her brother, telling him about work and how much she wished she could come home to watch Bojack Horseman.

A car drove by a little too quickly near Mia. But nothing could bother her. Nothing could bring her down. The window lowered and she saw a man put his face out, leaning in her direction. "Nice ass," he yelled, before laughing to his friend and rolling the window up. She didn't feel good anymore.

A man was running on the other side of the street from Madison. She wasn't paying attention, but instead zoning out, letting the music drown out the world. She heard someone's voice and perked up. "The things I'd do to you baby," the man said, before continuing his run. Madison thought this day couldn't get any worse.

No matter what she wears, he felt the need to comment.

VI.

Jay was running errands for the party tonight to celebrate the completion of her top surgery. It felt wonderful. She had never felt more like herself, and she wanted to enjoy her night.

She decided to look more feminine than normal, but her femininity was always androgynous. Her short cropped hair looked styled and put together, her bright purple hair a shooting star highlighting her curls.

Holding her reusable bags in one hand and a leash in the other, Jay and her terrier Daisy made their way to the grocery store. While walking, she saw some man outside of a UPS store gawking at her. She was used to it; she didn't look like someone a cisgendered man could understand.

"Hey you!" The man yelled at her. She turned around, seeing if he was talking to her. "I could fuck you so hard dyke that I could make you straight

again." Jay started walking quicker, holding Daisy closer to her. She wished she had a bigger dog, one that could rip his arm off.

She decided to go home and not get any snacks. She would ask her friend to bring chips and dip, maybe cookie dough. Or maybe she would cancel the party. She wasn't feeling well anyways.

No matter what she looks like, she is never what they want.

VII.

Many women say that they don't have any stories about sexual assault, but that everyone has a friend, family member, or peer who has that tale to tell. They don't realize that they have countless stories themselves. They don't realize the little moments, the everyday stories of street harassment, affects them too. It's a story that needs to be shared as well.

Photo by Charlotte Meffe





WHAT CAN I GET YOU?

Meg Harris

Tell me, what is it like to be King of the World?

What is it like to order expensive food with no regard for the price?

What is it like to read down the list of options and realize that what you really want for lunch is me?

Chicken.

Beef.

Fish.

Ass.

They are all available to you.

But what I really want to know,

so please tell me,

is what is it like to be ignorant of the pain you cause?

What is it like to believe that the cute little waitress's smile is really meant for you?

To be completely convinced that her lack of reclusion is a testament to your irresistible charm?

To be truly assured that she enjoyed that exchange.

Did she not walk away with a tongue full of bite marks?

The image of your face after telling you off is eclipsed

by the image of \$15 tip and a student loan bill.

Does it not occur to you that you may not be as desirable as you think?

Do you ever stop and ponder that my polite smile is only to prevent burning bridges and shutting

wallets?

To endure your lingering eyes until my pay arrives?

Silence your judgment, I am mine to whore out.

I am mine to put on the menu.

But what is privilege without self-determination.

I would far prefer the tip without the wink.

The gratitude without the grab.

The smile without the hunger in your eyes.

I'll ask you again.

What is it like to be King of the World?



HOW TO MAKE A's WHEN YOUR MOM HAS LOST 30 POUNDS

Kate Soupiset

avoid mirrors they show you how tired

you look reveal a body that won't walk

the stage a curvy B chest, not straight

A's

tell your mother she is beautiful even when it hurts even

when she tells you to do something about your pudge even

when she borrows the jeans you've grown out of

compliment her everyone else is doing it

compare your grades to your peers' like the way you

compare your body to your mother's only one of

these will actually motivate you to change

when you hear her footsteps on the stairs hide

the wrappers the wreckage from your night of

stress eating show her the thousand words

you've just written you've aced it hold on

tightly when she hugs you

she still sees you after she

sees your stomach and

your thighs and your

slouch

she sees you



**LITTLE RED
RIDING HOOD
EATS THE
WOLF IN
THE END**

Kailah Peters
Artwork by Caroline Schlegel

Lucy picked this night because it was quiet. Not many people stay out past 3 AM on a Wednesday night in Wrigleyville. With not a soul outside and no wind to rustle the trees, it was quiet enough for her to hear the rhythm of her heels on the sidewalk. Her pulse quickened as the rhythm changed. A man stumbled from a bar behind her, slamming the door shut. With uncertain footing, he gathered his surroundings. His eyes landed on Lucy, taking in her legs as they reached out from her black leather skirt, her feminine figure, and the way her ponytail swayed as she walked. He walked behind her, and Lucy pulled down the hem of her skirt. This wasn't the first time she found herself in this situation, and it wouldn't be the last. Lucy knew what to do.

She turned down Addison to test if the man was following her and, sure enough, he turned with her. She made her way under the lights that illuminated Wrigley Field to peer over her shoulder and assess him. He walked a short distance behind her, tall and daunting. Making no attempt to hide how drunk he was, he staggered down the sidewalk, his eyes never leaving Lucy.

.....
She picked up her speed and so did he. Now, she was sure of his intentions. Her eyes darted around as she decided what to do next.
.....

She picked up her speed and so did he. Now, she was sure of his intentions. Her eyes darted around as she decided what to do next. A long alleyway opened slightly to the left. It extended under the train tracks and reached behind a line of apartments. A bench promoting a movie in the park was up to the right, across the street from a liquor store that was beginning to close for the night. The Addison red line stop was in front of her, radiating its fluorescent light. The door stayed firmly shut, and a CTA official sat lost in her phone. Lucy calculated her options and took a quick turn.

The alley had a lingering smell of urine. Trashcans, both black and blue, were overflowing against the brick walls of the building. Light dripped down from the porches of the surrounding apartments, but inside no one stirred. As they got further down the alley, and away from any spectators, the footsteps got closer. Lucy smiled,

knowing she was now far enough from the red line. They wouldn't hear screams over the sounds of the train, and the tenants in these apartments were fast asleep. No one was around to witness what would occur.

His hand reached out, snatching Lucy's ponytail. Pain and adrenaline ran from her scalp, down her spine and through the rest of her body. With one swift move, the man brought Lucy to the ground, her body smashing against the concrete. His drunk hands fumbled at his waistline as he attempted to climb on top of her. The bulge was pressed to Lucy's thigh when he noticed her eyes, the whites shining a piercing red and the iris turning black. Fear spread through the man's face as he crawled away from her.

Lucy stared at the man intently, slowly bringing herself to her feet. She calculated every move he might make, but nothing could protect him from her. After considering all her options, she contorted her mouth into a vicious smile.

The man attempted to stand, making a start at his escape. Lucy approached him with long strides, moving faster than humanly possible. She wove her fingers into his hair and yanked down. The man collapsed backward. His head hit the concrete and began leaking out. The gravel turned warm and red. Lucy licked her lips, exposing a row of fangs. The man opened his mouth to scream, but before the air could leave his lungs Lucy had wrapped her hands around his neck. Her slender fingers constricted till they overlapped. The man gasped for air, clawing at her hands. He thrashed and thrashed, throwing his body in multiple directions, all to no avail; Lucy's grip never lessened. The man gave up his fight. His skin turned blue and his body went limp.

Lucy opened her mouth wide, letting the hunger control her. She went for his neck, taking a bite. Warm blood dripped down her face as she filled her mouth with a savory satisfaction and ripped apart his body with her teeth.

When she had finished, all that remained was teeth marks on bones and shards of bloody fabric. Lucy sat back, the pebbles of the alleyway poking into her butt. The back of her hand wiped away the blood dripping from the corner of her mouth. Lucy returned to her feet, blinking away the raging red in her eyes. She pulled a wet wipe from her purse and cleaned the blood from her skirt. Leather was the easiest to wipe off, and the red shirt never stained. She re-adjusted her outfit and walked away from her meal of the month, departing with only her own bloody footsteps.

FOR A BLACK GIRL

Limi Simbakalia

“You are pretty
You are popular
You are intriguing
You are exciting

for a black girl”

“You command respect
You are well-spoken
You are smart
You’re inspiring

for a black girl”

The wars I’ll fight
the walls I’ll tear down
The tears I’ll wipe
In a big white town

for a black girl

I’d like to write songs
I’d like to tell jokes
I’d like to walk miles
or walk down the aisle

for a black girl

THE RECLINER, A RIVER

Johanna Bear

For six months my weathered body
beached itself on silver shores

braving the botany of growing
joints back together. My mother

pressed her knees to the stained
grout of the bathtub to cleanse me,

childlike in my own ineptitude, her hands
catching bruised skin like fishhooks

pinching me present so as to not
forget my body in its afterbirth

newness. In our den watching grown men
watch the sky for a stitched leather

deliverance I imagined myself Ophelia
alive, water lilies cresting my stomach

& baptizing my thighs. Aimlessly adrift
in my immobility I am a body she might

have recognized. How we of the tender
kinship of the drowning find each other

spanning the breadth of years in rivers
named so many times over they have

become as nameless as we. Death
is but one of the places love cannot

be taken. My left shoulder is the ever-season
solstice where skin forgets its shape &

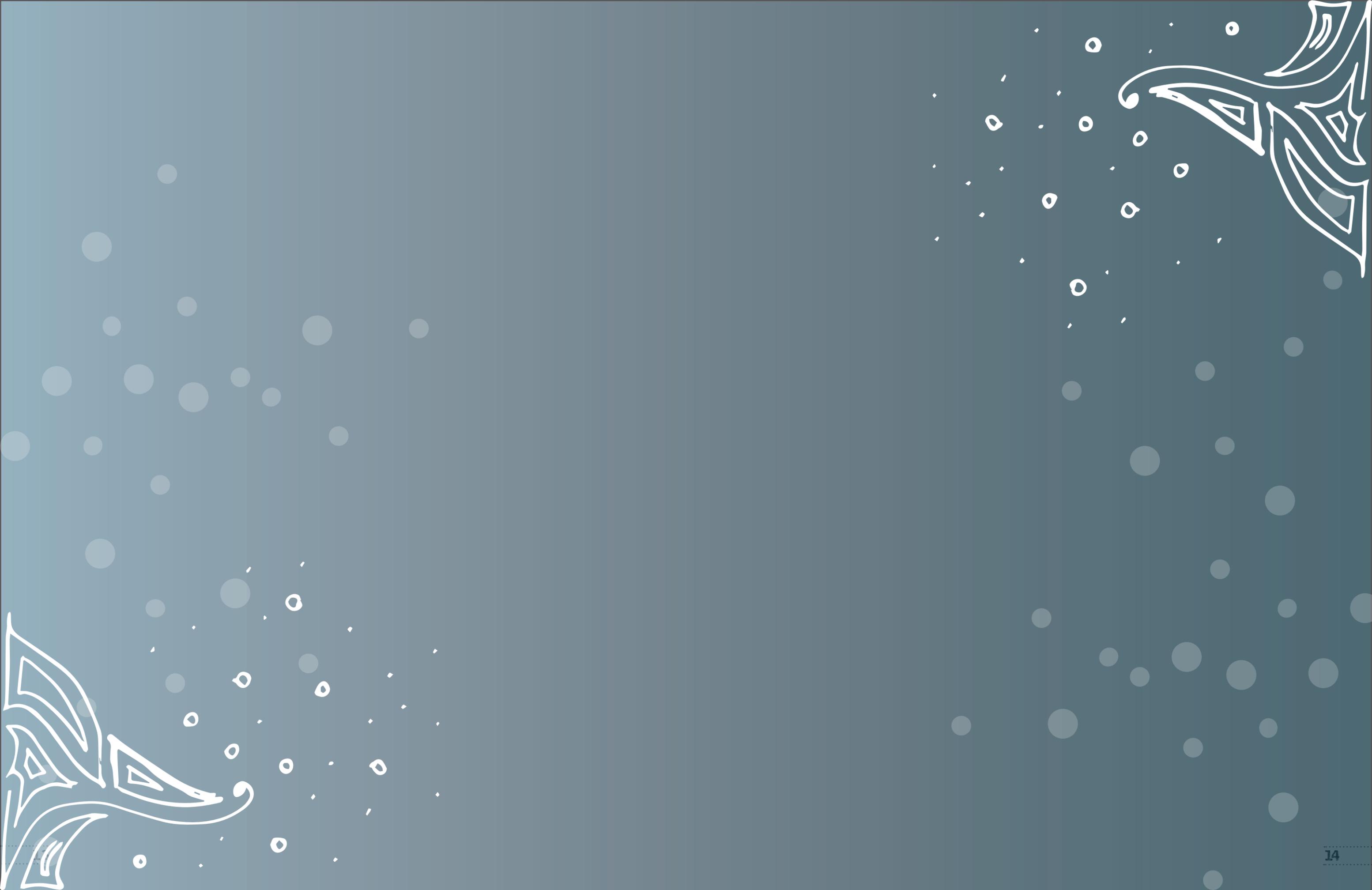
opens to an operating room’s antiseptic frost
and I am there again, the doctors piling blankets

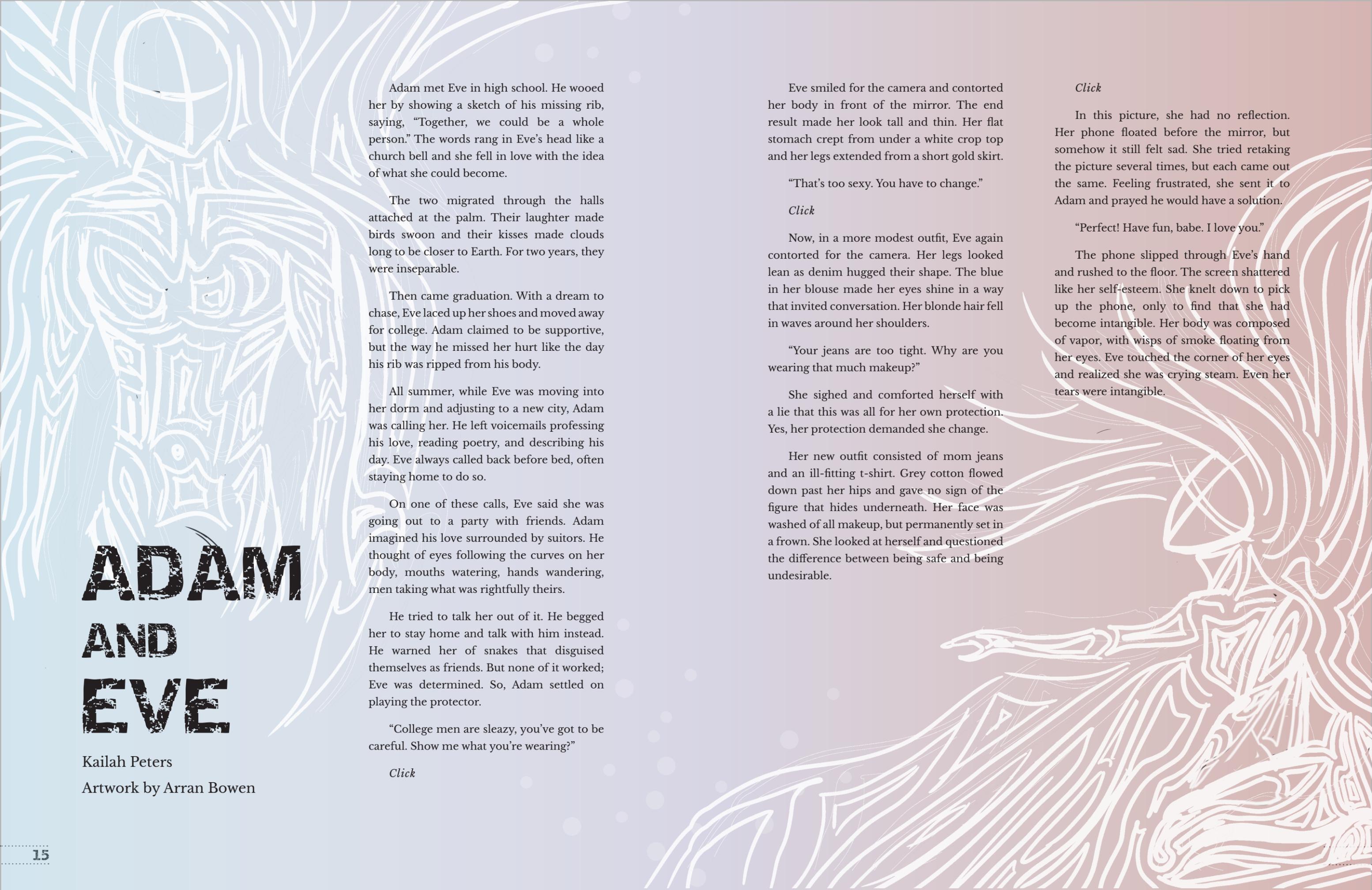
on my legs, entombing my body to rip it open,
strangers who know the shape of my innards

while I float towards crushed velvet rapture,
breaking the surface of the water anew.



Photo by Charlotte Meffe





ADAM AND EVE

Kailah Peters

Artwork by Arran Bowen

Adam met Eve in high school. He wooed her by showing a sketch of his missing rib, saying, “Together, we could be a whole person.” The words rang in Eve’s head like a church bell and she fell in love with the idea of what she could become.

The two migrated through the halls attached at the palm. Their laughter made birds swoon and their kisses made clouds long to be closer to Earth. For two years, they were inseparable.

Then came graduation. With a dream to chase, Eve laced up her shoes and moved away for college. Adam claimed to be supportive, but the way he missed her hurt like the day his rib was ripped from his body.

All summer, while Eve was moving into her dorm and adjusting to a new city, Adam was calling her. He left voicemails professing his love, reading poetry, and describing his day. Eve always called back before bed, often staying home to do so.

On one of these calls, Eve said she was going out to a party with friends. Adam imagined his love surrounded by suitors. He thought of eyes following the curves on her body, mouths watering, hands wandering, men taking what was rightfully theirs.

He tried to talk her out of it. He begged her to stay home and talk with him instead. He warned her of snakes that disguised themselves as friends. But none of it worked; Eve was determined. So, Adam settled on playing the protector.

“College men are sleazy, you’ve got to be careful. Show me what you’re wearing?”

Click

Eve smiled for the camera and contorted her body in front of the mirror. The end result made her look tall and thin. Her flat stomach crept from under a white crop top and her legs extended from a short gold skirt.

“That’s too sexy. You have to change.”

Click

Now, in a more modest outfit, Eve again contorted for the camera. Her legs looked lean as denim hugged their shape. The blue in her blouse made her eyes shine in a way that invited conversation. Her blonde hair fell in waves around her shoulders.

“Your jeans are too tight. Why are you wearing that much makeup?”

She sighed and comforted herself with a lie that this was all for her own protection. Yes, her protection demanded she change.

Her new outfit consisted of mom jeans and an ill-fitting t-shirt. Grey cotton flowed down past her hips and gave no sign of the figure that hides underneath. Her face was washed of all makeup, but permanently set in a frown. She looked at herself and questioned the difference between being safe and being undesirable.

Click

In this picture, she had no reflection. Her phone floated before the mirror, but somehow it still felt sad. She tried retaking the picture several times, but each came out the same. Feeling frustrated, she sent it to Adam and prayed he would have a solution.

“Perfect! Have fun, babe. I love you.”

The phone slipped through Eve’s hand and rushed to the floor. The screen shattered like her self-esteem. She knelt down to pick up the phone, only to find that she had become intangible. Her body was composed of vapor, with wisps of smoke floating from her eyes. Eve touched the corner of her eyes and realized she was crying steam. Even her tears were intangible.

INSIDE THE STONE IS JUST MORE STONE

Morgan Kail-Ackerman

Artwork by Caroline Schlegel

even before medusa could turn men to stone

the legends galvanized in her name

men would become hard

just looking at her

poseidon told the tale

of athena turning medusa into a monster

because she was jealous of her beauty

wanting to free the snake from

her golden apple tree

little did he know that this transformation was a gift

athena wanted to shield

her fellow woman from the

casualties of men

the goddess of war and strategy

barricaded her gender the best

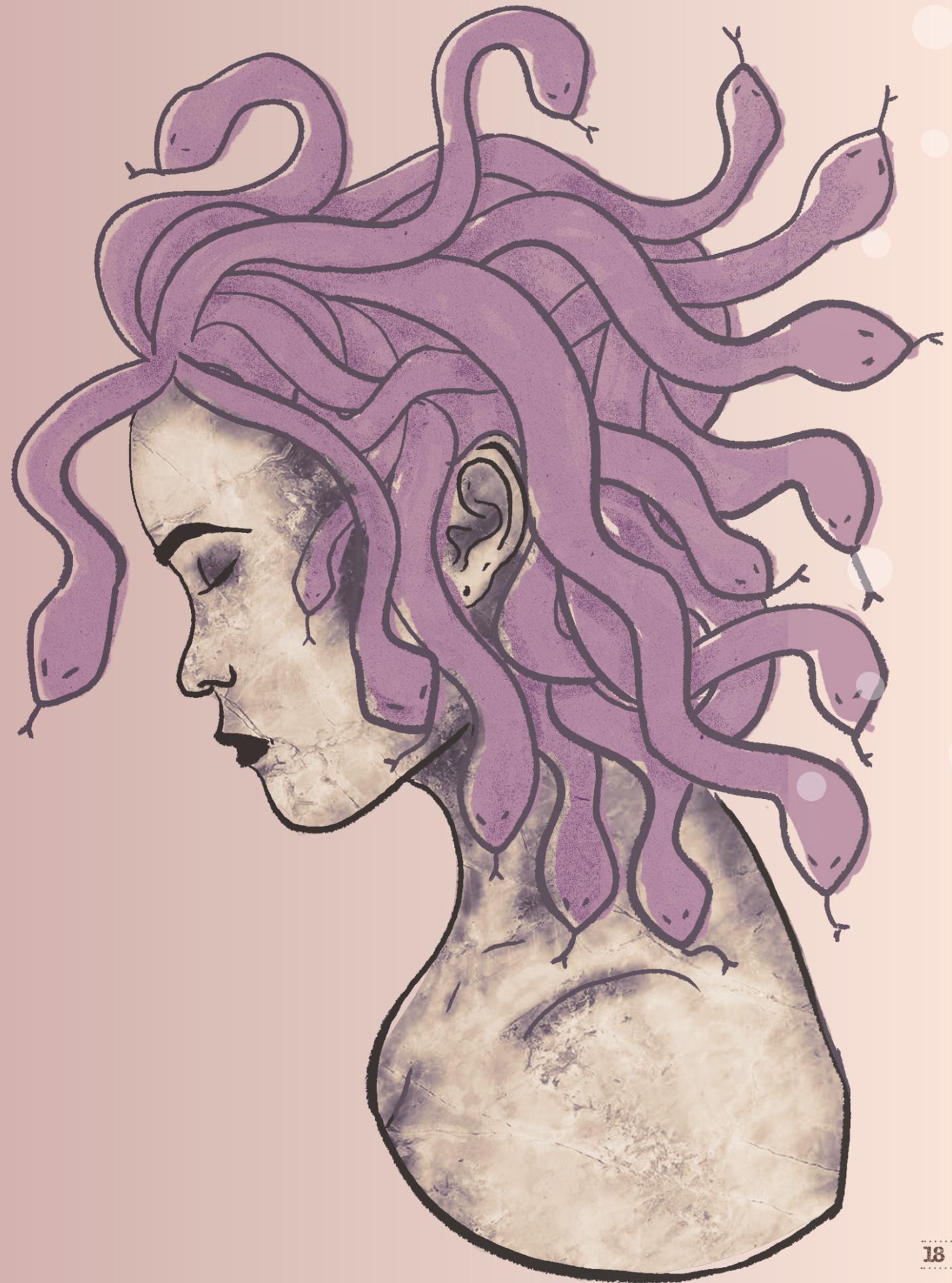
she could

medusa could now protect herself

against the hungry suitors who

wanted to tear her apart

she finally has a weapon



I BELONG

Arran Bowen

Artwork by Archie Archibald

We were just talking.

I was laying in his bed, my toes playing with the comforter. His apartment had so many windows for someone that hated sunlight. It made the space feel so open, so airy. I teased him about it, and he said it was for me. It was true I soaked up sun rays like a cat. At the time I thought it was a joke. That this new apartment wasn't for me, but he was glad I liked it.

We weren't even fooling around. We'd agreed neither of us wanted that anymore. No, we were just talking, clothes on, like friends.

I thought we were friends.

He pulled a rope out of nowhere, wrapping my ankles faster than I could think to react. I tried to slip away from him, to get off the bed, but his grip on my feet was getting tighter and tighter. It felt like a snake, constricting my ankles before going in for the kill. I was struggling to get away from him, but every time I did the rope wrapped tighter.

Next I tried to rip it out of his hands, to undo whatever knots he was tying, but he took that opportunity to grab my wrist. I pulled away from him, my hogtied ankles forcing me to roll off the bed and onto the floor. I grabbed at the knots, but he was on me again so quickly, pinning my legs with his and grabbing my forearms. I tried to elbow him, to hit him, anything that would get him off of me. Despite my struggles, the rope was forcing its way around my arms. The snake was coiling even tighter. He was telling me to calm down, that I was overreacting. He could see the terrified mouse I really was. He pulled the first knot tight around my

wrists. In a last ditch effort, I screamed for help, and he slapped me across the face.

Stars floated across my field of vision. Everything slowed as my brain tried to work through the dizziness and pain. I felt the weight on my legs disappear, but I didn't move or try to get up.

"Alright, you're okay. Come here," I heard him saying, as if to himself. His arms wrapped under my back and legs, lifting me off the ground. His chest was warm, his heart was beating almost as fast as mine. My head was throbbing now, even though he didn't hit me that hard. I wriggled a bit, the ropes chafing against my arms. He shushed me softly, saying he was sorry over and over.

He lay me down on the bed and lifted my arms over my head, hanging the rope that bound my hands on an invisible hook behind me. I struggled a bit more, trying to convince myself I wasn't completely defeated, but it was pointless. He was looking down at me, his eyes sad.

"Why are you doing this?" My voice was a whisper.

He sighed, and grabbed a roll of duct tape off the nightstand. I could've sworn it hadn't been there before.

"I'm sorry," he said again.

"Please don't," I begged. He ripped the piece of tape off the roll. "Please I'll be quiet, I won't say any-"

But it was over. Any words I had left were lost as his thumb pressed the tape down over my lips.

TO YOU

I heard myself let out a small moan, but it wasn't as if I consciously made it.

I was so confused as to what had just happened, I thought that - well, I thought a lot of things that suddenly weren't true.

.....
*You treated me like an object,
like I was yours and no one
else's. And soon enough I
started to believe you.*

.....
The ropes were so tight it felt like my limbs had been wrapped in concrete. The tape on my mouth may as well have been a needle and thread. I watched him turn away from me, turning the lights off as he went. In the doorway he paused.

"Try to get some sleep," he said. Then the door shut behind him, and I was left alone in the dark.

This story never happened. It doesn't matter whether it did or not. Just because a woman wasn't raped doesn't mean she has no reason to be afraid.

I get into an elevator alone with a man and shrink backwards at the idea of being in an enclosed space with him. He could be a nice person. It doesn't matter, the fear is still there.

I feel my keys in my pocket as I walk home, clutching them tight if a man gets too close behind me. Maybe he's late for something. It doesn't matter, the panic is still there.

I hear stories of other women, other people

that had it so much worse than I did. "Those are the real psychopaths," people tell me. "You had it easy." It doesn't matter, I can still hear him whispering in my ear, telling me how sorry he is.

I swipe through Bumble, Tinder, etc. Nothing sticks. I'm ashamed that I can't reach out, that I can't connect with someone new because in the back of my brain, I still belong to him.

Sometimes his words matter so much more than his actions. Words that haunt me in my dreams, long after I've left him behind.

You treated me like an object, like I was yours and no one else's. And soon enough I started to believe you.

I was yours.

I am yours.

I'll always be yours.

Even after you've long left me for some other object. I'll still dream of the things you wish had done to me, just to get me to stay.

And dreams can be just as terrifying as reality.



TEN

Morgan Kail Ackerman

From the 2018 Los Angeles Trader Joe's shooting

You wave your gun around.

You tell us everything will be okay. That you won't hurt us.

You lied.

Ten seconds.

You counted down to our death.

Ten.

In the middle of the frozen section, Abba blaring in our ears, you tell the police over the hostage's dinky cell phone that if the SWAT team doesn't leave, you will shoot someone. The threat lingers on your tongue. I look around to see eight people cowering in corners. What are the chances I'm the unlucky one?

Nine.

My mom grabs me. She tries to put her body around mine, trying to shelter me. The bubble has already burst, Mom. I hope that if he shoots me, it will kill me. I don't want to see my Mother's face as I slowly bleed out. Give me mercy, please.

Eight.

We whip our heads around in fear. We look out through the glass windows of the store, the policemen wrapping around like a cocoon. All we hear is static from the phone, and yet the deep breathing from you is louder than the 70s throwback music playing. It's a tennis game between the men who won't stand down and you, the man we hope who will.

Seven.

We see the gun. You make it visible. You continue to count down, staring at each one of our faces. You grip your shoulder where you were shot, feeling the agony the police gave you. We do not want to share that pain. I'm terrified of what you could do to me. To my Mom. To our family. Would today be the day I lost my Mom? We do not want our blood staining the Trader Joe's floor like yours has.

Six.

We inch towards cover. We thought we could trust you. You promised everything would be okay. You said you just wanted to hear from your Grandmother. A man who loves his Grandma, what a sympathetic man. At the time we didn't realize you were the one who shot her.

Five.

The police don't do anything. You repeat over and over you are going to shoot someone and, after all the negotiations, they're silent. I thought the police were supposed to save us. Apparently police protocol requires different values.

Four.

Some of us begin to cry, including me. My Mom keeps shoving me towards a shelf, trying to hide me from sight. It's no use, Mom. Organic corn chips and peanut butter chocolate bars won't stop a bullet.

Three.

We look around, seeing who will be shot first. My mom and I both knew I was in the worst possible location. All he needed to do was move his good arm forward. It could feel all the emotion leaving my body, replaced with an emptiness. I am a shell and yet I can feel tears on my cheeks.

Two.

Maybe I am the unlucky one. We pray he won't kill us all. Maybe he would be true to his word.

O-

And you stop.

The most terrifying nine seconds of my life.

You only wanted to scare us

And you did.

I am now always scared.





THEY TELL ME

Kailah Peters

- 1.** My worth can be measured in compliments.
Today, in red lipstick and heels, I am worth “Damn, baby” and “Know what I want to do to you?”
- 2.** My significance can be weighed on a scale. The lower the number the bigger the prize.
I keep skipping meals, but I haven’t won yet.
- 3.** My value can be quantified by counting the eyes that watch me and subtracting the hands that grab me.
I live in the space between your wanting and your having.
- 4.** In one breath, they tell me to:
Shut up and take it.
Act like I like it.
Close my legs
but let them inside me.
- 5.** In the next breath, they ask me:
“Who owns your body?”
“Who you dressing up for?”
“Whose pussy is this?”
Cuz’ I know it ain’t yours.”
- 6.** In my silence, I answer:
I was never my own.
I was designed for consumption
I was sold to mass markets.
Destined to be your spectacle or toy.

"SAFETY"

Sam Smiley

I want to walk home alone,
instead I call a Lyft
spending money I don't have

for protection I can't be promised.



Photo by Charlotte Meffe

CHICAGO IN THE SUMMER

Mo Lowe

I. Is good.

You sign the lease, you change your pace, you change perspectives,
in the literal sense.

Who knew that the other side of the city had so much to say.

You notice everything, everything is new. Signs that say
BEWARE OF THE DOG. Signs that say IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A SIGN,

II. KEEP LOOKING.

If you're still shaken up about 9/11, the Chicago
Air and Water Show says too freakin' bad.

Lizzo is capital g Good. A summer that is gushing.

You recognize nothing.

III. Hospitals aren't any colder in the summer

even when your jugular is capital j Cut.

This feels like soggy pizza. Chicago, you'll never be New York.

Pizza with no intention, but what's pepperoni got to do with it.

IV. Actually quite a bit.

Meat lures us in room 3328. Pepperoni that equals hope.

This is a football movie – exact same amount of yelling.

Your dad's mouth doubles as a locomotive.

The nurses could never.

V. He's a working man.

Summer gives him olive skin. He doesn't shave
because he doesn't have a reason. Thighs like elephants,

bowlegged like my brain.

Humidity doesn't beg for put-togetherness,

but neither do funerals,

and you're not dead,

so we grab the glue sticks.

Five o'clock shadows that say I work at a railway station

and I have two daughters,

VI. *one of which almost died.*

Bloodshed is often followed by a sense of false consciousness.

Chicago saved her because it was too tired to push her arms down and fuck.

So Chicago tosses the flag, says

Hold your roll boys. We've got a live one.

The city that holds a knife at the corner of 3 a.m.

to a woman with a halfway decent rack.

Chicago in the summer is

VII. something my uncle said to me once.

You haven't made me this mad since the Cubs won the pennant.

Too crowded, not enough space, to breathe

VIII. it requires precision.

Celery salt that tastes like tobacco and comfort.

Fuck your canker sores.

A city that whispers an apology. I guess I just expected the lamp posts to step in by now.

A city that begs for forgiveness, the ignorant concrete just under us all.

A city that winks then makes you sleep with him.

A city that's so much more manageable than New York,

a city that gives a boy's daughter fifteen seconds to bleed out

and the same amount of time to shotgun an Old Style.

Chicago, so slow, Chicago, so fast. Chicago, the city of a safe cigarette.

Chicago in his laundry t-shirt.

When a beautiful woman dies,

Edgar Allen Poe does a full black flip in Purgatory,

and the woman just bleeds out.

SENSE OF SELF

Meg Harris

Photo by Charlotte Meffe

Sexual assault and the threat it holds strikes me to the core. Sure, I've always been afraid of getting robbed or hit by a bus, but sexual assault struck a different nerve. Money and ID cards can be replaced, even bones can heal. How do you replace a sense of self? How do you heal after being robbed of your own being? The thought made me feel like a walking target. Every time I go around the city, particularly at night, I feel vulnerable. Stores have alarm systems. Homes and doors have locks. Hell, even phones have a password to protect the product, valuables, and sensitive information. But there I am displaying the "goods" out in the open, no alarm system or lock or password required for entry. Entry...

.....
Money and ID cards can be replaced, even bones can heal. How do you replace a sense of self?
.....

Sometimes I prefer the winter. My coat is my shield, it conceals my products. Sometimes I hope it conceals my gender. Maybe if I'm mistaken for the opposite of what makes me proud, for what gives fire to my words and confidence to my chest, I would be safe. If I am the opposite of a woman, I could be safe. I would not be myself, but I would be safe?

They say fear derives from experience. Our bodies keep a record of what threatens us and pumps fear when we are too close to repeating that unpleasant experience. But I've never experienced sexual assault. I was chased once.

I was walking to a friend's house for dinner. The bus stopped about a block from their apartment. When I crossed the street, there was a man standing in a wide stance with his index finger on his nose. As I tried to pass him, he closed his eyes and shook his head. It was enough to scare me. I ran back across the street and looked for another way to make it to her apartment without passing him. There wasn't one. I decided to not walk past him, but to cross the street, walk the block, then cross again away from him, but when I approached the walkway to cross, he felt it was still too close to his territory. His hand dropped when we made eye contact and before I could explain my plan to avoid him, he said "I warned you" and began to run after me. I ran.

Growing up, my Dad taught me that whenever I felt in danger go where there were the most people. He didn't tell me what to do when people and I were separated by two lanes of traffic. I ran in the opposite direction of shops, surrounded by residential property. Walls of doors with no way in. I finally found a business, but they were closed. After pounding on the front door, a man smoking outside walks over and asked if I wanted to get in. What a keen observation. By the grace of the universe, the smoking man happened to be the business' owner and unlocked the door for me after I explained by hysteria. I waited there until an uber took me to my friend's house. I don't know where the man went.

While this experience was very frightening and lingers with me, hiding in the shadows every time I return to the Sheridan red line

stop, I was not sexually assaulted. I wasn't even touched. I do not know what would have happened if I had not gotten into a public place. If the man had caught up with me. I've combed through the hypotheticals all the time. What if I'm walking home and get dragged away? What if I am attacked by a group? What if they inject me with something that paralyzes me? What if it happens and I don't know it even happened? These all sound crazy until you hear that they happened to someone. Until it's no longer a hypothetical.

I think what drives my fear is not the hypothetical, but how close it is to reality.

I like to think that I know what world we live in. What reality we live in. Which brings me back to my earlier question: how does one heal? Sexual assault undoubtably requires healing, a grieving process, but maybe it does not require losing a sense of self. I recently heard Naomi Watanabe, a Japanese comedian, say, "There are things, opinions I have that can be changed. There are topics that people can alter my view of, but my own beauty and knowing that I am beautiful is not one of them."

Maybe there are things that people can take away from us - phones, credit cards, money - but a sense of self isn't one of them.

W
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Sam Smiley
Artwork by Charlotte Meffe

Bow when you are told
Bow before you are told
You are younger
You are less worthy
You are not a man
Bow.



YOURS TRULY

Kate Roca

My body is my body.

I choose what I wear,

how I walk,

how I talk.

But my body is your body.

You liked my hair better last week.

I wear my hair the same in spite of what you said.

I wear my hair differently because of what you said.

You. Yours.

I shave so my body looks good to you.

I don't to make a statement against you.

You. Yours. My body is your body.

You are the reason.

You are why.

Why I don't walk alone.

Why I don't leave past 10.

Why I cross my legs.

You are always why I do what I do.

You. Yours. My body is your body.

I bend over at the waist.

I know what I'm doing.

I know what comes next.

"You look good in that dress"

I didn't ask you

I don't need your answer.

But I want it.

I am told to win your approval and to hate when I get it.

I seek your permission and I hate that I crave it.

I seek you out to find that you don't care.

But my body is yours, so you let me know anyway.

You. Yours. My body is your body.

I am called Kate.

Kater by my friends.

Katherine by my angry mom.

Cutie by the one I love.

Cutie by the stranger -- it's different.

Cheerleader by the stranger in the strange van.

Sweetie by the stranger smoking something strange.

Girl by the stranger and I feel I'm in danger.

Baby by the stranger who walks with his daughter.

Say bye to the stranger but even stranger

I walk by the stranger and you call me a name.

It isn't my own.

You name me.

You. Yours. My body is yours.

You stare when I wear nothing.

You stare when I wear it all.

I see you stare at my thighs.

My ass.

Your thighs.

Your ass.

What is mine belongs to you.

You. Yours. My body is yours.

I didn't give it to you.

You didn't even take it.

I was born and my body was never my own.

My body has always been yours.

You. Yours. My body is yours.

Because my body is my body I choose what I wear,

How I walk,

How I talk.

But more accurately,

Because my body is your body and I cannot change how you act,

I choose how I act.

I choose how I walk.

I choose how I talk.

And yet, I remain Yours. Yours. Yours.

My body is yours.

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. Special thanks to our Coven Congress participants for amplifying the voices of a variety of women across the world and for helping us learn from each other and dismantle the patriarchy with us on a school night.

Gin To
Avery Ferin

Becca Zolten
Meg Harris

SPECIAL THANKS

Caroline Schlegel for her amazing website design and also keeping Arran sane through this whole process. Glad to have you on the team, love.

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The assholes that catcalled Morgan (but actually fuck you).

DePaul University for putting so many amazing, creative humans in the same space.

All of our families, both forced and found, for keeping us alive while we embarked on this crazy adventure.

Our readers, aka YOU! We couldn't have done this without you.

OUR TEAM



Morgan Kail-Ackerman
Master of Fiction



Kailah Peters (KP)
Master of Poetry



Meg Harris
Master of the Media



Meg Harris
Master of Design

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

RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BOMBSHELL

RAINN (Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network)

Call: 1-800-656-HOPE
Chat: online.rainn.org
Info: rainn.org

#WHYIDIDNTREPORT

National Domestic Violence/Abuse Hotline

Call: 1-800-799-SAFE
Info and Chat:
thehotline.org

DEEP NARAYANS TED TALK
"7 Beliefs That Can Silence Women - And How To Unlearn Them"

WOMEN & POWER:

A Manifesto by Mary Beard

CHILDREN OF BLOOD AND BONE

By Tomi Adeyemi

#CATCALLSOFNEWYORK

Love Is Report---National Dating Abuse Hotline for Teens

Call: 1-866-331-9474
Info and Chat: LoveIsReport.org
Text: LoveIs 22522

WE WERE FEMINISTS ONCE

by Andi Zeisler

#CATCALLSOFCHICAGO

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Call: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

SEX EDUCATION ON NETFLIX

To Write to Love on Her Arms

[Twloha.com](https://twloha.com)
[@twloha](https://www.instagram.com/twloha) on instagram

BIRDS OF PREY

And The Fantabulous Emancipation Of One Harley Quinn

BITCHMEDIA.ORG

She Makes Money Moves
the podcast

HOME GIRLS:

A Black Feminist Anthology by Barbara Smith

Crisis Textline
Text: Home to 741741

THEY CALL US THEIRS:
A PLAYLIST ON SPOTIFY



the

end

**THEY
CALL
US**



@they.call.us

theycalluszine.com