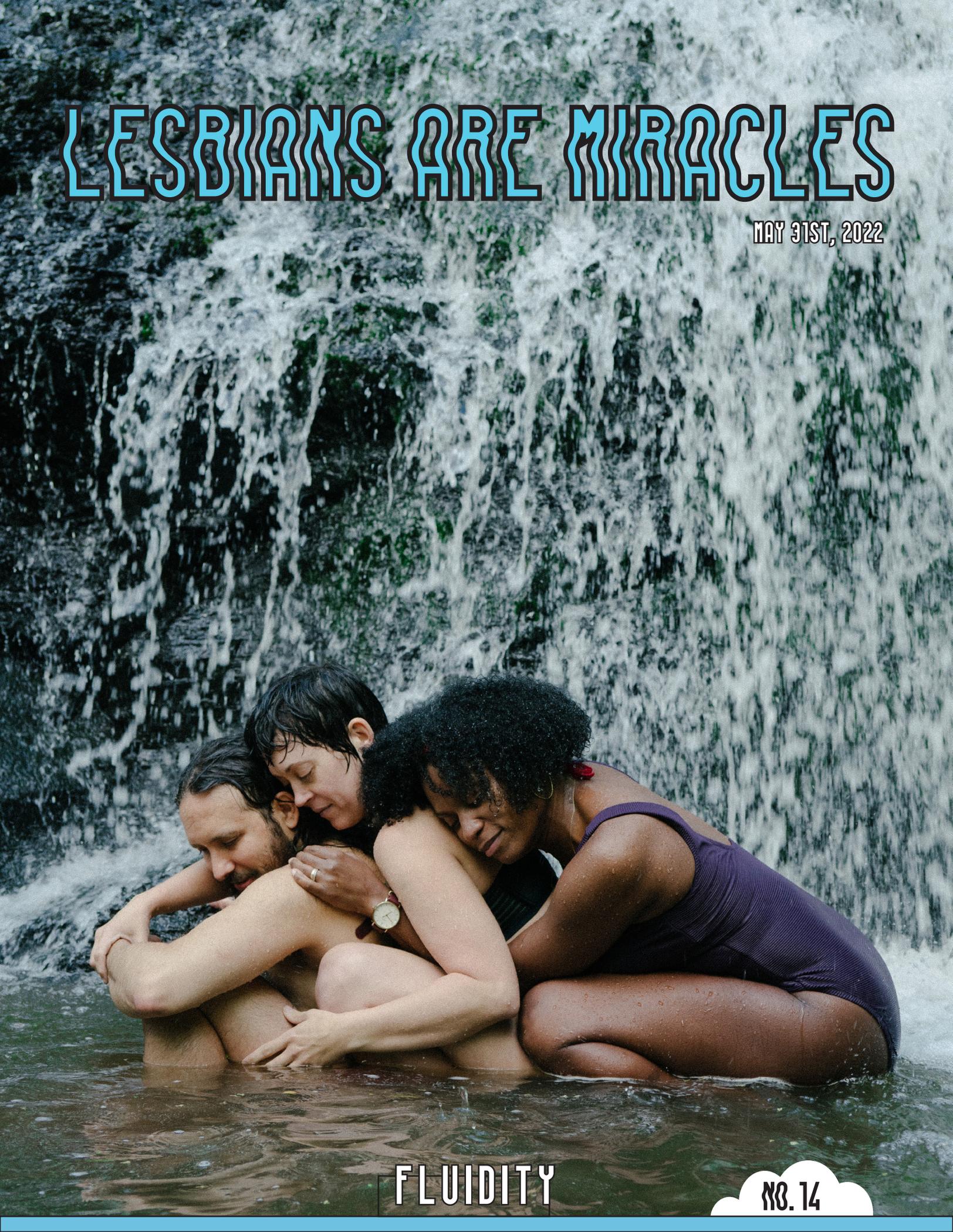


LESBIANS ARE MIRACLES

MAY 31ST, 2022



FLUIDITY

NO. 14

LESBIANS ARE MIRACLES MAGAZINE

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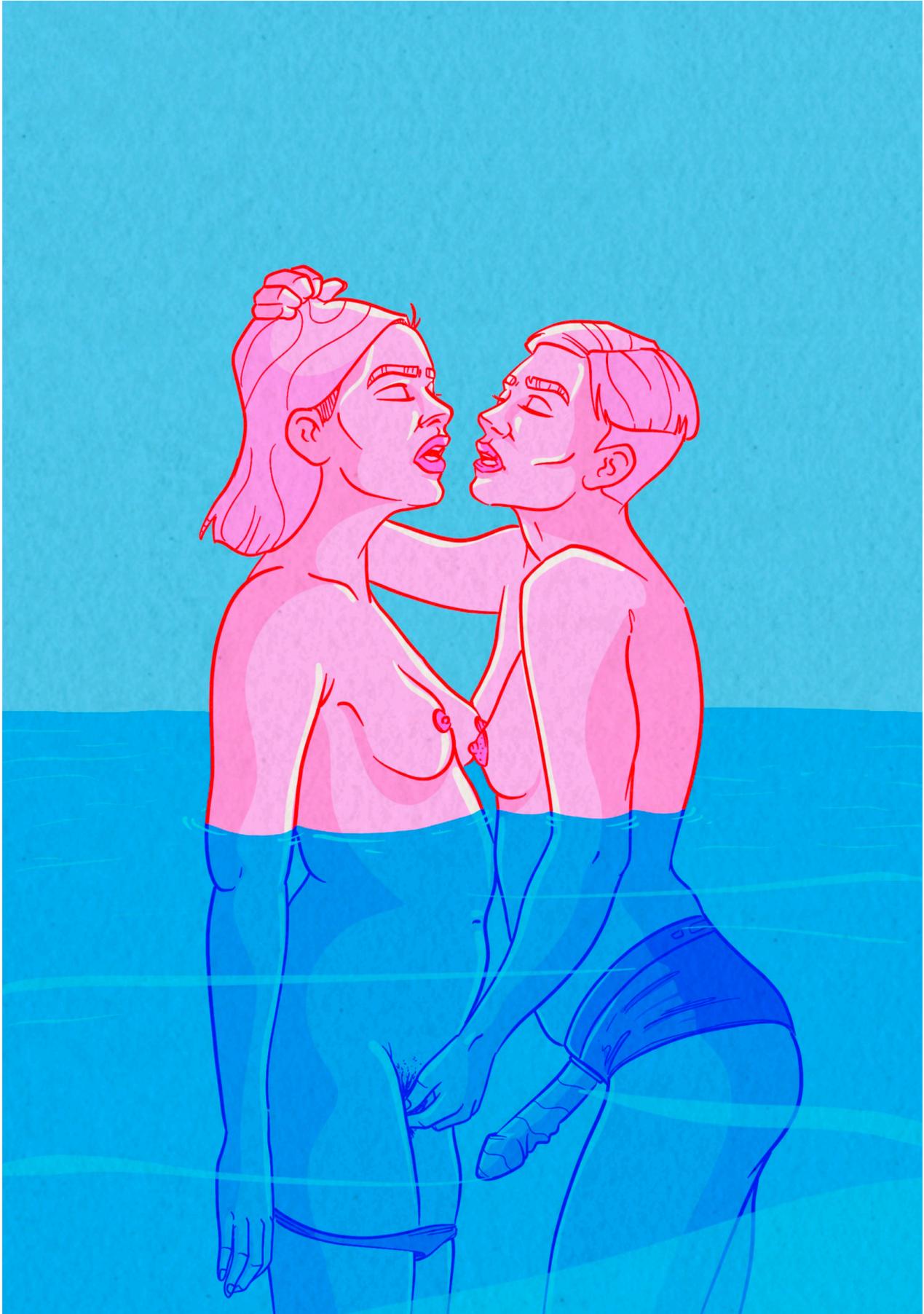
FLUIDITY

Fluidity: to be like water. To embody grace. To change and be changed. The submissions in this issue, and their artists, represent fluidity in all of its infinite forms. They exist in the spaces between soft and hard, butch and femme, old and young, light and dark, masculine and feminine, beautiful and ugly, content and angry, naive and wise. They meet us gently where we are; they push us out of our comfort zone. They transcend binaries, shift our expectations, take us by surprise, and challenge us.

Eternal thanks, as always, to our brilliant contributors from all over the world who have breathed life into these pages. We are forever in awe of your generosity, versatility, and talent. This issue is a celebration of you.

In appreciation,
Lia Ottaviano
Lesbians are Miracles





WHAT WATER, CATS, AND MY GENDER HAVE IN COMMON

by Anika Nacey

The properties of liquid matter are such that liquids will take on the shape of the container that holds them, all while not changing in volume.

In other words, water will conform to the space it occupies, filling the bottom of a cup as fully and wholly as it can.

The properties of cats are such that they will take on the shape of any container they desire, regardless of the volume of the cat in question.

In other words, a cat will take up the space it must, regardless of boundaries and borders. It will cram itself shamelessly into every nook and cranny and box it desires. (In other words, "If I fits, I sits.")

The properties of my gender are such that I will take on the shape of the container I occupy, even if it means sacrificing some volume.

In other words, my gender will adjust to the space I am in, and I may lose parts of myself on the way.

In some containers, I shrink myself, compressing endlessly at will, for fear of being too much or sometimes for fear alone.

In some containers, I flow as I am, and I overflow around the edges, pooling on the floor around me, my fears of too-muchness realized and spilling.

In some containers, I expand, blooming endlessly, encompassing all that is me and all that is not, because the not-parts are so important, too.

But here, it is easy to get lost in the abstract. Let me try again.

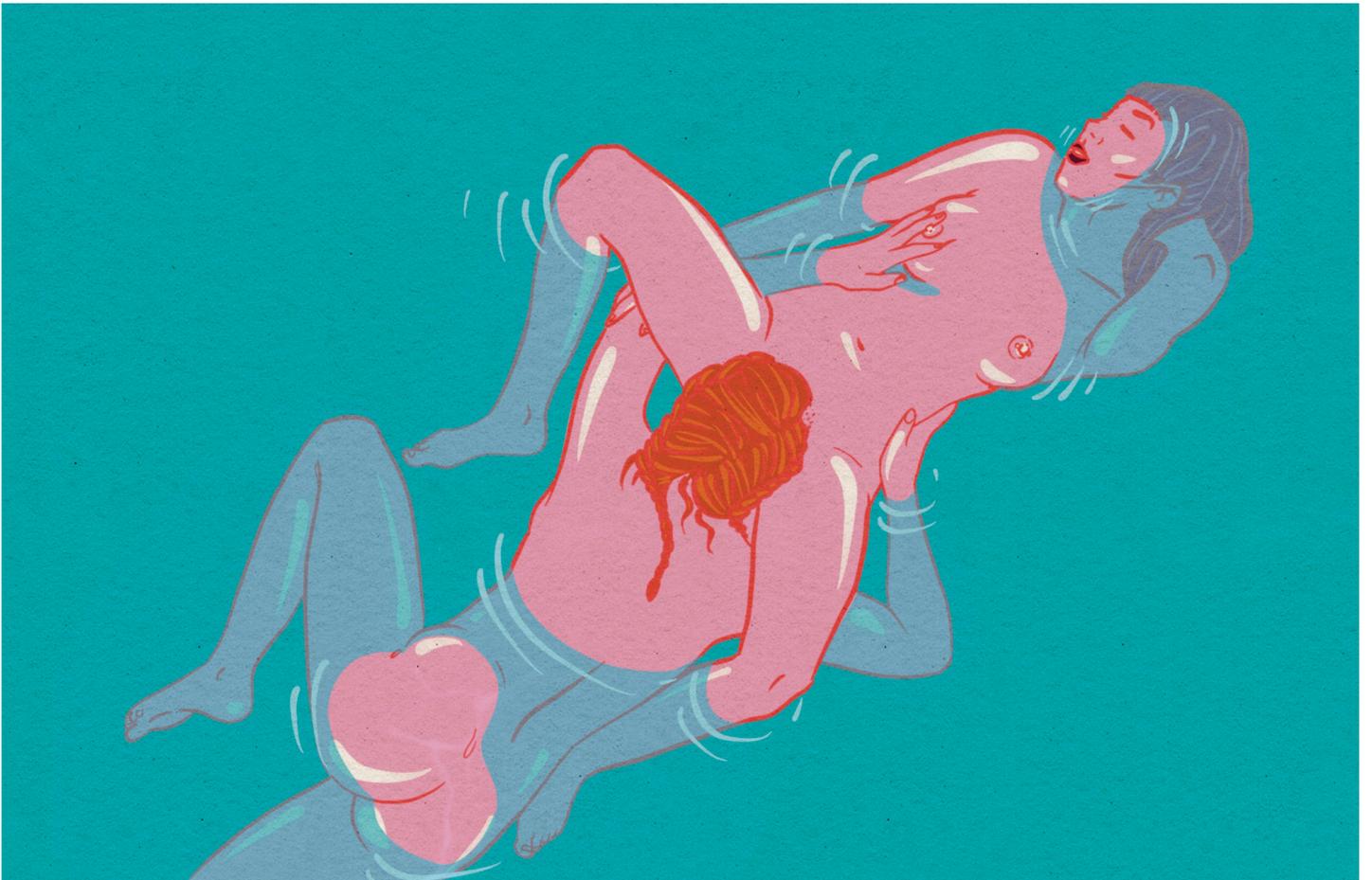
In the container of queerness, surrounded by friends and love, I am as big as I could ever dream of being, and there is still room for me to grow.

In the container of old friends, I explode dramatically under the pressure of my expansion. Sometimes, they pick up my shattered glass and assemble me again, different, new. Sometimes, they do not.

In the container of my fearful younger self, I settle into my undersized box and we both feel safer that way. Here, I am only "she." Here, I am just like her.

These diverse containers all belong to me, in one way or another. They have all held me when I needed them.

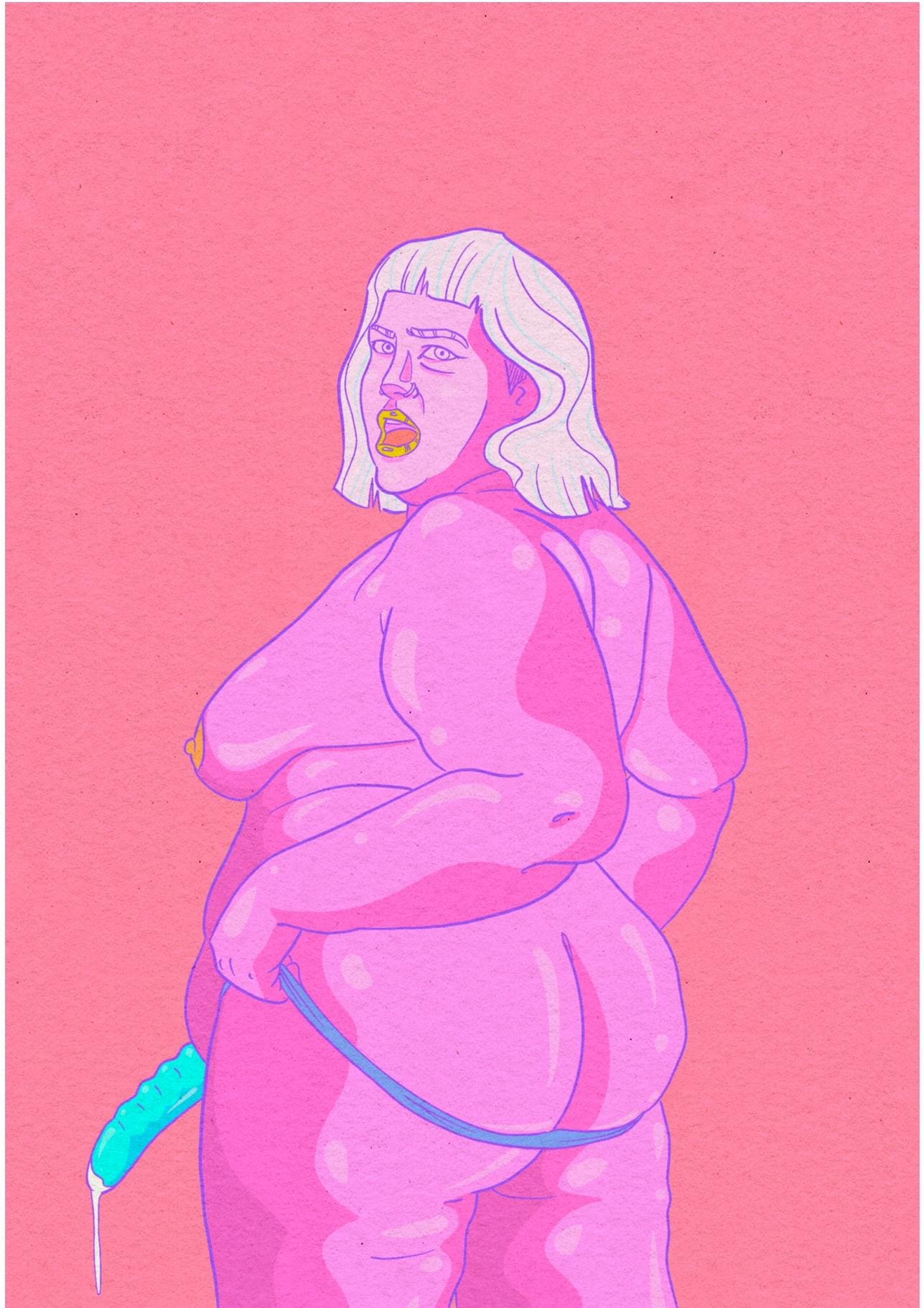
But someday, my gender will be like a cat. It will take up the space it must, regardless of boundaries and borders. It will cram itself shamelessly into every nook and cranny and box it desires. It will be everything Schrödinger dreamed; simultaneously all things and nothing at all. ♠

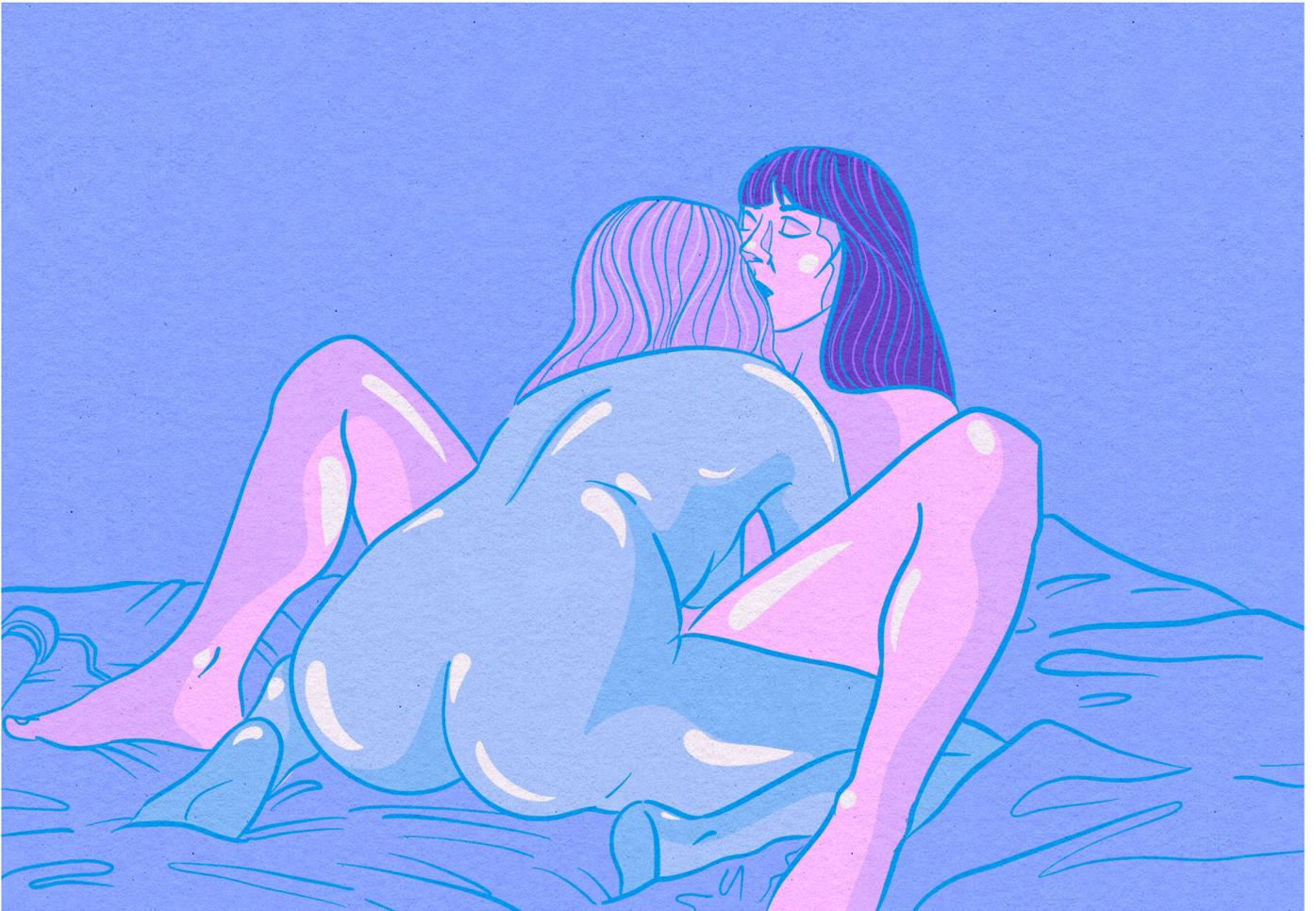




SARAH DE SOUSA







PLANS FOR THE WEEKEND

by Kerine Wint

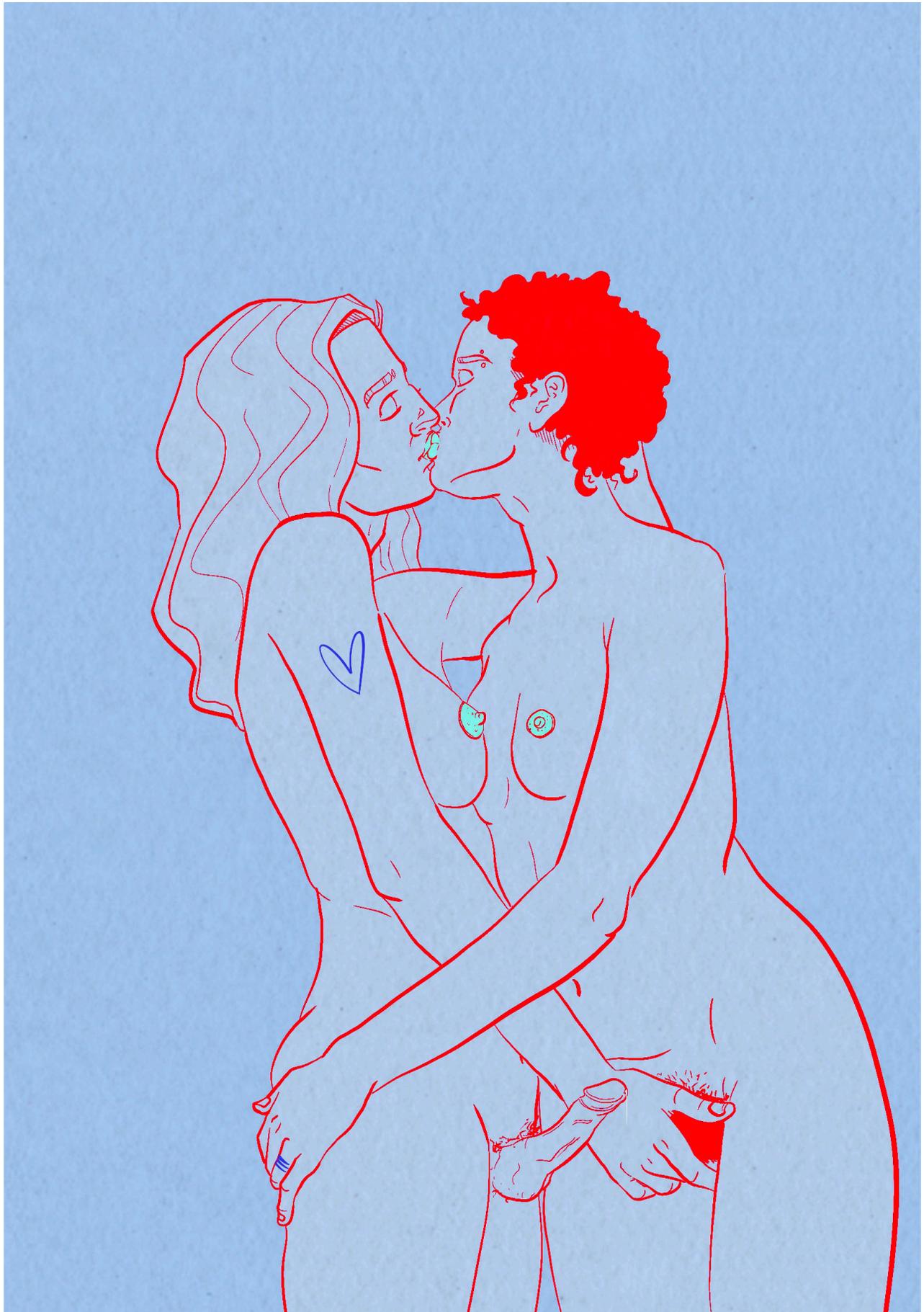
My breath slowed to normalcy,
With my fingers still on the pulse
Exhaustion proved greater than pleasure.

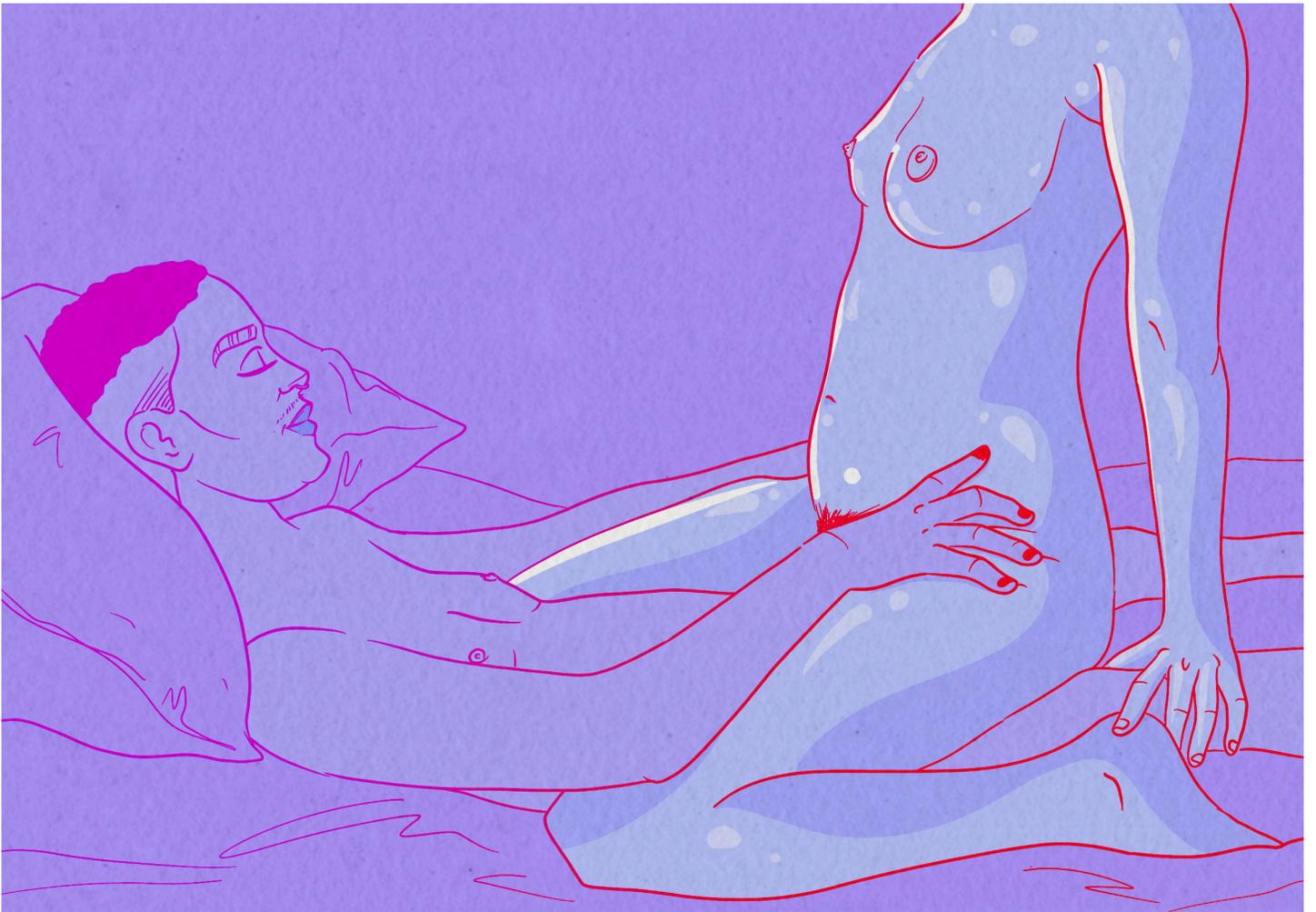
But it would be different with the pressure
Of you on top of me
Or sunken in on either side

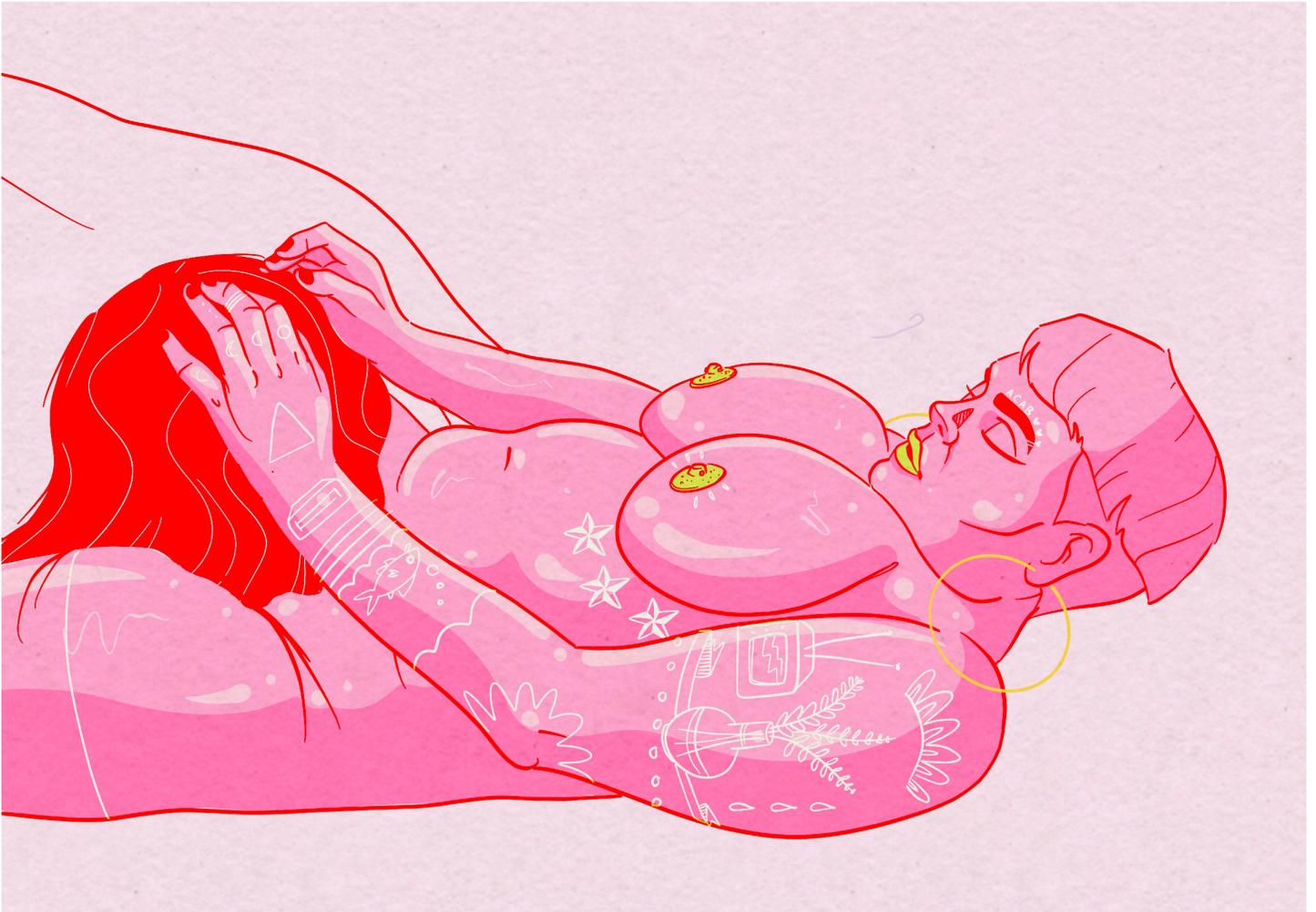
I know whether awake or asleep,
Dawn or day,
My rhythm would have stayed
On its circular trajectory
A motor powering the rise and falls.

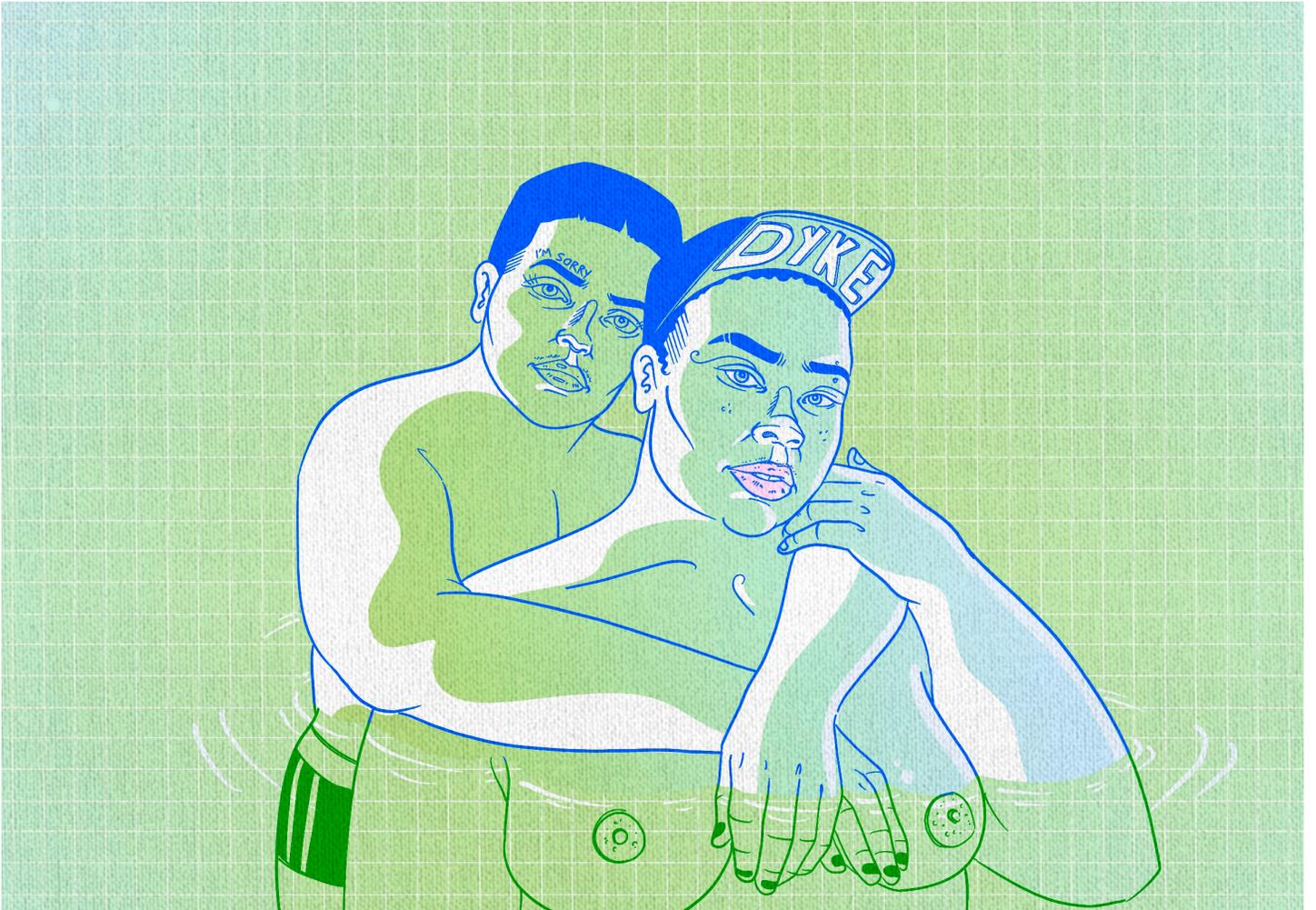
A performance for a worthy audience;
I would hold steadfast until I was cheering your name.











BUTCH, FOR ME

by Kieran Grey Shelley

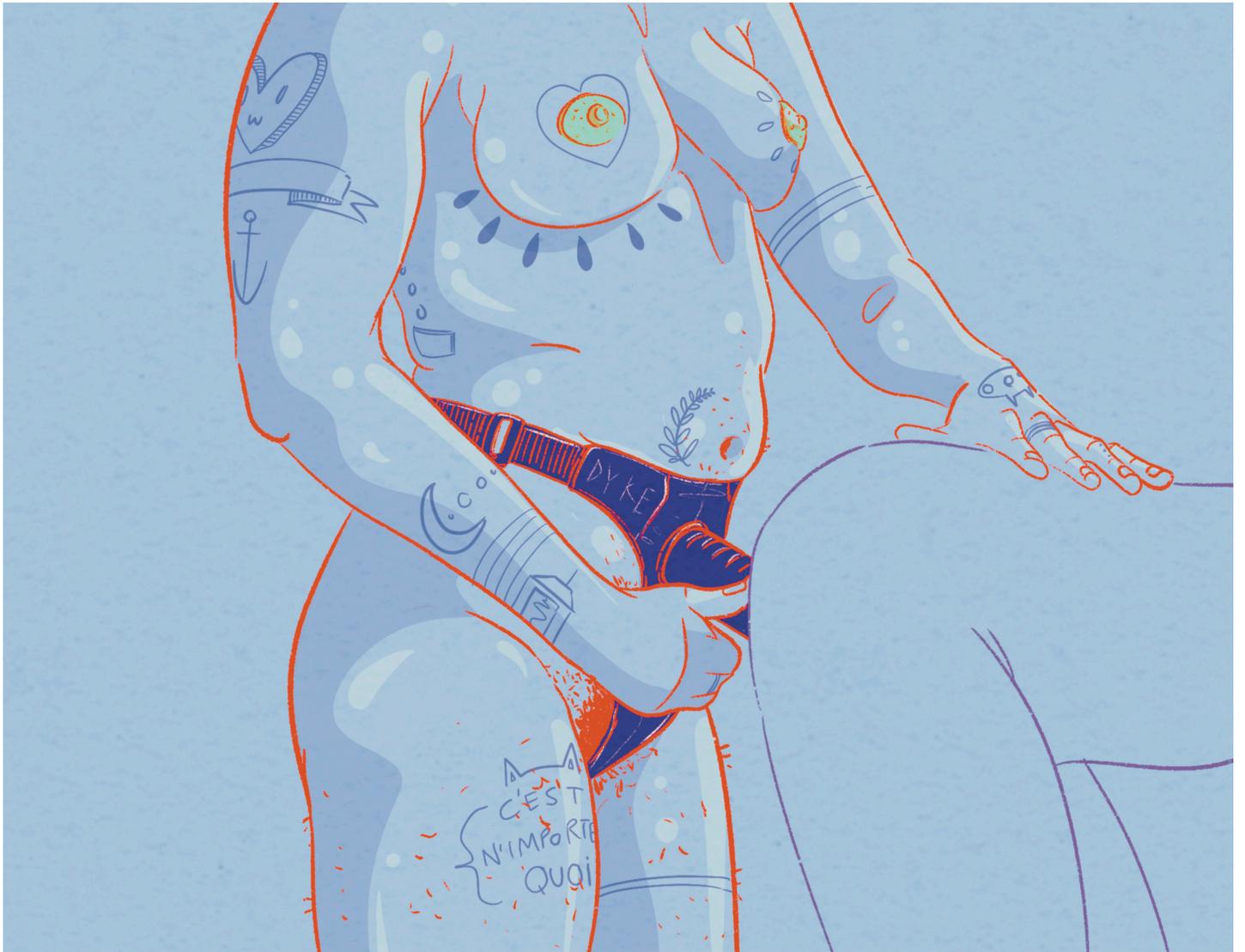
Where girl met butch, I became fire

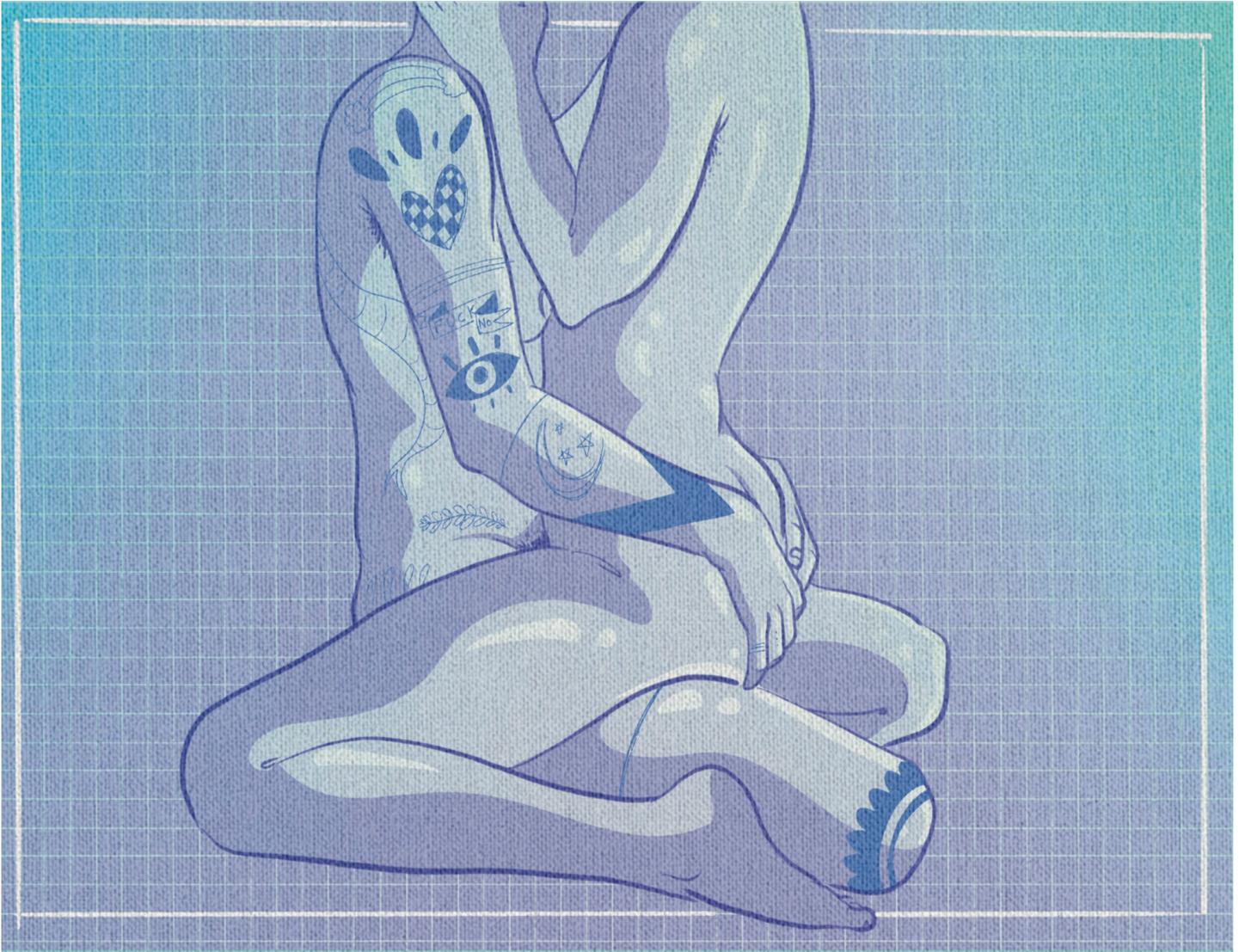
You could understand why the sky turns green during
a storm, where I became the wind & the sea all at once
My footsteps became thunder, my strut became all the power
My hand became the reason, my tongue became the problem
Holding myself like a God & kissing others like I could be

There was a girl who once didn't understand the beauty
The way she shielded herself from the rage, didn't understand
that when you turn to lightning, you can embrace the fire
& the ice in the same way & come out on the other side
with a type of kindness that can only be held by calloused hands

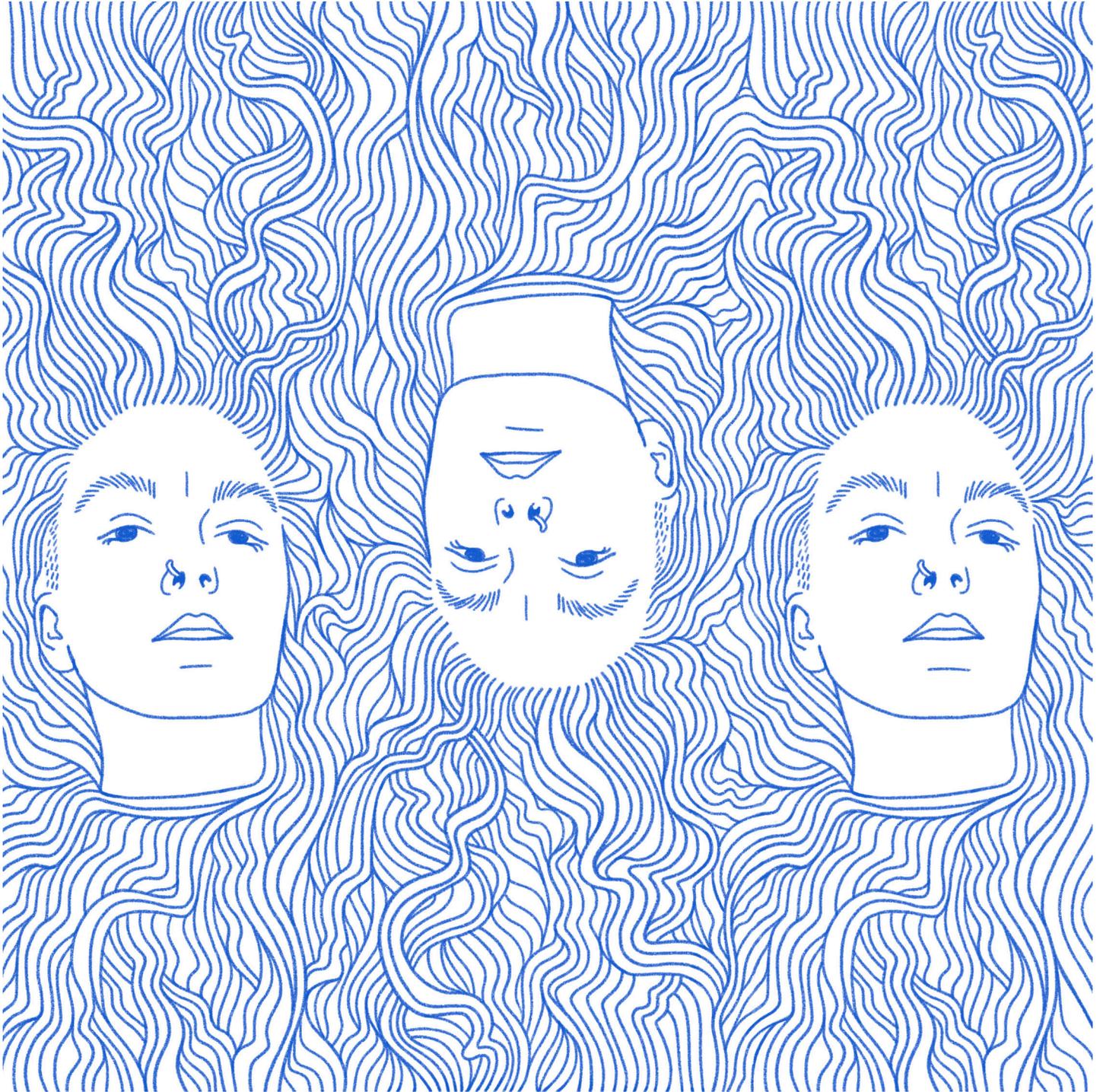
Dyke on the lips like venom turned to sweet candy when
used for self identification, a badge, an honor
Short hair has no reason to be a so goddamn Godly
Working through the problems like a right of passage &
loving the people who are & came before you

& that's the thing with the storm, its flows inside & out
Comes and goes before the Summer and into Fall &
You can fall for the girl who masters being a mister
& the boy who is the girl of your dreams if you
Let yourself love the fire & storm inside of you too





ROBYN TOWLE



MY FEMME

by Julia Burges

(my femme)
my femme is
a healed fracture
my femme is
neither caterpillar
nor butterfly
my femme was born
running
my femme cracked
open and bled
the day she
turned 12
my femme is feasting
on breadcrumbs
my femme only
exists in broad
daylight or
bright rooms
my femme is like
the colour purple
because I only
like her sometimes
my femme plays
hide and seek
and more often
then not I forget
how to find her
my femme is a
backseat driver
a friend you only
see at parties
my femme does
not command
nor obey
my femme goes
with the flow now
a slight breeze
on a sunny day
the impulse to
tuck my hair behind
my ear I have
learned to live
with my femme



EARTH SPELL FOR TRANSFORMATION AND GROWTH

This spell, which calls upon the Earth element, is a demonstration of an instance where magic can use metaphors and symbolism to manifest change. It is best to perform this spell during the New Moon, which is a great time to mark a point of change or manifest transformation.



INGREDIENTS

- A green candle, for change and growth
- Peppermint seeds, for bringing about change
- Pine needles, for clean breaks and growth
- Bay leaves, for manifestation
- Cinnamon, for success and spirituality

GUIDELINES FOR THE SPELL

- Gather all of your ingredients, and take them to an outdoor location. You will need a patch of soil for this spell; if you don't have a garden, you can adapt the spell to use a pot of soil instead.
- Light a green candle, and visualise the flame's power entering your body. Keep the candle going for the duration of the spell
- Sow the peppermint seeds into the soil, about 6mm deep. Space the seeds about 1cm apart.
- Cover the seeds with soil. Use your finger to draw a spiral into the soil above the seeds. This sigil is symbolic of journeys, growth and transformations.
- Sprinkle the pine needles, bay leaves and cinnamon over the spiral. As you do this, visualise the magical powers of each of the herbs.
- Very lightly water the mint seeds. You will need to water the peppermint seeds every day, and they should take about 10-15 days to germinate. This time period is symbolic of growth, and the way in which it takes time, and is a process that cannot be rushed, controlled, or forced. The growth of this peppermint plant is symbolic of your growth, and will also aid you in manifesting transformation.























ON CONVECTION

by Niamh Ahern

To be queer is to be liquid. Yet to be butch is to be a rock.

You have always felt like a fraud. Womanhood, autism, pain, and queerness are some of the arenas in which this feeling has reared its head particularly strongly. Butchness is no exception, but it is something in which carving out a niche feels possible, even cathartic, in spite of certain discursive woes.

As a child, you were perpetually out of place. A talkative tomboy who grew out of dresses before grade one. A child who feared her tears being subject to an external gaze. At twelve, you came out. After a year of categorical experimentation, you landed on lesbian. It fit you well.

You got your first girlfriend at fourteen, a relationship from which, retrospectively, you were so far removed in spite of how much you felt. So remote, so unaware of how to break yourself open and feel another's hands beat your heart on your behalf. Though you exchanged acts of young love with your first love – letters, playlists, rudiments – their power was countered by dissociation and journal entries chronicling empty sadness and Mapplethorpe facsimiles. After you parted ways, you made a fool of yourself in front of her many times. You wonder how she looks back upon your teenage floundering. Who does she think you are? The day she broke up with you was the first time she'd seen you cry.

Following this devastation, you struggled with a flavor of lesbian loneliness that arises when the emphasis on fluidity drowns out one's assertions about oneself. The very mention of the word ignited dispassion within your bones. Virtually every queer you knew was bisexual, and no one you knew was butch or into New Queer Cinema. Your solution was L-Wordian – reject modernity (tenderness), embrace tradition (distance – i.e. embody Shane McCutcheon post-

Cherie Jaffe). You attempted to be androgynous and suave, never knowing how to communicate, let alone initiate, beyond stilted inquiries that seemed too obvious to be seen as smooth from the receiving party. You feared being seen as a predator, and, in an era of rejection and self-doubt, developed a routine around the confirmation of your sexuality: mantras (“I am homosexual”), late-night trawls of years-old forums, checking your attraction to any and every man who crossed your path, and forcing yourself to view women through the eyes of a power-hungry director.

At the edge of seventeen, you made a friend who became the Michael Novotny to your Brian Kinney. You fostered an “above-friendship-below-romance” as you used to refer to it, which was not always the healthiest, but unceasing in its intensity. On the brink of a relationship, you both knew that it couldn't – wouldn't – work, settling instead for symbiosis, as teenage girls do, spending every waking moment together, either in-person or on the phone, clashing constantly but always swimming back. You endured a friendship breakup or two, the first of which was amended mere weeks before the world fell apart. You were her mentor; she lapped up your pontifications, made you think, made you laugh. Though you allowed yourself to fall apart in front of her, there remained a great divide. An uncanny valley of sorts, which only grew as you entered into a relationship with the person who was to be your abuser. You had reconnected in the midst of the apocalypse, following a brief encounter as your own quasi-platonic partnership threatened to breach amorous territory months before. These two figures – your friend and your girlfriend – were engaged in perpetual warfare, a foray into an eighteen-year-old's style of polyamory, messy and complicated. Ultimately, the ties of your friendship (which have now been reattached) were severed for the sake of an increasingly toxic relationship, a happening that was preceded by your sexual assault. The openness you allowed for with your abuser was the

closest thing to vulnerability you could muster at the time. It was mired in mistrust and traumas, a mutual fear of emasculation, interminable conflict. She was the first person who told you that she thought you were autistic; as time went on, you realized that she thought this of most people, only this time she had hit the nail on the head. One would think that two traumatized autistic butch dykes would be able to see eye to eye, to find comfort in each other's leather and lace alike, but it was not to be. Not for you. Ironically, prior to establishing yourselves in the girlfriend terrain, she lent you *In The Dream House*, a book that you borrowed a second time when pondering your departure. A book you read to your boyfriend, before you called him your boyfriend, sobbing at the echoes of your own Dream House. Beyond the tales of the obvious – assault, infidelity, involuntary commitment – words about her do not come easy. The wounds are still too raw, swathed in a will towards stillness.

Ann Cvetkovich's reimagining of stone butch identity as an emotional style made a lot of sense to you, and still does, despite of the loss of the qualifier. Being stone is not inextricably linked to trauma, but, either way, Cvetkovich's reconstruction depathologizes the notion that to give is to receive. This is a process to which many can relate, beyond the confines of sex or queerness. Touch is a difficult thing; when Leslie Feinberg wrote about the melting of a stone, ze spoke of touch and its ability to transform, and to harm. In many people's eyes, to be touched is to trust and be trusted, and withholding it is hurtful if not downright offensive. But how can one allow for such touch if intimacy feels like an invasion? Throughout your life, you have felt unlovable, unreachable, an extraterrestrial to closeness. Your intimate encounters were marked by a safe distance, each feeling more like a performance than a connection. You felt like a failure no matter how hard you tried. Your ability to receive – to have needs, to be loved – ebbs and flows, and

your ability to give still comes more naturally. Unmasked, safe, and in the process of connecting with your feelings, though, things are easier, but not without challenges.

As you attempted to extricate yourself from your abuser's invisible talons, you met the man who would become your boyfriend. You had agreed to help a student with an accompanying course, ghosted him for three weeks because you didn't know your pieces, and nervously agreed to a rehearsal time in spite of your unreadiness. You hit it off instantly. With coffee and chicken wraps in hand, you would sit at a rickety table or spread yourselves out in the grass, talking, listening. The following month was marked by expedited attachment. You went on a break with your abuser, in need of breathing space and an escape hatch. This newfound friend spoke about synthesizers, and you rattled on about *The Wizard of Oz* or walked up and down the table imitating Doris Day. You rehearsed multiple times a week, baked cookies and curry, listened to his compositions. He was the first friend you had made knowing that you were autistic. This was what unmasking felt like – pure, unbridled, free to form a bond at whatever pace felt natural, allowed to act as weirdly as you wished. When you hugged him, you felt something. Seated beside him, there seemed to be an electric potential. You cried in front of each other within weeks of meeting.

At the time, given the lesbian-abuse situation, it made sense for you to be impacted by compulsory heterosexuality. You were caught in a particularly bad patch of it, and, lying next to him the first night of an endless sleepover, you feigned sleep in favor of checking, aching with anxiety. But, in spite of your intellectualization and search for an answer, you knew that this was more than a projection of male validation. You liked him. That scared you. The evening after the accompaniment exam, you kissed, and things felt good. Things felt okay. The week before, you had confided

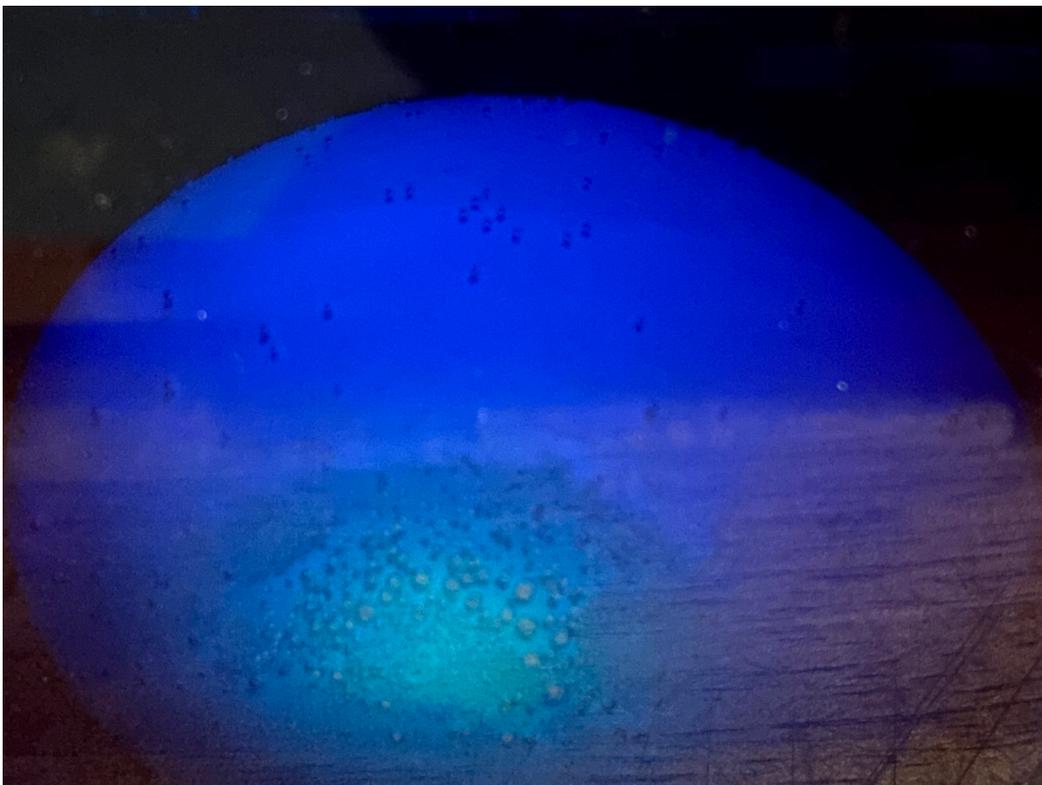
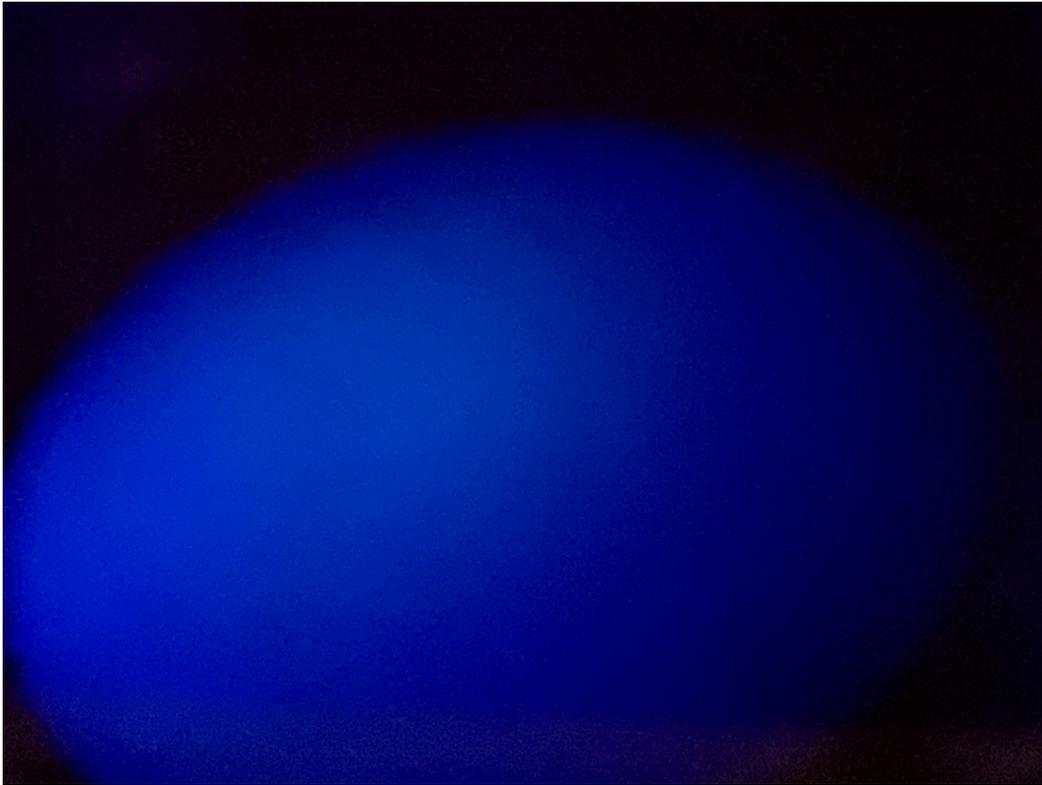
to a recent mutual friend that you felt bad that you could never like him back, but knew that you couldn't get enough of him. Your friends were shocked – some concerned, as you were being bombarded with traumatizing threats and your ex-but-not-really-ex-girlfriend's commitment, growing angrier by the day at the treatment to which you had been subjected, oscillating between near silence and bristling rage on the hospital phone. But this was not a trauma response or a cry for help – you were falling in love.

Initializing a relationship with your boyfriend meant that you had to reconfigure your conception of yourself. As a rule, you were not one for the consumption of bisexual content, but found yourself buying a secondhand copy of *Bi Any Other Name*, reading about lesbian-identified bisexuals or faggot-identified dykes, radical concepts to your Gen Z sensibilities, labels that would have shocked you were you not one of them. Bisexual doesn't quite fit, but neither does lesbian in the traditional sense of the word. You have settled for queer, or bi-dyke if pressed, but, for the first time in your life, you are content in not knowing. You are allowing for the liquid of your queerness to flow beyond your reach. In the wake of abuse, you let yourself cry whenever the feeling arises, allowing his gaze to settle upon the tears as they shine upon your cheeks. Every time you mention your current set-up to people you haven't seen in a while – living with your boyfriend, his brother, and, recently, a rescue kitten – they are surprised. You are okay with that, and understand their confusion; you are happy, you are in love, and you are loved.

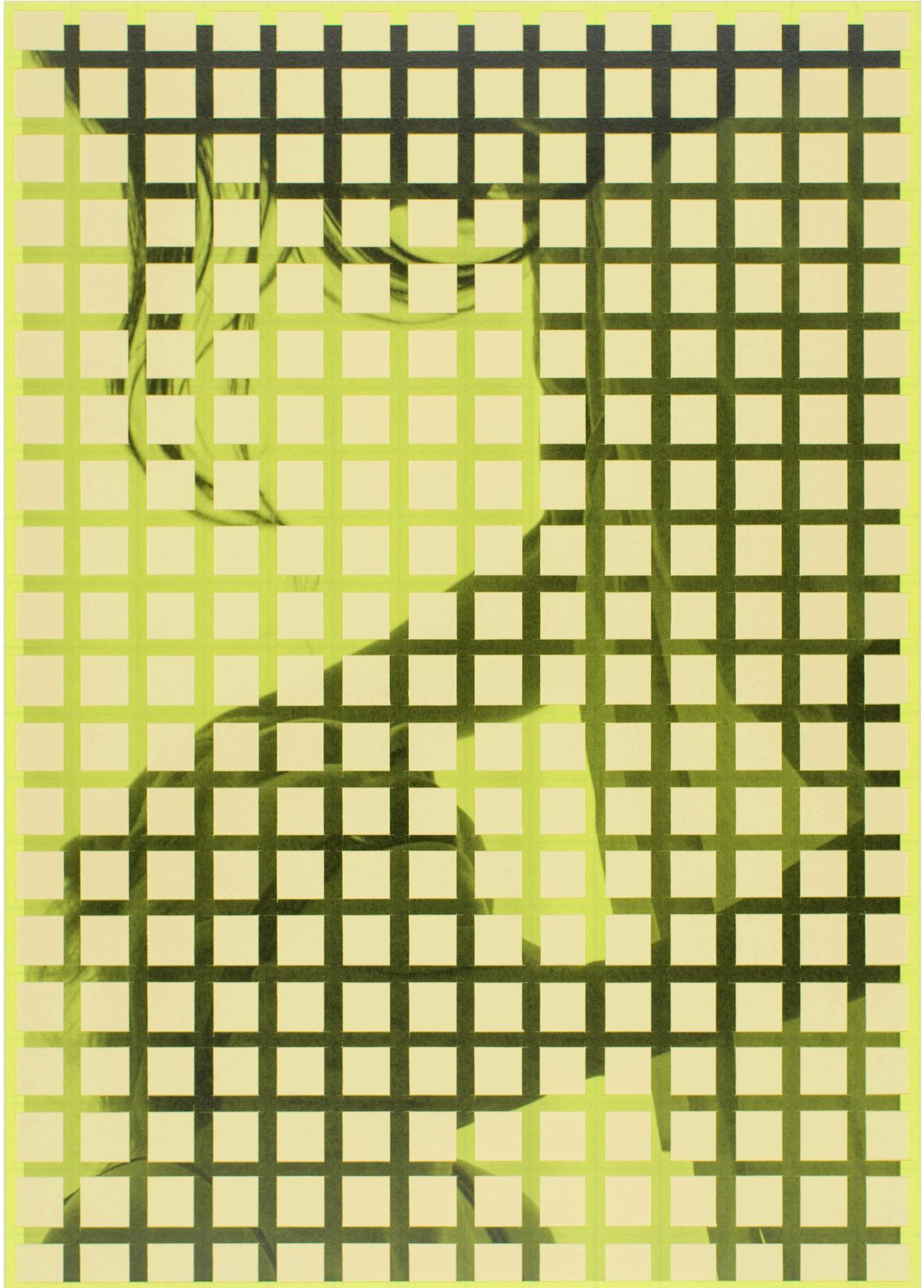
You are a butch dyke, you have a boyfriend, and you are not bisexual. You exist, you exist, you exist. He likes your button-ups and tank-tops alike, your assertiveness, the way your short hair frames your face. Your butchness is yours, and will evolve alongside you and the happenings of your life, but is a constant, an important fixture of who you are. At first glance, your story feels like the antithesis of a queer

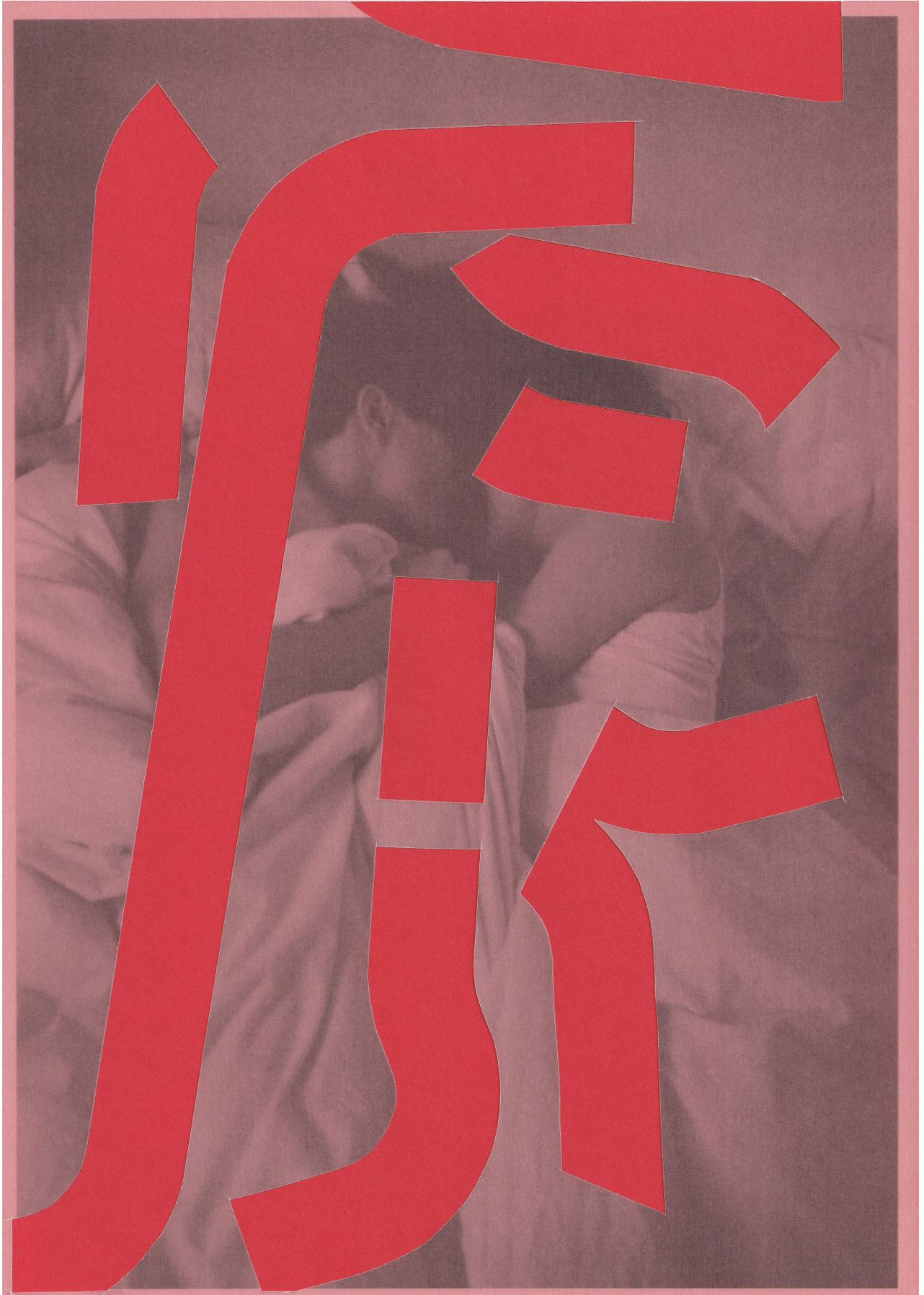
narrative. When traversing the landscape of queer theory, one will find an abundance of butch-femme discourse. Butches are seen as contingent on femmes, and vice-versa. Much of it relates to somewhat archaic understandings of gender, sexuality, and the like, and the construction of a butch self-concept is left to intracommunity confabulations and a lived experience, rightly so. Most people don't hedge their development on the exploration of research papers or anthologies. But there is an issue with the idea that butch identity is inextricably linked to an intimate dedication to women, in that it erases the very real and rather common experiences of butches who date men or other mascs. More importantly, the notion that butchness is defined by a performance of gender, sex, and love for women implies that butchness cannot stand on its own two feet, and that such a performance is primarily sexual. Whether such butches are "allowed" to refer to themselves as such or not depends on which lesbian subreddit you peruse, but it is not impossible to look past the gatekeeping and claim the right framework for yourself.

Your story is not concerned with the validity discourse that interrogates the position of bisexual women performing cisheteronormative relationship dynamics who feel invalid within their queerness. Nor is it concerned with proving that butches with boyfriends are rare – if you need validation that there are others out there, it is a mere Twitter search away. Plus, pictures of Kate Moennig and Ian Somerhalder's butch-for-boy relationship in *Young Americans* look exactly like you and your boyfriend, and what is more validating than resembling the Queen of the Lesbians herself? Your story is simply an attempt to provide others in a similar position with your perspective, one of an awkward, chronically online butch who is very much in love. ♣



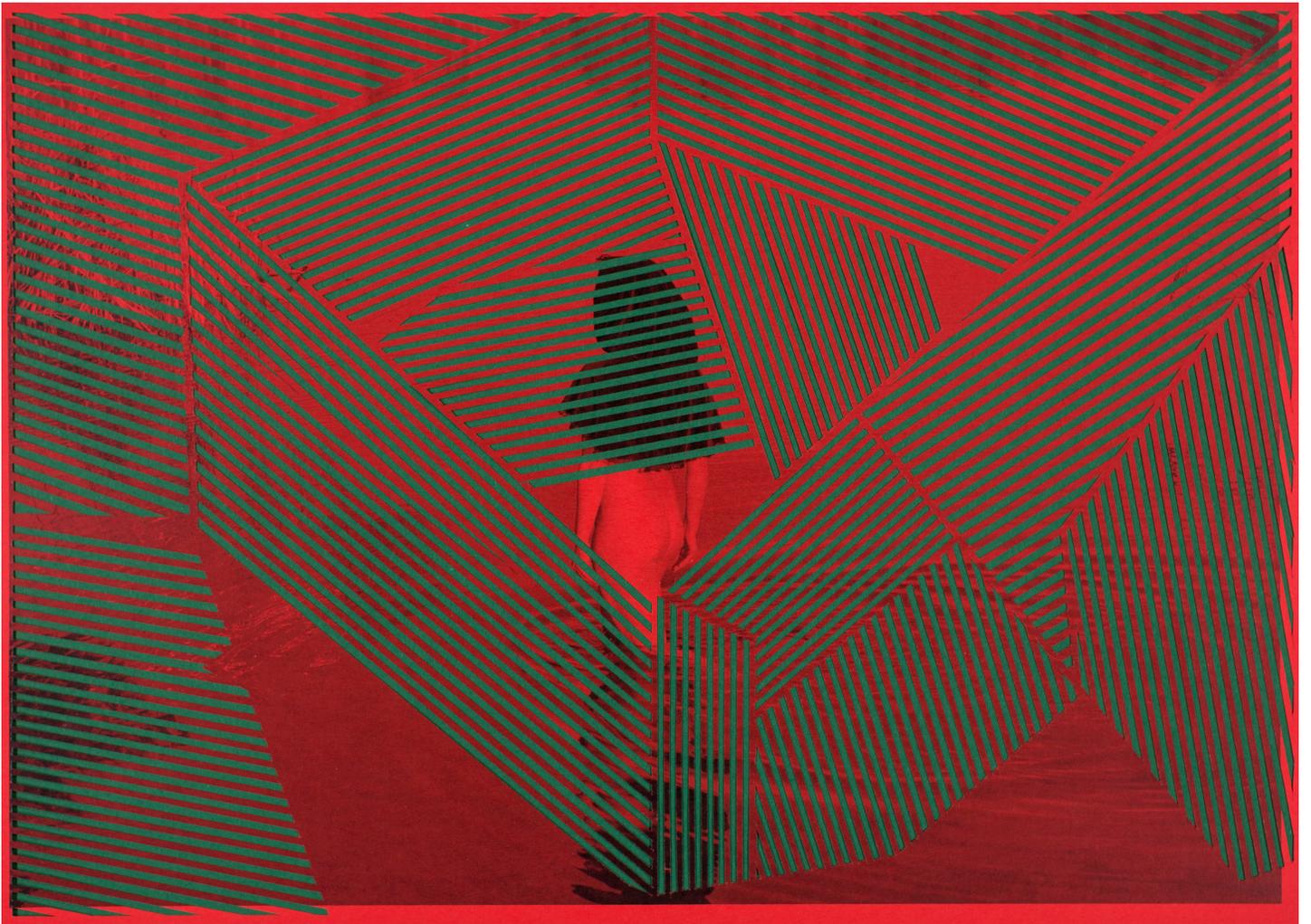
MELISSA STECHBAUER













RECREATION

by Sophie Daubigny

1.

On our lunchbreak we take a dip in the park, take a dip in the city's grass.
 How long till work begins? How long till work ends?
 We'd like to swim through time, like liquid sunshine when you hold your breath.
 How long can we live in this moment?
 We set timers and think about the rays screwing the device.
 How does it know when it's time to kill time?
 Stop.

2.

Sink into soil, fall into blue
 Cast your mind back like the fishing line your father hurled at the sea,
 Though they want to reel you back
 like the harness around that dog or
 child?

3.

In your shoal of thoughts you catch a glimpse of feeling
 Diving deeper into the wreck, you think you can just about breathe again
 And then you think you can't –
 you think you've forgotten how.
 How many bars of oxygen left?
 You panic: you check the screen: it tells you: 1 5 : 0 0
 So close to the deep, now your chest feels punishing in a tight embrace.

4.

Blue. It's still blue up there.
 The gaps between thoughts are quiet and the thoughts are not your own,
 there is so much quiet in queer.

5.

Rich takes you by the hand and you descend to face the wreck once more.
 This time the oxygen is pure, limitless

dark.

Squeezing past ship's carcass, the splinters threaten to

burst.

Space conquers time here and bits of wood are let

be.

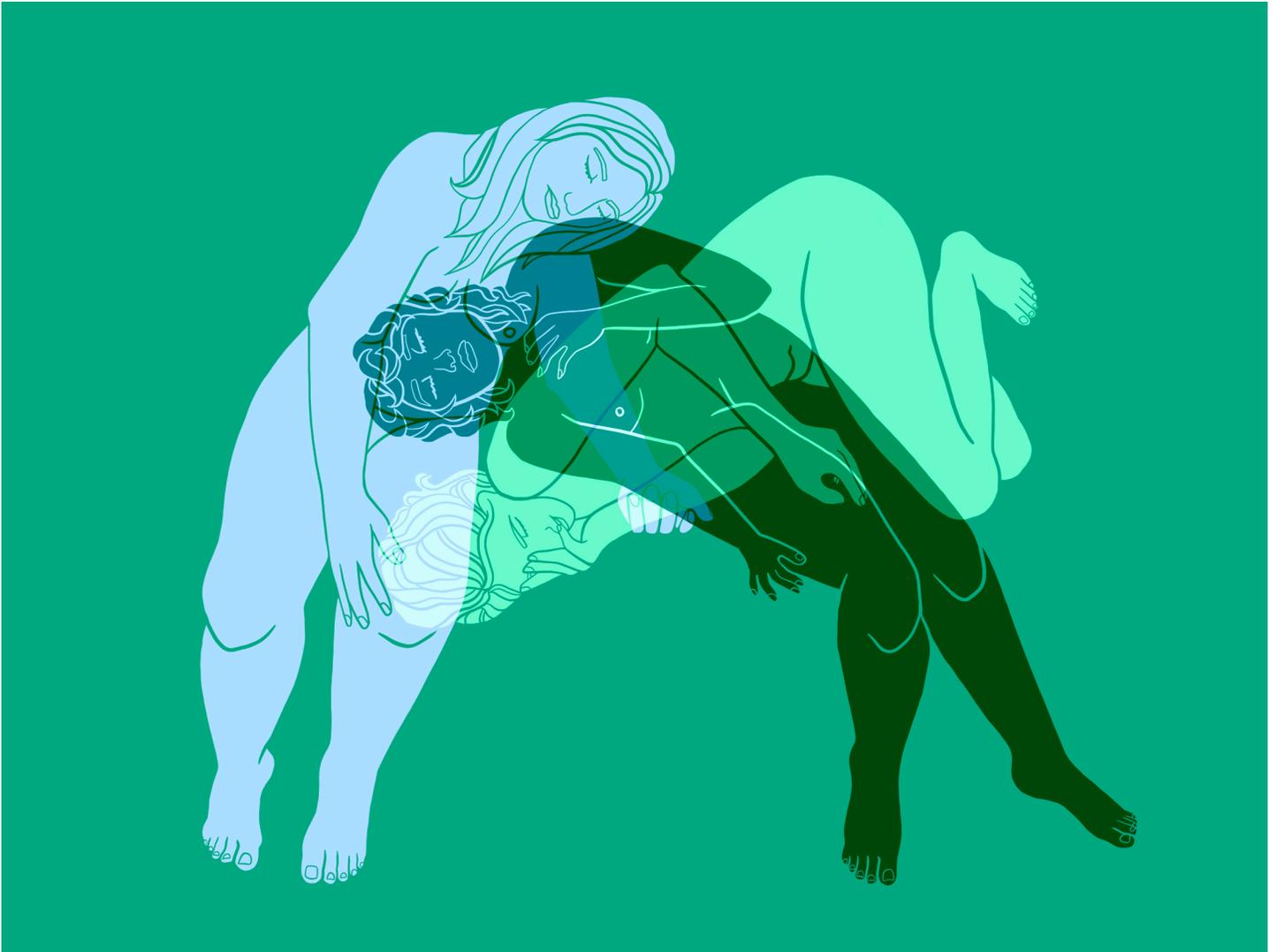
They don't hurt, their faces just pulled in frozen pain, never to

thaw.

Here they are silent and they are free.
 Submerged under rippled history,
 you think you see your future





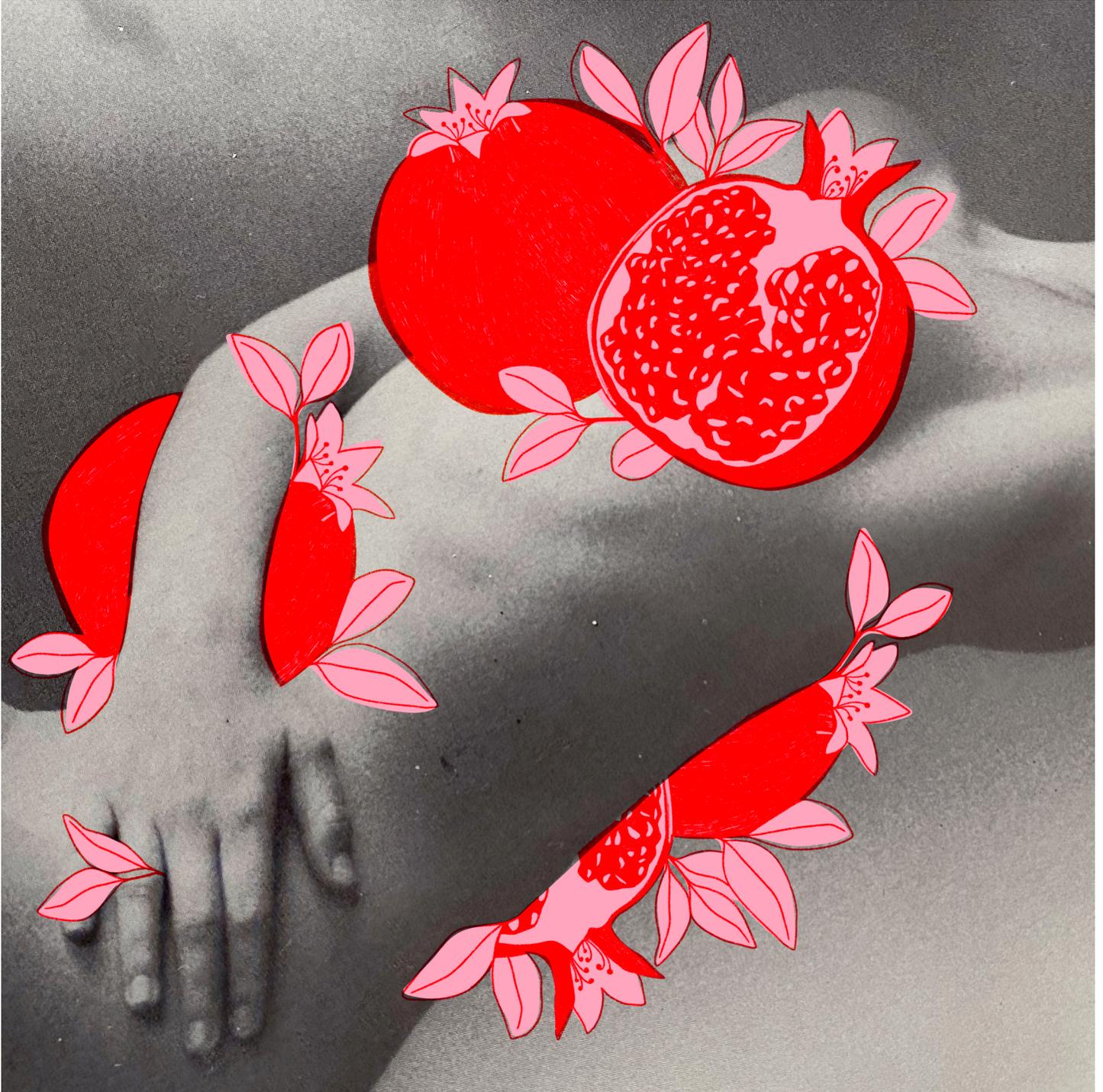


BLOODLETTING

by Mai Panelli

After, you were in a barn at night.
 of the door, its natural
 resistance.
 how they refracted
 Hollow and
 When I was a girl
 An empty sky,
 an unused landfill.
 To pass the time
 I climbed blackberry bushes
 Do you want to get hurt,
 What I said
 After, I picked out the thorns
 lined them up, glittering jewels,
 on my bedside table
 As a child you were older than
 In photos your face
 among lush adults,
 their mouths
 You don't remember
 the parties in the photos.
 Crowded kitchens, green plastic
 chairs in the backyard.
 I tore open my wrists
 for the heaviness to
 After all, we danced
 We are getting better
 My body knows
 even with the floodlights off.
 In the flashes
 allowed to see
 It is a worship to be
 with you
 with you.

You remember the weight
 You remember the headlights,
 in the animal eyes.
 waiting to be fed.
 I was laid on my back.
 to talk with god
 they asked
 I don't remember.
 from my hands and knees,
 greedy as a child.
 your body.
 is a fresh hard splinter
 open and splitting.
 and thighs, I waited
 drain.
 opposite each other.
 at this.
 how to move with your body,
 I am
 your thickened skin.
 in the dark
 alone







FACIAL RECOGNITION

by Leah Plath

grab your own face and
watch yourself turn to clay
mold yourself how you'd like
mold yourself how you'd need

witness what it is like
to feel yourself,
to see yourself,
slipping through
your own
fingers

look in the mirror now
is your face still one
your father would recognize?

no, it's not

are your hands still the ones
your mother has held?

yes, they are

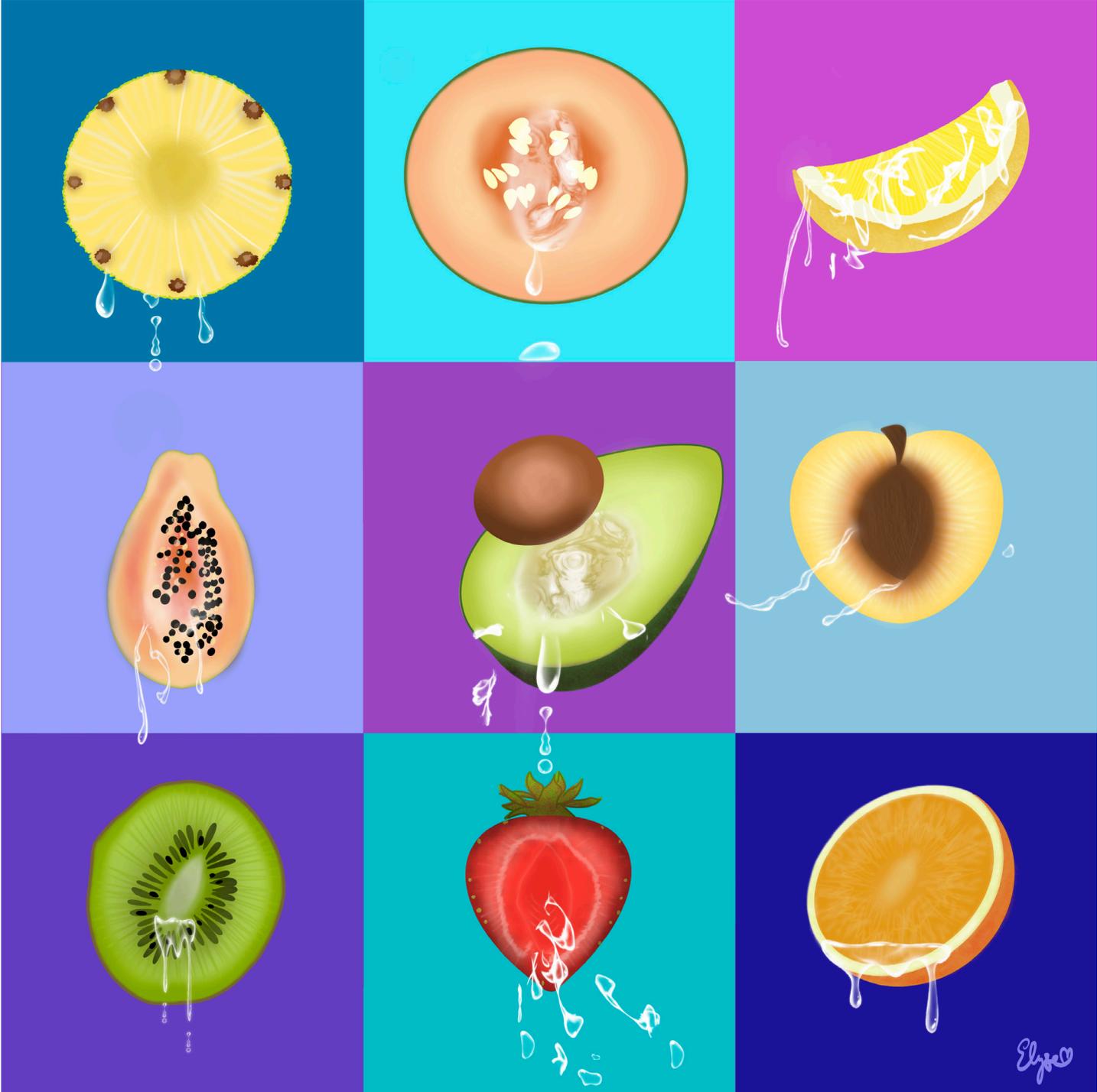




DYKE

by Lindsey Eisenmann

dyke as in
my masculinity and femininity
and everything in between
ebb and flow
down the same river
i contain every gender
and none at the same time
my hips are soft and my hands cold
she tastes like honey and hot tea at midnight
the sweetest nectar
is the touch of a dyke
the most peaceful slumber
is my head on their chest
to sleep, to dream of a dyke
is to be welcomed home



TO YOUR WET FRUIT

by Maddy D.

I want to take a piece of you
and save you for later.
Place you neatly in Tupperware, and give you
the last empty spot in the fridge.
One day, when I really need it,
I'll throw all of the spoiled food on the floor,
and pry you from the back.
Bruised (I did save you
for a true emergency after all),
I'll just eat you like a fine cheese,
hold the crackers—you need no vessel.
Then again, I also want to swallow
you whole—seeds and all—
juice dripping from the corners
of my mouth, only to lick up the droplets
on the floor, I don't want to miss
a thing.

CONFESSIONS OF A LESBIAN CANNIBAL

by Kieran Grey Shelley

I am not soft
I am not secure in this part of the story
Where I hold out my hands and they come back
Bloody from where I loved

I wanted to know her before I knew shame so I
Feasted on her eyes to see the beauty she saw I
Ate at her tongue to feel the words chip away at my teeth I

Broke her right hand in two and snacked on the palm to
understand how she touched so tenderly

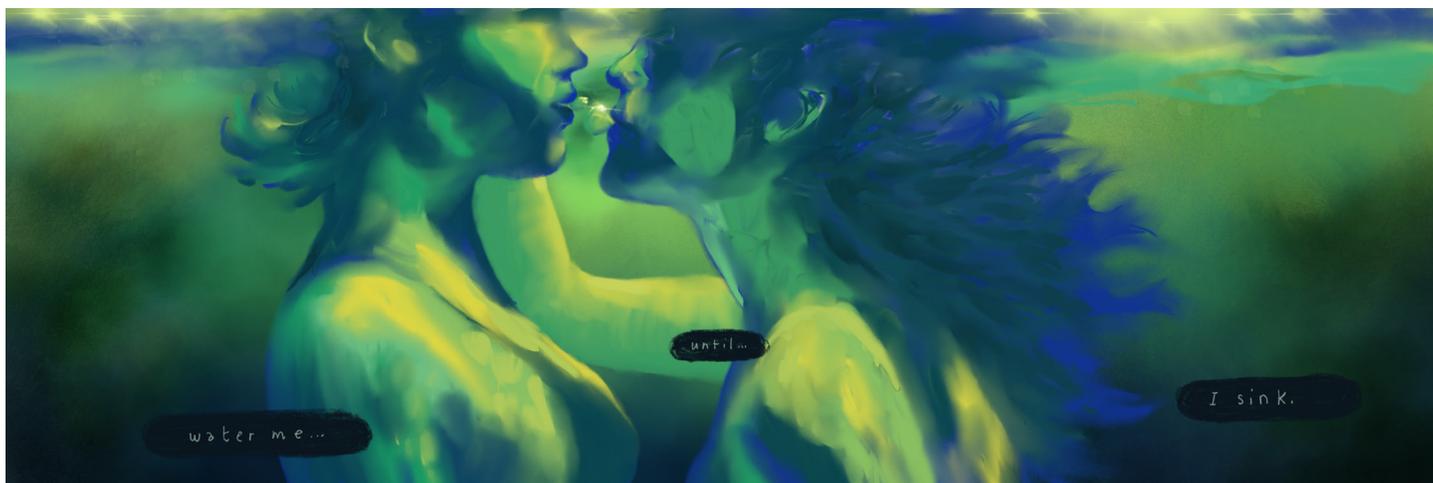
To consume is to love is to
Understand is to
Live

I live with her in my belly and
I've never been so full



AMK

FLUIDITY













MELISSA STECHBAUER









GENDER DEFCON ONE

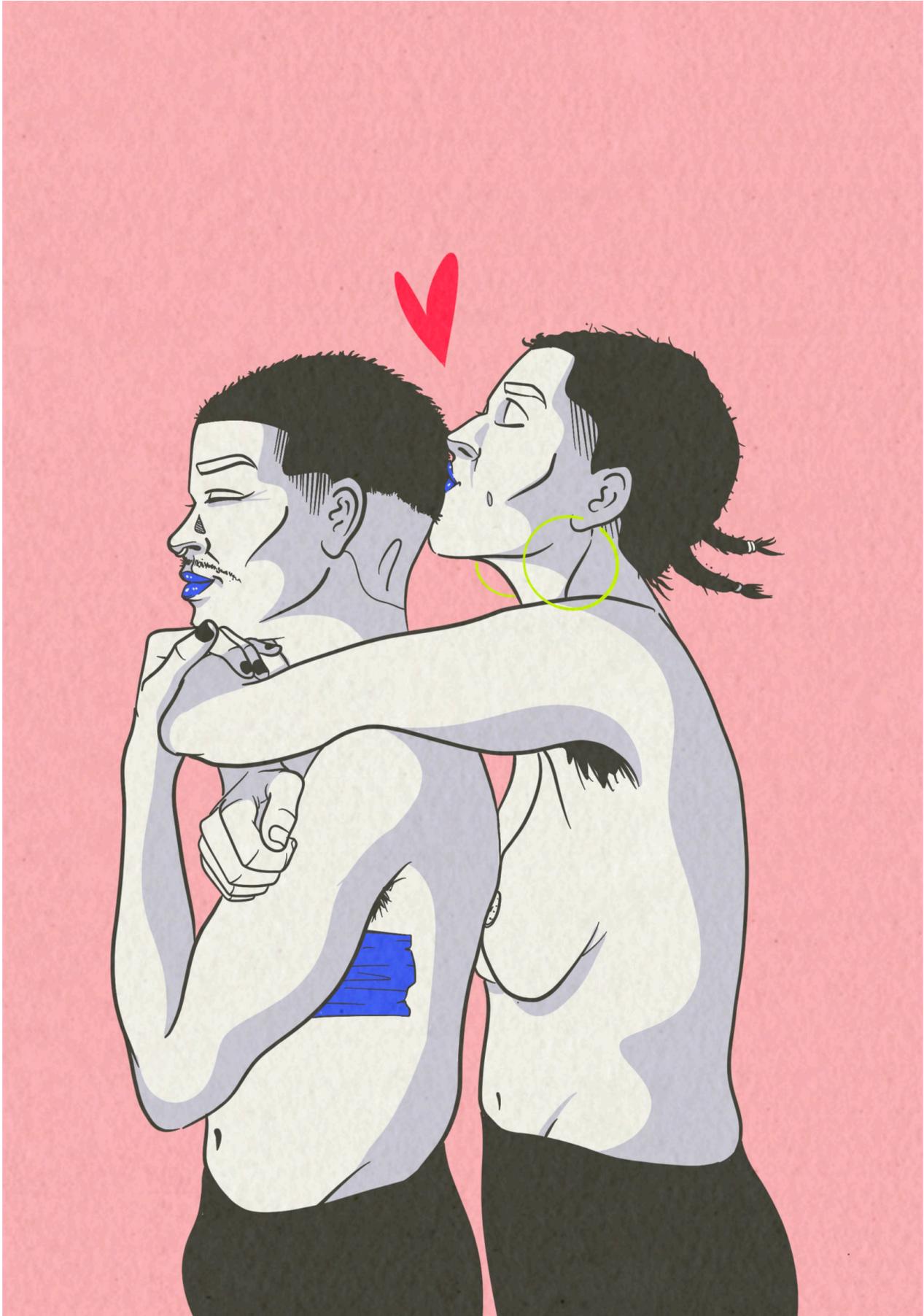
by Estee Michael

Sorting mail I make eye contact with the dead eyed Burberry model Mid smolder Leather jacket
flung over tanned
chest On a scrap of paper that smells - when the corner is lifted - like a script that touches on
truth

10:13 at night Eyes shut I lift the corner Drag the packaged promise of leather jacket and
Something something me too Over each wrist

Eyes open and I'm still in my kitchen
But I am your pretty boy

I can't smolder for shit I hover spatially between cocksure and terrified Still I am your boy
Shivering into the night Hands in pockets Shoulders arched up to my own ears like an apology
Rocked back on my heels Mid laugh Full smile Like the sun encroaching on the territory of a
hapless moon I am the fantasy Still awash in dreams Don't wake me



WE LOVE OUR CONTRIBUTORS!

Niamh Ahern (she/they) is a South African neurobutch writer, artist, musician, and student based in Cape Town. They publish *The Good, The Bad, and The Rain Man*, a monthly newsletter about neurodivergence and media, and publish essays on Medium. You can find her on Instagram [@mixtaperomancer](#), most likely ranting on her story about the Wizard of Oz or dispensing fun facts about Tom Cruise.

Julia Burges (they/them) is a queer, non-binary, autistic poet and artist from London, born and raised in Germany. They have lived in London for five years and have been doing spoken word performances for about four years. They have been published in two poetry anthologies, and their work was also exhibited in Tate Britain last winter. They mainly write about the autistic experience and topics they are passionate about, including but not limited to mental health, gender, queerness, and rape culture. Follow them on Instagram [@poetthejulia](#).

Carrie Chen (she/her; they/them) is a queer, Taiwanese-American artist born and raised in Los Angeles, who is currently in the process of applying to grad school for Art Therapy. Carrie is a drawer, painter, writer, poet, zinester, tarot reader, and digital artist. Art has been their way of processing trauma, celebrating milestones and the joys of life, and a way that they continue to connect with others! Follow Carrie on Instagram [@cache.n](#).

Maddy D. resides in sunny Austin, Texas with girlfriend, kitty cat, and a stubborn puppy. Maddy feels most inspired when relaxing out on the balcony, listening to Miranda July audiobooks, and mingling with other creatives. Maddy has mini zine called *Dear Reader*.

Sophie Daubigny (she/her) is a queer poet, filmmaker, zine-maker and writer studying in London. Sophie's work focuses primarily on mindfulness and attitudes towards the environment (with a couple of cyborgs thrown into the mix too!). They have been published by the *Strand Magazine* and the87press. Follow her on Instagram [@sophiesays.hi](#).

Sarah De Sousa (she/her) is a Portuguese-Canadian queer artist in Montreal. She makes queer erotica, showing queer sex and sexuality as she has seen it and experienced it. Follow Sarah on Instagram [@queer.mtl](#).

Lindsey Eisenmann (they/them) is a dyke residing in Oklahoma City. Lindsey is passionate about expressing themselves through film photography and the written word. Their photography influences their poetry and vice versa, and they're most inspired by queerness, the natural world, and how the two meld together. When they're not making art, they work as a barista and spend time with other dykes and queers in the city.

Elyse (she/they) is a queer, self-taught digital artist based in Austin, Texas. They live with their partner (a poet!), and together they parent a grumpy tabby and an anxious lab. You can find more art at [@bilo.live](#).

AMK (she/her) is a French illustrator and activist from Paris currently living in Grenoble, with a south-Asian background. Nature is a strong inspiration for her, as is feminism, queer culture, drugs, but also hate of state and cops. She does drink a lot to survive. Follow her on Instagram [@annemarienoadkoko](#).

Lex (they/she) is a nonbinary lesbian artist and poet who mainly uses traditional mediums such as markers and paints. Their favorite pieces usually include queer/trans bodies and saturated, vibrant colors, but they also love to create portraits and distorted faces. Their work is inspired by nature, emotions, the queer experience, and the human body. Follow Lex on Instagram [@mournful.november](#).

Estee Michael is a midwestern queer multidisciplinary artist. They started writing at a young age and their creativity took off from there like a runaway train. When they aren't creating they're either scamping with their dog, avoiding long walks on the beach due to chronic illness, or can be found on Instagram [@localqueerspinster](#).

Mia Montalvo (she/they) is a queer multi-media artist, based in New Jersey. Their work explores themes of childhood wonder, identity, and viewing the world through a queer lens. Since discovering a love for art in their formative years, Mia finds joy through collaging, creating video diaries, and experimenting with oil pastels, chalk, paint — really any bright colors she can get her hands on. Follow them on IG [@mmontalvo_xo](#).

Anika Nacey (they/she) grew up just outside of Salt Lake City, Utah, where they found their passion to write among the mountains and forests. She lives there still, with her wife and two dogs, because the mountains make her feel grounded and impossibly small. Follow Anika on Instagram [@justanikaa](#).

Mai Panelli (they/them) is a Southern Cheyenne, nonbinary poet and artist. They are a recipient of the IPRC BIPOC Writer and Artist Residency. They are queer and in love. Follow them on Instagram [@bbbabydog](#).

Lou Neveux-Pardijon (she/her) is a French artist working primarily in drawing. Through detailed depictions of domestic spaces and quotidian gestures, her work explores the tension between intimacy and intrusion. She consistently uses symbolic imagery in order to

create psychological portraits, each unfolding into fragmented narratives. She will graduate from Concordia University in Spring 2022, with a BFA in Studio Arts and Creative Writings. Follow Lou on Instagram [@louneveuxpardijon](#) and visit her at <https://louneveuxpardijon.com>.

Leah Plath (they/she) is a queer poet in Des Moines who is working on healing through words. They currently serve as a board director for VegLife Des Moines. In her free time, Leah climbs, cooks food, and sits in the sun with friends and cuddles with their cat, Louie. Follow along with them on Instagram [@leahwritespoems](#).

Rocío Isabel Prado (she/they) is a non-binary Mexican American comic, improviser, and professional nerd. They express themselves through laughing too loudly, talking very quickly, and writing online. Her work covers living with mental illness, poverty, pop culture, and being a flaming queer. Her haphazard education has led her to study at California State University, Fullerton, The Ohio State University, Upright Citizens Brigade and the Groundlings Theatre and School. You can find her on Twitter and Instagram: [@chiosgotjokes](#). They currently live in South Los Angeles with their partner and cat.

Kieran Grey Shelley (he/him; ze/zir) is a queer 23-year-old Transmasc lesbian from central Texas. Kieran has been writing since the age of five and publicly for the past six months. He writes mostly about his experiences as a Transmasc lesbian and how he navigates the world in the south. Follow zir on Instagram [@kierangreysheley](#).

Allie Shinn (she/her) grew up queer in Oklahoma, and it is her experience struggling to survive in the bible belt that drives her passion as an activist and as a photographer today. In recovery from alcohol abuse since 2012, Allie's art is often an expression of her refusal to miss the quiet moments that make up life, from which she spent the first 25 years running. Though insufficiently organized for a consistent gender presentation, moody outdoorsy lesbian fits the bill most days. When she's not taking photos, Allie reads, grows food, works full time to build a leftist Oklahoma, and can usually be found camping with her wife, her favorite person that's ever lived. Follow Allie on Instagram [@itsallieshinnyall](#).

Melissa Steckbauer (she /her) is an artist, writer, and founder of The Sensorium Institute in Berlin. Her work has been featured in Castello di Rivoli—Museum of Contemporary Art, Rivoli; KW, Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Deutsch Bank KunstHalle, Berlin; Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Riga; Teatr Studio at the Palace of Culture & Science, Warsaw; District, Berlin; Kunstsaale, Berlin; Le Salon Du Dessin, Paris; and Cité internationale des Arts,

Paris. Follow her on Instagram [@msteckbauer](#) and visit her at www.melissasteckbauer.com.

Robyn Towle (she/her) of R Nicole Studio is a queer artist and photographer based in Maine. In her art, she uses a wide variety of bright colors to emphasize the intimacy conveyed in small gestures, especially between queer lovers, friends, and human beings of all shapes and sizes. She believes everyone should be able to see themselves reflected in accessible pieces of art. Follow Robyn on Instagram [@rnicolestudio](#), and visit her Queer Makers' Markets account [@queermakersmarketme](#).

Sarah Bates Washburn is an emerging artist who lives and works south of Boston. Currently a Visiting Assistant Professor at Bridgewater State University. Washburn earned an MFA in Visual Arts from Lesley University College of Art and Design (LA+D). The scope of their work engages social practice, politics, humor, and aesthetic while initiating a larger discourse relative to the objects they create within the world surrounding them. Their work manifests conceptual ideas via social and political critiques with a globalized attitude. Washburn has work in private collections across the country and currently exhibits in the United States as well as internationally. Follow Sarah on Instagram [@s.b.washburn](#).

Kerine Wint (she/her) is an Afro-Caribbean freelance writer, editor, and reviewer of speculative fiction for publications including *FIYAH literary magazine*, *Goodreads* and *Publishers Weekly*. Through her journey into creative non-fiction (CNF), she has found an interest in global media (books, shows, podcasts), especially with short fiction, speculative elements, and explorations of gender identity and expression. Her CNF mostly consists of media (shifting focus outside of North America), books, and examining gender practices and norms that existed in pre-colonial societies. You can find her work on kerinewint.com and follow her media musings on Instagram [@almosto_kayyy](#).

Ayshe-Mira Yashin (she/her) is an 18-year-old lesbian artist from Istanbul and Nicosia, studying art at Camberwell College of Art in London. She makes political and spiritual art, exploring themes such as witchcraft, feminism, and sapphic love and intimacy. She runs a small business where she sells her tarot deck, as well as handmade notebooks, art prints, stickers and more. Follow her on Instagram [@illustrationwitch](#). ♦

