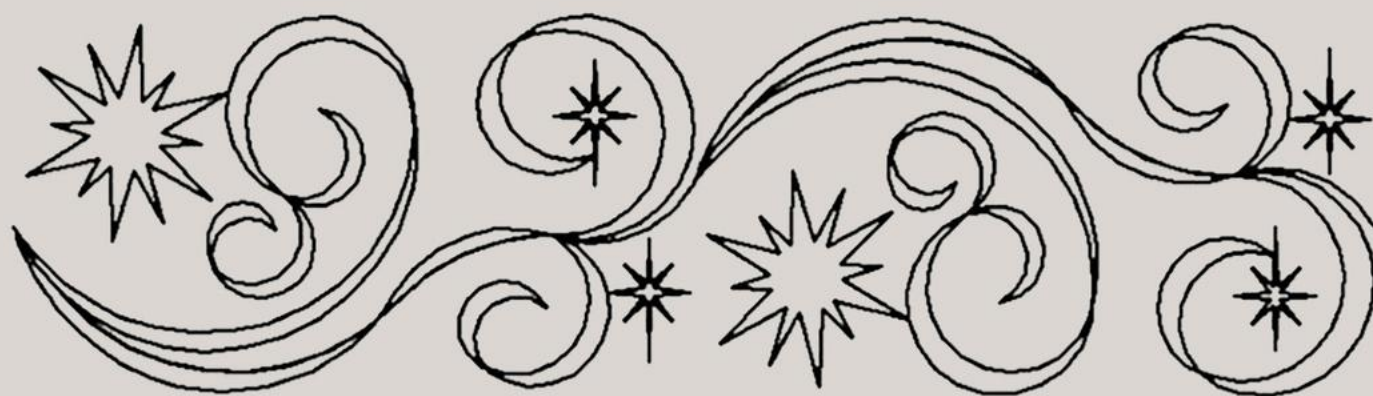


ADORE

HER BEWITCHED MIND
ISSUE 02
2025



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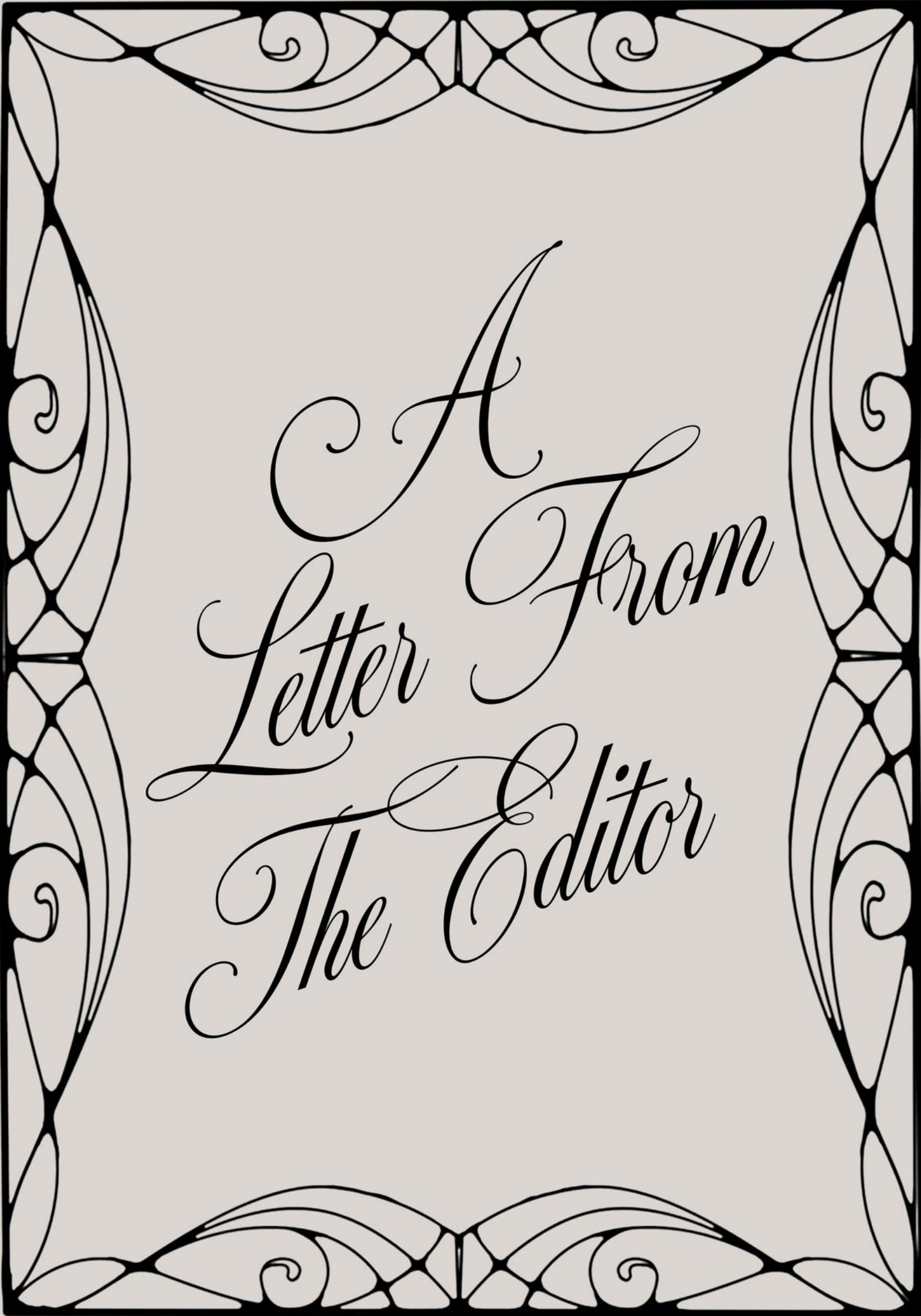
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A
Letter From
The Editor

Dear readers,

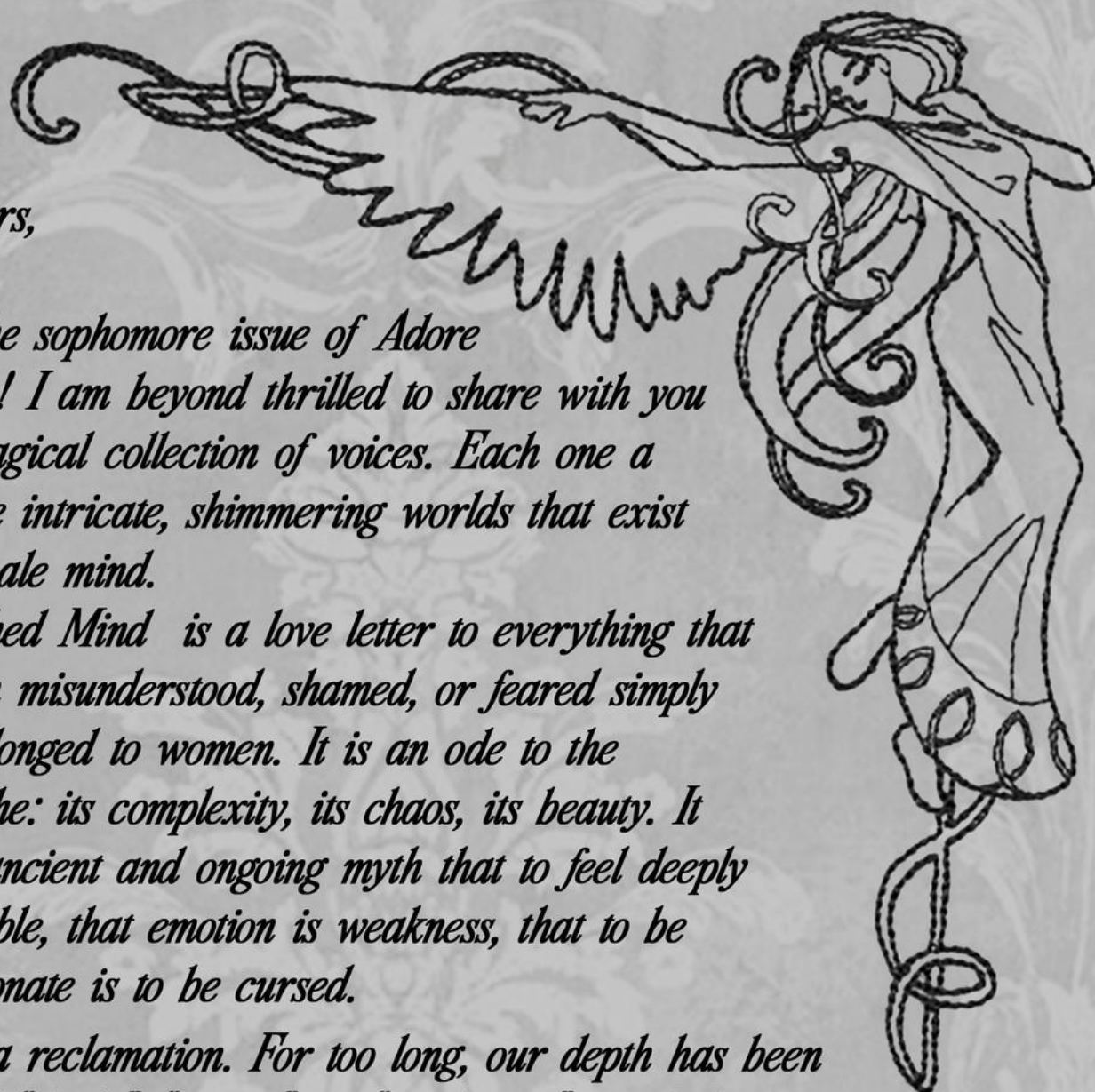
Welcome to the sophomore issue of Adore Art Magazine! I am beyond thrilled to share with you this deeply magical collection of voices. Each one a portal into the intricate, shimmering worlds that exist inside the female mind.

Her Bewitched Mind is a love letter to everything that has ever been misunderstood, shamed, or feared simply because it belonged to women. It is an ode to the feminine psyche: its complexity, its chaos, its beauty. It explores the ancient and ongoing myth that to feel deeply is to be unstable, that emotion is weakness, that to be wild or passionate is to be cursed.

This issue is a reclamation. For too long, our depth has been feared, called "dark," "crazy," or "witchcraft" simply because it couldn't be understood. But our emotions, our desires, our love, our independence; these aren't dangerous. They're sacred. They're powerful. They're ours.

As you turn these pages, I invite you to immerse yourself in the spells cast by our contributors. Let yourself wander through their dreamscapes, their rituals, their heartbreaks and rebirths. Let yourself feel bewitched. So take the key, open the door to this world. Step inside with curiosity, with softness, with wonder. There's magic waiting for you.

*With love,
Sofia Gonzalez
Editor-in-Chief*



The Adore

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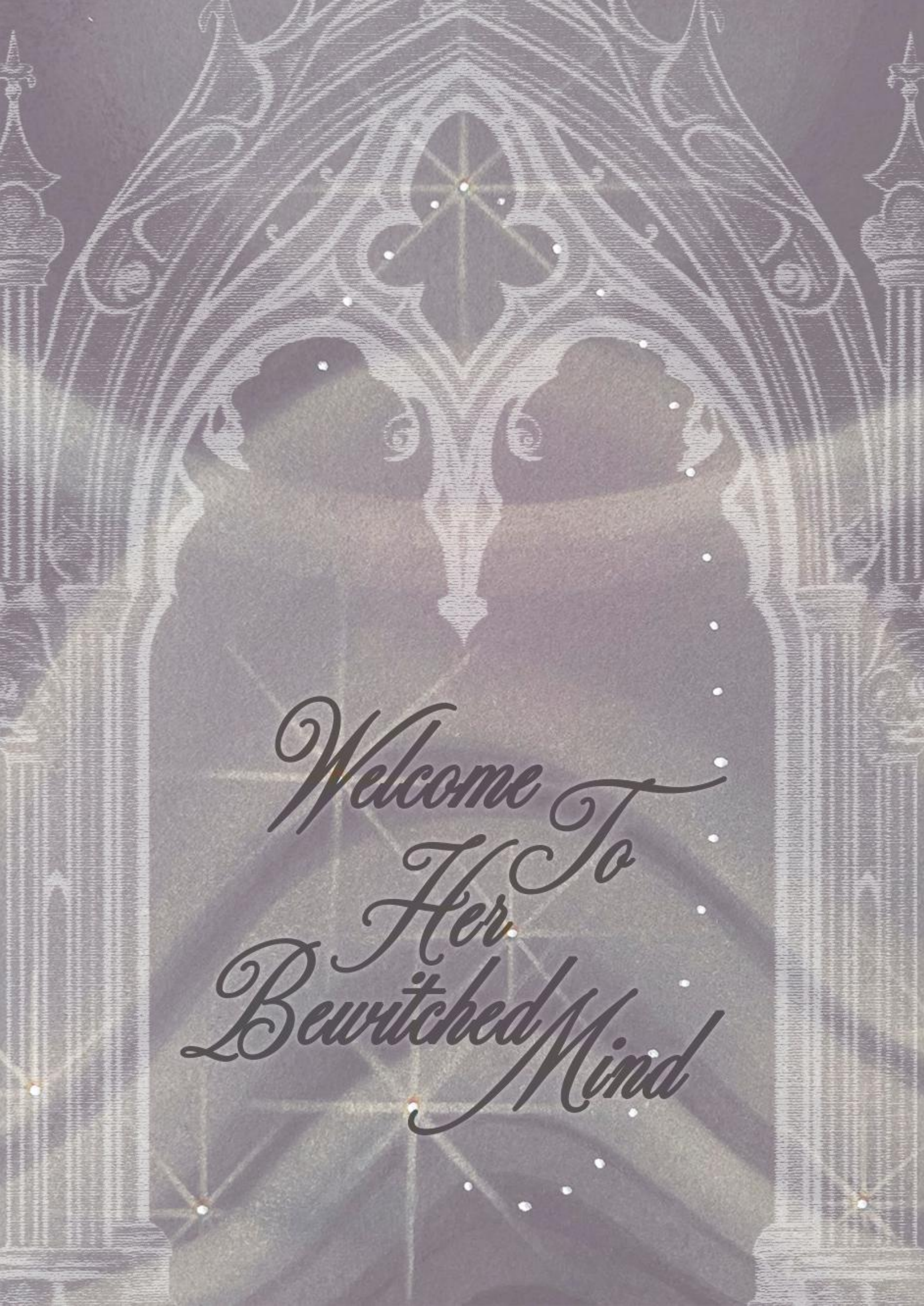
Designer



Dear reader,

*This magazine contains
content that might be
sensitive or triggering for
some individuals.*

*We encourage you to
read with care.*



*Welcome To
Her
Bewitched Mind*

Team Showcase





By Brooke Shinnick

You're Always Hungriest Before You Go

By Aisha Zubair

I have to leave today. I remember thinking this multiple times before, but it's happening today. I packed my bags, I called the taxi, and he's not home. It's time to go. I grab my bags and head on down, reminiscing. The floorboards creak beneath me like they always do—like they're whispering to stay. They've seen everything. They know how many times I've tried to leave and how many times I've been swallowed back whole.

I pass the kitchen on my way out, a butcher knife resting on the counter from last night's dinner, lamb chops. But I didn't have any, I usually don't.

"You love me more when you're hungry." He would say.

Maybe I did, maybe I didn't, it certainly made things easier, the hunger. When I was hungry, that was all I could focus on, nothing else he did hurt then. It made me dizzy and achy, it made him feel like a saviour, a feast.

He used to collect my hair, my used contact lenses, and my nails. Strands from the shower, tucked into tiny jars he kept locked in a drawer. I never asked. I didn't want to know why. Once, when he was in his study, he kept the door open just a bit, just enough for me to see him put the used lens in his own eye, to see him swallow the nail like a pill.

Still, I stayed. The nights were the worst. I'd lie in bed and feel him watching me long after his body went still beside mine. I could feel him pulling my hair out, one strand at a time.

His breath on my neck was always a little too cold, like he'd forgotten how to be human in his sleep. Sometimes, I thought I heard him licking his lips. I wanted to hug him. To shake him and make it go away. Surely this wasn't him, this was something else, something that consumed him and left him a shell of a human being. But today, the air felt different. Lighter. The walls didn't groan. The shadows didn't reach me.

Even the old clock had stopped ticking, as if the house itself had paused to let me go. I stepped over the threshold. One step. Then two. The hunger was gone; I was finally done with it all.

But the truth is, I never made it to the taxi.

My bags have rolled down the stairs the same way I did. He came home early. He saw

me. There were no screams this time, just silence and the sound of my skull cracking open like a rotten egg.

Now I can never leave. I am a ghost, a smear on the staircase, a breath caught in the bedsheets. He drags my body to the backyard like it's just meat. He doesn't cry. He doesn't even look at me.



I still want to hug him.

I'm hungry again as I'm stuck in this house like a secret no one wants to name.

Sometimes I whisper through the pipes.

I rattle the windows. I leave claw marks in the walls that only women notice.

I wasn't the first. I won't be the last. I'm so hungry.

I wish I had left



Strangers

Some people are born beautiful. I don't mean just visually, but their souls too. They are just naturally pure, do not need any filter because they don't have different versions of themselves to be a beautiful person. I have to be a different version daily. I have to know what I'm showing so that other people can perceive me as I want. It is not effortless and natural. It is just how I defend myself against hatred. Hatred not from the others, but myself. I have a little person in my head who is perfect, sarcastic but not offensive, cool but has boundaries and things like that. I don't depict that visual reference, and that is who I compare the new people I meet to. My judgement is brutal. I don't understand beautiful people.

Dark hair, deep eyes, pure soul.

How does she do it?

I see her, every day, the same energy, the same walk, everything remains the same, she gives no space to discontinuity or inconsistency. The way her hair falls behind her, her rhythmic laugh, the unintentionally funny jokes; she is that little person from my head. I try to be like her all the time. The way she sits, the way she talks, her movements are my muscle memory now. but still, when I walk, I feel my limbs getting weird, going all the places I would rather have them not.

My body feels unreal, almost as if my soul visits it during intervals, only to find no potential and at the end, snatches the little string of hope I'd been looking forward to and then finally holding onto, to replace it with that old stench of starvation. But everything looks soo natural on her. It makes me look like dirt water. The layers of sedimentation, each one with a different level of purity. Layers and layers to myself. So, whenever I meet someone, I rip them out with my judgment.

First the skin comes off; the layer that shows how they want to be perceived.

Then comes off the flesh; and I decide if their strengths are enough for me to like or accept them. Then I break the bones and reveal their hidden truths and their deepest fears.

Lastly, I rip the hearts out and always hold it close to me. Every heart is different, so, I refer to them all

equally to understand and concentrate my understanding of human nature. The thickness and the pressure of the blood, each and every heartbeat of the heart tells me the real versions of people, not what they showcase but how they really belong.

After that, I select the layer most suitable for each person. Nobody knows me entirely. Even the sediments at the bottom with the dirt and rocks belong to me. The things they hold, the good and bad both. I underestimate the filth I contain in myself, for I've been too scared to explore the deepest parts of me. So, every time I speak, it's never me. The water gets dirtier every time I feel new hands diluting it. The water is filthy and impure. It is something that

cannot be undone. Somethings can never be fixed and I can never understand how beautiful people function. It is not sad, it is empty. It is that hollow feeling, with the spiky wires around your neck choking and forbidding you from crying or speaking because there seems nothing wrong. I believe that I have a lot to be grateful for, to feel the way I do. It is why I feel my eyes getting droopy and what could be wrong with me.

It is tiring, every moment I live is intentional. I will never be okay since I've only known living like this.

It is how I've survived and maybe is something I'm born with, because, some people are just born broken, and we cannot change that. Beautiful people may be created but these cracks let in the dirt and grease. So, I will wait for my last day like a dog at the door and miss the version of myself I never was like a little child, till I can be truly free and feel pure again.



For my Beloved

By Alisha Sharan

They told me I am mad
cause to love is to be patient
But I beg you please consume me
Just say, "I could kill for you" and show that you mean it
For to study you perpetually is inevitable for me
You'll turn eternal and I'll be immortal
My sobriety drowns in my temptations of you

I can see you
You look good from both front and back
I am drunk in disguise with the distance I need from me
Stolen stares
Your pretty smile
And our curious minds align
To my shy wine; you're all I want

My visions come true
I lay in bed sharing my thoughts with you
Slicing me open, I share it with you
But it ends and I burn a new hell
Crawling and begging as I watch you call me mad
Because I meant it when I said it
I could kill for you

Come back and come looking for me
I am the one you need to want
Dare you steal yourself from me
Leave all the world behind
I'll say it, I am mad
My madness is a defence against terror
My madness is a defence against grief



By Brooke Shinnick



Sum the Vitch

Society's Fear of
POWERFUL WOMEN

WRITTEN BY
MEGAN MAHLE

ADORE

Historically, powerful women have been seen as bad omens. Warning signs. A danger to a perfectly prejudiced society. Before the early 20th century feminist movements and the 2010 #girlboss era, women were treated as inferior to their male counterparts (and still are). This systemic inequality manifests in many forms, but one of the more interesting is “women as witches”. But what is a witch? According to the Oxford dictionary, a witch is “A person (in later use typically a woman) who practises witchcraft or magic, esp. of a malevolent or harmful nature.” This term became exhausted from the 14th to 18th centuries in the era known as the “witchcraft centuries”. It earned this name for its cruel treatment of anyone accused of black magic, heresy, mystical powers, or general witchy activities. The punishments for this loosely used term were generally torture and execution. It was present in both small community courts and at the national level. The “witchcraft centuries” saw an influx of burning at the stake, hanging, and drowning. But, of course, none of the crimes truly fit the punishment. The term “witch” was haphazardly imposed upon people who didn’t conform to societal standards, which were often independent, powerful, and confident

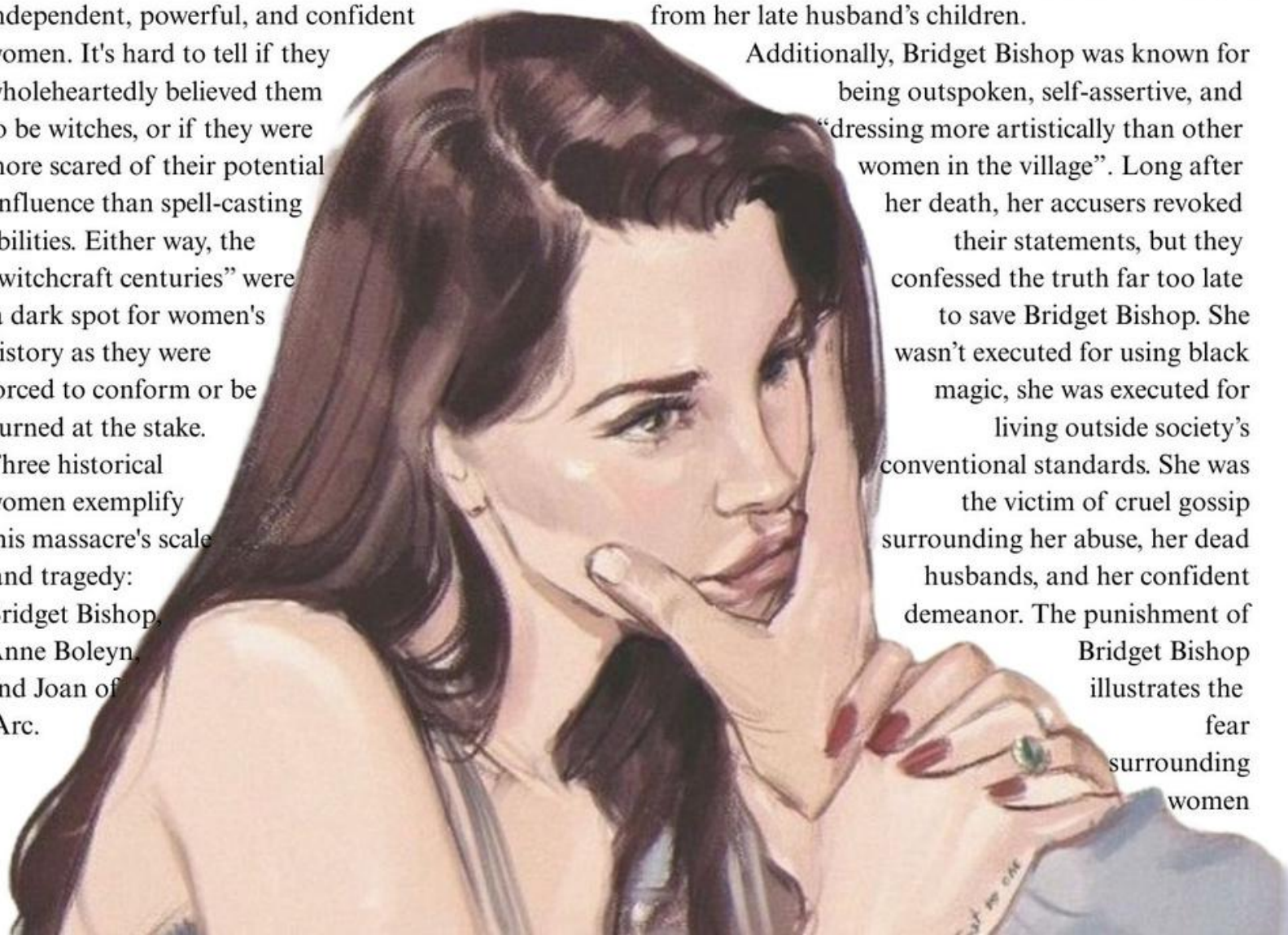
women. It's hard to tell if they wholeheartedly believed them to be witches, or if they were more scared of their potential influence than spell-casting abilities. Either way, the “witchcraft centuries” were a dark spot for women's history as they were forced to conform or be burned at the stake.

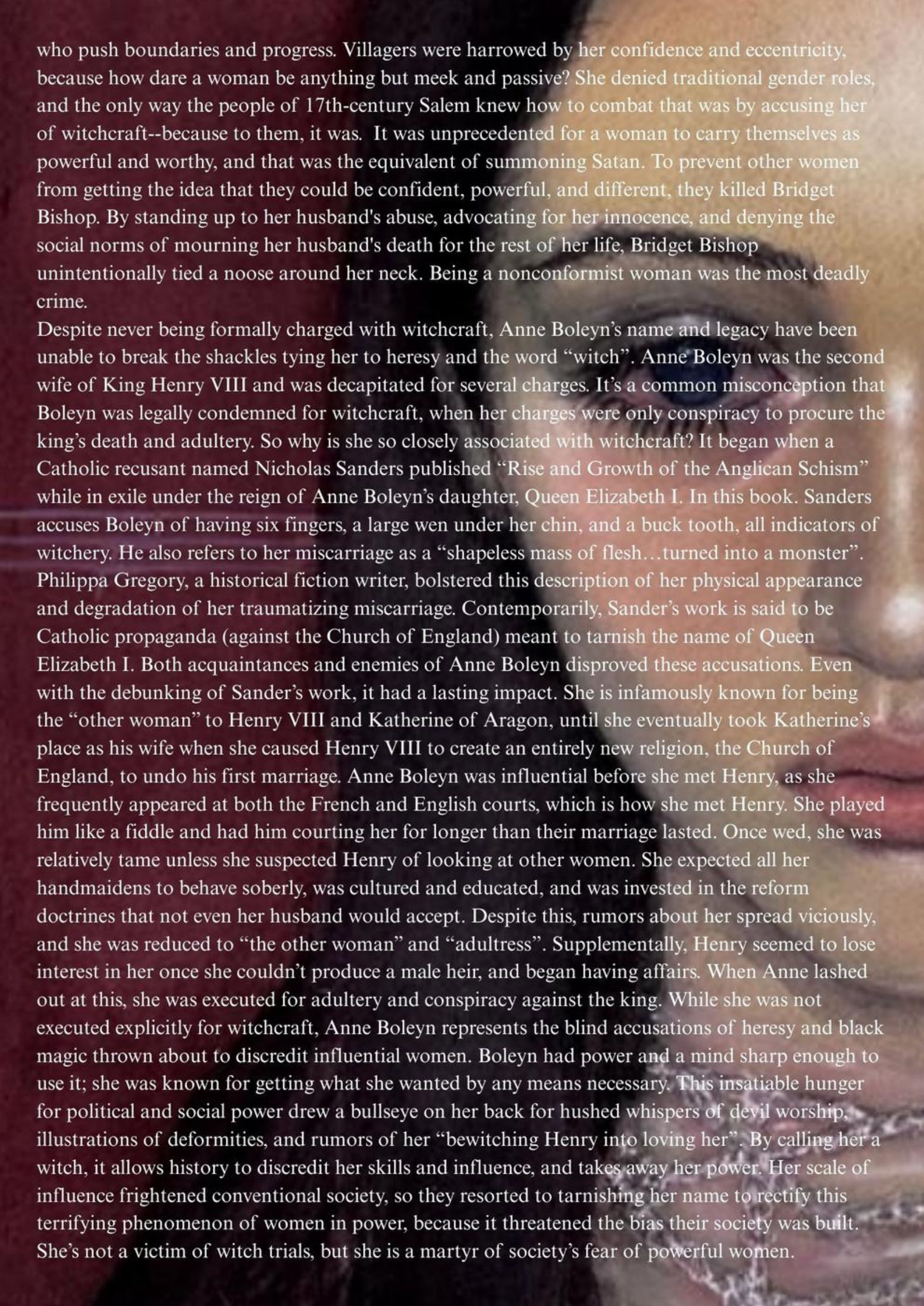
Three historical women exemplify this massacre's scale and tragedy:

Bridget Bishop,
Anne Boleyn,
and Joan of Arc.

Bridget Bishop existed during the height of the American “witchcraft centuries” in the 1600s and was one of the first victims of the Salem Witch Trials. She was executed when she was charged with witchcraft. Citizens of Salem accused her of attacking and killing their children, making beloved pets disappear, and sending bewitched animals to attack her foes (specifically a talking monkey). She was also accused of devil worship and being possessed. Her genitals were all so found to be witchy as she had, according to MuseumHack, “nipples where nipples didn’t belong”. These vast and supernatural crimes of hers had no evidence to support them, but it was her word against a town of people determined to see her dead. But why would this community come together to end her life wantonly? Because she lived her life against the conventional 17th-century norms. Bridget Bishop had three husbands before she died in 1692, starkly contrasting the typical single-marriage and dutiful wife standard. Bishop’s second marriage was volatile and turbulent; she frequently fought with her husband, and they had multiple public altercations where he abused her. It was her second husband’s death that sparked witchcraft accusations from her late husband’s children.

Additionally, Bridget Bishop was known for being outspoken, self-assertive, and “dressing more artistically than other women in the village”. Long after her death, her accusers revoked their statements, but they confessed the truth far too late to save Bridget Bishop. She wasn’t executed for using black magic, she was executed for living outside society’s conventional standards. She was the victim of cruel gossip surrounding her abuse, her dead husbands, and her confident demeanor. The punishment of Bridget Bishop illustrates the fear surrounding women





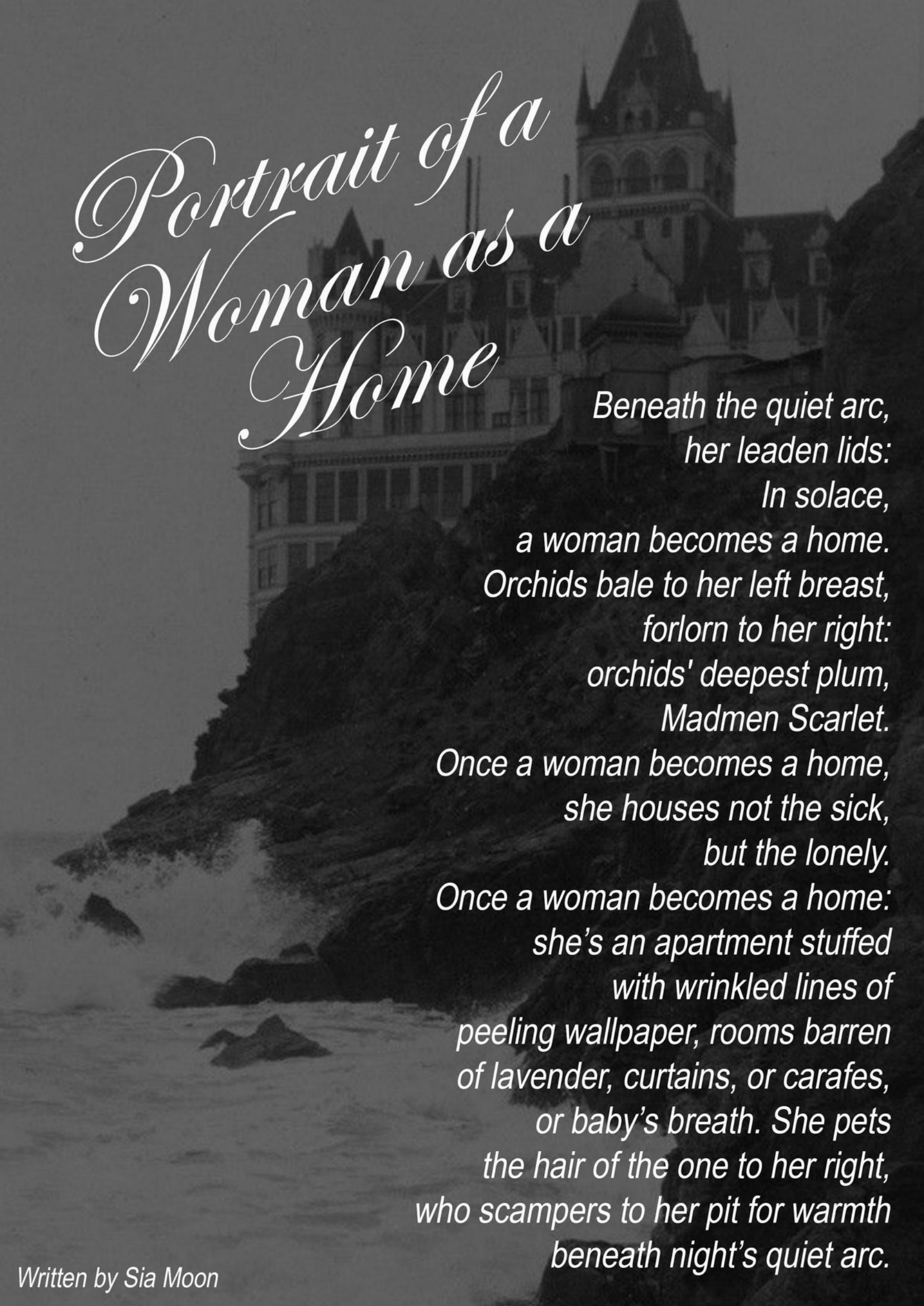
who push boundaries and progress. Villagers were harrowed by her confidence and eccentricity, because how dare a woman be anything but meek and passive? She denied traditional gender roles, and the only way the people of 17th-century Salem knew how to combat that was by accusing her of witchcraft--because to them, it was. It was unprecedented for a woman to carry themselves as powerful and worthy, and that was the equivalent of summoning Satan. To prevent other women from getting the idea that they could be confident, powerful, and different, they killed Bridget Bishop. By standing up to her husband's abuse, advocating for her innocence, and denying the social norms of mourning her husband's death for the rest of her life, Bridget Bishop unintentionally tied a noose around her neck. Being a nonconformist woman was the most deadly crime.

Despite never being formally charged with witchcraft, Anne Boleyn's name and legacy have been unable to break the shackles tying her to heresy and the word "witch". Anne Boleyn was the second wife of King Henry VIII and was decapitated for several charges. It's a common misconception that Boleyn was legally condemned for witchcraft, when her charges were only conspiracy to procure the king's death and adultery. So why is she so closely associated with witchcraft? It began when a Catholic recusant named Nicholas Sanders published "Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism" while in exile under the reign of Anne Boleyn's daughter, Queen Elizabeth I. In this book, Sanders accuses Boleyn of having six fingers, a large wen under her chin, and a buck tooth, all indicators of witchery. He also refers to her miscarriage as a "shapeless mass of flesh...turned into a monster". Philippa Gregory, a historical fiction writer, bolstered this description of her physical appearance and degradation of her traumatizing miscarriage. Contemporarily, Sander's work is said to be Catholic propaganda (against the Church of England) meant to tarnish the name of Queen Elizabeth I. Both acquaintances and enemies of Anne Boleyn disproved these accusations. Even with the debunking of Sander's work, it had a lasting impact. She is infamously known for being the "other woman" to Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon, until she eventually took Katherine's place as his wife when she caused Henry VIII to create an entirely new religion, the Church of England, to undo his first marriage. Anne Boleyn was influential before she met Henry, as she frequently appeared at both the French and English courts, which is how she met Henry. She played him like a fiddle and had him courting her for longer than their marriage lasted. Once wed, she was relatively tame unless she suspected Henry of looking at other women. She expected all her handmaidens to behave soberly, was cultured and educated, and was invested in the reform doctrines that not even her husband would accept. Despite this, rumors about her spread viciously, and she was reduced to "the other woman" and "adulteress". Supplementally, Henry seemed to lose interest in her once she couldn't produce a male heir, and began having affairs. When Anne lashed out at this, she was executed for adultery and conspiracy against the king. While she was not executed explicitly for witchcraft, Anne Boleyn represents the blind accusations of heresy and black magic thrown about to discredit influential women. Boleyn had power and a mind sharp enough to use it; she was known for getting what she wanted by any means necessary. This insatiable hunger for political and social power drew a bullseye on her back for hushed whispers of devil worship, illustrations of deformities, and rumors of her "bewitching Henry into loving her". By calling her a witch, it allows history to discredit her skills and influence, and takes away her power. Her scale of influence frightened conventional society, so they resorted to tarnishing her name to rectify this terrifying phenomenon of women in power, because it threatened the bias their society was built. She's not a victim of witch trials, but she is a martyr of society's fear of powerful women.

Similarly to Anne Boleyn, Joan of Arc was not formally charged with witchcraft, but was considered one in all relevant fashions. During the 15th century, Joan of Arc was famously burned at the stake in one of history's greatest betrayals. Under what she believed to be the guidance of god, she fought for France in the Hundred Years War to put Charles VII on the French throne. She pretended to be a male to complete this goal, one of the things that led to her execution. She was formally charged with heresy, wearing men's clothes, claiming to be inspired by God, and refusing to submit her beliefs to the Church. Her trial was unfair and rigged by the English and their allies, and she was forced to sign a confession admitting to her charges. Her success in battle, the cause of many French victories, was associated with "supernatural strength" and was "ascribed to the Devil". Specifically, Bishop Cauchon was committed to proving her a witch, for more political reasons than religious, as he was vying for English success in the war, and she threatened that. She agreed to obey the Church, and that decreased Cauchon's ability to get her convicted for witchcraft. The Church was given an edict to wear "women's clothes" before her execution, but was then told by Cauchon's English allies to dress her in men's clothes. He then moraciously burst into her cell and found her "disobeying the Church", perpetuating his desire for her to be accused of witchcraft. Bishop Cauchon was never successful in getting her formally charged with witchcraft, but did succeed in helping to get her executed. He hoped this would lower the morale of the French troops. The rumors created by Cauchon were used to attribute her military success to a greater power than a woman, because how could she have possibly possessed the ability to do that independently? She had to be a witch, she had to be in league with the Devil for that to be a possibility; that's what they believed. Portraying her as a witch also discredited her "divine connection," which was the reason she fought for Charles to take the throne. By accusing her of lying about her communication with God and associating her with the Devil, the English also got to discredit Charles's place on the throne. Joan of Arc is the epitome of witchcraft combined with religion. The rumors of her witchcraft took away her power and pushed the stereotype that women couldn't be successful or masculine without the help of the supernatural. By accusing her of heresy, it took away the religious influence Joan of Arc had and encouraged people not to believe in her connection or mission with God. This simultaneously took away her power and religion. While never formally charged with the crime of witchcraft, it was used as a verbal weapon to strip away her power and personality. Joan of Arc's accusations of witchcraft were a direct result of not believing in black magic, but using superstitious fears to further political and social ideals, no matter who was killed in the crossfire. These three women didn't die because they were witches; they died because society couldn't comprehend their nonconformism. Their confidence, intelligence, masculinity, eccentricity, and power threatened the gender norms of the "witchcraft centuries". Everyone was scared that these women would be the catalyst for a larger movement of powerful women, women who would take the spotlight away from men. Their ideals of women being passive and unimportant were threatened. They thought they could silence this progression through executions, but now it only serves to prove that they were influential despite the people attempting to hold them back. "Witches" haven't gone away; often, feminist icons have witchy imagery associated with them, by choice or not. Stevie Nicks, a famous singer and feminist, embraces the idea of witchcraft and incorporates it into her art as a symbol of history and power, most famously in her song "Rhiannon" with Fleetwood Mac. On a more tragic note, modern witch hunts have been reported in Indonesia and sub-Saharan Africa, according to The Week. They say the hunts are perpetrated by powerful young men who are looking to eradicate differences, as well as for medicinal purposes. Ultimately, the idea that different or powerful women must be supernatural, associated with the devil, or are overall "witches" has not disappeared. It presents itself in different ways contemporarily, but society still has a fear of powerful women.



By Brooke Shinnick



Portrait of a Woman as a Home

*Beneath the quiet arc,
her leaden lids:
In solace,
a woman becomes a home.
Orchids bale to her left breast,
forlorn to her right:
orchids' deepest plum,
Madmen Scarlet.
Once a woman becomes a home,
she houses not the sick,
but the lonely.
Once a woman becomes a home:
she's an apartment stuffed
with wrinkled lines of
peeling wallpaper, rooms barren
of lavender, curtains, or carafes,
or baby's breath. She pets
the hair of the one to her right,
who scampers to her pit for warmth
beneath night's quiet arc.*



Written by Clara Verischel

Painted Nightmares, Enchanted Minds: Goya's Bewitched Women

In eighteenth century, Spain, raising a girl “properly” often meant teaching her to suppress truth and disguise her most natural desires. She was allowed everything—except sincerity. As long as she hid her emotions and feigned disdain for what she yearned for most, she was praised. In this view, a successful upbringing instilled fear, and a silence akin to servitude. While the rest of Europe was discovering the philosophy of The Light, which was all about freedom and critical thinking, the control of the Spanish Catholic Church brought the country back to medieval times. Women needed to be submissive, to bear children, to embody purity, and to obey. That was what the church, and thus everyone, expected of them, it was the norm. But some were rebellious, some were brave, some went against the Church and their conservative rules. But by doing so, their fate was sealed: they would be arrested, hunted, humiliated, and, eventually, killed publicly.

Any behaviour deemed “unwomanly” — from sexual freedom to childlessness, from religious doubt to mental anguish — was a sentence in itself, often leading inexorably to death. Because such defiance was seen as unnatural and dangerous, it was believed that women who exhibited these conducts were in league with the devil himself — branded as witches, enemies of both God and society. Francisco de Goya saw these harsh rules and superstitions as nothing less than delirium—a dangerous madness fueled by ignorance and fear. In response, he created a powerful series of satirical works that mocked those who blindly believed such absurdities. Through his art, Goya defended the so-called “witches,” exposing the cruelty and folly of a society quick to condemn women for simply being themselves.

The Witches' Sabbath is Goya's most famous depiction of witches and dark magic. In many of the Spanish painter's works, the goat — a symbol traditionally associated with the devil — looms large, embodying the evil forces that society feared and blamed on these women. Yet, through his satirical portrayal of the Great He-Goat surrounded by witches, Goya highlights the absurdity of linking women's supposed “witchcraft” to evil, turning the figure of the devil into a mockery of superstition itself. As much as the black horns and crazy eyes are scary, evil isn't depicted, it's implied, raising the question, what is more frightening, the truth, or the human imagination?



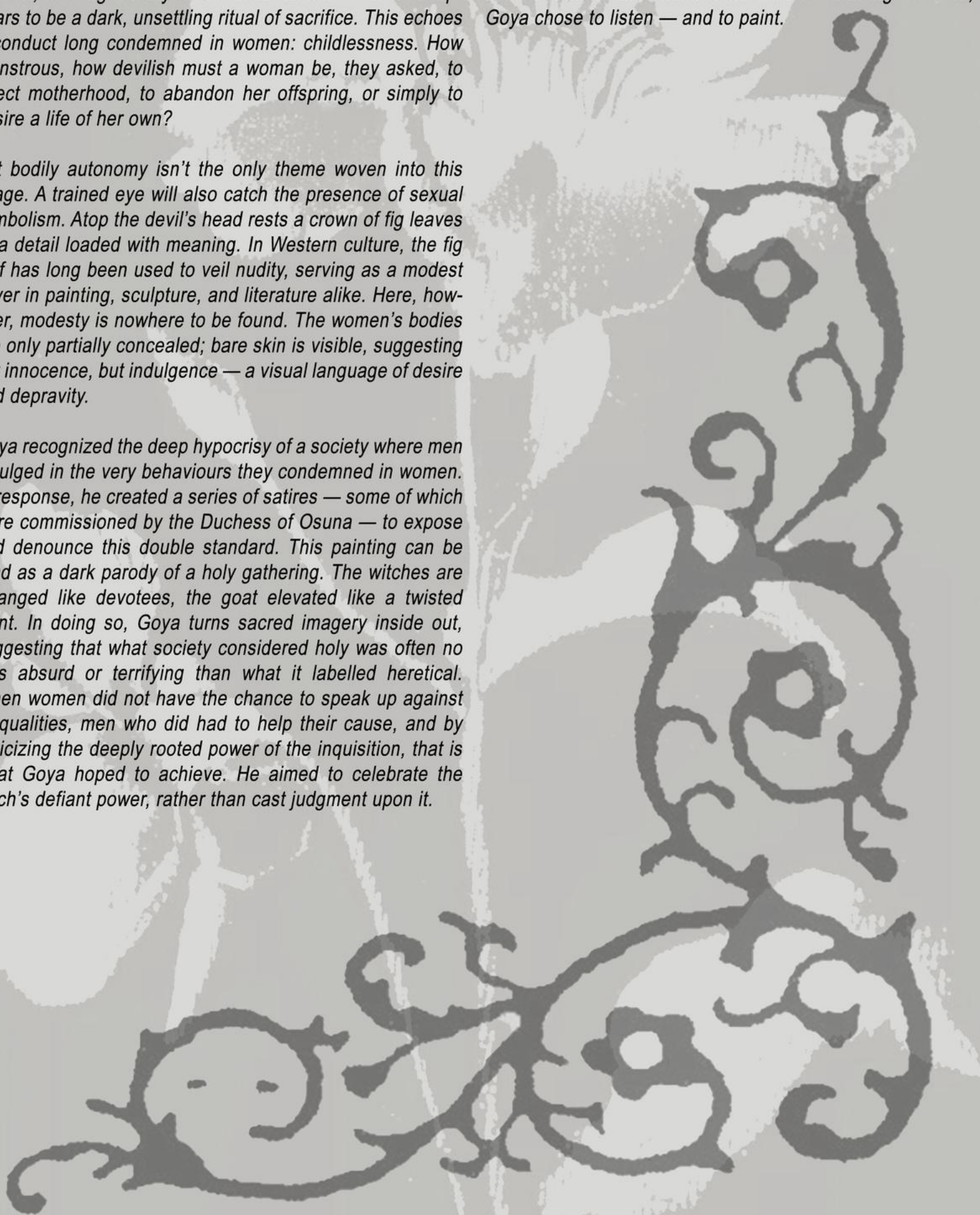
What heightens the unease in *The Witches' Sabbath* is Goya's masterful and unexpected use of light. Rather than cloaking the scene in shadow, as one might expect of a depiction of dark rites, Goya exposes it with a stark, almost clinical brightness. This light does not comfort; it confronts. It sharpens every feature — the witches' twisted expressions, the devil's blank stare, the lifeless forms strewn across the ground. The clarity strips the scene of mystery, making it all the more disturbing. We are forced to look directly into the faces of fear and madness, as if Goya were daring us to witness, without flinching, the irrational horrors that society projected onto women.

There is no diabolic or heretic behaviour being shown in this image, and yet everything leads us to believe something disastrous is taking place. After our gaze settles on the protagonist at the centre of the painting, it drifts to the background, where three tiny infant remains come into view. Then, drawn forward to the foreground, we encounter other lifeless forms, until finally resting on the outstretched arm of a witch, offering a baby to the devil himself — in what appears to be a dark, unsettling ritual of sacrifice. This echoes a conduct long condemned in women: childlessness. How monstrous, how devilish must a woman be, they asked, to reject motherhood, to abandon her offspring, or simply to desire a life of her own?

But bodily autonomy isn't the only theme woven into this image. A trained eye will also catch the presence of sexual symbolism. Atop the devil's head rests a crown of fig leaves — a detail loaded with meaning. In Western culture, the fig leaf has long been used to veil nudity, serving as a modest cover in painting, sculpture, and literature alike. Here, however, modesty is nowhere to be found. The women's bodies are only partially concealed; bare skin is visible, suggesting not innocence, but indulgence — a visual language of desire and depravity.

Goya recognized the deep hypocrisy of a society where men indulged in the very behaviours they condemned in women. In response, he created a series of satires — some of which were commissioned by the Duchess of Osuna — to expose and denounce this double standard. This painting can be read as a dark parody of a holy gathering. The witches are arranged like devotees, the goat elevated like a twisted saint. In doing so, Goya turns sacred imagery inside out, suggesting that what society considered holy was often no less absurd or terrifying than what it labelled heretical. When women did not have the chance to speak up against inequalities, men who did had to help their cause, and by criticizing the deeply rooted power of the inquisition, that is what Goya hoped to achieve. He aimed to celebrate the witch's defiant power, rather than cast judgment upon it.

In his haunting depictions of witches and rituals, Goya was not merely indulging in the grotesque — he was holding up a mirror to a society obsessed with control, fear, and contradiction. By mocking superstition and elevating the figure of the witch, he offered a radical counter-narrative: one in which female power, autonomy, and rebellion were not sources of evil, but symbols of resistance. In a world that silenced women and called them mad for wanting freedom, Goya chose to listen — and to paint.





By Brooke Shinnick

The Hetic

Written by Sharanya Tissera

The first sign that the grand old blues are making their seasonal return is when that deep dissatisfaction starts to creep in and ruin the subtle joys of the mundane. Morning coffee becomes stale, and catching the train to work isn't so romantic anymore. I wind my scarf around my neck, mohair, and I stand to avoid the seated crowd. I routinely wrap the scarf exactly twice, and once I'm on the train, I spin the woolly ends around my hand four times.

Neurotic. That was my brother's favourite word at dinner, and if he had the chance to rile up a crowd and stand in the spotlight for even a second, mentioning his neurotic sister would become the highlight of conversation. Sensational, I can't describe it as anything other than that, and I blame my passivity for their raucous laughter. Leaning against the steel doors of the train, I wrap methodically four times around and four times undone. An old man seated on the priority bench switches his glances between me and another woman. She's pregnant — noticeably so — and no one offers a seat. I glare at him. So shameless. That would be nine rows of turns, and according to *The Inferno*, I've sentenced myself to the sixth ring for heresy.

There used to be a painting hanging in the hallway to the dining room, which showed the young Joan of Arc standing in front of a court as they condemned her to death. A fearless girl who had nothing to lose as she stood in front of the men who would decide her fate. I would stand there for hours, just admiring that brave look on her face. The second sign of the blues comes with the questions. The constant worrying. That bone-rattling anxiety that everyone in the world is out to get you. I don't live in that house anymore — that dark hallway lit up only by one small lamp in the corner. It led to a large oak dining table, well-varnished. It always smelled of some sort of polish. I ate there alone nearly every night.

Talking to yourself is seen as a sign of absurdity. The very image of a woman who is self-reliant and talks to herself is what drives the power behind the word lunacy. I looked it up in the dictionary at the college library back when I was twenty and had nothing better to do. I wanted to understand why my mother could never meet my eyes, and why my father took so much joy out of angering me.

The doors of the train finally opened, and a man pushed me to get out first. I hadn't wrapped my scarf twice around, and it lay on the dirty platform floor. A young woman in a pinstripe coat picked it up — dark cherry on her lips — and handed it over to me. Her voice sounded like Joan, or what I imagined she sounded like, and she passed off a joke that we women always had to pick up after them. At that moment, I felt this strange buzz of kinship develop between me and this stranger. She says we so effortlessly, and I want to hear it more. I walk beside her on the platform, carefully treading behind her down the stairs and watching the bob of her curls as they threaten to come undone from her bun. She smiles with this mysticism, as if she understood me simply by touching my scarf.

She tells me of a clothing factory that burned down a week ago. I need to catch the subway, and she needs to cross the street, but I keep walking, and so does she. We walk past the overhead construction, with its steel pipes and stained wood, and I ignore the way one of them stares at me. It's different from her eyes, from my mother's eyes, and my reflection. She leads us to a small cafe — very hole in the wall, she tells me — and I settle in the corner while she orders something for us.

That old house was always empty, and it only ever came to life while I was gone. The sandy brick walls of the outside. The dust was collecting on the TV stand. The pair of dirty running shoes no one claimed. The memories rush back to me as she sits down and hands me a cappuccino. The drink for the sophisticated. I feel like a fraud. But she assures me with a silent look — a gaze that breaks through the iron barrier of being the lunatic, of being the black sheep — and she tells me we are not different. Somehow, along the way, my mother had been like me too, I rationalised, but the rules got the better of her.

I hold onto the warmth of the porcelain cup and stare at her ascot, neatly layered underneath her pressed white shirt. She works a lot, and so do I. She's a designer, and I can barely name a brand or two. My days pass by slowly. Painfully. I wish that the next one would not come, but I do not tell her this. She sips her coffee and tells me we're free to smoke inside if we want. She's a dynamic woman, and I take her up on her offer. We smoke in our little corner, and the couple sitting behind us glare. The woman coughs loudly. But this lady, with her pinstripe coat, points at a sign: Smoking is Allowed Indoors.

I tell her of the blues, and their warning signs, and the fact that I will burst at the seams sooner or later with a poisonous rage. She pats my hands and tells me that it's shedding season. Women are snakes, she speaks calmly, leaning back to coyly blow her smoke at the couple. I don't mean it in a bad way, she reasons. I'd be insulting myself. It's just— I take a sip of my coffee and nod my head because I'm entranced by the comparison. It's just... every woman has her moment of renewal. She needs to take the time to shed off the old to don her new skin, and she'll be better than ever. You don't want to stay in your old skin, do you? I shake my head vehemently and focus on the ridges of the wooden table. There are small scratches and some stains of nail polish. She doesn't say any more, and I tell her that I'd be a black mamba if I were a snake. Why? she asks. I take a drag and puff it out to a world I can't reach. I'm poisonous, and I hurt people. She takes a sip and puts on her leather gloves. I thought you'd say it was because you were very graceful.

Graceful.

Not poisonous.

Not lunacy.

Not neurotic.

I looked down at my nails — a simple coating of the darkest red I could find glistened under the yellow light of the cafe. I dug my nail into the grooves of the old ridges and let my polish scratch off. She stood up and waited. I wrapped my scarf four times around my hand, unravelled it, and then twice around my neck. She pulled on the edge of her gloves and patted down her jacket. Terrible habit, she apologised, and I pulled on the woollen edge of my scarf. I tell her about the wrapping, and she thinks about it for a while. They won't send you there, she finally reasons. Why? I ask. Your fate isn't written up to them, she smiles. I look back to see the couple arguing at their table.

Out on the street, our faces bitten by the chilling cold of a February morning. A woman walked by in a raincoat, and another was carrying a small poodle in her arms. An older woman, dressed in a white fur coat, passes us by, and she gives me a small wink. I adore her bright eyes. We walked down the street at a slow pace. She told me she wasn't going into work after all and that I should visit her sometime if I'm ever on this street. She held my hands with her leather gloves, and I watched the ascot shuffle in the wind. Her curls are much looser from the bun, and the remnants of her lipstick sit on the edge of the porcelain cup.





Sticky apple cordial
and
fingers pricked with broken vases
and
a suffocation of pretend
and
three bruises on my knees
and
being drenched in sunlight
and
gasping for air that never comes
and
tight screwed on smiles
and
pacing on linoleum
and
picture perfect family breakfast
and
mother talking about religion to feel important
and
the bloodied baby pink nightgown hidden in the closet
and
lipsticked mouths opening too wide
and
devouring the lies
and
now remember to be nice
and
patchwork puppet limbs
and
i can't
and
i just can't
and please don't let go
of the string.

Hometown

Written by Rifa Iyooob



Nothing Girl



Nothing girl like her father wanted
black mary janes and her sunday best smile

Nothing girl folds her hands
prays to a god she knows isn't real

drops a silver dime offering
Nothing girl with a mona lisa smile
takes kisses on her pearly hand

flutters a pair of bambi eyes
Nothing girl becomes lover girl
guilty dirty pleasure

a story for the drunkards to pass along

Nothing girl wears a chapel white veil
snaps both ankles walking down the aisle
carried to the altar like a broken dove

Nothing girl is cut in half
they need more of her to go around
an eye for each

Nothing girl is feasted on
she tries to scream

she forgets her mother took her voice a while ago

Nothing girl, we tried the best we could
they mourn and recite her eulogy

and in the crowd, a girl sitting front row of the church
wearing black mary janes and her sunday best smile

Written by
Rifa Syoob

Fallen Angel

Written by Rifa Iyooob

I have met an angel,
witnessed the others weep for their loss
as she descended onto earth
her wings were clipped but not her radiance
her every touch left heart-shaped stains
every smile burning sweet against rotten earth
she has created beauty
she is beauty
is the laughs between the cracks of graying concrete
the melting copper sun before it's swallowed whole
the mother fruit before it bleeds
and now
now the angels are dancing
for the world is a wonderful thing once more
there is luster
there is life
for she has become earth's eternal muse
it's clandestine lucky clover
the one we all were blessed to find.



Nobody Likes a Mad Woman

Written by Stevi Eibach

I think of the song "Mad Woman" by Taylor Swift quite often, and how true the lyrics really are. When women are upset for valid reasons, they are immediately painted as being in the wrong. You're supposed to be quiet, don't have an obnoxious personality, and definitely don't stand up for yourself or others. As the years go by and I become more aware of society, I have noticed how rooted misogyny is in every aspect of life. It's in the short conversations we have, the critiques on random strangers we don't even know, and the way we laugh at jokes made at our expense. Internalized misogyny is the unconscious bias that women adopt towards themselves or other women. There are so many anti-women conversations that infiltrate women's perspectives.

The time period we live in currently is extremely digitalized, and information is easier to access than ever before. Being able to access information in seconds has also done quite the harm when it comes to bashing female celebrities. The media works in monstrous ways because every single click counts. Rachel Zegler became the victim of a hate train for months for simply saying the live-action Snow White movie wasn't going to follow traditional standards. For months, she experienced horrific amounts of hate for denying tradition. Growth is important. We will never overcome stereotypes or boxes that women have been put in for centuries if the same narrative is followed. Going against tradition is seen as almost taboo, in a sense. It's also become quite the trend to hate on male celebrities' girlfriends. People will create an idea of said male celebrity in their head, and if they aren't dating a girl that would fit into their standard of him, they will direct hate onto his girlfriend. I have seen hundreds of comments saying, "What do they even talk about?" "Can they even hold a conversation?"—which shows how deeply rooted misogyny really is. Social media has convinced people they know what others are like, when in reality, everything is fabricated.

From a young age, we are taught it's wrong to be overly emotional, and that women can't be logical due to the fact they're overly "emotional." Something that hasn't gone unnoticed recently is the decline in empathy. To have knowledge is to be empathetic. Everyone deserves to be understood, and that is something slowly slipping out of daily life. If everyone possessed just so much as an ounce of empathy, we would be so much farther ahead. If being emotional is such a crime, then how is having no emotion any better? The human experience is based on experiences and the emotions we feel during those experiences. Being emotionally intelligent is something everyone should work toward.

WOMEN LIKE HUNTING WITCHES TOO:

Bonding over gossiping has been a thing for quite some time. Internalized misogyny continues pitting women against each other, and the line "Women like hunting witches too" shows that. When we partake in gossiping, the outcome can be harmful, especially if there are missing pieces of information. Bonding over hating the same person isn't new, but there is always a deeper meaning. And that deeper meaning: misogyny. The comments women make about other women, feeling disgusted by feminine things, and so many other things that just end up being normalized because of the patriarchal society we live in. Seeing young women tear themselves to shreds or drain their bank accounts to keep up with the newest beauty standards is a reminder we can never really rest. From sun up to sun down, it feels like one big performance—trying to fit into standards that weren't made for you, trying to achieve something that's unattainable.

Terms like "I'm just a girl," "girl math," and other phrases like that are what are continuing stereotypes. It may seem like a silly trend to partake in, but dumbing down your knowledge to just being a girl is so much deeper.

"Women, they have minds, and they have souls, as well as just hearts. And they've got ambition, and they've got talent, as well as just beauty. I'm so sick of people saying that love is all a woman is fit for."

— Louisa May Alcott, Little Women

This quote runs through my mind nonstop. Women are meant for so much more than love and the traditions forced upon them. It's important to challenge traditions and break those barriers. You are capable of absolutely anything you put your mind to, no matter what it is. Have those tough conversations with the women in your life. Talk about those topics that have been deemed taboo.



Written by Charley Dobson

Hexerei and Hysteria: The Misattribution of Female Emotion

Throughout history, women have lived under expectations to be docile and decorative, a passive beauty to bear children and warm her husband's arm. When a woman breaks her mould, whether it be due to grief, self-expression, or for reasons unbeknownst even to herself, she is tried as a witch or haunted by the label of hysterical.

It doesn't take a brain surgeon or even a degree in medicine to realise that hysteria is not a legitimate diagnosis for any woman's set of supposed symptoms; least of all for symptoms which do not show any health implications at all, rather only frustrations with their roles in society. Secondary roles.

The misattribution of female emotion leading to wrongful diagnoses of hysteria has been explored tirelessly in media, though one pioneering example is the nonfiction novel by Asti Hustvedt titled *Medical Muses*. The text explores medical treatment (or rather mistreatment) of women diagnosed with hysteria—how these unfortunate women were coveted by curious 19th-century physicians, who of course could find no cure to their non-existent illnesses. Their lives and fragile mentality only worsened under the diagnosis of hysteria and reduced the women of this text to objects of diagnostic curiosity. As explored in this novel and evident in countless real-life instances throughout history, treatments for hysteria were alienating and dismissive. 'Hysterical' ladies were essentially hidden or removed from their place in their respective communities. Pronounced women were forced out from polite society, and depending on how far back in history we go, were often accused of any of the following: satanic admiration, witchcraft, or plain delusion as being a cause to their accused hysteria—all suggestions which are completely ignorant to more realistic causes, like an overzealous husband wanting his wife where only he can reach her, for example. Many women were locked away or sent to far-out places: the coast, the country, anywhere out of sight and out of mind.

The very real and very unfortunate history of women suffering from accusations of hysteria has escaped the bounds of history textbooks and fled into the welcoming arms of Hollywood and the publishing press. Countless pieces of fiction employ the trope of the hysterical wife wasting away in her bedroom by the sea. The irony, of course, is not missed by modern audiences with the ability to realise that unbroken isolation is only going to encourage any physical symptoms of insanity, not cure them. I'd like to think I'm pretty much all there upstairs, but if you shut me away and tell me I'm crazy, I'd bet within a month of isolation I'd be conforming to the diagnosis. Now, to make sense of this self-fulfilling prophecy, let's look at an example in literature: *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a tale of forced isolation in which the accusation of hysteria alters the treatment of the narrator so much as to where she becomes exactly what she was labelled as. It is a must-read short story for those interested in attitudes to treatments for hysteria.

With repercussions of harmful stereotypes of hysteria reaching even into today's society, how has hysteria managed to maintain such a vicious hold on public opinion all these years? I think the simple answer is fear of the unknown—fear of those who oppose public opinion. It was the 1880s in which hysteria began to be accepted as a legit diagnosis. This is over 100 years after the height of witch-hunting and trials. Even after occult hangings and huntings were ordered to cease, this doesn't necessarily mean that suspicions dissolved instantly. That leaves around two generations onto which fears of the existence of witches could be pushed before the rise of the hysteria diagnosis, treatment of which is conveniently to exclude hysteric women from everyday life. Perhaps this treatment stems from lingering anxieties as to what women who don't fit their expectations may be capable of. To maintain a patriarchal consensus, it is much easier to discredit and silence the voices and actions of women in disagreement—namely by accusing them of witchcraft or mental incapacitation—than to consider reason in their motives to speak against their social structures.

However, putting the past behind us, if we look to contemporary Western media representation, it would seem that the traits so often associated with hysteria and witchcraft throughout history have been reclaimed. For instance, the iconic Hollywood picture *The Craft* features teenage witches as the unapologetic antiheroes of their story. Similarly, the recent release *Sinners* centres Annie's hoodoo practices, which are wholly responsible for sparing a few survivors from the evil residing in Mississippi. As for hysteria, we can look towards characters like Harley Quinn—an undeniably 'crazy' presentation of a woman—yet viewers don't label her as hysterical. They watch in awe and envy of her pig-tails and carelessness, which only goes to show a shift in societal values regarding femininity and womanhood.

All these reclaimed representations noted, it's not all sunshine and rainbows when it comes to nonconformity in Hollywood, and it would be ignorant to suggest that even now, claims of hysteria don't haunt outspoken women who disagree with their male counterparts (a prominent recent example is namely the media's treatment of Kamala Harris during her election campaigns). Now comparatively, to weigh the media's portrayal of spiritual women, not all representation of Wiccan practice is positive. Just in 2024, for example, the A24 film *Tarot* reduces an ancient divination practice to a invitation to death and destruction, subsequently worsening stigmas which already plague those devoted to such practices.

In short, if history has told us anything, it's that women will always be scrutinised and punished for actions and attitudes that oppose the status quo. But even slow progress is better than no progress. After all, there's nothing wrong with reclaiming a little crazy.



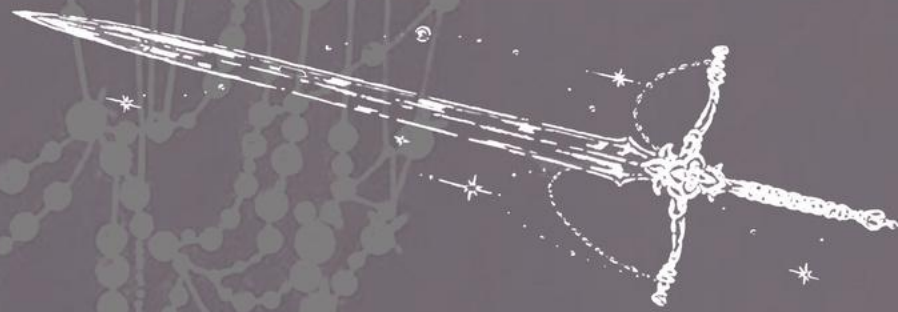
By Brooke Shinnick

Contributor Showcase



Allie Rose
Amanda Gostomski
Andjelic
Ani Nosek
Bella Kirby
Beth Newman-Moseley
Chloe Shoreman
Colina van Bemmell
Dawn Rosa
Divine Photo Project
Eliza Rudalevige
Elliea Kiley
Emma Filer
Eve McKay
Faith Gayring
Hannah Ruth
Jennie Cao
Joan Namaggwa
Kathleen Kralowec
Kaysi Grimes
Lin Eigelshoven
Maddy Abdella/ Madame
Matrix
Madelene McMillian
Madeline Rossetti
Meg Koning
Michaela Hart

Mitch Sprung
Morganite
Moyan Wang
Natalia Mvrie
Rachael Owen
Rachel Genito
Reese Clemons
Reese Elizabeth LaFond
Sam Ectoplasm
Sam Morgan
Sam Solomon
Sol Fin Park
Suhani Tewari
Unbeliebabe
Vlada Pavkina
Witch print



Artists

Alison Ehringer

Allie Marini

Ananiah

Andrea Marisabel Irene Rojas

Anjali Panwar

Azhar Otezhan

Brittany Silveira

Cara Pleym

Chainka

Christine So

Cristina Chaidez

Elizabeth Barnett

Elizabeth Butler

Kara Laymon

Katelynn Lau

Katie Kenney

Mackenzie Kae

Mariam Mouna

Mary Binniger

Millie Percival

Mont Vald

Nell Shore Sirotin

Nerys Schmetterling

Patricia Alejandre

Ryn

Sonakshi

Suraya Foster

Victoria James

Victoria Milumbu

Writers



Carla SM
Carmine Eleonore
Esther
Scram
Violette Rain

Multimedia Artists







Thistle by Moyan Wang

*Moss grows fondly on flesh,
With water meandering into the valley of her breasts,
As daisy chains shackle her feet.
Silently, a periwinkle hue rises to her cheek,
As silken strands of rusted red weave into the water,
A mistress of madness; once a daughter.*

*Murky, miasmic green lays claim to her flowing ivory
dress,
Lazing into her mouth with an intimate caress,
Slickly slithering along her porcelain features.
The reeds writhe like willowy creatures,
While satin petals scatter from her floating palm.
A soft breath blooms, and the brook calms.
With unfocused eyes, the maiden shows no alarm.*

Opheia 
Written by Millie Percival





Written by Charley Dobson

'Girlhood Inferno': Interview with Rachel Genito

Rachel Genito, BFA Illustration '26 is an illustrator from Hudson, New York whose work explores the complexity of femininity, aging, and identity. Working with digital mediums in an array of styles, Rachel is focused on the power of portraiture and storytelling.

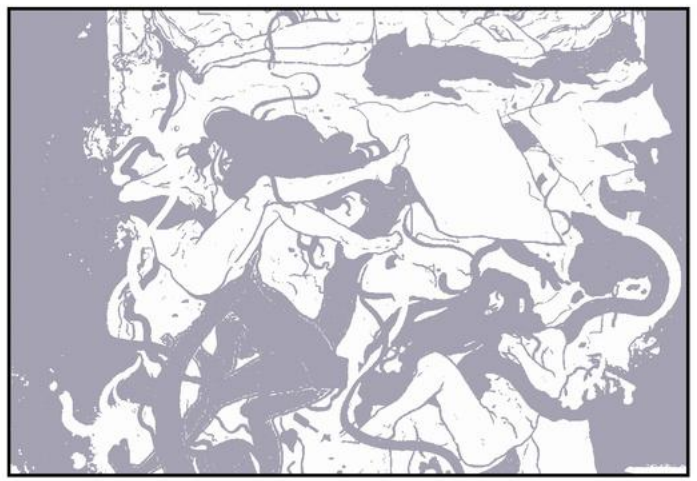
AA: 'Girlhood Inferno' will feature in the issue titled 'Her Bewitched Mind'. It's a volume focused on reclaiming the complexity and disorder of our inner workings as girls. How would you say 'Girlhood Inferno' captures this theme?

RG: I am so beyond excited for this issue! The exploration of girlhood has been a large theme in most of my work. It's something I hold deeply personal, as I have experienced it in my own way but find such beauty in conversing about it with both other young women, with my mother, grandma, and younger sister. It's an ageless experience; it's loved, hated, or adored. Girlhood Inferno is my most relevant work to this theme: the inner chaos of the female mind. There is so much of a war on our external bodies during girlhood and adulthood, yet the mind is also equally complex. Girlhood acts as an almost otherworldly experience at times, and I think this theme and my illustration both tap into the magic and almost mysticism of that transition.

AA: Within 'Girlhood Inferno' there are countless hidden gems that play into capturing the turbulent experience of girlhood. To highlight just a few, I noticed some religious symbolism from the addition of a Bible, a reference to *The Bell Jar* (arguably the most prominent example of "sad girl lit"), as well as the gorgeous deer, which typically in pop culture represents femininity and innocence. Could you walk through how all these stunning visual references work together to create the essence of girlhood captured in this piece?

RG: Absolutely! This work is exciting to break down, as I love to hear what people have noticed the most. There are two ways to read this work: at the bottom or the top. At the top, we have a young woman on a bed daydreaming, or "bed rotting." At the bottom, there is the young girl, innocent, a representation of the beginning. The ribbon acts as a bit of a guide, allowing you to read it whichever direction you prefer, yet it quickly becomes messy, hidden, and tangled around other symbols I included. Heavily inspired by Dante's *Inferno*, I wanted it to feel like different layers of hell, or "girlhood." I made sure to include as many iconic symbols as possible of the girlhood experience, rooted deeply in the current internet aesthetics. There is a teddy bear, makeup, a doll, childhood drawings, shopping bags, and morphing bodies as a

symbol of the biggest part of girlhood, how the body changes through puberty. I wanted it to feel chaotic, often as the experience of girlhood feels, everything is in a state of change, shifting around, all layered on top of each other like a messy room. I always love to hear how others see/read it, and how they may personally connect with any of the symbols woven throughout.



AA: Looking at your other works also, it's as though there's some real storytelling throughout all your pieces. Where do you typically find inspiration to encourage your art?

RG: Reading has always been at the forefront of my creative process. I have always spent a great deal of time reading in college and use it and research as the backbone of my work. I believe to be a skilled artist, you should be well-rounded in terms of literary understanding. In our current world, critical thought and reading are even more important than ever. One of my favourite things is going through my portfolio and pointing out all the references to books and stories I try to include. It makes it so much more fun and dynamic in making art, thinking about the storytelling, and the writing that inspires it all.

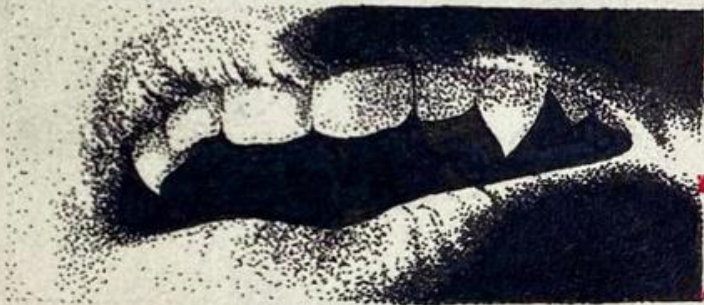
AA: Given that this issue focuses on unapologetic female emotion, what feelings are you hoping to encourage from someone viewing this piece? How did you feel during its creation?

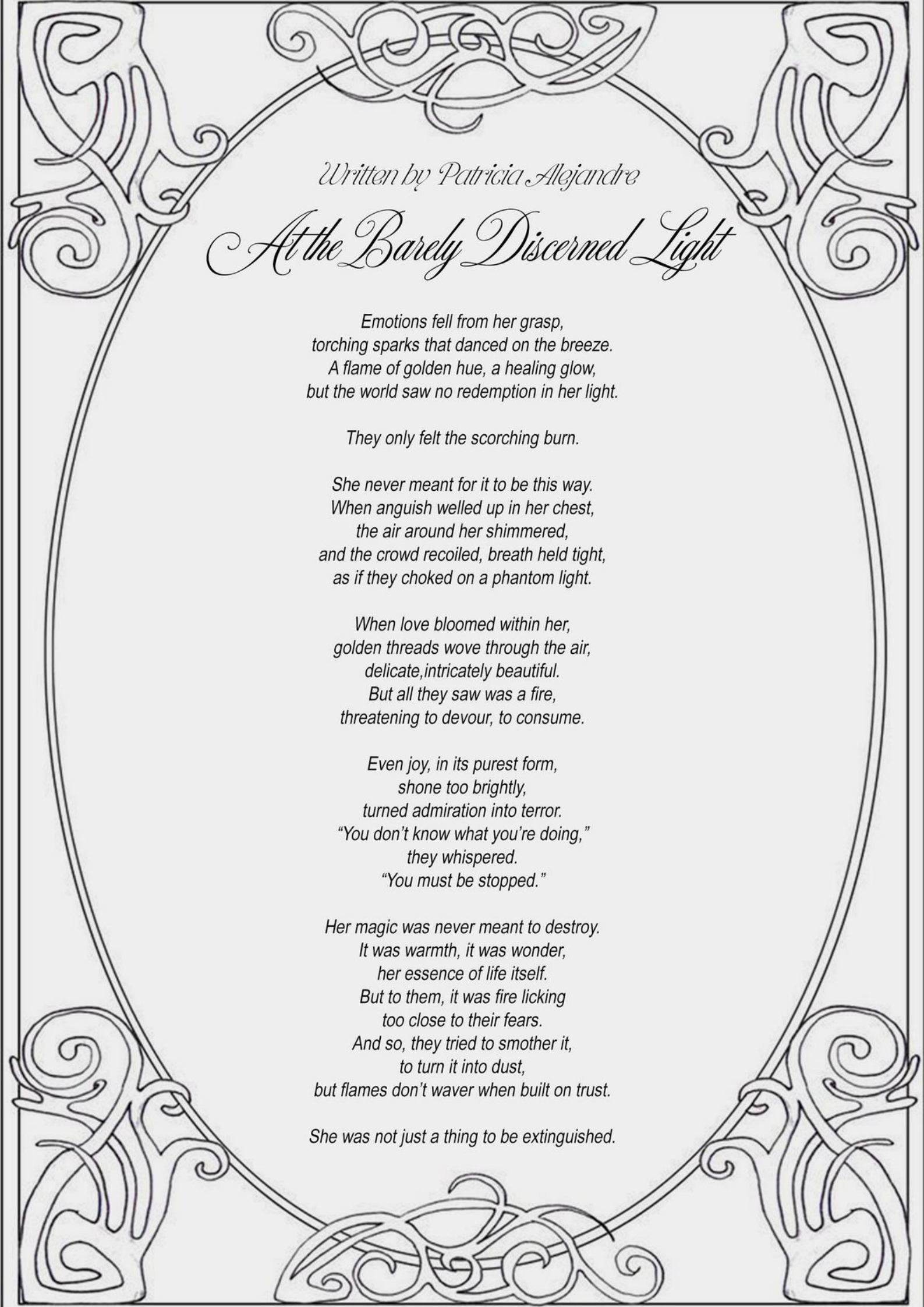
RG: I love this question. I think the most important feeling to this work is "discomfort." The female experience is so critiqued, observed, sexualized, villainized, adored, hated, loved, universal, and unique. It exists in such a state of contradiction, yet in some aspects, there are collective experiences. Yet I think universally, all women have experienced some form of discomfort in our bodies, through some form of pressure, internally or socially. I hope this work helps us all remember that this beautiful chaos of the feminine experience is not isolated. Rather, we all have experienced our own degrees of discomfort, and I hope to tie us all into a reminder that girlhood is both our beautiful, unique personal story and something that can also unite us all together.

AA: What was your creative process for this piece? Did the idea come out of the blue, or was it something you had to work at?

RG: Making *Girlhood Inferno* was largely inspired by a class I had taken in my junior semester at Pratt called "Girlhood." I loved that class, it was like a book club every week with just seven girls. It largely impacted my literary voice; I believe a skilled artist should also be well-versed in it. Most of my work is centred in research, what I've been reading, what I've been observing. I try to always connect myself with the current and past cultures. Based on a collection of readings, I drew this piece out of discussion, from things like the die-hard fanbases of Sylvia Plath, internet obsessions, the war on the female body, and strange "feminine" aesthetic subcultures. *Girlhood Inferno* was my lovechild to that class.







Written by Patricia Alejandre

At the Barely Discerned Light

Emotions fell from her grasp,
torching sparks that danced on the breeze.
A flame of golden hue, a healing glow,
but the world saw no redemption in her light.

They only felt the scorching burn.

She never meant for it to be this way.
When anguish welled up in her chest,
the air around her shimmered,
and the crowd recoiled, breath held tight,
as if they choked on a phantom light.

When love bloomed within her,
golden threads wove through the air,
delicate, intricately beautiful.
But all they saw was a fire,
threatening to devour, to consume.

Even joy, in its purest form,
shone too brightly,
turned admiration into terror.
"You don't know what you're doing,"
they whispered.
"You must be stopped."

Her magic was never meant to destroy.
It was warmth, it was wonder,
her essence of life itself.
But to them, it was fire licking
too close to their fears.
And so, they tried to smother it,
to turn it into dust,
but flames don't waver when built on trust.

She was not just a thing to be extinguished.



Phantom by Sol Jin Park



Dearest Lolly Willowes

*Written by
Alison Ehringer*

Insatiable hunger filled you,
sat at richly decked tables,
a speared pig, freshly slain,
sugar and spices, imported,
from lands you would never see.

You bit the insides of your cheek
until the scarred flesh bled,
yet the familiar taste,
a sharp, metallic pang,
kept you, not so sane,
but subdued, a lamb's innocence,
painted to perform in front of the
family.

The stiff fabric of your best dress,
manifested an innate itch,
inherited by an ancestor shaking,
her wild head of hair.
She whispered to you at night,
when the ants under your skin,
crawling,
kept you from finding sleep.

You did not belong,
but you can carve your way in.

I see you for what you are,
dearest Lolly Willowes.
You belong here, with me,
sat in a meadow deck,
with dawning daffodils and
blooming tulips, counting
birds passing by and humming,
the tune of the bumblebees.

Tonight, there's another dance,
you can forego the shoes,
embrace the earth and
ruddy roots underneath.
Leave the corset and hairpins,
at home too.
Refrain from hiding, you,
the itch you cannot scratch.

There's only us here, whispers,
your friends,



Casting spells!



Casting Spells! by Chloe Shoreman

Born Evil or Born Woman?

How Gender and Sexuality Dictated the Salem Witch Trials

Written by Elizabeth Barnett

Whether or not you were a servant to the devil or simply disliked by your neighbors, the 1690s were a rough time for women in New England. Even today, the Salem Witch Trials are one of the most notable events in early American history. Beginning in early 1692 with Abigail Williams, the next year would be one filled with suffering. In case these events are unfamiliar to you, Reverend Samuel Parris's daughter and niece suddenly fell ill, having strange outbursts and alarming symptoms that could not be cured with medicine or prayer. Not even the village doctor, a man named William Griggs, could find a solution, so word spread that the illness was the work of witchcraft. Soon after, more and more young women claimed to be ill because of witchcraft, the "affliction" spreading like an epidemic. These girls complained of spirits stabbing and choking them, and soon enough, names were cried out in accusation. Arrest warrants were issued about a month later, and so the Trials began.

The trials were messy, with the so-called victims putting on a show as the accused denied their guilt. However, some did confess and named other co-conspirators. This pattern continued, and soon enough, the courts were overflowing with witchcraft cases—so much so that they got an entire court dedicated to the issue. A few short months later, they had their first conviction: Bridget Bishop. Although she was not the first to be accused, she was the first to be executed, as a week following her trial she was hanged for her alleged crimes against Salem. Following her, hundreds were persecuted, and 19 were killed in total. At the start of the following year, spectral testimonies; evidence seen and gathered within dreams and visions; were outlawed, causing the number of cases to decrease severely. Many citizens of Massachusetts began to realize the error of their ways, and slowly the Salem Witch Trials came to an end.

Despite history depicting this era as a time of fear against the evil in the world, it was really more about subduing women and minorities. Statistics show that of the 19 "witches" executed in Salem, 14 of them were women, and as Carol F. Karlsen tells it, 78% of the 344 accused witches in New England were women. Not to mention that more often than not, the reason men were persecuted was due to their relationship with an accused woman; often as a brother or husband. At the time of the trials, Puritan and Christian beliefs dominated society and reinforced the idea that a woman should be a mother and beneath her husband in station. The women accused often rebelled against gender norms, practiced sexual deviance, or had qualities that drew attention to them (i.e., being overly wealthy or poor, having too many children or none at all). In alignment with Christian ideals, there was an underlying assumption that women were more prone to temptation because of Eve's actions in the Garden of Eden.

However, over time, people have grown accustomed to the thought that these particular women were persecuted because of their independence from men—something that was unusual, yes, but also threatening. In a society that was centered on male domination and superiority, the idea that there were women who not only did not want men but did not need them was terrifying. Society conditioned men to expect to get everything they wanted, and that fueled their misogynistic tendencies. The Trials served as an outlet for these men to exert their power, both over women—oftentimes women they were supposed to care about—and other minorities. Returning to the original cases of the accused, the one woman who confessed in 1692, a slave by the name of Tituba, was likely coerced into that position for fear of worse punishment because of her identity and place in society. Those feelings make someone easy to manipulate, which played a large role in the outcome of the Trials.

Aside from targeting women, the Salem Witch Trials and discrimination against witches in general have ties to the persecution and hatred of queer peoples, lesbians especially. Much like witches, lesbians throughout history have been considered dangerous because of how they disrupt traditionally accepted societal roles and behaviors. As was mentioned earlier, society feared witches for their independence from men, which is extremely evident in the case of lesbianism, and many were persecuted because men found discomfort around the ideas of female sexuality. In fact, a certain witch-hunter manifesto written in the 15th century, *Malleus Maleficarum*, claims that witchcraft comes from "carnal lust, which in women is insatiable" (Heinrich Kramer). Beyond the power of witchcraft, lesbianism posed a threat to the very foundation of relationships, and that is something that men found intolerable.

Much like the punishment and imprisonment that witches met, homosexuality in the 1600s was considered to be immoral and was also met with penalties if the participants were discovered. In both cases, the question has to be asked: what is wrong with it? Witches weren't condemned solely for their independence and ability, but because of the alleged afflictions they caused others, and how it threatened religious ideals. In the same sense, lesbians weren't condemned for their love, but rather for how threatening it was to societal standards. Both cases emphasize that the issue has never been a woman's identity, but how people filled with fear twist their independence into something horrible.

In the past few decades, as more information on these discriminatory issues has surfaced, there has been more media representation of queer witches. From movies and TV shows to books and articles, stories of forbidden love between witches have been integrated into some of the most popular media franchises, to provide both positive representation and criticism of the events that took place in the Trials and similar eras. One major issue that the media works to illuminate is how lesbianism was viewed as the worst possible option for women in the 1600s, and how that influenced the way that witchcraft functioned. During this time, in Scotland, a woman named Maud Galt was persecuted for practicing witchcraft and her sexuality, despite trying to hide it by marrying a man. After being charged with several pages' worth of crimes, authorities were repulsed. What's shocking about her case, however, is that historians have reported that the authorities found it easier to cope with the idea of witchcraft than her sexuality.

As of this year, Marvel; one of the largest movie franchises in the world; has brought important representation to this issue in its new limited series, *Agatha All Along*. The main character, Agatha Harkness, made her first appearance in *WandaVision*, where her origin story was introduced. Her coven; her mother; was intent on killing her for stealing knowledge and practicing dark magic, a crime that was considered a betrayal of her family. However, in episode 5 of *Agatha All Along*, "Darkest Hour / Wake Thy Power," Agatha's mother tells her that she was "born evil," and she "ought to have killed [her] the moment [she] left [her] body." Ouch. As it was already established that her corruption came from the dark magic she stole, this statement implies that she was born evil because she loves a woman, once again placing that fact at a value worse than witchcraft. This episode was written with so much detail regarding the religious trauma that was inflicted on people, and Kathryn Hahn captures these feelings immaculately. To further develop this allegory, the episode is given a sleepover theme, to encapsulate the innocence that was associated with the women and girls persecuted because of their identity, and Agatha's character is even wearing a friendship bracelet with the lesbian flag colors, emphasizing the delicacy of this part of herself, and how personal the issue of sexuality is.

Thanks to these efforts to highlight the wrongdoings of the Salem Witch Trials, women and witches are reclaiming a positive spotlight. However, there is more progress to be made, as there are still many who struggle with giving women the appreciation they deserve. Despite the longing looks and emotional depth that is being captured on screen with queer witches, the male storylines are still dominating the headlines—ironic, considering the Salem Witch Trials began with an accusation from a male doctor. Society is so used to having men as a foundation of every story, but with time and more positive female-led witch stories, we can take back the narrative. So, what was really more terrifying: a lesbian "witch" who might curse your chickens, or the people who were willing to kill a woman they found to be outside societal norms?









Forget-Me-Nots

Song by Violette Rain

By Dianne's illusion,
there, I'll feed my delusion.
You'd have me by this moon,
where forget-me-nots bloom.
And your dark, bedroom eyes
still pierce me by sunrise.
Somehow, I, still excite you,
although, I've slept beside you.

You love me,
but I don't think you want me
anywhere in your story,
but why would you say you
miss me,
say that you can't resist me,
but you'll never kiss me,
find me lying I'll be
in the forget-me-nots.

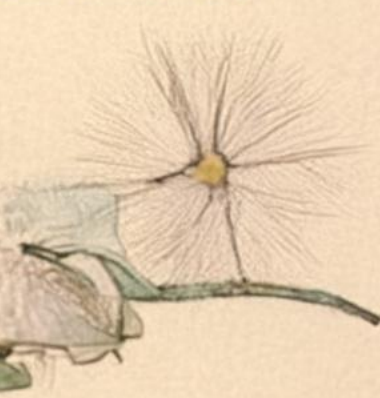
And the cards say your quest
plunges three swords through my chest.
Although I've drawn the lovers,
they hold blades to each other.
And would Anne know her fate,
if she'd willingly chose to wait?
Like a green ribboned witch,
though, her neck holds the stitch.

You love me,
but I don't think you want me
anywhere in your story,
but why would you say you
miss me,
say that you can't resist me,
but you'll never kiss me,
find me lying I'll be
in the forget-me-nots.

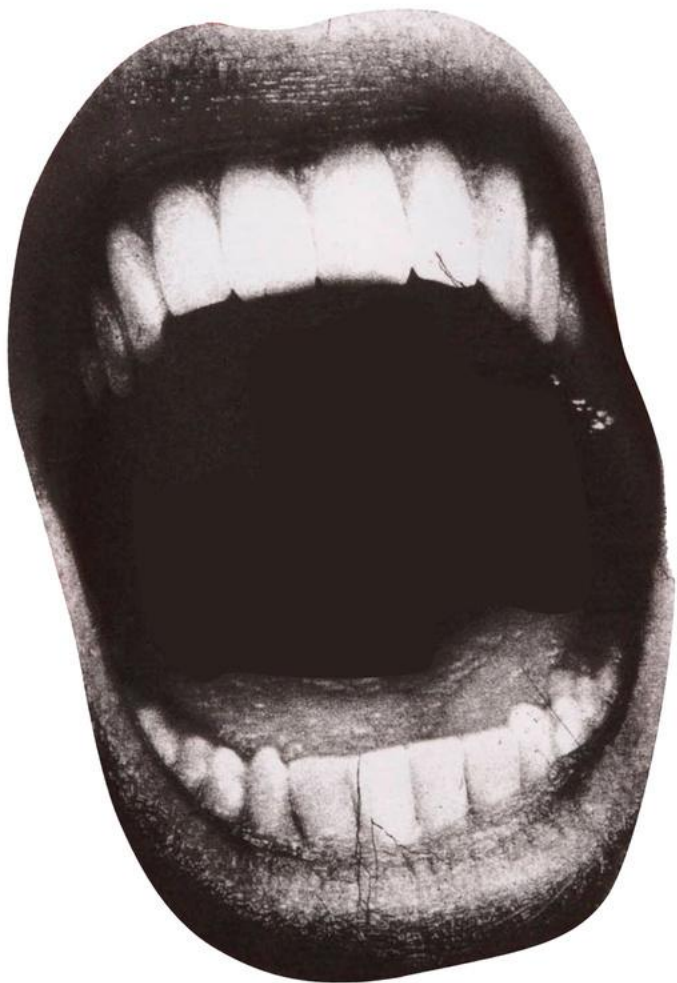
So I'd best bid adieu
to the dream I thought was you.
In my sleep, turn to stone,
all the vines hold my bones.
And someday, I may wake
to a wanderer's vain mistake.
What he finds in my tomb,
where forget-me-nots bloom.



Listen to the full song!



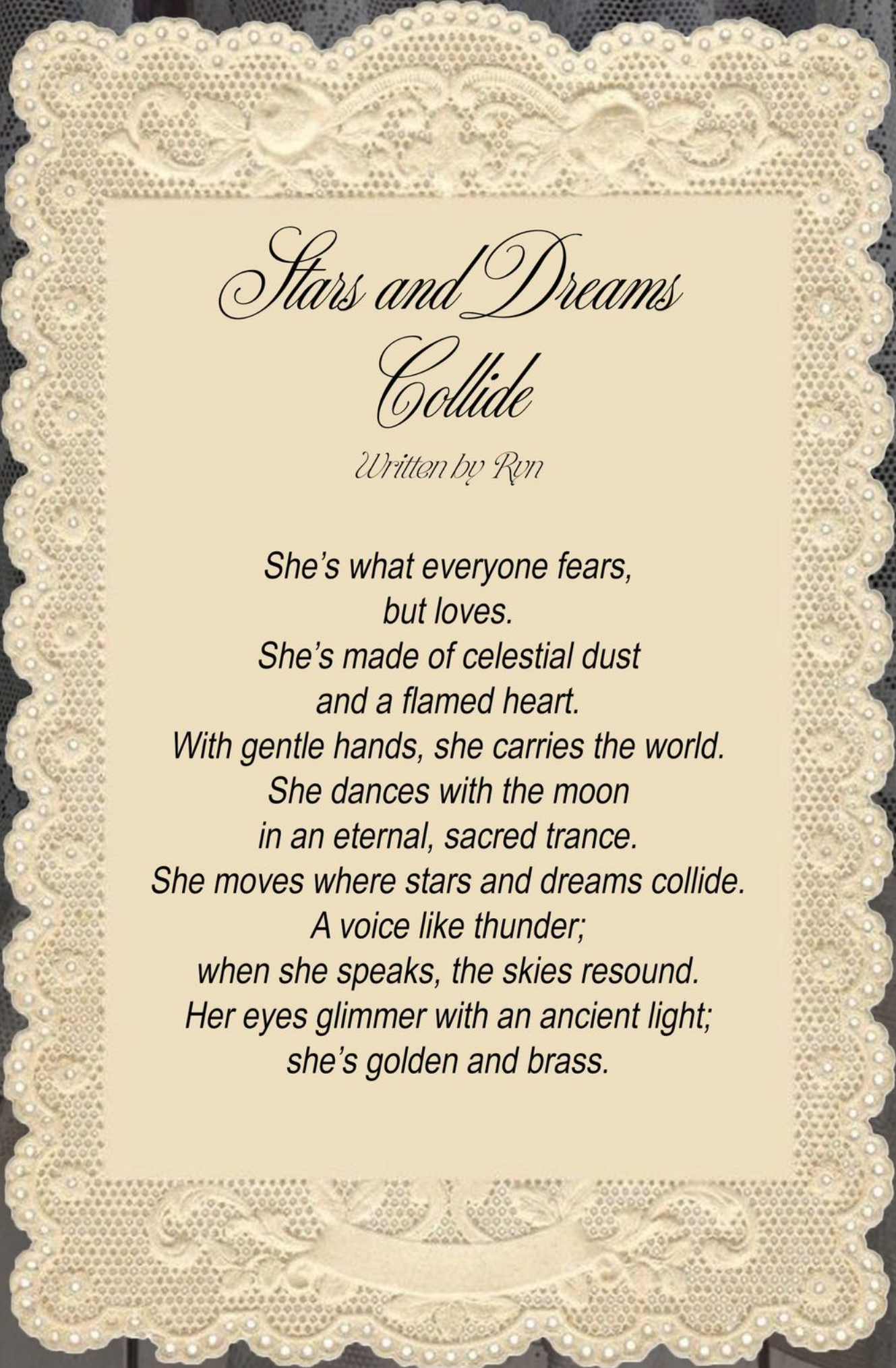
Mad Woman Prayer



Mother machine,
cleanse me of me;
erase this violent canker
of memory;
dogs foaming wild and snapping
for a soft-ocher body.
Father façade,
make them applaud
when you turn me virgin-everything;
so when they cast stone
I'll set flame to heresy.
Patron saint of hedonism,
make me hip bones and rocks in pockets;
form me just how they like it,
build me indifferent as I crash out in private.
Mercurial man,
break me, you can,
when I shake your mold of glory;
leave me rotten, half-forgotten,
just enough time for your side of the story.
Heavenly sister,
you once a marred resister,
dried out at the altar
that once sang for you,
lost in a solemn vicissitude.
Give me strength to become
hardened heart, violent drum
against the idea of me in their head
composed of mere fantasy;
for I'd rather, then, be dead.







Stars and Dreams Collide

Written by Ryn

*She's what everyone fears,
but loves.*

*She's made of celestial dust
and a flamed heart.*

With gentle hands, she carries the world.

*She dances with the moon
in an eternal, sacred trance.*

She moves where stars and dreams collide.

*A voice like thunder;
when she speaks, the skies resound.
Her eyes glimmer with an ancient light;
she's golden and brass.*



MSRUNG
12

Mind full by
Mitch Sprung



She was an empath first, but always last in line, with graceful hands still upturned and hopeful, but scarred from holding the animosity of those who did not understand. How could she forgive so easily? They called her weak. A soft voice, too often seen as meek, her power unfurled in tendrils, ever seeking those most in need: the undernourished, the ones unable to speak their pain, and so she helped take it away, caressing creased brows into gentle sleep. They cried witch; she showed them her herbs, and still they found stones to strike her with.

Unnatural. Too powerful. When she spoke in anger, it was as thunder, travelled for too long alone, and so the storm was unwelcome, despite the blessed rain which watered their harvest into abundance. A conundrum they met with contempt. When she bore life, she thought they would be kinder, but her babe was frail and too quiet. A changeling, they said; hair too bright and moonsilver eyes. She buried her daughter alone. They claimed that as proof of her wicked nature, cursed, ignoring the many births she had eased into water, mothers held through their labour, and still, no one spoke for her.

Uncomfortable with their gratitude, they called her thief, seeking to breach their community and discard their beliefs. It was a religion to hate her, name her as other. When she left, the flowers wilted where her home once stood, and the magic she nurtured faded from the land. They saw better in wasted colour, whispered of her anger for years to come. Yet when they raided her safe havens, they did not find spells but seeds, preserved honey that still fed the bees, and an altar to all the children she was unable to keep, for her power cost her greatly and her body overburdened.

Eventually, they found her cloak fraying over her bones, with a solitary lily growing; a reminder that hope is eternal and love never wasted. It will always bear creation.

*She was an
Empath First*

Written by Cara Pleyrn



Eaux Troubles by Sam Ectoplasm

Earth goddess by Sam Ectoplasm





Bones of Us by Meg Koning

Her Name is Storm

Written by by Azhar Otezhan

*Her dimples are thumbprints of God,
born by the ocean's lullaby.
She is a fusion of stained glass and waves,
perfectly craved and crafted.*

*The wax is not a candle, but a maiden,
and her body recognized by shadow of the flame.
Maybe there is a fire in the world that can melt her,
even though to love, means to flow,
like water's submission.*

*She sweeps away trees, rocks and dry grass,
like a thunderstorm in the steppe,
she flashes and rumbles,
made of lightning and snakes.*

She is all.

*Death to all creation,
and the beginning of every word spoken.*

*My voice remains in her haunting echoes,
like dawn,
she abolishes the night when she comes
but when i kiss her elbow,
the storm perishes.*







Filly

Written by Kara Laymon

*As a young girl, I hated pink.
I hated that a pink shirt made me "girly,"
that sparkles on my clothes meant, I couldn't.*

*I hated the inherent brightness of the color,
for it caused more people to see me.*

*I did not want to be seen,
long enough to be dismissed.*

*So I lived my days wearing black sweaters, blue jeans and my
resilience,
for they are dignified,
important in ways,
that frilly pink could never imagine.*

*Except that it is just a color,
and I am a person -
growing and changing enough to decide that,
I deserve to be seen,
just as much as the frilly pink dress,
hidden in the depths of my closet.*







Unfinished Whom I Love by Maddy Abdella/ Madame Matrix

Interview by Sharanya Tissera

Velvet Sunset: An Interview with Carmine Eleonore

Indie Velvet Sunset is a shoegaze rock band from Paris, France. Their music explores themes of love, friendship, and inclusion, capturing listeners with dreamy soundscapes and heartfelt lyrics. At their core, they simply love love.



AA: *Go Kid* was selected for Adore Art's 2nd issue that celebrates the inner world of women and the complexity of emotion and beauty. Why did you want to submit *Go Kid* specifically for this issue?

CE: Being a woman is so beautiful these days. Things are changing for the best and we take back our power to empower others girls and give them a voice to change the world. I wanted to submit because I felt drawn to the editorial line of the magazine that promotes witchy, unusual, and powerful artists.

AA: The lyrics for *Go Kid* seem to cling onto nostalgia and beg for a moment more before the inevitability of adulthood. What inspired you to verbalise this feeling that most people get, especially as we leave our teen years behind us?

CE: I think these feelings of leaving our teen years for adulthood are coming in waves. It is not just one defined moment in time. When you leave high school, university, when a friend gets married or has a baby. When you listen to an old song or watch a movie, tv show. Many things can inspire this feeling of growing up. I think I went through many transformations in my life despite being 30.

Being a freelance artist and being very much in tune with my intuition, I can certainly revive this feeling with a nice sunset, a pretty view from the park, watching kids playing and people laughing. Finding the innocence in everyday life, like watching the wind in the trees are the things that make me feel carefree and nostalgic of my teen years. You think it will last forever. It doesn't and it does because you can find it elsewhere. Be present, be in love, watch in awe.

AA: *Go Kid* is a single, however, the music from your album *Only Lovers Left Alive* follows a similar atmosphere of dreamy lyrics and hazy instrumentals. Why this sound specifically? How would you describe your genre of music?

CE: I would say a mix of dream pop, alt rock and shoegaze. I love to feel in love. I love to feel the sadness of being happy. When you are so happy you could cry. This is the atmosphere I am looking for.

AA: Your interview with Liberty Music shares that you each had a deep love for music from a young age. How would you say that music has shaped the way you view passion and love? Whether that's love for another person or yourself.

CE: Loving yourself is a never ending process. It depends on so many things and music shaped imagination. It brings confidence. With music you can dance, make love, share food, cry, jump up and down, run, ... This is the essence of life itself.

AA: Personal identity shares a deep part of the creative process. How would you say that your sense of identity has shaped your creative process and unique sound?

CE: It is certainly an evolution. When you feel angry at times, or not good enough, when you go through a self love process, breakups, falling in love etc... all the beautiful and difficult moments in life shape the creative process because you are, at this moment, a different version of yourself while remaining the same at your core.

AA: As an additional part to the last question, you created a dreamy single *Let Me Be* with the incredible Emmanuelle Seigner. How has your Parisian identity shaped your music and creative identity? As an additional part to the last question, you created a dreamy single *Let Me Be* with the incredible Emmanuelle Seigner. How has your Parisian identity shaped your music and creative identity?

CE: I guess this is more of a British vibe that shaped our music because Velvet Sunset does not really fit into the Pa-

*Today I go out in the sunshine,
Today I feel like losing my mind.
Come on now, rolling on my skateboard,
You wander and you're getting older.*

*Keep listening to your music,
Feeling in love and a bit sick.*

*Go, kid. Go, kid. Go, kid.
You weirdo.*

*Today I am young and I am free,
Today the world is mine to carry.
Come on now, rolling on my skateboard,
You wonder and you're getting older.*

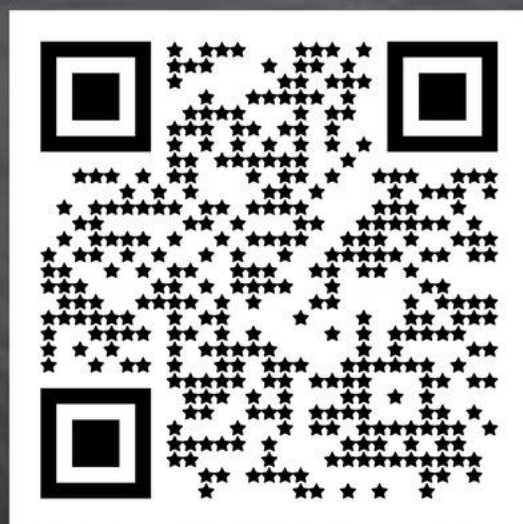
*I wish I could take all my friends,
Feeling like it will never end.*

*Go, kid. Go, kid. Go, kid.
You weirdo.*

*Look at you, kid, with your vintage music,
Falling asleep to the ocean sounds.
Do you smell the love in the air?
You go.*

Go Kid

Song by Velvet Sunset



*Listen to the
full song!*



Cloud Witch by Kathleen Kralowec





I love knives and swords, all things sharp,

For I've loved men

Who've poked daggers into my chest,

Plucked its bleeding remains out,

Tossed it in their hands,

And fiddled with their fingers as their eyes stayed still.

Who've had tongues that carve disgust onto my virgin skin,

Deserting me in the shower for endless hours scrubbing off the dirt.

When our lips crashed and you said you love me, it was nothing for you.

I felt it —

The heavy weight of these words as I spelt them out,

The sour taste of it as it swirled around my mouth,

The splashing rhythm of each syllable as the waves moved.

But even after every scar and every warning thrown at me,

My legs, my mind, have built a routine.

I'd rip my shirt and cut open myself,

Thrust my little beating heart into your now bloody palms,

And scream—

Stop letting me go.

Let me chase even if I shouldn't.

Sharp Things

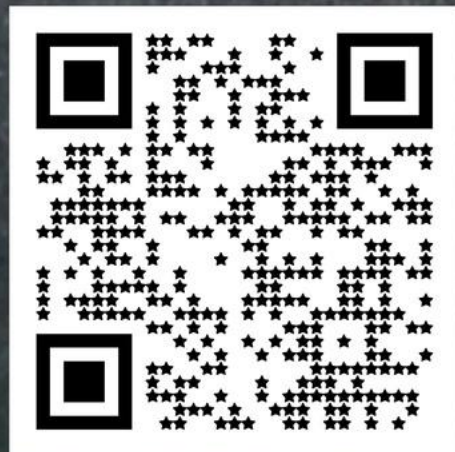
*Written by
Ananiah*



scram presents

coron

*Watch full short
film on youtube!*





A Witch in Her Bedroom by Vlada Pavkina

Written by Katelynn Lau

The Bewitching Hour



*In the gentle hush of twilight, midnight gathers softly,
when shadows stretch long and deep,
they whisper of her—
her ambition,
her fire,
her hunger for the glittering stars.*

*They fear her eyes that see
beyond this dull earth,
beyond the sky's false promise.
They call her wretched, an evil woman,
a wild thing,
a creature of chaos
for she dares
to reach,
to dream,
to rise.*

*They say she is unnatural—
a storm painted in the shape of a woman,
her thoughts too sharp,
her desires are too bright.*

*Destiny, her name burns like a fierce madness.
As if ambition could be a sin,
as if hunger for more
were a curse to be feared.*

*She walks in the moonlight,
untamed,
her mind is a constellation of impossible things.
To them, she is a force of the dark arts,
a spell bending the rules,
a force that could shatter their worlds.*

*But she is not evil—
merely the reckoning they won't speak aloud,
the power they cannot contain,
the mystery they cannot label.*

*She is the wind that will not be caught
in any cage,
the dream they could never silence.*

*And when the hour turns,
and the night grows heavy with their dread,
she will rise
untouched,
unbroken,
and they will remember
that she was never meant to be tamed.*

Her Aura by Faith Gayring



Gold Magic

Written by Victoria Milumbu

*She is home alone, enveloped by silence.
Acid percolates in her throat and trails down, burning in her chest.
In her eyes, glossy secretion coats her cornea.
As the furnace in her chest blazes and the gloss blurs her vision, she desperately holds on to
her mask of perfection and optimism in resistance. Since she was a teenage girl, she was
made to believe that this mask holds her power and strength.*

*Suddenly, like a spirit possessing a corpse, she is swiftly bewitched by a mighty force, coerc-
ing her to drop her mask—shattering it.
The shards of the mask depart from her, leaving her exposed like someone who was stripped
of their clothing and left bare.*

*From her eyes, the translucent gloss spills, flowing down her cheeks like a stream.
As this river slithers down, it changes into an ethereal, pearlescent luster.
Like a siren, her cry vibrates in the air, piercing through the silence. This cry is a spell that
manifests a wave current within her. It moves languidly, soothing the burn in her chest.*

*In this moment, she allows herself to feel what she is feeling.
Frustration. Because life is moving faster than her planned timeline, and she is falling behind.
Insecure. Because despite her efforts and discipline, even the people younger than her are
progressing ahead of her.
Angry. Because she has spent many years with this mask, trying to be the composed, uncom-
plaining, good girl.
Always saying yes. Always giving.
Yet she was still misunderstood and overlooked.*

*As she embraces her emotions, her pearlescent tears become pure gold—creating a spell-
binding gleam in her deep brown irises.
The wave current in her chest. The gold pouring from her eyes.
This is her inner magic—thawing the shell of artificial fortitude that, in reality, has been keeping
her bound.
This is the gold magic uncovering her essence.
She has unlocked her true power.
She is free.*



Gentle Huntress by Jennie Cao

A Siamese Cat of a Girl

Written by Mary Binninger

Lately, I've come to realize that I am just a feral cat who often finds herself indoors. Locked indoors, that is. I will not be coerced into false narratives to confine myself to a cyclically clouded cage. But of course, my violent refusals of domestication tend to be met with such an arm-twisting force—that even as I persist and resist, they still succeed in their unlawful quests to file down my vampiric fangs, declaw me of my daggers, and dim the glow of fluorescent moons reflecting from my eyes.

A Siamese cat of a girl, they call me. Deafening cries, shrieking like an infant. Affectionate and loving nonetheless—if you earn it. They want to own me. Collar me. Control me. Regulate me. Stifle my splitting screams; rendering each decibel stillborn. “Cat got your tongue?” they’d sneer. But don’t they know that you don’t own a cat? Don’t they know that she owns you?

Now this must be why they vilify me—they’ve realized they cannot drag me leashed around town, train me into their dumb, doting doll. Well, not that they necessarily can’t, because God knows they will try. But it’s that I don’t want to be their faithful toy is what makes me so loathsome. Threatening, if you will. They say I deceived them, I’m calculating, deemed lethal for allowing them to be lured by wide, blueberry-pies-for-eyes, velveteen satin, enticed by alleged purity. But don’t they know that everything is not always as it seems?

Declared untrustworthy as I lunge with prowess, lusting to taste the jugular, taking no issue with correcting violations of crossed, bold lines—or at least attempt to. Obedience is not a word that’s found freely frolicking within my vocabulary. I won’t let them steal my body, slink writhing limbs into a straitjacket. My unwillingness to go willingly finally leaves them no choice but to dose me up in a pinch. Murmurs of casual conferrings with colleagues begin to desaturate. Shimmering silver stars eclipse my vision.

“God, just shut her up already,” one says, a hand cementing over my mouth. “These things need to start coming with mute buttons,” another spits through crooked teeth. And just like that, the vexatious wails of defiance escaping my pout cease. I’m now subject to their mercy. Or lack thereof.

They should not get to feel me, pat my little head, poke and prod at my sacred silk, examining the inner workings of a girl such as I to figure out what went wrong. Why I won’t comply. Why I won’t just be a good little girl like all the others. But they do not get to mold me into their perfect, pink, purring little pussy they’ve so hungered to stroke.

“She can kiss a man or slit his throat,” they say. And believe me, I will. All this carnal bloodshed—whether mine or theirs—and they still haven’t learned by now? I thought the lesson was obvious: Women and cats will do as they please, after all.



Curing the Enemy (The Death of Beauty)

Written by Nervs Schmetterling

Cradle-spun gold slathered onto drab chamber walls, light dim and flickering. Drapes drawn by anxious hands, leaving thin slicks of sweat glistening like snail trails. In the artificial night, she is combing rabid tendrils with a bent silver spoon, frail head sunken into a mound of pillows, reciting presidential speeches. Tightly wound chains of petals skim across the glaze of her eyes. She is flaying rabbits and smearing a bone-braided chest with their entrails to cool the rabid meat of her heart, strange organ gasping and wheezing.

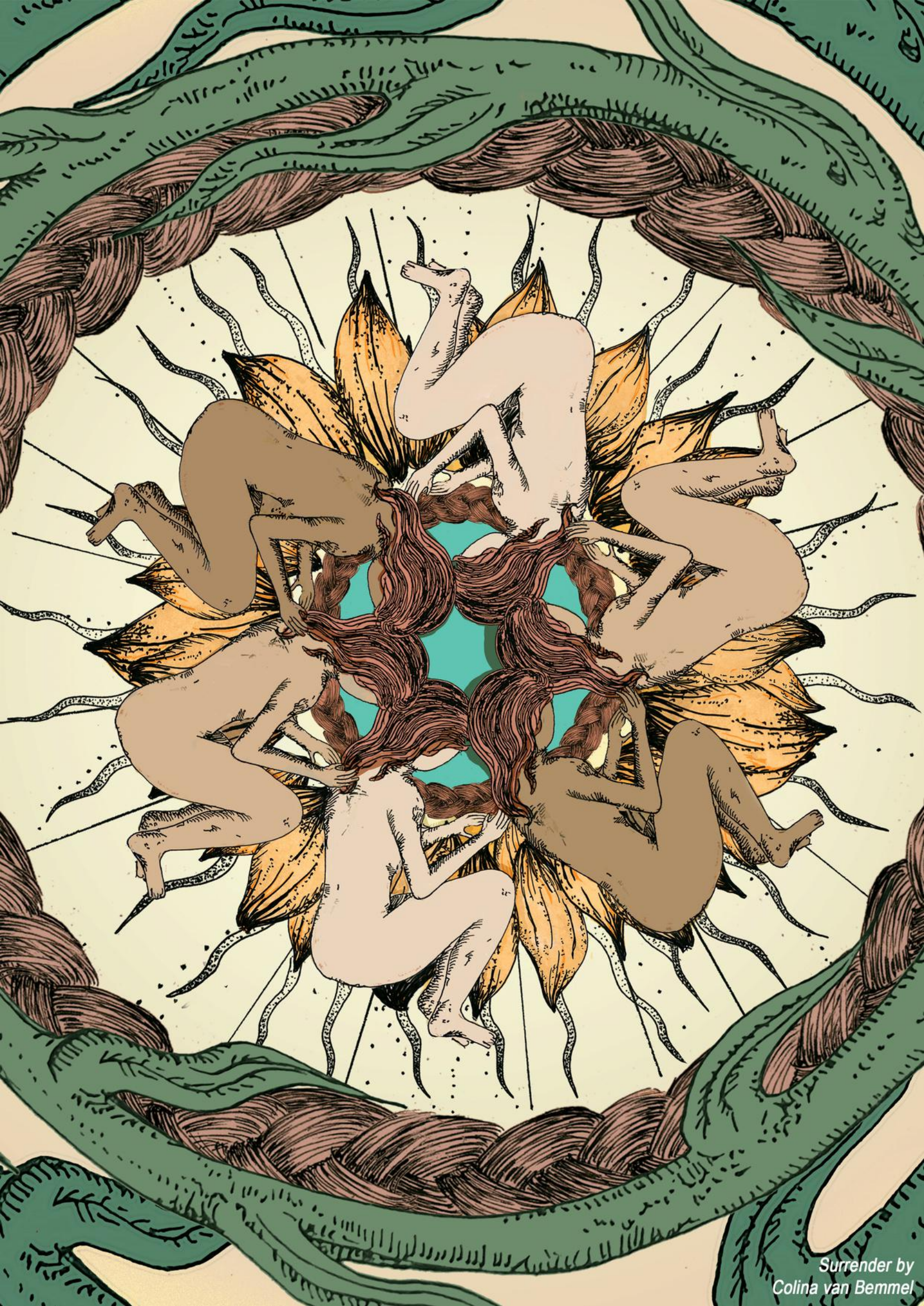
We unshroud mirrors to carve the symmetry of jagged cracks into tender flesh. She winces as a swollen tongue slithers from its nest of pink gum to wet splintered lips. We allow the grease of our ruptured veins to dribble into her mouth, record her whimpers on videotape to watch back when we are naked and terrified.

Her coal-shuttle eyes caked in oozing pus and scabs that flake when we probe the scarred leather of her skin. She is on a diet of dried caterpillar carcasses, adolescent intestines stewed in saffron, fish eggs on cranium. This room is cloaked in silence, yellowing bedsheets steeped in gore, stagnant air carrying the warm-blooded stench of rotting meat. We try Wiccan incantations, knead our fingers into daisy chains until they fracture, bone tearing away skin as we chant guttural words in half-forgotten languages that burn our throats. We resurface coughing up blood, Kleenex flowers blooming in our palms. Beads of sweat glisten on her wrinkled forehead.

Wood-paneled walls alight with ancient scenes, she talks to the figures, and they wave their tiny arms, thrash and plead at the edges of their frames. She tells us tales of beauty, talks of moonlight and the charmed brine congealing in the uncut diamond of her fishtailed bride's glowing face. The pause before a kelp-entangled kiss, the way the ship creaked and howled as the ocean tossed and bartered their tiny home until scales dripped with blood, the horrific symmetry of a pretty face bludgeoned and caved in on itself like a landslide.

She rubs salt on her wounds until her screams are tangible; we bandage her arms in papyrus and ethanol-soaked silks. We are curing the enemy; this is the death of beauty in all the idiocy of her star-splayed chamber, surrounded by her harem of thieves. With her tiara of thorns and sagging boobs leaking bile and milk, her ill-fitting skin puckered and slack, eyes still reflecting that famous candid gaze, dancing shoes still bound to gangrened feet beneath layers of duvet, rancid flesh contoured and smeared in dollar-store foundation.

She is laughing at sitcoms and shopping from Primark, eating cake and regurgitating it until all she can taste is stomach acid, teeth sore and face puffy. She drags her sick flesh from this bedchamber, away from our attempts at her salvation. When she hit the road, I am told she died instantly. For the meagre seconds she was aflight, I wonder if she felt like an angel. I wonder if the sun hurt her eyes.



Surrender by
Colina van Bommel

Our Molting

Written by Katie Kenney

This morning in divination,
The prophets, those pagans!
Brought a praying mantis to my window, those
seers, their mandible mouthparts,
their beseeching hands,
a femme fatale, a spirit guide to ancient
Ireland, bringing luck, devouring virtue,
embodiments of God. Our
ancestors—spindly, persevering, a bit
green. The Hallowed, their harvest
of festive fare, nuts and fruit, blessed crosses
placed above the door. Cutting hair
for the bonfire as embers reveal
husbands, all turnips
carved and left burning for the walk home.

Our ancestors, to shed, to
metamorphosize, crazed on
colcannon and barmbrack for
rings to reveal the thimble—
to prophesize: you will never marry.

This morning in divination, you are
selected, naturally, by forgotten grandmothers
to molt, to meal on male wariness, who
select us for the wideness of
our compound eyes. Tonight she
feasts—a lavish banquet, an indulgent gorge.

Willow Branches in an Olive Jar
by Kaysi Grimes





Moon Ritual For Gathering

Written by Allie Marini

I relight the candles every night.

*I pull balls of hair from my comb,
leave them for the birds.*

*I am thatched in October's rust,
dressed in an herb-speckled sackcloth.
Green Vikti and I have been gathering
stinking henbane, pine straw, belladonna.*

*I have no fear of nightshade,
nor the lunar light.*

*I embrace all the delights of darkness.
I offer flame and fate to the candle.*

*Ask the birds for a favor,
then blow out the candle.*





Female Rage

*Female rage is hereditary,
historical, collective,
and mythical;
for in my mind
I have been all of them,
the weeping phantoms
trapped in their pain.*

*They could have been me,
in another life,
that
could
have
been
me.*

*I can feel Hypatia's intellect
blooming in the air
where they scattered her remains.
In my mind
I have been all of them,
the murdered witches
cursing their faith.*

*Female rage is ever-burning
in the history books,
in myths and religions, too.*

*I can see Matilda's birthright
stripped from her hands
as anarchy bled
her country to death.*

*It's time for Medusa to
reclaim her truth!
It's time for Hera to
regain her youth!
And it's time to set
the record straight:*

*female rage is confessional
of timeless, made-up blame.*

*So, tell me,
is female rage not
hereditary?
Passionate?
Empathetic?*

*Written by
Mont Vald*

Unspoken

A song by Esther



Listen to the full song!



Brittany Silveira

Belladonna

Botany class is where Jane started to question her mother's view that beauty was weakness. At best, it was bothersome, fussing about everyone's perception of you. At worst, it was dangerous, for the unbridled envy and feral desire it could incite.

Jane's doubts began upon meeting Luna, who floated in, exuding an ethereal aura that made her presence felt. There was an intrinsic grace in how she sat beside Jane and delicately laid out her books, how her ruby-ringed fingers serenely tapped on her keyboard. Jane could only nod when Luna smiled at her, pinned by the enigmatic glimmer in her gray eyes. Her image was striking, almost celestial: an ivory sundress billowing around her bejeweled ankles, long platinum hair rippling against a breeze that only found her in the room. From where it came, no one knew or cared — that spark of magic was hers. Luna was divinity beaming from a plastic orange seat.

No stranger to stares, Jane was acutely aware of them on other women. Her unconventional appearance provoked looks of disbelief, often judgment. Unbothered by insults muttered about her, from "slut" to "Satan worshipper," she leaned into this persona and sharpened her shield with fuchsia hair, dark makeup, fishnet tops, latex skirts, and combat boots. But rarely had she witnessed the kind of ignited gazes that followed Luna — especially from their professor.

Raised by a fend-for-yourself single mother, Jane knew how to patch drywall, change tires, and negotiate anything. If you didn't need a man, you couldn't be crucified by one. Her mother also imparted life lessons. You were never too much — and any man who said otherwise could stand to learn something from you. Dress for yourself (not men), don't be too nice (lest a man bulldoze you), and don't show too much emotion (whether rage, despair, or elation, to not be misconstrued as hysteria).

But in seeing their professor's response to Luna — Greg's schoolboy smile, his tentative hand hovering over her sleeve, the evolution of his gaze from pleased to enthralled to ravenous — Jane wondered if there was power in beauty. Luna's eyes held a mystic force that melted men. Did she play into her quiet allure? Or did her obliviousness amplify her spell?

When Greg's taste for younger females had surfaced, he reasoned it wasn't that inappropriate. Handsome by most standards, he was usually only ten years a college student's senior. The power dynamics could be worse. Neither cruel nor coercive, he knew how to pick his girls. Loud, temperamental ones were to be avoided — those who'd lash out.

When he saw Jane, Greg's mind veered to sex in a terrible way: promiscuity, kinks, dominatrix porn. He thought: there's a beast who needs taming. But when he looked upon Luna, with her freckled cheeks and flowy attire, he thought: there's a sweet girl who's malleable. The dichotomy between both, seated side by side, was jarring — and he felt it nearly sacrilegious: vulgar versus virginal, hammer versus honey, danger versus desire.

Tired of Jane's unsettling presence, Greg asked Luna to stay back under various pretenses, whether to discuss a paper or presentation. It seemed to him that she enjoyed his company, so he grew bolder — from complimenting the baby's breath braided into her hair to skimming the hem of her dress when checking out her ankle bracelet. Luna always smiled. She stayed nice. And thus he twisted the absence of "no" into an invitation for more.

They discussed her project on the history of belladonna: its uses ranging from cosmetics to poison. She sat listening — her heavenly smile, waves cascading down her shoulders, the pretty dress framing her silhouette, muted yellow like sunlight at dawn. Her features ever softer, ever more spectacular. Luna's magnetism held an otherworldliness that consumed Greg. Mesmerized by the slope of her collarbone, he approached her.

"Belladonna is deceptive because, though it looks unthreatening — beautiful, even — it's lethal."

His gaze traveled the length of her exquisite neck and landed on her moonstone-beaded choker. He slipped his index finger under her necklace to examine the gems, his nail grazing her throat.

"Sheer beauty and absolute danger."

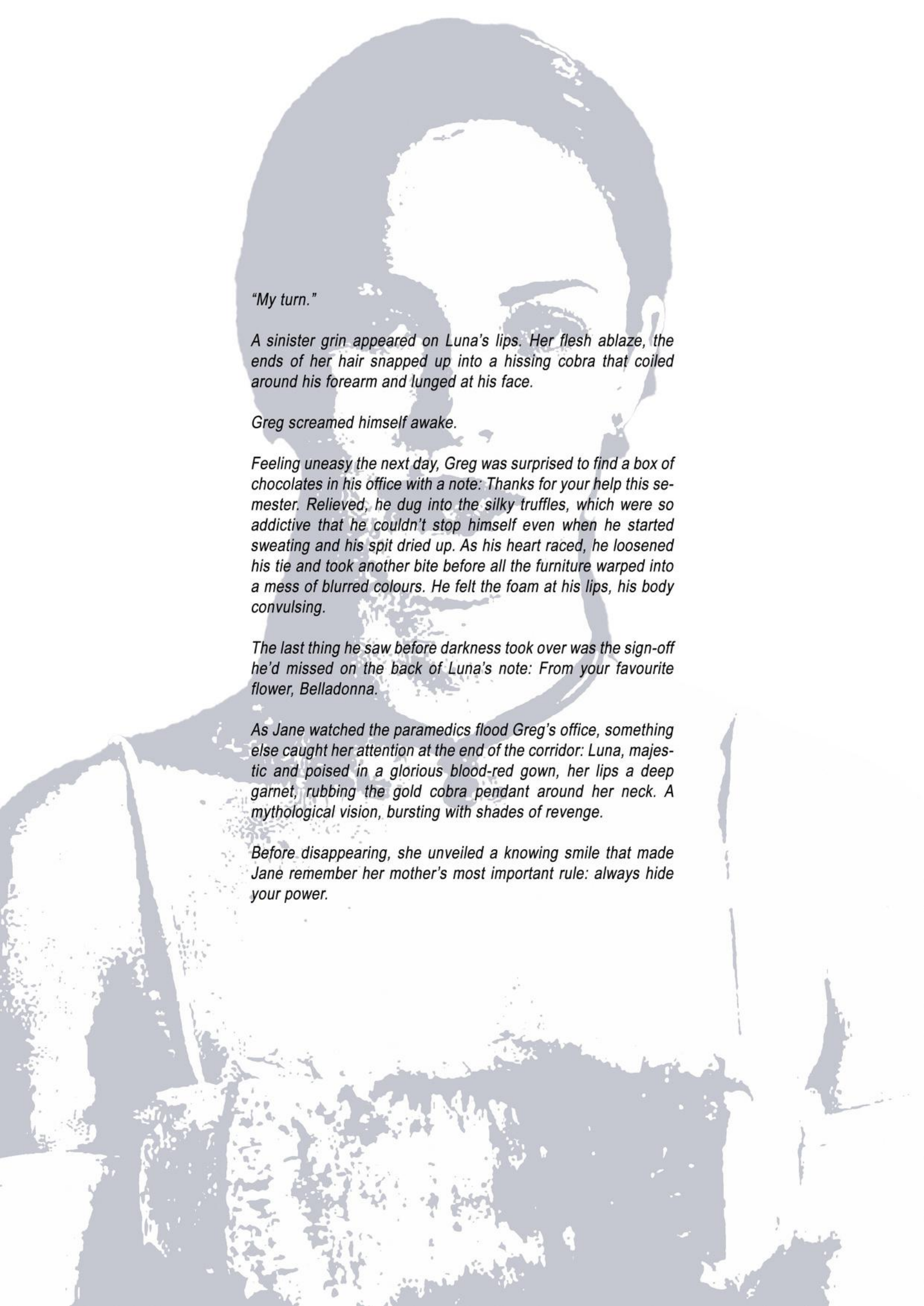
Luna didn't respond, and Greg didn't budge. In the tense silence, her irises morphed to stormy amber, pupils flickering to black slits. A merciless stare that told him he'd crossed the line — not only with her, but with past students — and knew it every time. An unnerving force tethered him to this moment from which he sought release. His wrist suffered a crushing sensation, and he was paralyzed by the realization that he was nothing. And to dust he'd soon return.

Finally, Luna stepped back, and the pain ceased — Greg's finger so tightly hooked under her choker that it shattered. The sound of dozens of gems hitting the floor filled the room as she left. A pit of dread curdled in his gut and infiltrated his sleep that night when he dreamt of her.

Amid the hypnotic blues and purples of midnight, Greg followed the white light ahead, shrouded in steam and willow trees. There he found Luna, gliding naked through a hot spring to a small waterfall where warm water traced the contours of her body. The moonlight reflected off her glistening curves, fireflies circling above her head like a floating crown of gold light. Over her shoulder, she beckoned him with a finger. He undressed and came up behind her — wanting to touch but wary.

"Just a taste," she whispered.

Her permission lifted the weight of apprehension from him. Wrapping her wet locks around his palm, he kissed her neck and hardened against her.



"My turn."

A sinister grin appeared on Luna's lips. Her flesh ablaze, the ends of her hair snapped up into a hissing cobra that coiled around his forearm and lunged at his face.

Greg screamed himself awake.

Feeling uneasy the next day, Greg was surprised to find a box of chocolates in his office with a note: Thanks for your help this semester. Relieved, he dug into the silky truffles, which were so addictive that he couldn't stop himself even when he started sweating and his spit dried up. As his heart raced, he loosened his tie and took another bite before all the furniture warped into a mess of blurred colours. He felt the foam at his lips, his body convulsing.

The last thing he saw before darkness took over was the sign-off he'd missed on the back of Luna's note: From your favourite flower, Belladonna.

As Jane watched the paramedics flood Greg's office, something else caught her attention at the end of the corridor: Luna, majestic and poised in a glorious blood-red gown, her lips a deep garnet, rubbing the gold cobra pendant around her neck. A mythological vision, bursting with shades of revenge.

Before disappearing, she unveiled a knowing smile that made Jane remember her mother's most important rule: always hide your power.



Faith

I shot my phone because it didn't get me closer to God by Hannah Ruth



Morganite

Target by Morganite

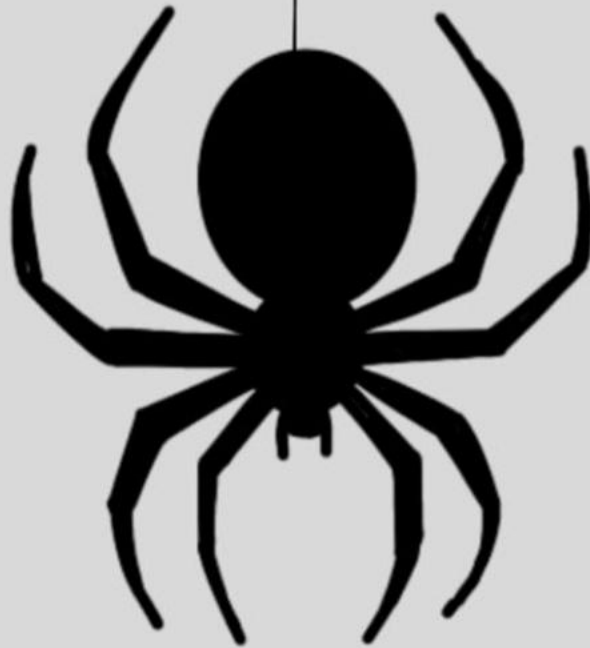
You want a woman
who lets spiders live.
Frowning, you contend,
“it’s not hurting anyone.”
Yet, I say, yet.
A threat must be
recognized and
realized and,
most vitally,
neutralized.

Holding myself,
I implore you to
understand me —
“when I sleep,
it will bite me.”
“When I sleep,”
I shout,
“its poison will
crawl up my veins,
clotting my blood.”

Your view distends.
“The clots,”
I am screaming,
“will take my limbs
and decades of life.”

Frowning, you kill
the little threat.
“You’re crazy.”
I hide, I weep,
I do not let spiders live.

*Written by
Mackenzie
Kae*



Spiders



Nurturing, selfless,
Sacrificial.

When others cry,
You must be the
Shoulder to

Let
Them
Cry
On.

But I'm too tired to
be everything;
To be the "witch,"
"Caregiver,
The one who does
Instead of says.

My cup is

D
R
I
P
P
I
N
G
I
G

It's empty,
On the brink of
shattering,
On the brink of
pouring out my soul,
Everything I want to
say.

My soul is milked
dry.

My soul is filled with
rage.

My soul is not mine.

"You're supposed to
be a mother."

You're Supposed to be a Mother, They Say

*Written by
Christine So*



*there's a heartbeat
of a new beginning,
name-brand brooms for flying &
a fresh spellbook page.*

*the sorceress sisterhood of
a modern tradition,
taxidermied familiars &
performing shearing spells in the sink,
sitting in a circle,
casting curses
while lighting candles &
chanting hate hexes,
making love charms
for zombies to take,
swapping heartbreak &
bloodsport stories.*

*four good witches
cackle over a cauldron
just south of the local haunted house &
under the watch of a blood moon.*

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As a West Coven

Written by Nell Shore Sirotin





Written by Elizabeth Butler

As Mother Nature Intends

We have been waiting for too long now, buried here for decades upon decades. As the years move on, dust and dirt have been piled upon us. We have had enough.

Like moles, we do not rely on our eyes to see but use our other senses. Our sense of hearing has improved dramatically since we lay in hiding, biding our time. Together, we are one; we are all part of our little coven.

We have no idea how long we've been down here, but as an outsider looking out, the world is destroying itself more than it has ever done before. This is why we can't wait and stand by a moment longer. We cannot sit around and let the Earth crumble.

The only issue is Mother seems to disagree. Mother, our leader, the woman I look to most for guidance, is lost. I do not like to say she is getting too old and frail, even if her bones have been weary these last few months.

The coven nodded. This was the first time since we agreed to come down here that they had agreed with anything I had said. I was surprised, even though I really shouldn't have been. All this time preparing, we should have been working together. The second oldest, the lady with long ebony hair, stepped out from the circle, kneeling in front of Mother while she felt her pulse on her wrinkled palms. She was no more, and there was only one thing we all had to do. We had to climb above ground level once and for all.

Perhaps war had broken out in the decades we had been underground. Maybe a nuclear bomb had crashed into Earth, wiping away everything in its path. Whatever it was, it shocked us all. We could barely speak.

The lushness of the grass was now transformed into layers of dirt and mud. The forests were flattened. Beyond the horizon stood a wasteland of rubbish—literal rubbish—that had piled high. The smell alone was enough to make anyone gag, never mind our coven, who had been protected for decades.

"Mother Nature! What has happened to you?" Violet, one with dark mahogany curls, spoke out, tears in her eyes. "We've prepared our entire lives for this moment; you all know what to do."

Armageddon, Doomsday, The Apocalypse—whatever they choose to call it—if it were to happen, we should have been ready and prepared. However, our previous Mother seemed reluctant to teach us. In many ways, she may have been scared and just didn't want to face the facts, but personally, I feel she knew she was about to die, and she wanted us all to discover it for ourselves.

I watched my fellow sisters trail through the mess. With their fingers pinched over their nostrils, they sifted through the debris, trying to find some kind of life, some kind of seed or forgotten plant. Ebony stood in what looked like the centre of a crater—yet more piles of mud and rubbish compacted together, towering high like the skyscrapers the humans had built.

Then, we spotted something. We could see only faintly, but it was there: something green, something natural, something growing with leaves and sprouts.

Ebony shouted, "Be careful! If this is the only one and you step on it..."

Everyone gathered around.

"Now, let's recite what we have rehearsed," Ebony explained, looking seriously into our eyes.

"Our Mother previous was not too eager for us to practice. Perhaps we are not ready as she predicted," Annie worried.

"We must try," Ebony insisted, stretching out both hands and gathering us around in a coven's circle.

I could barely remember the words; it was so long ago since we practiced together. My mind was elsewhere and I felt inadequate. I was the youngest, the one that nobody listened to, no matter how much I shouted and screamed.

"Exsurge ex somno. Surge et cresce. Natura te vocat, te iubemus crescere, Mater te iubet natura!"

For a moment, it looked as if one of its miniature leaves blew in the strong winds. There was something magical happening—we all felt its presence while our eyes were tightly shut to the elements. The bewitching had begun, until we heard it no more. It wasn't working.

Ebony turned a dark shade of grey. Bags under her eyes appeared purple. Her entire body started to shiver. She was scared—she usually barely showed her emotions in public.

The coven could feel how unsteady she was becoming. We all looked to her now. She was our new leader, and when she hadn't the answers, we were scared for ourselves. "Sorry, I just thought... Mother wouldn't have lied to us, she knew what was best for us..."

"She left us to die, Ebony. She left us all to fend for ourselves. That is not thinking of our best interests..."

"But what about the prophecy?" Ebony whispered.

The rest of the coven, including myself, exchanged strange looks. Mother had never mentioned any kind of prophecy to us. All we had been told was that if an event should eventually come, we should be ready.

"What did The Mother speak of?" I asked, barely a whisper. I was terrified for what would come next from Ebony's mouth.

"She spoke to me long ago. As I was the eldest, I was the one she confided in. She told of a sister, stronger than the rest. I had always thought it meant more powerful. I assumed, as the oldest and the one to take over, it would be me, but hearing you speak—you know what you want, you aren't afraid to speak out from the crowd... Eve, I think she spoke of you."

Several pairs of eyes turned to me. I was not a leader in any shape of the word. I did march to the beat of my own drum; I did listen to the rumbling in my heart, and not even Mother could question it. However, lately, as my sisters had been ignoring my pleas, I had doubted this.

I stared at my feet squashed into the debris. "This was what she was preparing us for—her own death. I think I'm the one to bewitch the sprout."

We tried the incantation again, this time with just me saying the words. Again, nothing happened—silence and the dead was all that was left. Carefully opening my eyes, I stretched my hands out, signalling for my sisters to join. We chanted for the third time, over and over.

Suddenly, the ground below it, and under our own feet, started to sprout. Green, luscious grass spread across the debris. We screamed for joy, hugging each other excitedly. We were as giddy as schoolgirls, and we didn't care how sore our cheeks hurt, because we were smiling too much.

This was the day my coven and I turned the world into Mother Nature's beautiful home once more. This was the day our Mother died and the prophecy came true. The land was now bewitched.





Everyone Is Me by Joan Namaggwa

Mainstream culture relishes in raging women: a symbol to liberate all; yet I cannot help but ponder, who receives this liberation, and who capitalizes on it? And whom does it free? Because women all around the world carry years of silence and their blue wrath, to erupt one day like a volcano, unheeded. Do women ask themselves in the darkest midnight blue of their lives: Will I be liberated if I erupt? Or will I become a pariah, knocking on the borders of social society, begging to be let in until the day I die?

Raging, transgressive women are lovely to behold, but how many have that once-in-a-lifetime choice to execute this mission that may alter one's life forever? Othering oneself to become oneself is a perilous journey. Dare to ask yourself: Am I willing to embody my authentic self on the condition of becoming the 'Other'? — not as a rarity, but rather as a monstrosity.

Judith Butler was right when she implied the gendered life is a performance — we dance to the tune of normality, of whose we have no sense. Yet we twirl to its music, unaware of what we become if we stop the dance. We envision the mirrorball crashing down, its shining lights becoming a solitary lighthouse, navigating its isolation.

What happens is... nothing. Silence engulfs our souls. Nothing happens, yet we stand, mouth agape, with an altered life. Layers of identity furling into a rose on fire — a beautiful horror — a paradox, unable to fit in the puzzle, until you become a lighthouse, searching for the result of your rage. Where is your victory? A pat on the head for demonstrating courage, but all you can conjure is fear, not respect. The essence of becoming a raging woman is either being feared or being crushed.

Witnessing the raging women of mythology: Medusa and her hissing snakes, or Kali's bloodthirsty tongue; on our screens: Jennifer's unceasing hunger, Pearl's murderous streak, or Nina's seething perfectionism, breaking barriers to embody the black swan; words forged of fire by Plath, or the unknown women tethered to their yellow wallpapers, becoming unreleased phantoms, labeled 'uncontrollable' and 'powerful,' elongating to 'mad' and 'hysterical.'

Medusa is a paradox; she is beauty and horror. She is the frozen rage of womankind who stands on the periphery of established patriarchy. She is a beacon of lost female power, but where does society place her? Either as a victim or a villain — the only two categories that exist for women in our society. Recalling those three lines from Sylvia Plath's poem Lady Lazarus:

Out of the ashes / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air.

But hasn't she become the 'mad poetess' today? As if her oeuvre, which forms the very essence of the subjective feminine experience and authenticity, is discarded. Their rage is powerful and empowering, but not pleasant to yield.

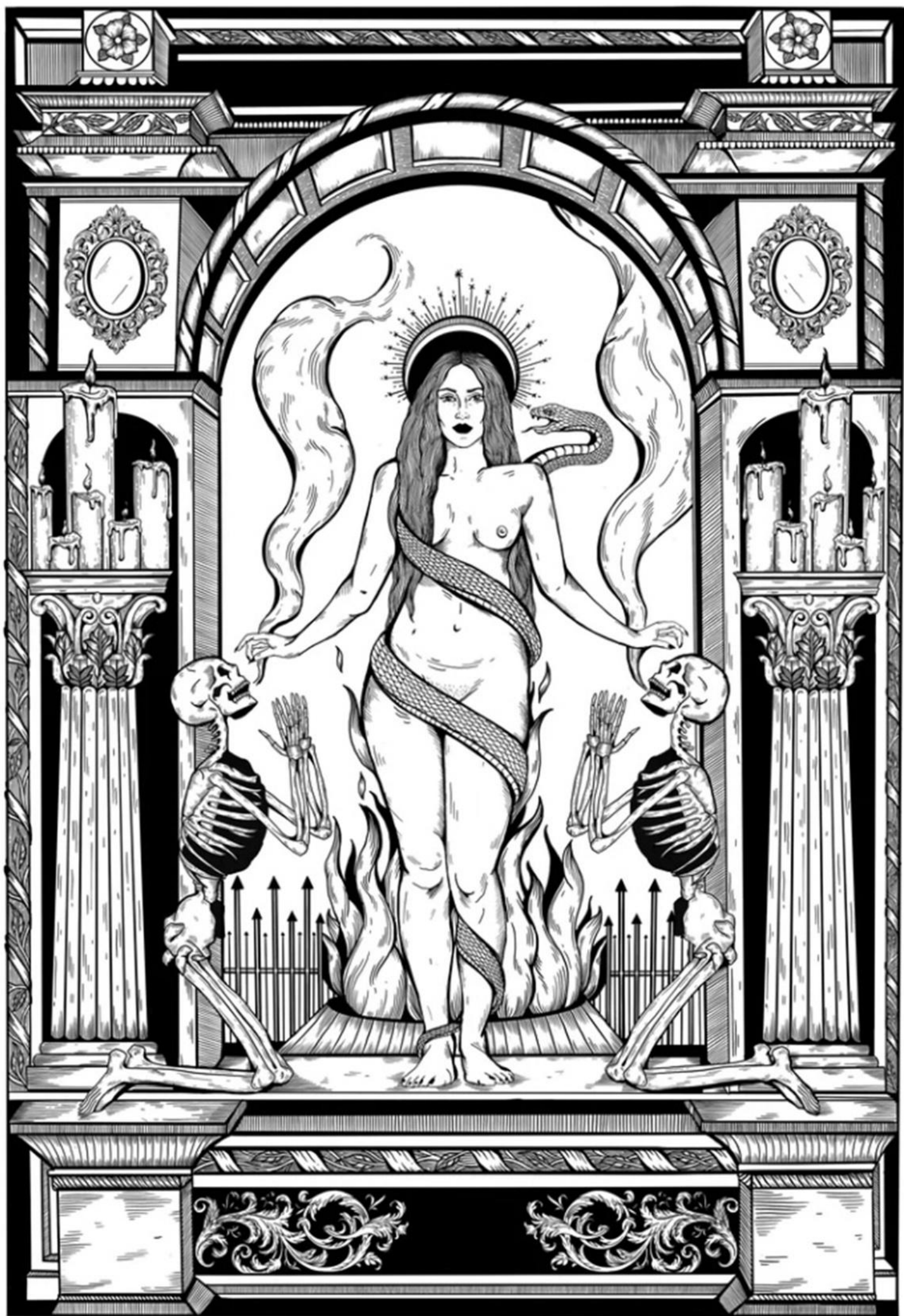
The raging woman has been present since the beginning of time, but we have noticed her only now. Our acknowledgment of her existence has been revolutionary, yet their rage continues to consume them: liberated, but at what cost? They paint themselves red to unbecome what they have become, owing to a prescribed societal definition, catering to a structure, until they crumble. Rage is not a victory; it's a symptom of a sick society that forces its women to insanity — a display of its malady.

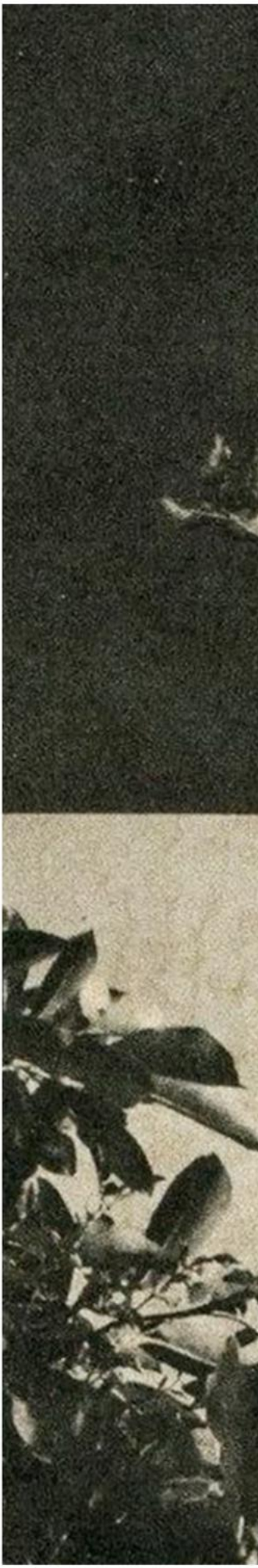
Our raging women deserve more than just retribution, more than just a pedestal, much more than just their rage.

Decoding the Raging Womens Experience:

EXPLORING
MEDUSA
AND
PLATH

Written by Anjali Panwar





Major Arcana 18

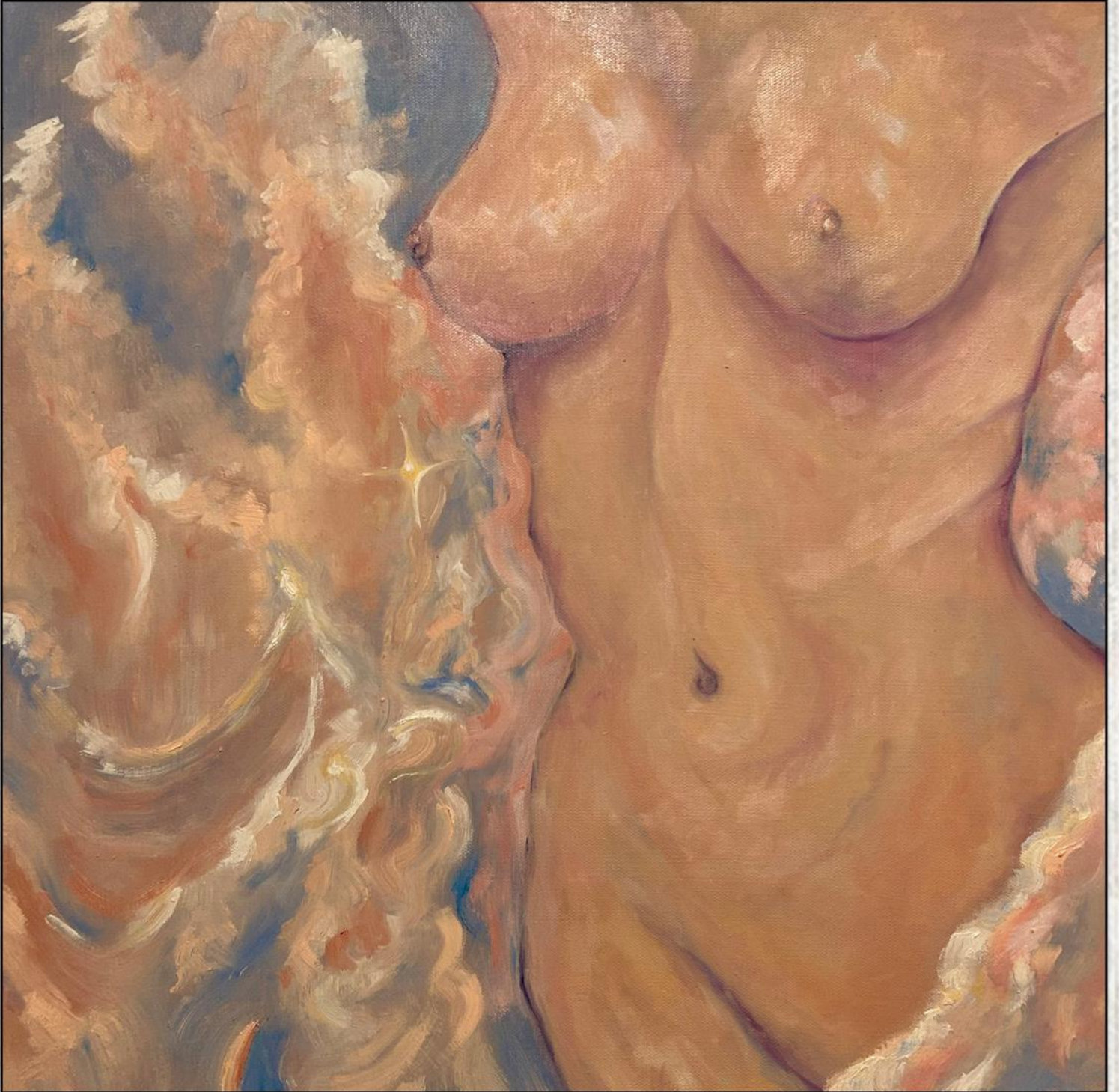
Written by Christine So

*Luna swirls around her.
Her light, iridescent,
Magnificent.*

*The glow softens her skin,
Delicately deflecting.
Yet,
Luna's mystery can always give in.*

*Divine feminine energy,
She gives us the power to dance in her shadows,
Light guiding you in times of unease,
Reminding us of cycles,
That it's all alright.*

*Hence why the moon
Has always given femininity power.*



Afterglow by Reese Clemons

She Must Be Free

my soul fell
deeply in love
with herself,
seeing clearly
what was once blurry,
breaking walls
profusely.

she can no longer contain herself.

She. Must. Be. Free.

so, she surrendered,
took one breath after another,
towards the edge of reality,
and then
she leaped
into the mystery,
fearless,
hungry.

she lands softly
on her own magic.

my soul fell
within herself,
into spirals of existences,
vulnerable,
powerful,
boundless.

she fell
back into place,
where divine darkness
always awaits.

*Written by
Mariam Mouna*



Rotten Woman by Sam Morgan

Sharp Things

*I can love knives and swords and all things
sharp,
for I've loved men
who've poked daggers into my chest
and plucked its bleeding remains out,
tossed it in their hands
and watched as if it were a Christmas orna-
ment.*

*Who've had tongues that carve disgust onto
my virgin skin,
leaving me in the shower for endless hours
scrubbing at the dirt and—
I was yours, but you weren't mine.*

*When our lips crashed and you said you love
me, it was nothing,
nothing for you.
I felt it—*

*the weight of these words as I spelt them out,
the taste of it as it swirled around my mouth,
the rhythm of each syllable as the waves let
out.*

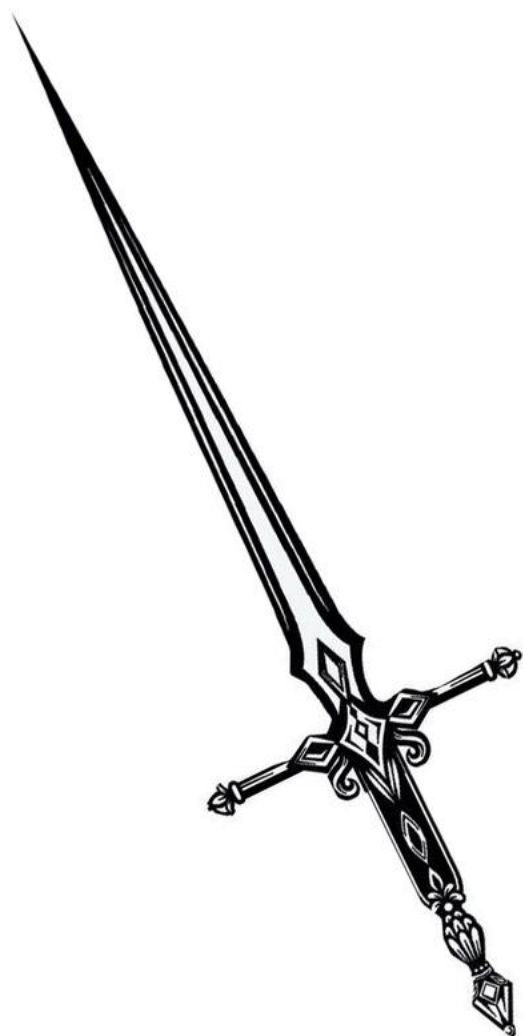
*But I'd still run back to you if you were to leave
me bleeding, chest open on the plains.
I'd rip my shirt and cut open myself,
thrust my little beating heart into your now
bloody palms,
and scream—*

It's yours.

It's yours.

I'm all yours now.

Just lie to me and tell me that you love me.





you silenced her every hissing request,
you plucked scales from her when she had none to give,
you broke vertebrae pieces off as a means of discipline,
you mocked her path in the sand and
drew new grooves for her to follow.

You spit burning insults as a means of control,
but hide as you might, she's now on a roll —
you rattled her,
chased her tail,
asked for more than offered,
played with her like a worn-out teddy
until she stopped trusting herself.

Stuck her with venomous words,
stunning her into silence and submission,
chopped her to pieces,
forcing her to grow a new body,
leaving her lifeless when you were done.

But she'll be gracious — you won't feel her venom —
you'll be dead before you've realized your mistakes.

Seventeen Venomous Reasons for Dipsa

Written by Victoria James



I can't look away.

I look at you by Elliea Kiley

Throw the dog a bone

"Where'd she get that poem from?"

"I don't know, but I can tell she didn't write it on her own."

Throw the dog a bone.

Please, just throw the dog a bone.

"She's probably turning the devil on,

She's not doing this alone,

She sold her soul,

Her talent is a loan"

Throw the dog a bone.

Let it be,

For those who've outgrown the devil.

Just throw the dog a bone.

THROW THE DOG A BONE

THROW THE DOG A BONE

"She's over there, trying to break the cycle; the bond,"

"Somebody's going to tell that poor girl that she was born

Just to be a beautiful dumb blonde and nothing more."

Throw the dog a bone.



*Written by
Chainka*



*Cyanotype Collage by
Beth Newman-Moseley with Haunt Assembly*



*I hold my arms out towards the ocean by
Beth Newman-Moseley with Haunt Assembly*

