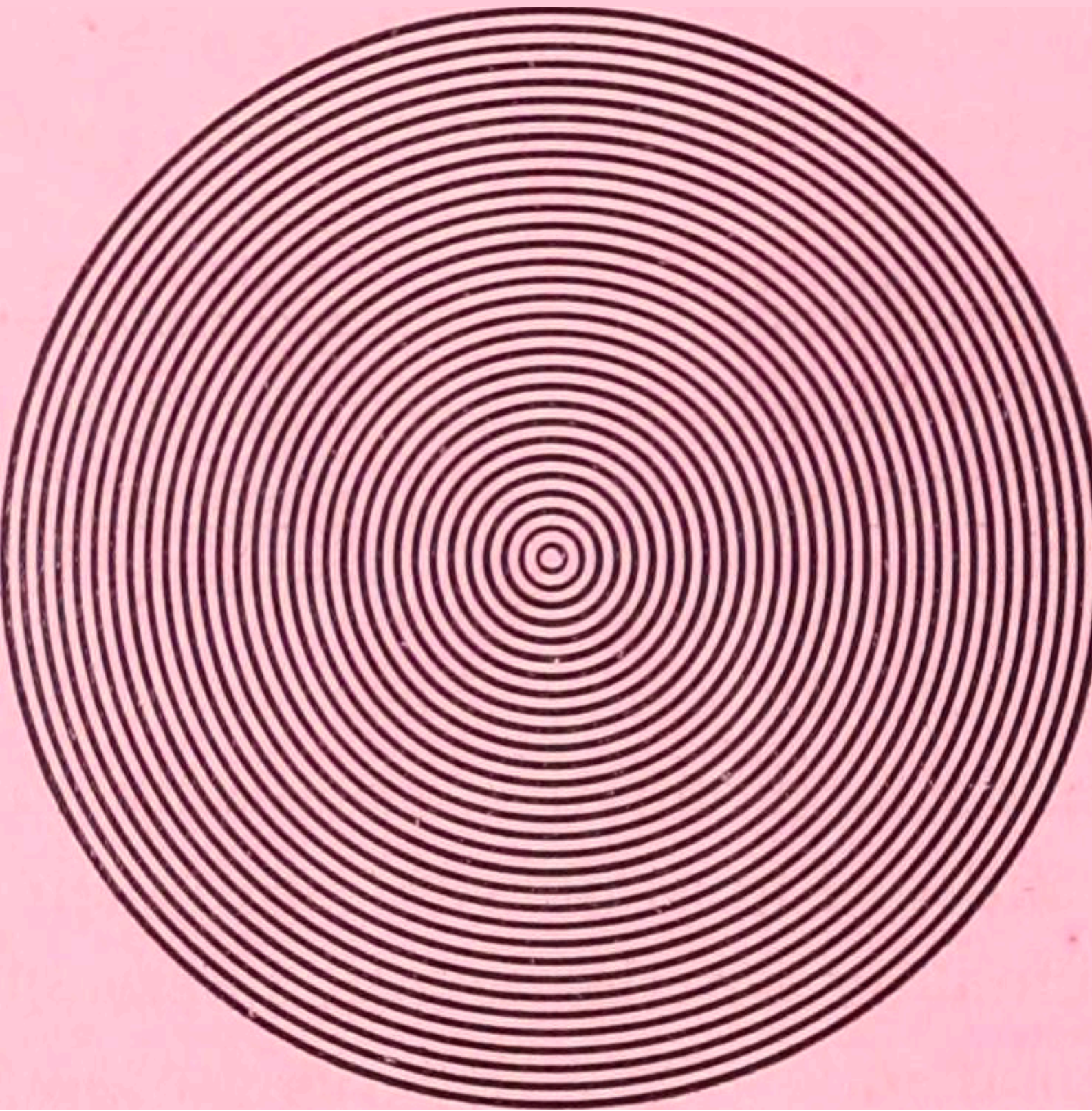


SEEN / UN SEEN

a zine on trans visibility



SEEN/UNSEEN

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We'll Be Our Mirrors / Glen Kalliope Rodman

What would you write if you knew only other trans people would read it?

I have the all-too-common experience of being misgendered by students while teaching remotely. In the refractive prism of Zoom world, I can watch my face shift in real-time, from a bookish effete young man to a scared, defensive, failed woman. I am forced to witness the concreteness of misrecognition's affect: the way that I see myself changes, my features reorder in an instant without my consent.

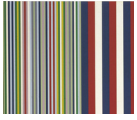
Contrast this with my FaceTime calls with my dear friend Esther. In my hand, I hold both my face and hers, and we look fucking fantastic. I catch myself preening, playing with the angles of light on my face. How could I have forgotten that I am a handsome young man? How could anyone see otherwise?

Much has been written about the dangers of visibility for Trans people, especially Black trans women: to be seen is not necessarily to be understood - to be seen is also to be surveilled, policed and targeted for violence. When we are visible, whose gaze are we subject to, and what narratives are being imposed upon our bodies?



"Not only does it divert focus from those who are most on the margins due to racial capitalism and neoliberalism, but visibility also invests in forms of normativity that may harm the very people that liberal-minded people and organizations aim to support. Finally, the project of visibility is ahistorical in suggesting that things are "getting better," when the reality is that it is only getting better for some, and even then, the gains are marginal, slow to come, and stratified along lines of race, class, sexuality, and gender."

Z Nicolazzo, "Visibility Alone Will Not Save Us: Leveraging Invisibility As A Possibility for Liberatory Pedagogical Practice"

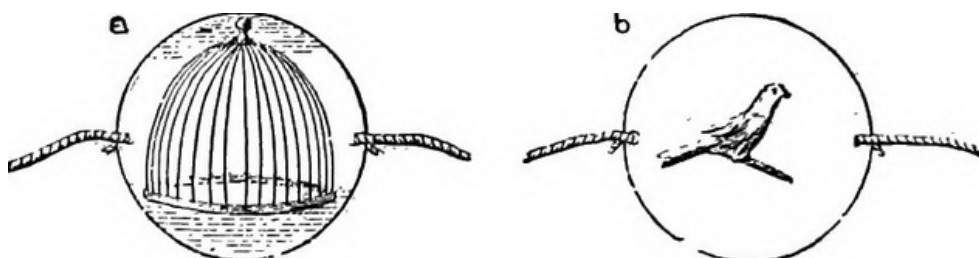


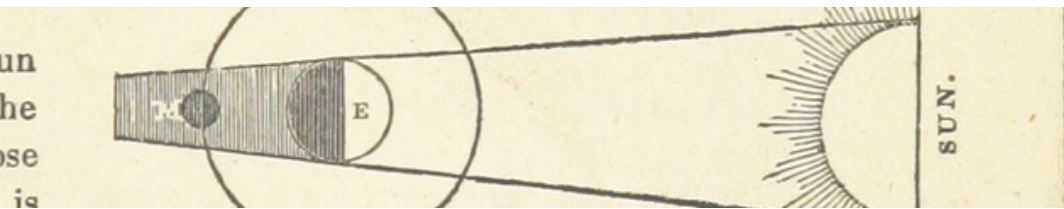
Yet we must be visible to each other in order to survive and organize. Knowledge, including self-knowledge, can only be developed in dialogue and collaboration. We are all co-creators of ourselves and the world around us.

How can we collaborate to make our world worth living in? A question worth asking one's self, regardless of identity or positioning, but when you are trying to build a selfhood in an environment structured to police, deny, and eradicate that selfhood, the project of self-making becomes urgent, an aspect of survival as much as eating or sleeping. The miracle of feeling others see what I wanted to see in myself gave me the courage (uncharacteristic for me, a bona fide coward) to pursue transition as an arc towards a survivable "me."

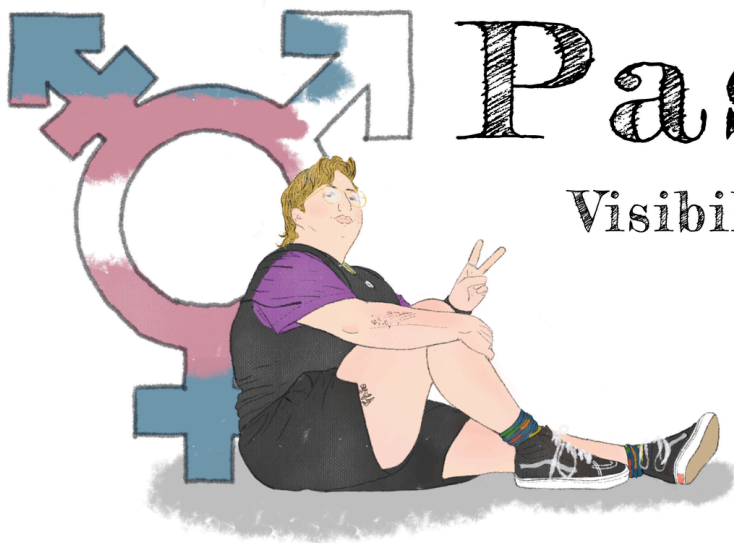
In *Trans Care*, Hil Malatino describes the experience of seeing a billboard reading "Trans People are Sacred," the (unattributed) work of trans artist Jonah Welch: "Anonymous, named but not represented, and hailed in the complexity of my need—to be seen and unseen simultaneously, to be comforted and also left alone, to, for once, feel held and witnessed within a public space without being made subject to other people's witness of me." Making art together - seeing together - is a form of trans community care. It's a way to parse one's own reflection, to reify both the self and the other in trust and good faith.

SEEN/UNSEEN is an attempt at reciprocal self-making: by us, for us, about us.





Passing? Visibility & Just Letting Trans People Be /
Atlas A. Lee-Reid



Passing?

Visibility & Just Letting
Trans People Be

A Comic By
ATLAS A LEE-REID
(they/he/ze/zir)

I'm incredibly lucky.

I spend a lot my time
surrounded by trans people.

I don't have to try.

I can be feminine, I can be fancy.

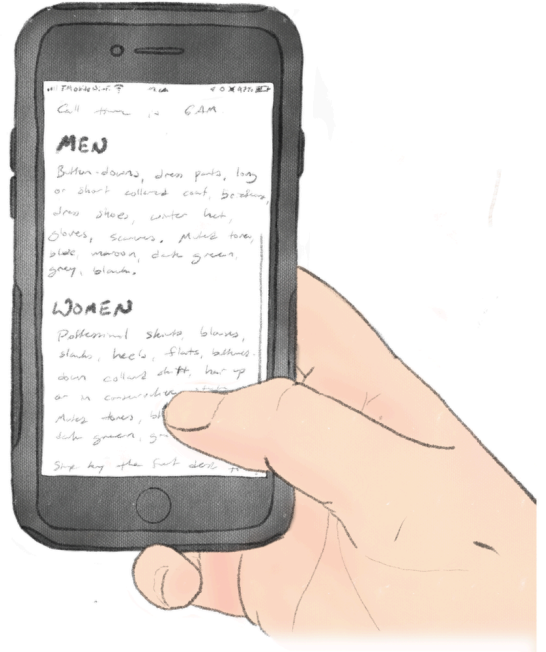
My friends will see me.

It's with cis people that visibility
becomes a problem.



I was on set the other day
as an extra.

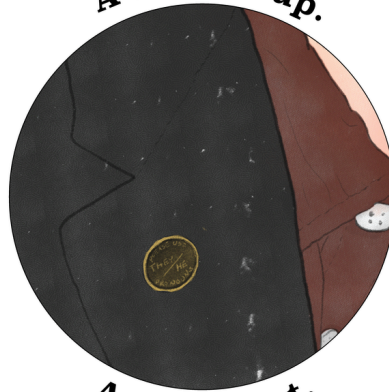
The costume instructions
weren't exactly clear,
so I decked myself out
in the way I knew how.



Docs.



A button up.

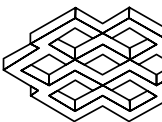
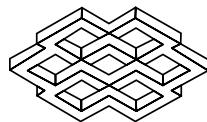
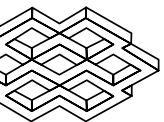


A nice coat.



A gay earring...

... so the viewers could
witness a gay.

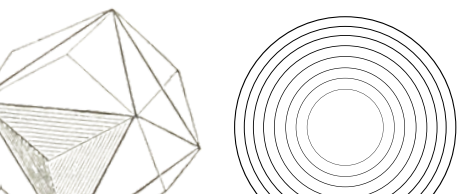


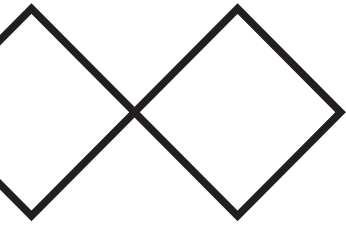
I got on set, and for a few hours, I felt like I passed.

For the first time in a long time.

I was so happy.

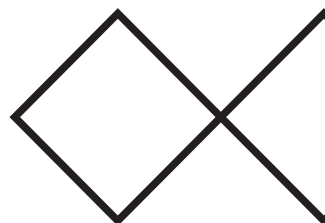
ALL EXTRAS TO THE
PROPS TRUCK!
HAVE YOUR ID'S READY!





I walked up to the truck,
expecting to be given a briefcase
like the other masc pedestrians.

... but I wasn't.





All of a sudden, it felt like the illusion was broken.

I hadn't ever passed.

I was so aware of my body.

Every curve.

My binder restricting my skin.

I felt unsafe.





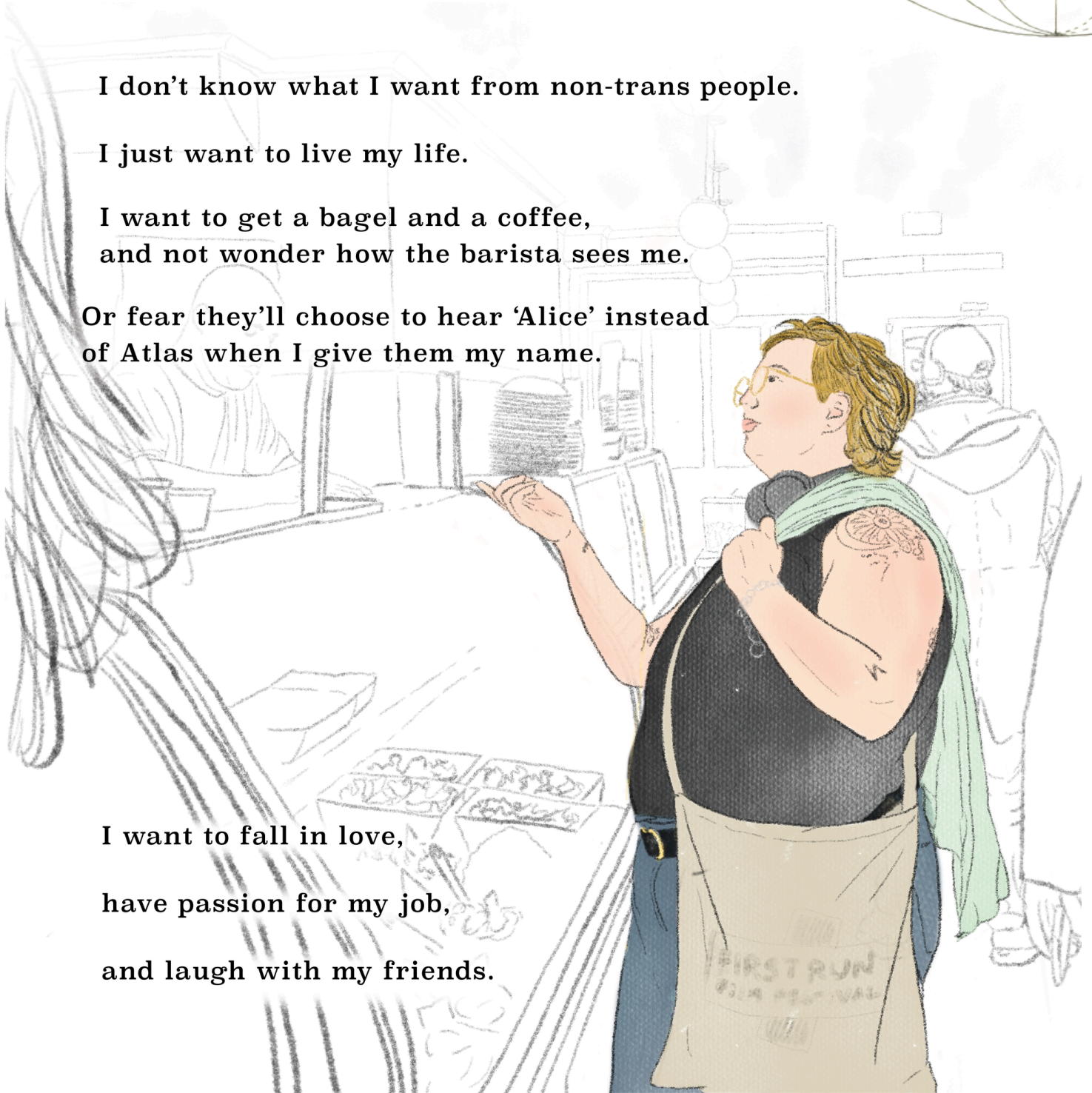
I don't know what I want from non-trans people.

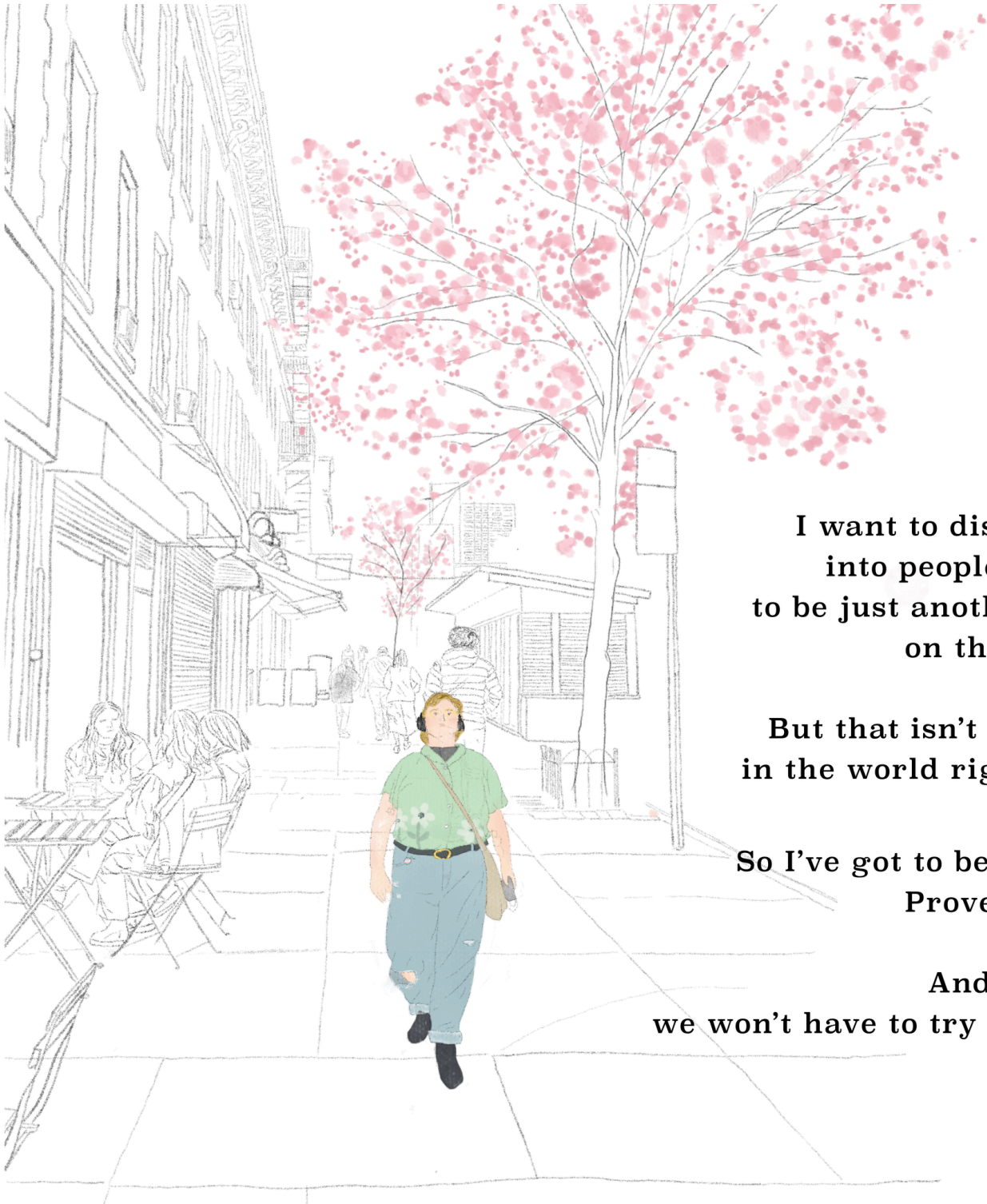
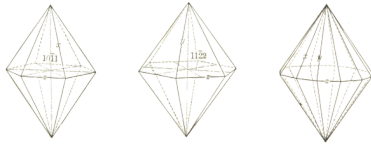
I just want to live my life.

I want to get a bagel and a coffee,
and not wonder how the barista sees me.

Or fear they'll choose to hear 'Alice' instead
of Atlas when I give them my name.

I want to fall in love,
have passion for my job,
and laugh with my friends.



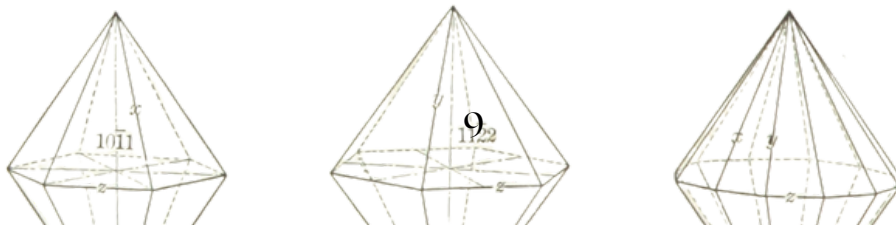


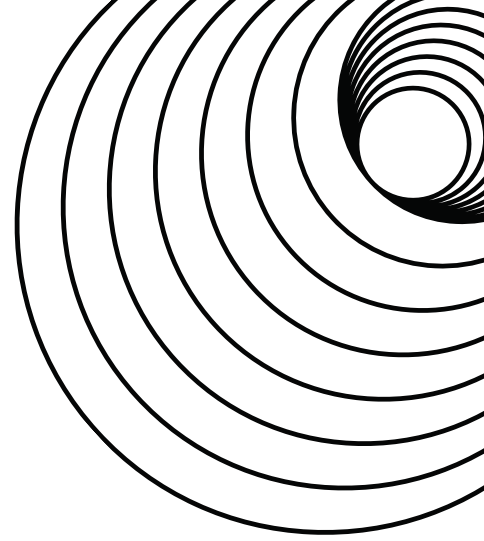
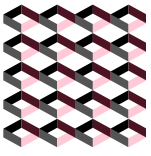
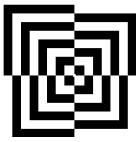
**I want to disappear
into people's lives,
to be just another guy
on the street.**

**But that isn't possible
in the world right now.**

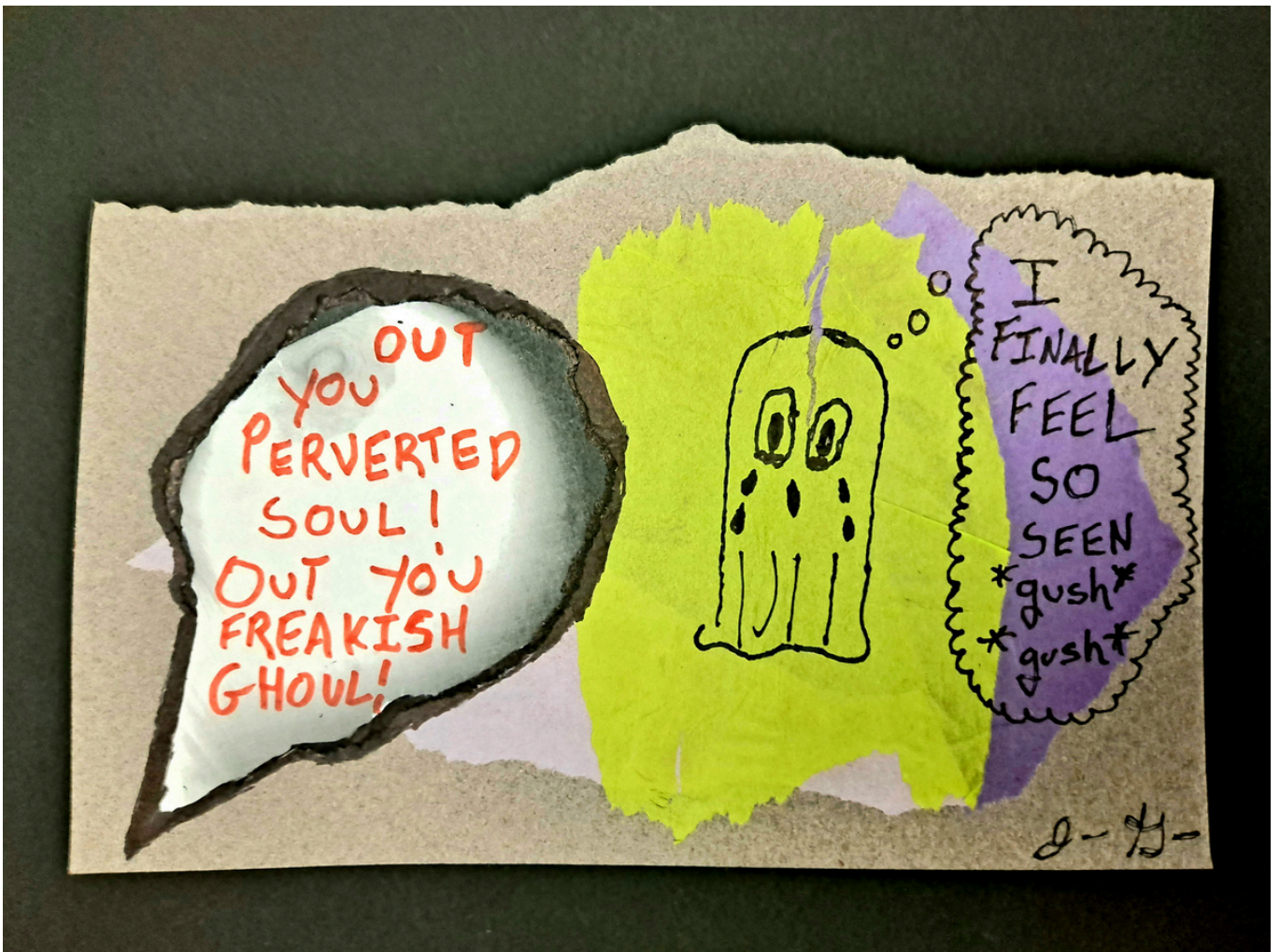
**So I've got to be visible.
Prove I exist.**

**And one day
we won't have to try anymore.**





(untitled) / Judy Giera



(untitled) / Wendy Wildshape

hi

my name is wendy
and i am transgender

i make games

you can see them at
<https://wendywildsha.pe/>

some of the games were made
before i started my transition

some of them were made after

but i was always transgender
even before i knew it

i mostly make them for myself

not many people play them

i guess now my games
and me
are slightly more visible

423 DATA BUFFER FCT TEST
424 PF MODULE FCT TEST
425 CLOCK TUNING FCT TEST
426 GRP DELAY FCT TEST

313_RCUR/ANTENNA STATUS
314 MUX/ENCODER STATUS
315 BASEBAND/XMITR STATUS
316 SIG CONDITIONER STATUS

NAU FCT TEST IN PROGRESS
DATA BUFFER MEMORY A ON
L1 ON L2 OFF
UPLOAD VERIFY COMPLETE

(FLASHING MESSAGES)

what are you _ show yourself / charlie jasper

the story starts the same way:

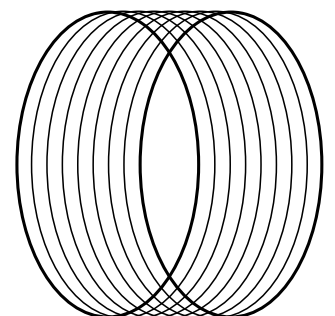
i was walking down the street the other day
clinging to my humble few servings of fruit to last me the
next week
because the six, seven, eight, nine
the fine line between divine androgyny
teetering on masculine if you squint hard enough
defining my caloric count.

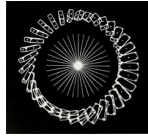
but that's a different poem.

i was walking down the street the other day
clinging to my grocery bags as if to shield myself
two men, cigarettes perched on their pursed lips
no purse? but, a curse, a threat to their own masculinity
as if i cried, i called, i barked to these men
"what are you?"

but no, they did.

i put my headphones louder and walked a little faster
but that just irritated, an imitation of what it would be like if
their words weren't weapons
they barked again, with a different demand:
"show yourself."





“show yourself.”

show you what?

show you the binder i use to lie to those eyes, to your eyes,
to cause you to investigate my chest, too late, my breasts
have already been neatly tucked away, the flesh pressed
behind the nylon-spandex vest.

“show yourself.”

show you the scars on my wrist

from the “she” instead of “he”

endlessly, endlessly

my unmistakable femininity

my dad saying “you just seem like a woman to me”

“show yourself.”

but i am.

i crafted these boot-cut jeans, this sweatshirt, these pin stripes
to hide the silhouette

that i bet could get me in even more danger

because curves contrasting the gritty city grid
by shadows and streetlight are dangerous.

but that’s a different poem.

“show yourself.”

i would be showing you a different narrative of masculinity

i would be showing you a man with a high voice

a man with breasts and a man with hips and a man with thighs
and a man with lips

a man trapped not in his body, but in perceptions of his body.

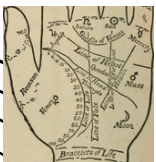
what am i?

a trans rebel.





charlie jasper / photo by Carli Neusdadt



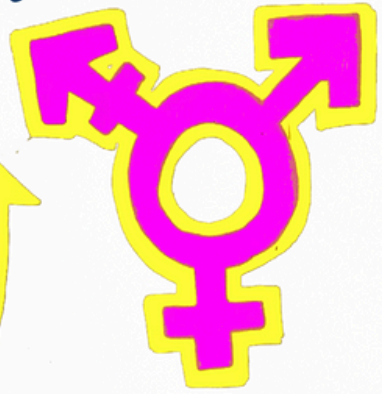


(untitled) / MyfNorris

I have been **drawing** for basically my **entire life.**  but there is one subject I have never been able to represent:

MYSELF.

a lot of this can be blamed on **UNRECOGNIZED DYSPHORIA** or **LACK OF ARTISTIC EXPERTISE** but...



no matter how far I climb, both in my mastery of art and in my self-esteem as a trans woman
....

I can't seem to represent

ME

in a form that feels ok.



before I transitioned I made a few attempts, and tried to hone in on my defining features:

my bold

eyebrows,



my steel blue

eyes,



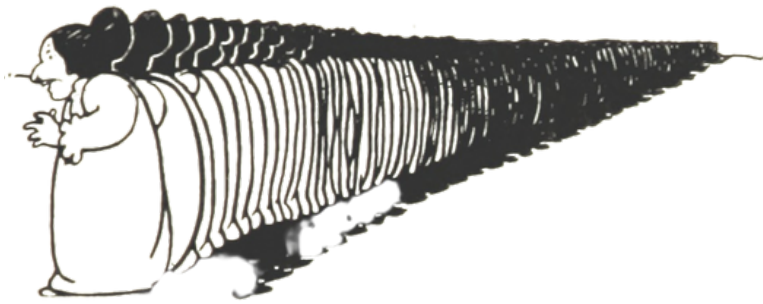
my big and pudgy

BODY!

you would think that transitioning, "finding myself," finally loving the self I see in

the mirror, would help...





... it really didn't.

before **AND** after, I have found self-representation in other visual forms:

a monogram,



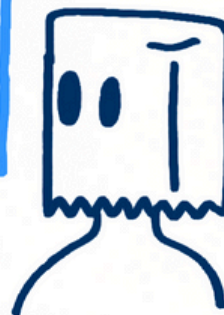
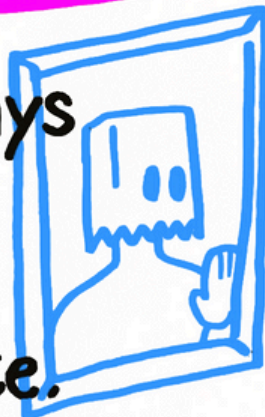
a fictional character,



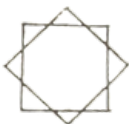
the unique Trade Marks of my style-

BUT ASIDE FROM MY SIGNATURE

I have always struggled to show myself in what I create.



IN THE CORNER.



I make art because of a **CREATIVE IMPULSE** that I can't control.

but also because I want to be

VISIBLE

I want people

to like me.



to like my art,

and, by extension,

when I was younger, I wanted to be a **GREAT AMERICAN** artist/novelist etc.

I wanted to be **FAMOUS**. and sometimes I still struggle with recognizing that numbers and notoreity do not equal

SUCCESS.



Some of
the most

**Visible
Artists**

receive the most
hate and harassment
after all.

I've had to reconcile my need for
ATTENTION and **CARE** with the
reality that being



will not necessarily make my life better.

So many of
my art skills,
I've stolen.

borrowed from



other artists. little things
I try to emulate.
seeing beautiful
things makes me
want to create
some beauty myself.

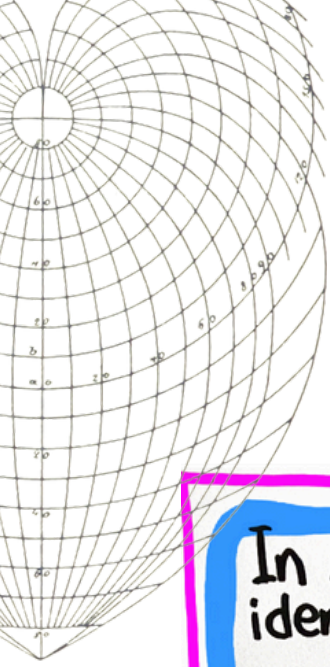


Fig. 53.

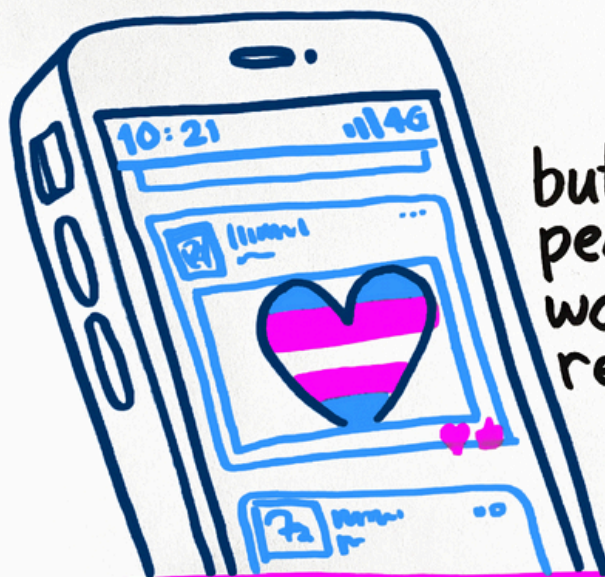
In a way, my trans identity was the same.

I didn't accept that I was trans until I was 24.

when I had those thoughts, that I wanted to be a woman — felt like a woman, I dismissed them.

as foolish...

as **PERVERTED**.



but once I saw trans people living full and wonderful lives, I realized I could do the same.



... so maybe I just need
to steal more.



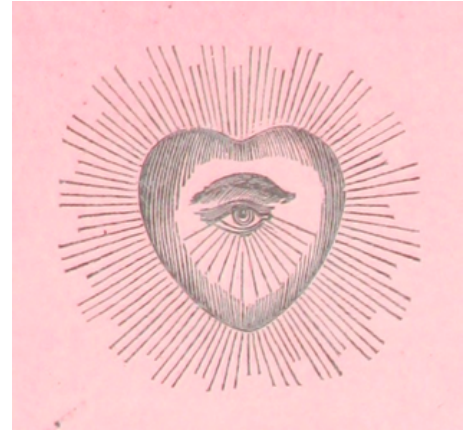
CREATING ART, JUST LIKE BEING QUEER,
IS A WHOLLY COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCE.

discovering beauty and joy is
a conversation. It doesn't matter how
VISIBLE I am if there is not
community around me.

... and maybe, it doesn't matter if
I can draw myself, as long as I am
seen by the people who matter
most to me.

MNF NORRIS · APRIL 2022





“Visibility is the Pride flag hanging in front of my house.” / B.N. Laux

Visibility is the Pride flag hanging in front of my house.

My cis-gendered partner and I bought our home in December, in a nice neighborhood not too far from the city park. Our kids walk to the end of the street to get on the bus and every so often the street sweeper goes chugging along. Train tracks run a ways behind the house, and every morning at ten my youngest runs to watch them go by through the trees. People walk their dogs by our house and Trump banners wave cheerfully back to them.

What I’m saying is, I live in conservative white hell. Quaint, peaceful, and suffocating.

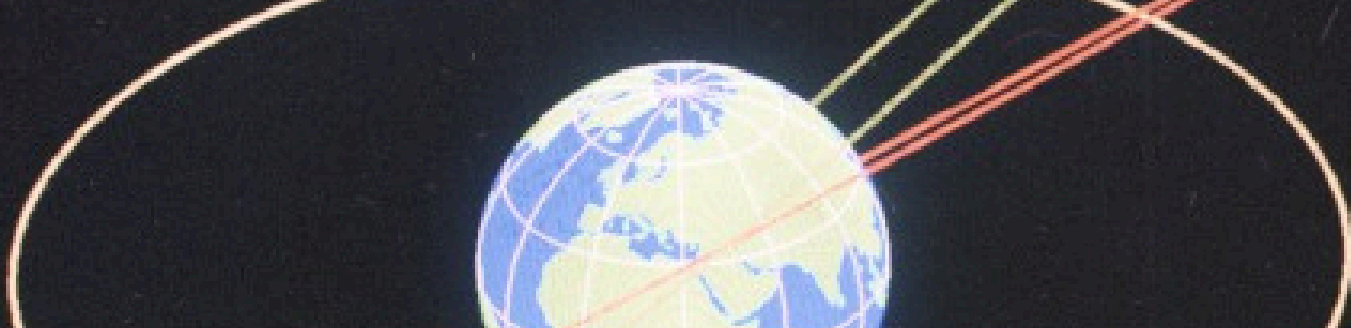
As an AFAB queer enby, I’m out as out can be online but I play it safe in my real life. There are kids at my children’s school who get teased for being gay. Two years ago, a gay couple less than ten miles from our hometown had a homophobic slur burned into their yard.

Burned.

The message was clear, and it hasn’t gotten any better. Here, visibility costs dirty looks and whispers. Being snubbed by other parents. Kids being bullied. At worst, a nice slur burned into your lawn. No violence that I know of, not that it would be on the news.

And yet, I persist.

I tell people I came out for my child, and it’s mostly true. It’s important to me that they know it’s okay to be who they are. But I can’t tell them it’s safe. Not here.



On the other hand, it almost seems like they want us to be visible. To lay eyes upon their enemy. The ones they loathe and 'pray for' . . . We're called the groomers and the pedophiles and the freaks. Sinners.

They want a face to slap on their demon before they slay it.

We're expected to be educators and defend our identities with facts they refuse to believe. They say they love all of God's children, but I've never felt more unwanted than in a church.

My coming out has been in layers. Bisexual to pansexual to non-binary. I've been peeling off the opinions and prejudices of others to finally discover who I am beneath their weight. Making sense of my own identity is hard enough—it's harder yet to make sense of the hate people insist on carrying for anyone who doesn't embody their idea of perfection.

The very first Pride event in my current city was held last year. I'd like to say that's progress but after the onslaught of anti-trans legislation, I can't. My heart is too heavy. Not to mention it was held in August instead of June.

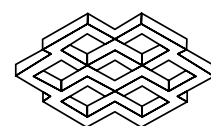
And the website of the group hosting the march hasn't been updated since.

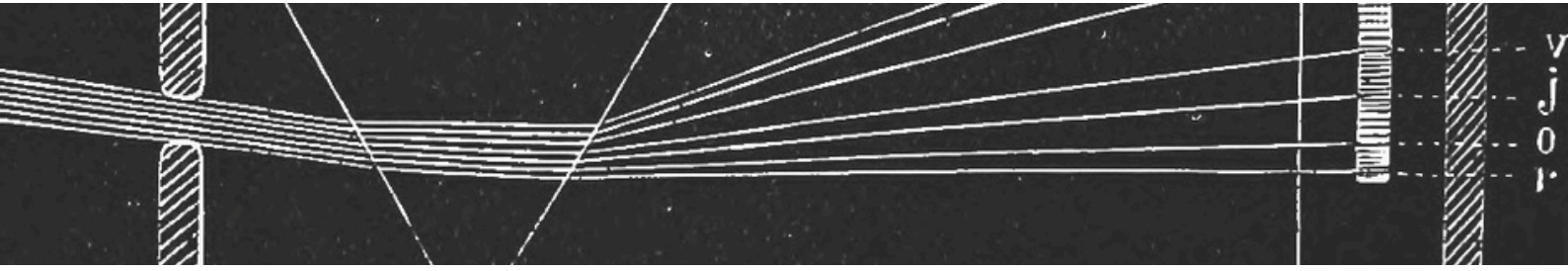
I can't be sure if it still exists.

Invisible is how I feel.

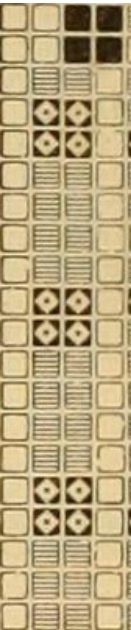
So I leave my flag out at night, even though I'm afraid. I dress how I please and don't care what the neighbors might think. And I encourage my kids to befriend the ones being bullied instead of the bullies when I can.

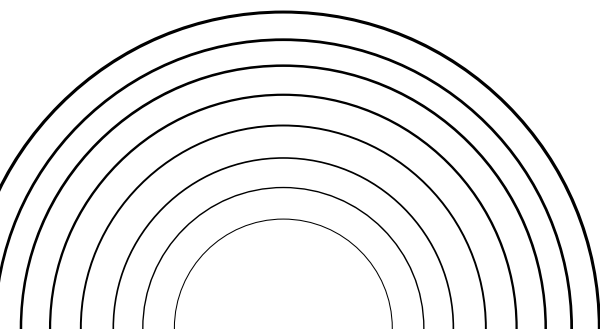
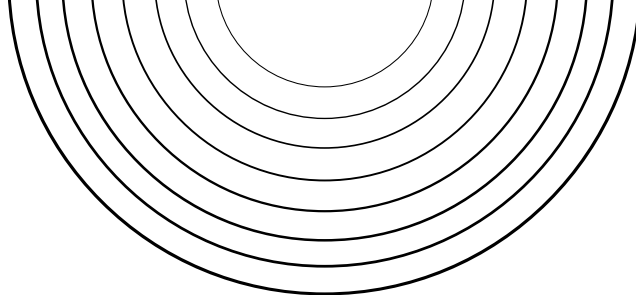
Mine is a quiet resistance, and it's all that I have.

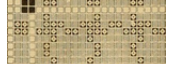
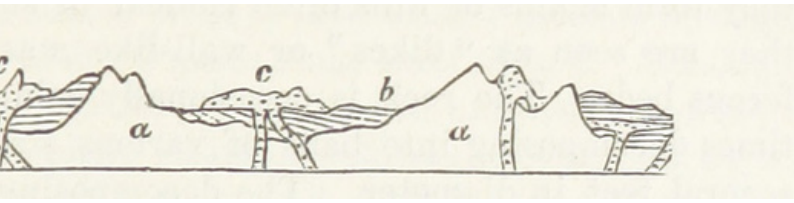
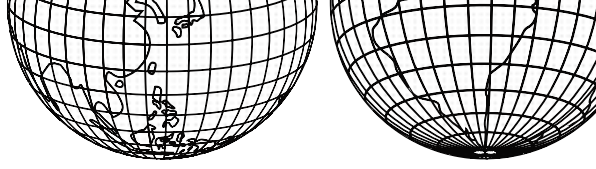




At Large / TFEM









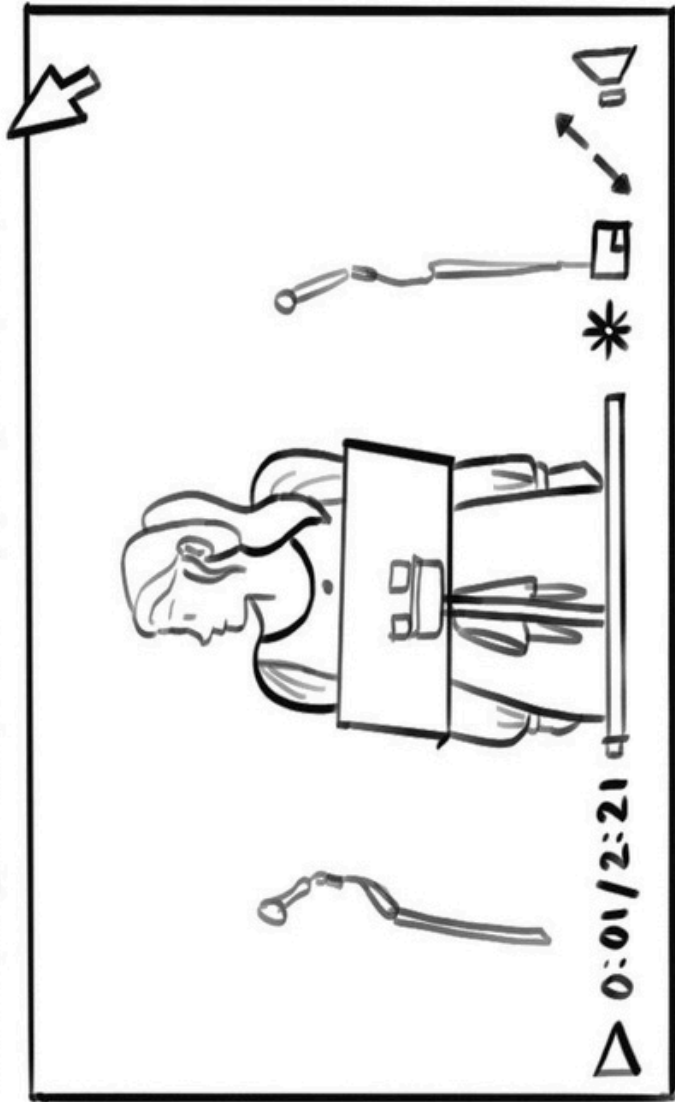
What You Owe and What You Own / Andy Lindquist



KATHY LINDQUIST

MAY 2012 • 

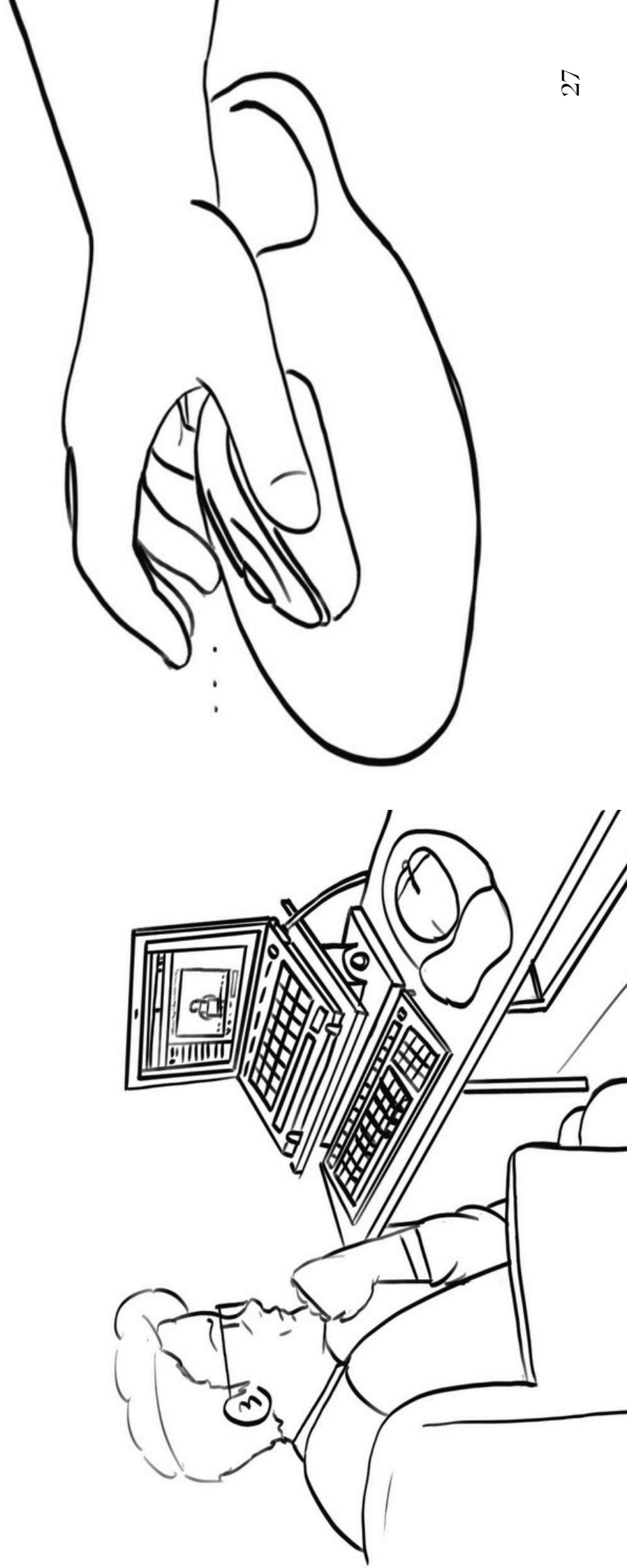
ONE MORE PERFORMANCE CLOSER
TO THE END OF SCHOOL! NOT A
DAY GOES BY THAT I'M NOT
APPRECIATIVE OF MY DAUGHTER.



ART SONGS. OPERA.

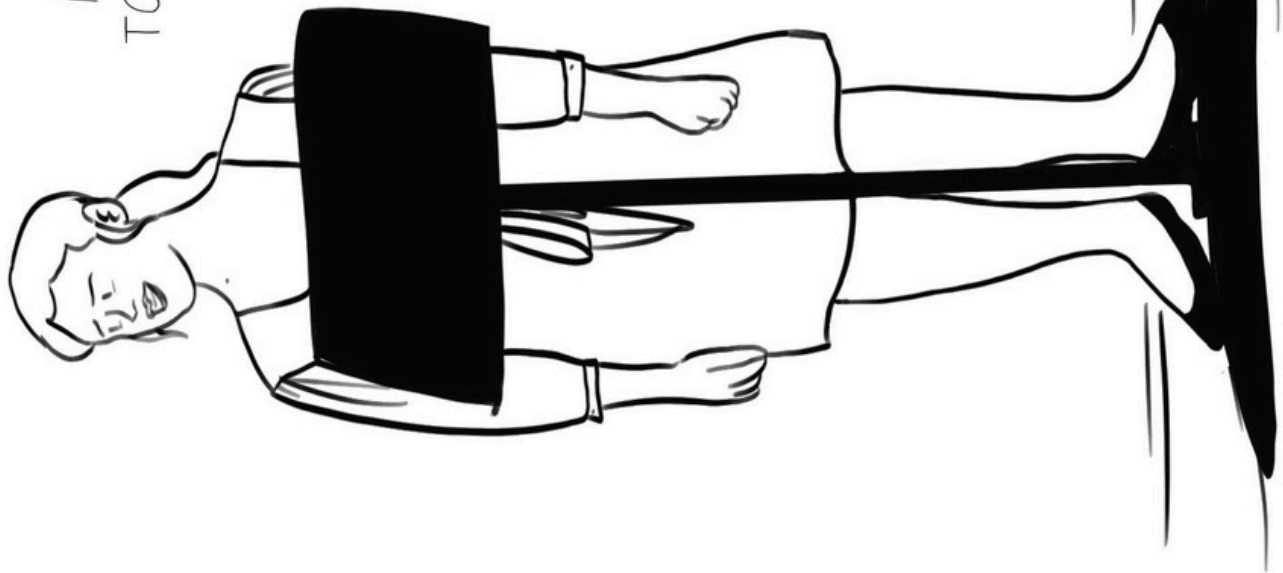
THAT SORT OF THING.

I STUDIED CLASSICAL VOCAL
PERFORMANCE IN HIGH SCHOOL



I LOVED TO SING.

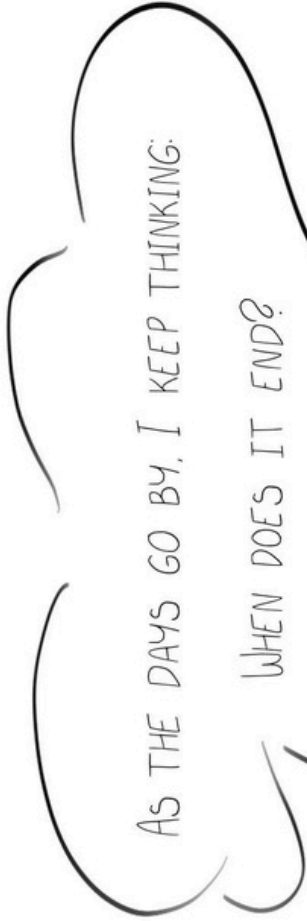
PEOPLE LOVED
TO HEAR ME SING.



I WAS ONE OF THE BEST
SOPRANOS IN MY SCHOOL.



I WAS A LOVELY YOUNG WOMAN.



AS THE DAYS GO BY, I KEEP THINKING:

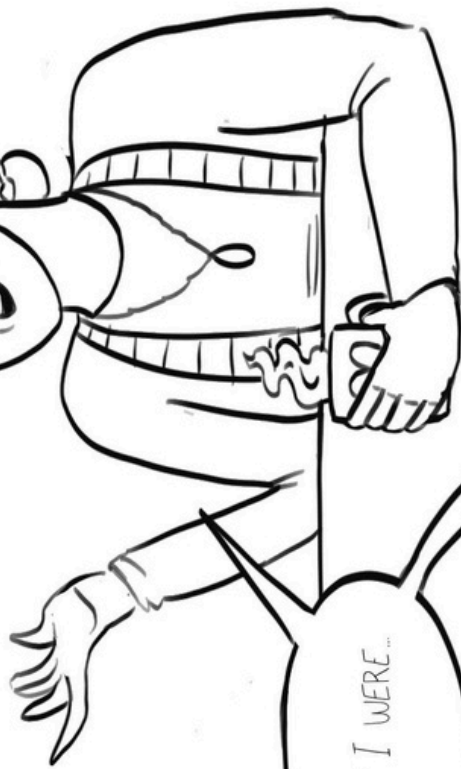
WHEN DOES IT END?

I'VE HEARD
THAT IT'S A COMMON EXPERIENCE
FOR TRANS MEN—

THAT ONCE THEY TRANSITION,
PEOPLE ACT AS THOUGH
THEY'VE BEEN ROBBED
OF A LOVELY YOUNG WOMAN.

BEHOLDING A YOUNG WOMAN
MAKES ONE FEEL AT EASE.

LINDQUIST,
I'M NOT INTO WOMEN...



...BUT IF I WERE...

...YOUR VOICE WOULD MAKE
ME FALL FOR YOU. 1



THERE WAS NOTHING ABOUT BEING
A YOUNG WOMAN THAT MADE ME
FEEL AT EASE, THOUGH.

WHO THE FUCK
IS THIS HOT
BITCH...



...AND WHY IS SHE ME?

SPECIFICALLY, A LOT OF ARIAS AND ART SONGS FOR SOPRANOS BOIL DOWN TO:

IN OPERA,
THE SOPRANO TRADITIONALLY
IS THE LOCUS OF DESIRE
UPON WHOM OTHERS ACT.

I'm so horny?
BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS FEELING MEANS BECAUSE I'M INTRINSICALLY VIRGINAL??
MAYBE I SHOULD JUST DIE?!



SO THIS SONG IS ABOUT...
S E X ?

YEAH,
LIKE, NINETY PERCENT
OF ALL ARIAS ARE
ABOUT SEX.

(MY VOICE TEACHER,
JEN)

ART SONGS

OR:

I'M 5000 HORNY, SO I HAD SEX—

—BUT, LIKE, I'M STILL CONFUSED AS TO WHAT THAT WAS ALL ABOUT?

ALSO NOW I'M RUINED??

GUESS I'LL DIE?!?



I WAS OVERWHELMED,
BUT NOT BY OWN DESIRE.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY
JEN SUGGESTED THAT
I SING "NOT A DAY GOES BY"
FOR MY JUNIOR YEAR RECITAL.



IT'S A BITTER SONG. IT'S NOT
REALLY MEANT FOR A TEENAGER.

...BUT I JUST GO ON

THINKING AND SWEATING AND

CURSING AND CRYING AND

TURNING AND REACHING AND

WAKING

AND

DYING...



NO WONDER IT TOOK ME
SO LONG TO UNDERSTAND
THAT I WASN'T
A CIS WOMAN.

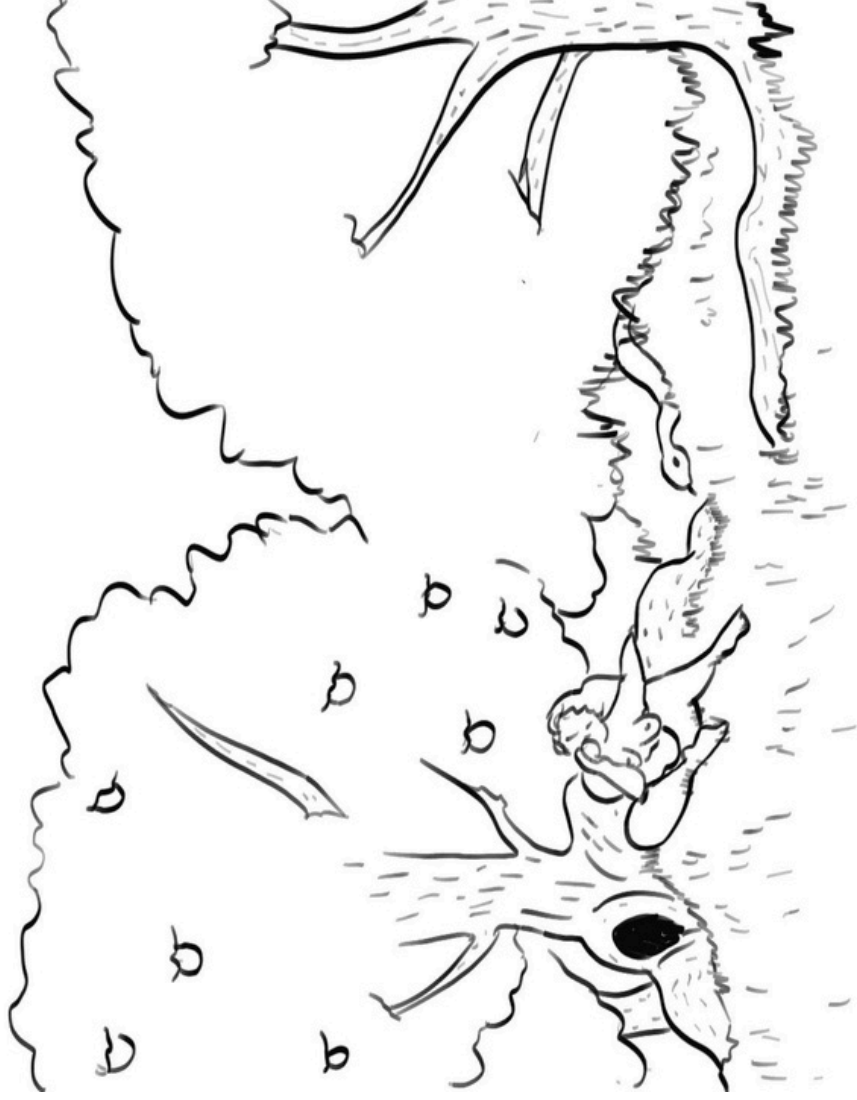
EVERYTHING I LEARNED ABOUT
WOMANHOOD REINFORCED THE IDEA
THAT IT IS INHERENTLY AND
CEASELESSLY PUNISHING,

THAT IT IS A CONDITION TO
BE ENDURED FOR THE SAKE OF
OTHERS.

(MY MOM CIRCA 2016, WHEN I TOLD
HER MY GIRLFRIEND WAS TRANS.)



WHAT IF NO BODY
WAS TASKED TO BEAR THE BURDEN OF BEAUTY?



WHAT IF WOMANHOOD EXISTED ONLY TO GRANT
PLEASURE FOR ITSELF?

WOULD I HAVE
KNOWN MYSELF SOONER?

ALL THAT TIME....

COULD I HAVE--?

WHAT COULD I HAVE--?

SO THERE'S HELL TO PAY

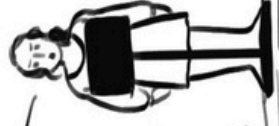
AND UNTIL I DIE--

I'LL DIE DAY

AFTER DAY AFTER

(DAY AFTER DAY

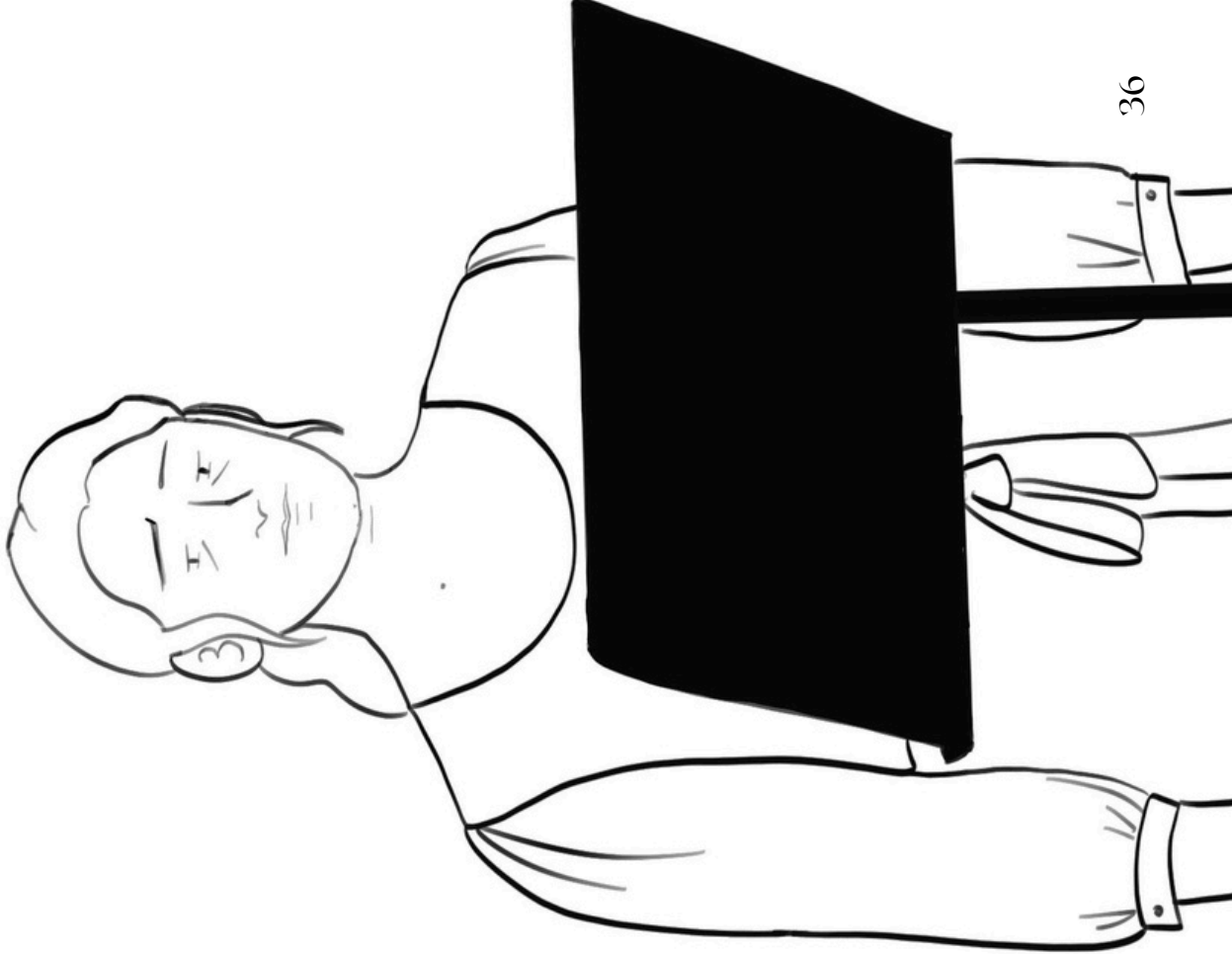
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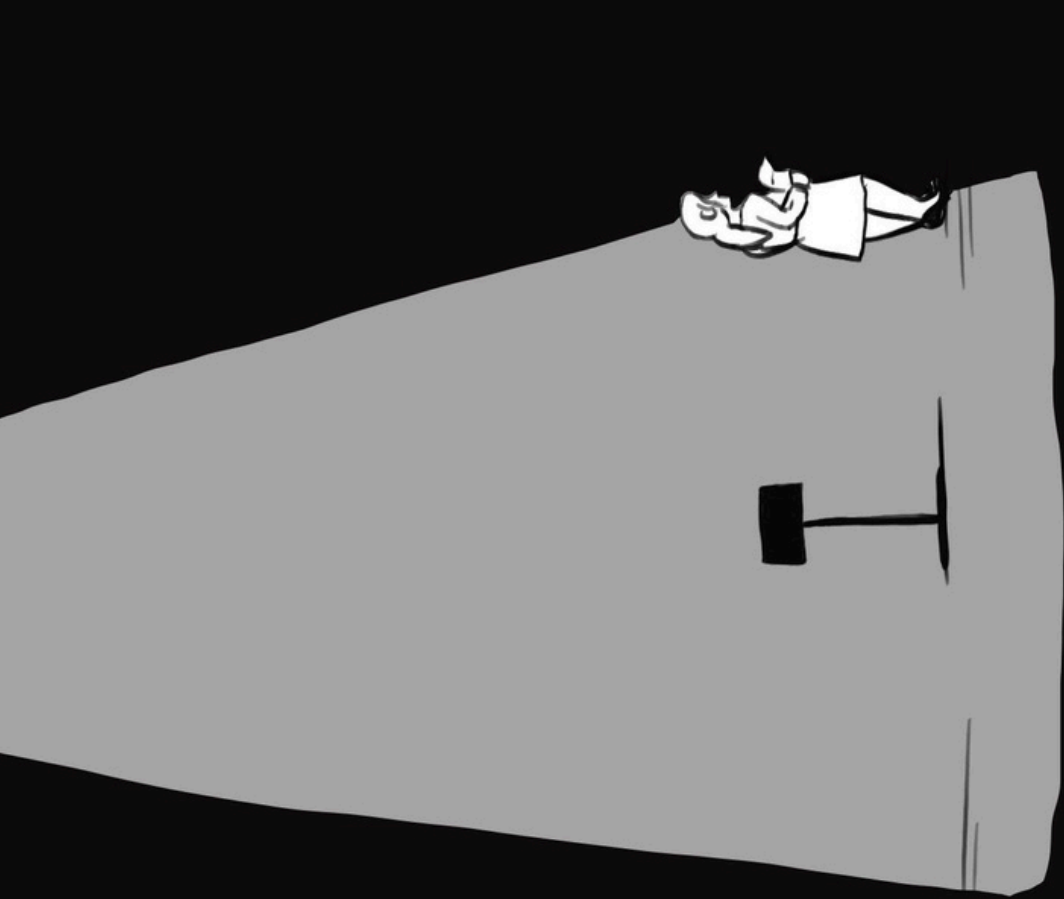
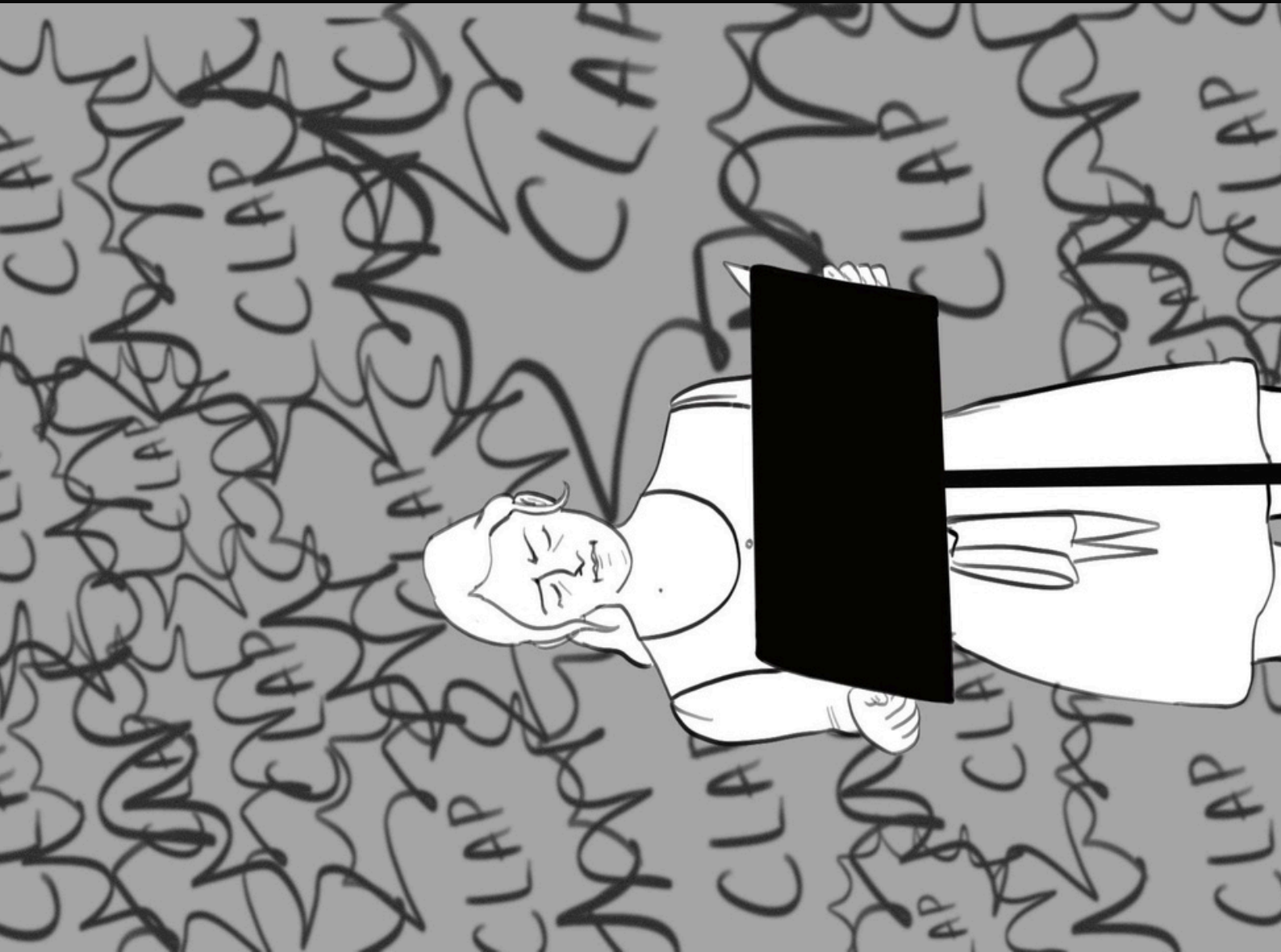


'TIL THE DAYS GO BY!

'TIL THE DAYS GO BY...

'TIL THE DAYS GO BY...





SEEN/UNSEEN

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A Call For Submissions!

Shapeless Press is seeking collaborators! If you are interested in contributing to our upcoming zines, or have an idea to pitch, say hello at shapelesspress@gmail.com.

We'd love to work with you!

- SP Mgmt.

