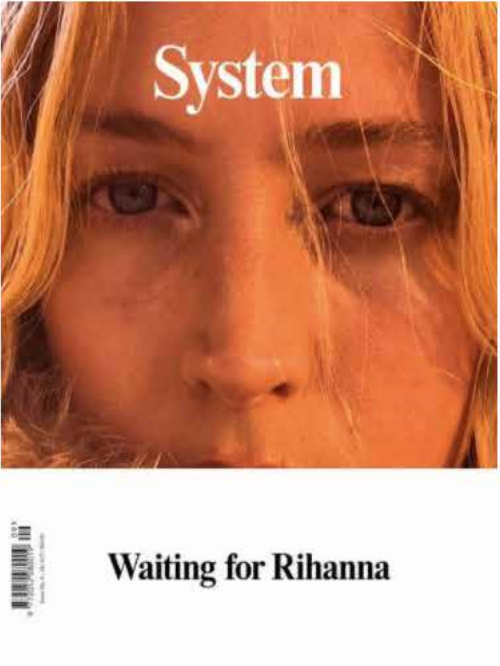
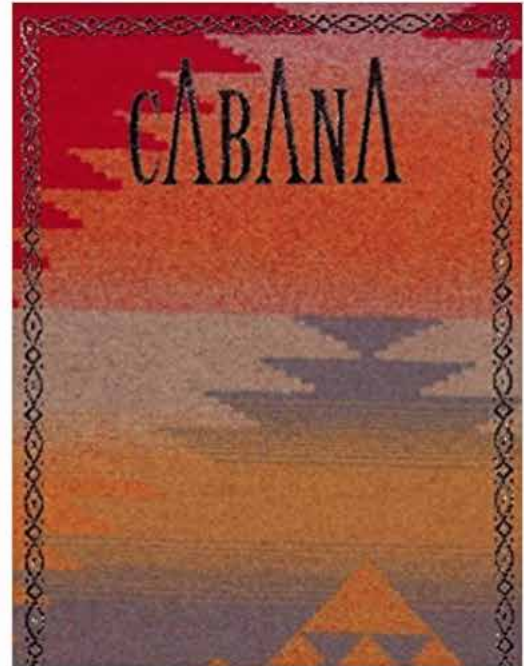
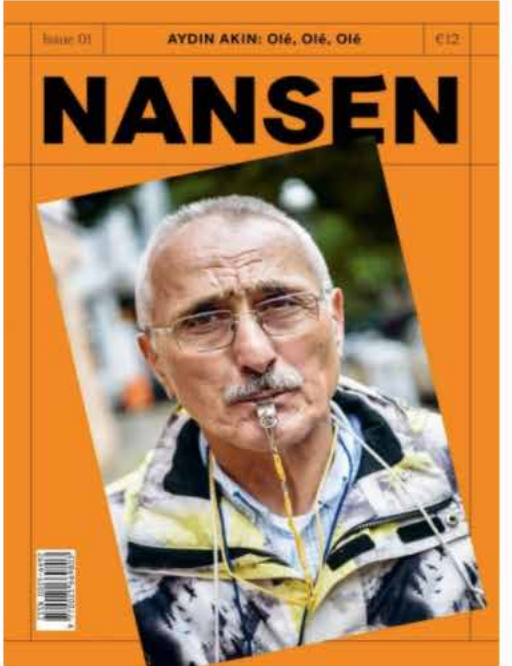
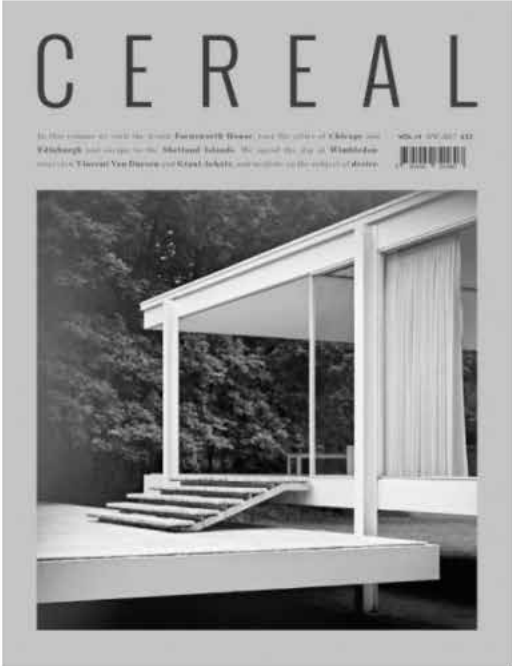
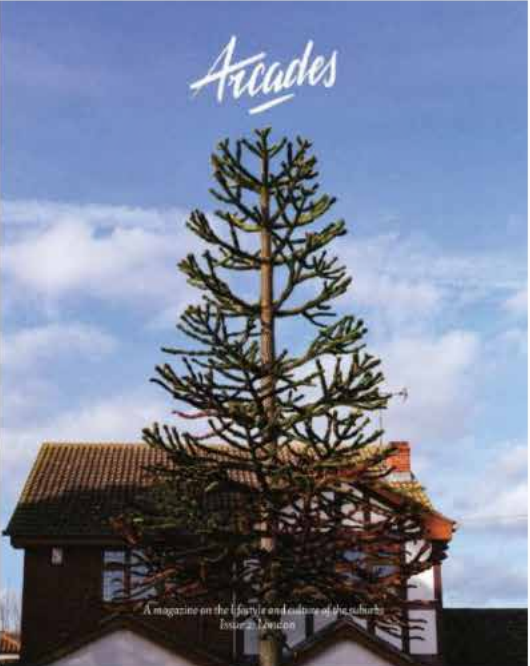
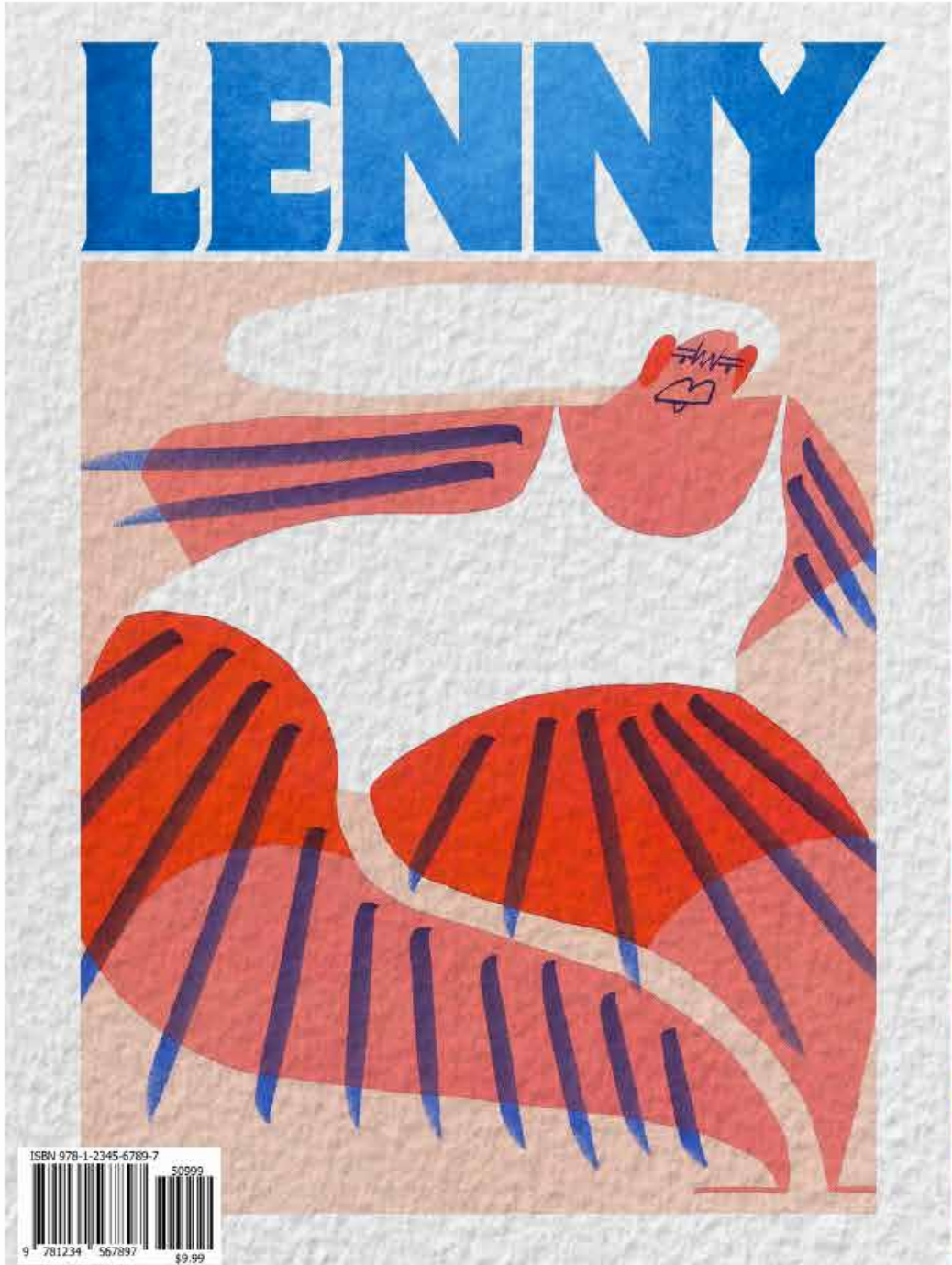


MAGAZINE PROJECT



ANA SOFIA MURILLO

MOODBOARD



Lenny is a platform for young female voices to discuss feminist issues. The newsletter features political essays, personal stories, interviews, art-work and even an advice column from Dunham and Konner themselves called "Letters to Lenny."



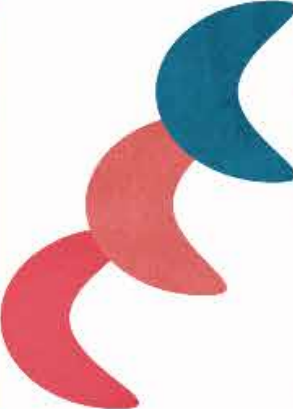
DEMOGRAPHICS
Young women
Feminists
Bulletin customers
Women with a voice

IMAGERY
Laid-back
Cartoons or hand-made drawings.
Colorful Imagery



LENNY

LENNY



LENNY

SECTIONS

LIFE
Advice
Horoscopes
Stories

CULTURE
Pop culture
Book reviews
Interviews

HEALTH
Health advice
Stories
Sex



MOODBOARD



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POLITICS
LIFE
HEALTH

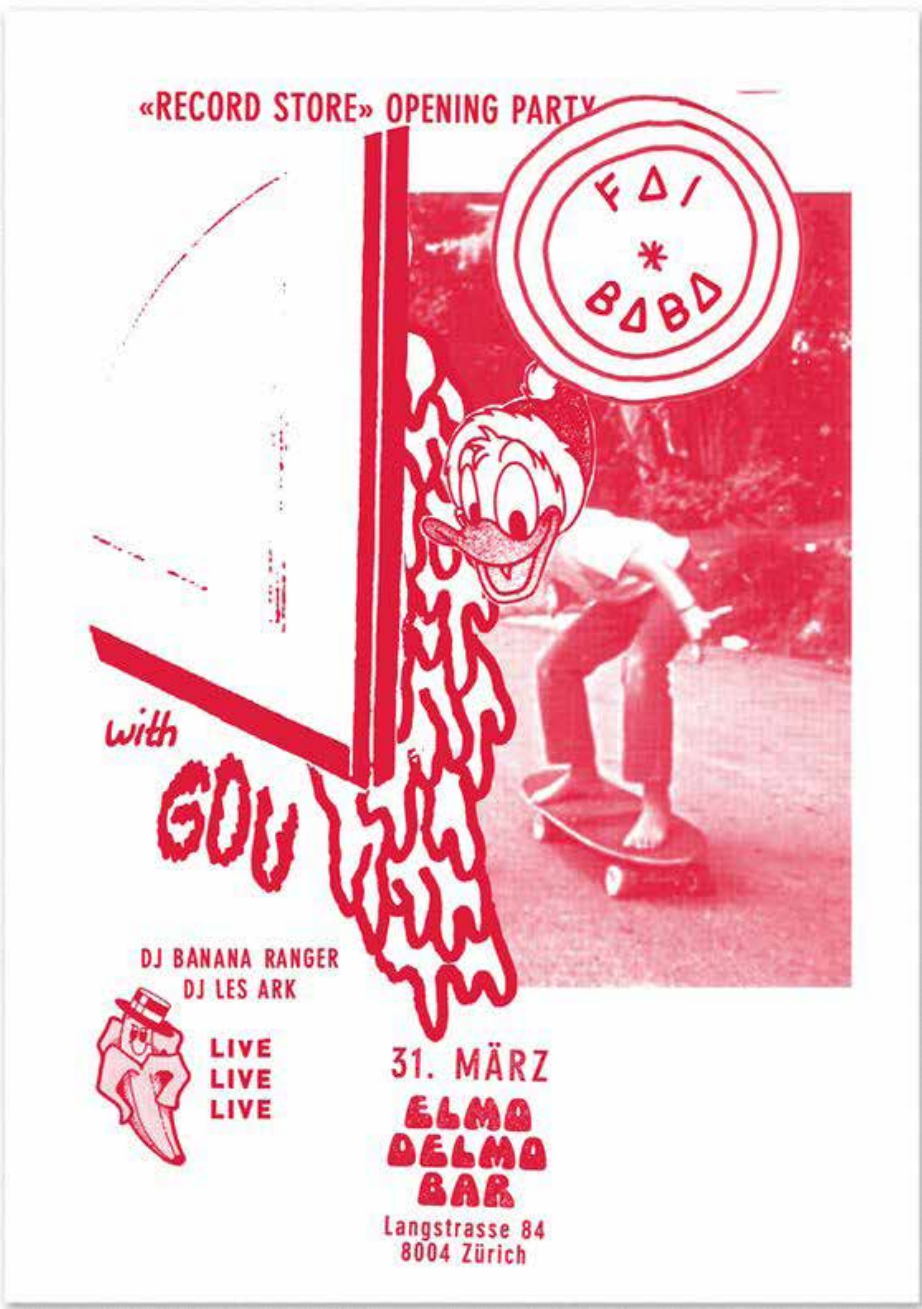
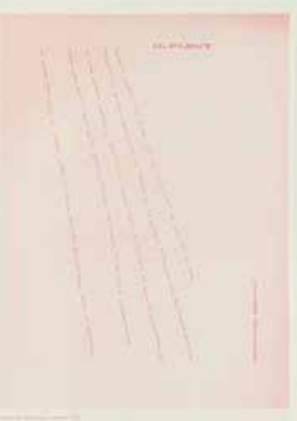
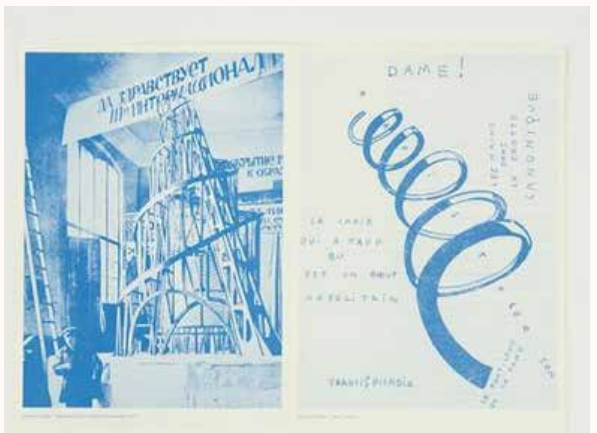


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BARLOW.
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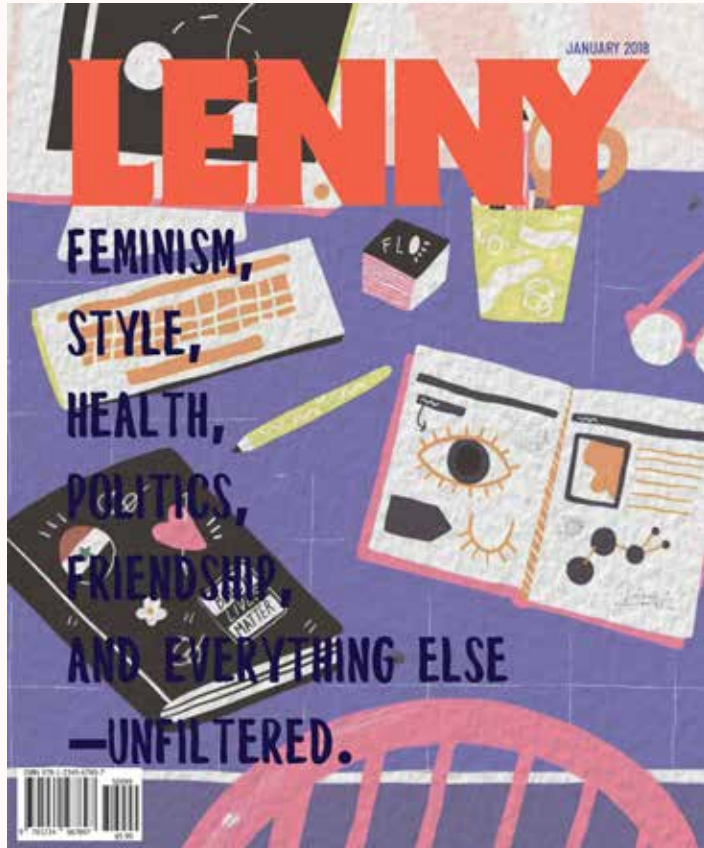
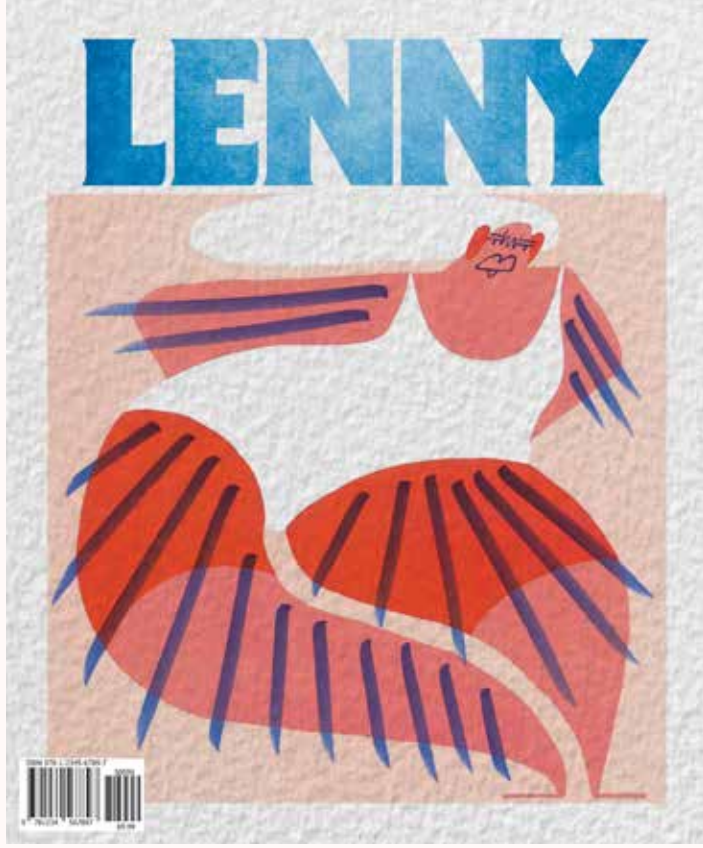
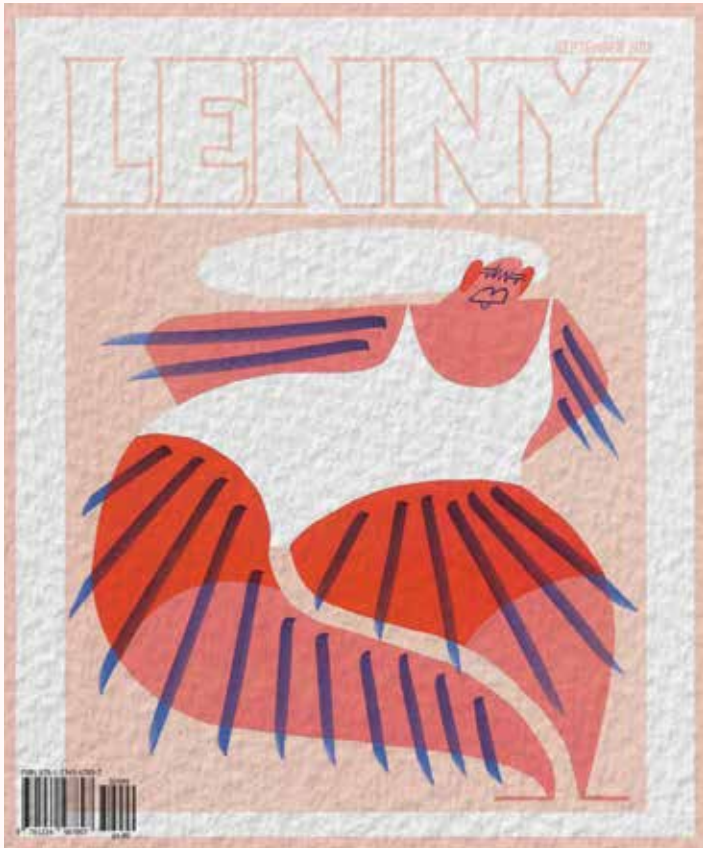
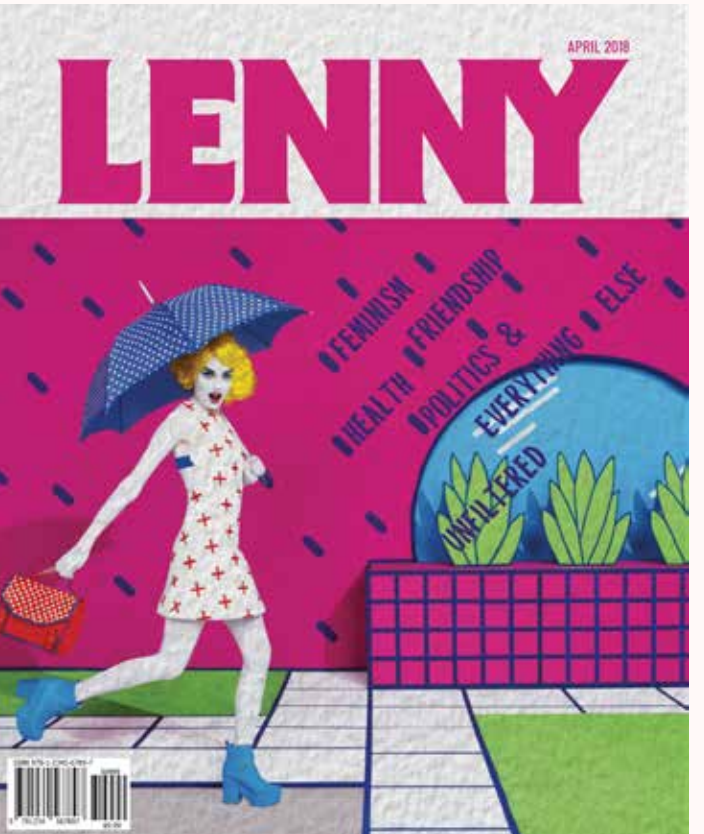
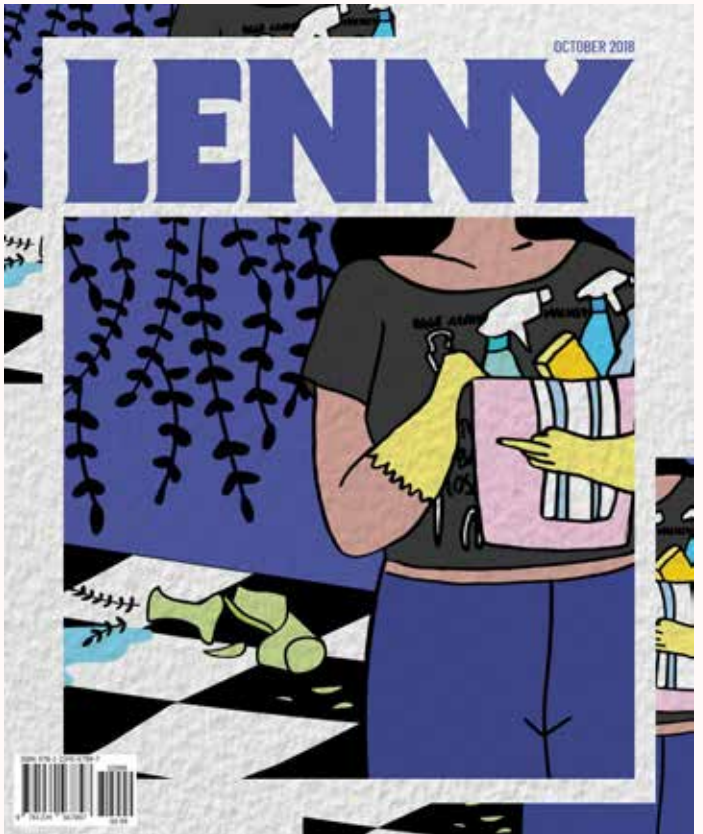
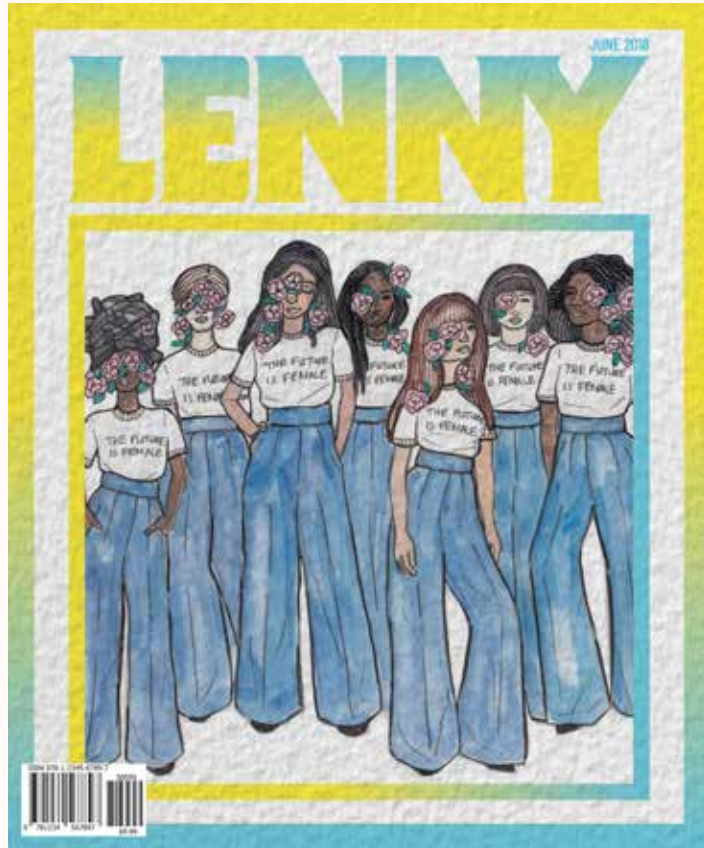
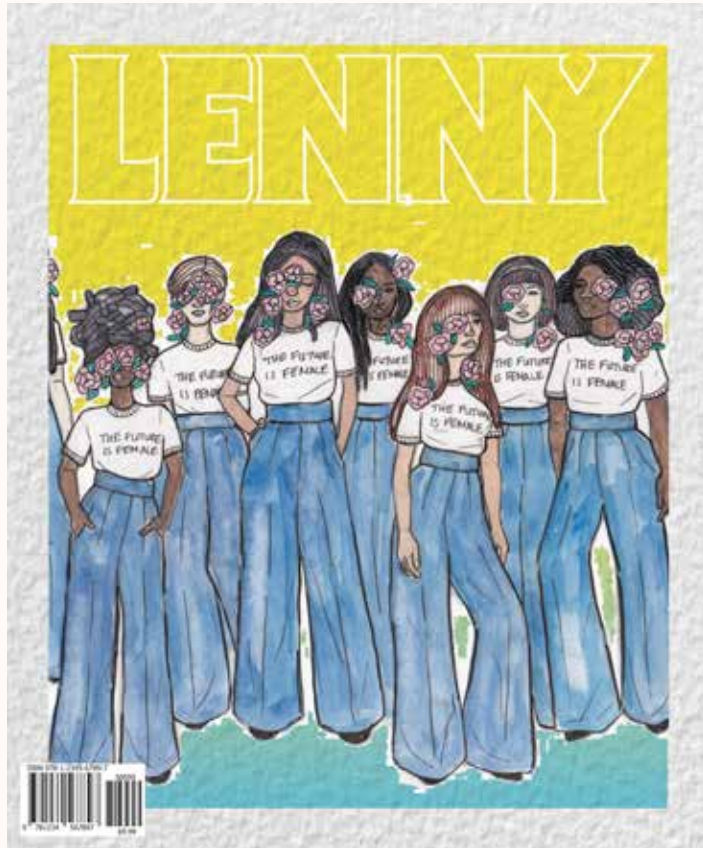
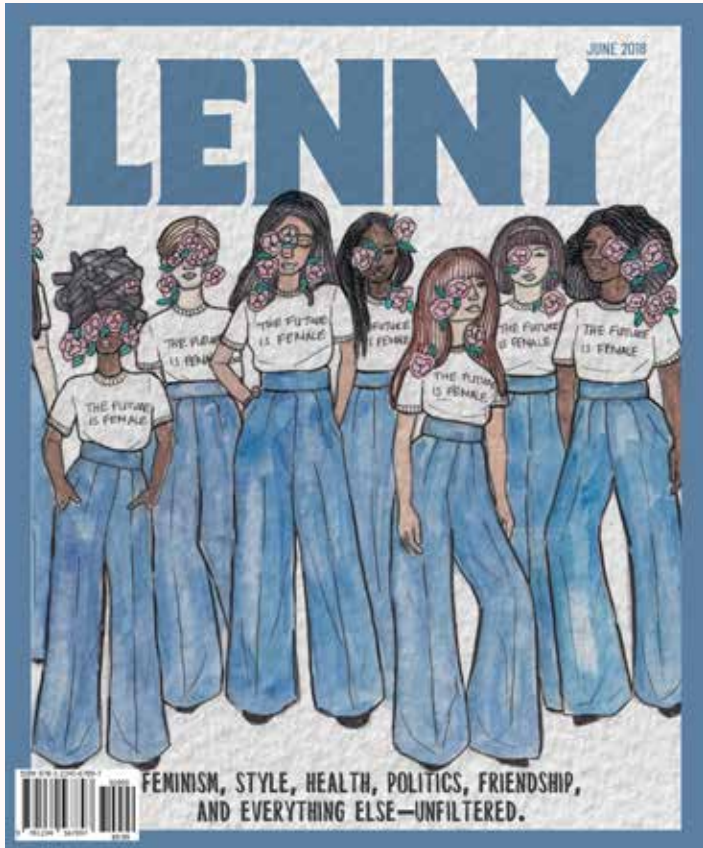


PAGE # **1234**
567

MOODBOARD



MAGAZINE COVERS



SECTION OPENERS

CULTURE

AT KELIS'S TABLE
BY JASMIN HERNANDEZ
FEBRUARY 27, 2018

HOW ONE WOMAN COMPLETELY CHANGED TEQUILA
BY ELVA RAMIREZ
FEBRUARY 27, 2018

THIS MONGOLIAN SUMO QUEEN WRESTLES THE PATRIARCHY
BY BIDEM TALI
FEBRUARY 27, 2018

I LOVE SPAM MADLY, DEEPLY, UNIRONICALLY
BY EUNY HONG
FEBRUARY 23, 2018

CONFESSIONS OF A DEBUTANTE
BY C. MORGAN BABST
FEBRUARY 13, 2018

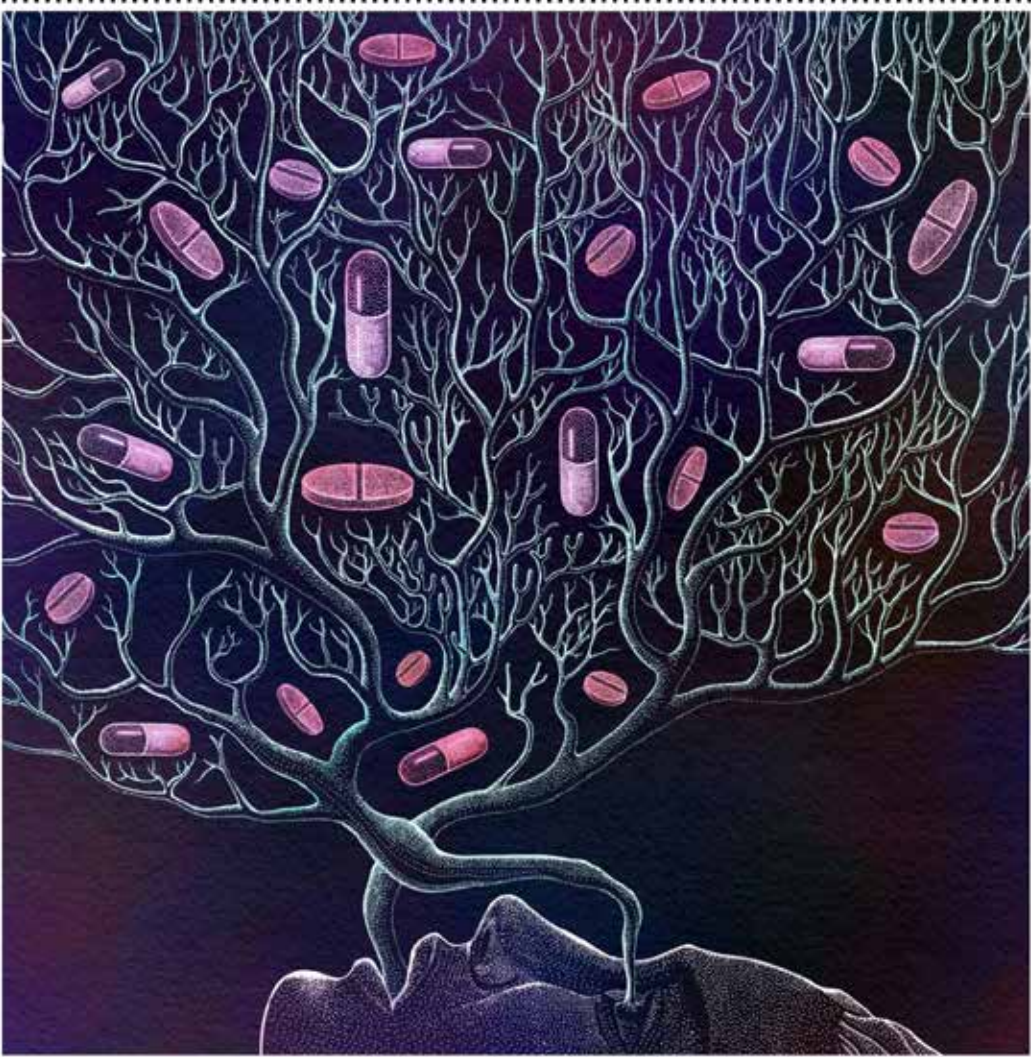
COMPUTER MAGIC'S WESTWORLD-LIKE ROBOT-HUMAN LOVE SONG
BY DANIELLE "DANZ" JOHNSON
FEBRUARY 19, 2018

Life



THIS IS MY COUNTRY?
I hadn't realized the strength of my American roots until a stranger questioned my place in this country.

Health



SECTION OPENERS

CULTURE

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BY JACQUE HERNANDEZ
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FEBRUARY 27, 2018

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FEBRUARY 23, 2018

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FEBRUARY 13, 2018

COMPUTER MAGIC'S WESTWORLD-LIKE ROBOT-HUMAN LOVE SONG
BY DANIELLE "DANK" JOHNSON
FEBRUARY 16, 2018

LENNY MAGAZINE

LIFE

A GUIDE TO NAVIGATING ESTATE SALES
BY CAITLIN CRUZ
FEBRUARY 6, 2018

THIS IS MY COUNTRY?
BY SHURMA SONGER
FEBRUARY 20, 2018

THE EMOTIONAL RESCUE OF A CELEBRITY CRUSH
BY LEESA CROSS-SMITH
FEBRUARY 20, 2018

YOKO ONO'S LOST WEEKEND — AND MINE
BY LAURA SMITH
FEBRUARY 6, 2018

MY LIFE SMELLS LIKE THIS
BY AMY BLOOM
FEBRUARY 13, 2018

SEX ON THE SPECTRUM
BY MADEIRA RYAN
FEBRUARY 6, 2018

THE HEALING POWER OF RAGE-CLEANING
BY KELLY O'CONNOR MCNEES
MARCH 2, 2018

LENNY MAGAZINE

HEALTH

MY ROMANTIC HYSTERECTOMY
BY VIVIAN MANNING-SCHAFFEL
JANUARY 16, 2018

GET READY FOR SAME-SEX REPRODUCTION
BY RACHEL LENMANN-HAUPT
FEBRUARY 27, 2018

FIXING THE OPIOID CRISIS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME
BY JAN RAUER
FEBRUARY 21, 2018

CONQUERING SUICIDE
BY CHLOE S. LOVE
JANUARY 16, 2018

A GIFT IN 2018: SLOW DOWN
BY RUSSELL BROWN
FEBRUARY 6, 2018

MY LOWER HALF WAS RIPPED IN TWO: WOULD MY SEX LIFE SURVIVE?
BY COLLEEN KELLY ALEXANDER
FEBRUARY 20, 2018

LENNY MAGAZINE

LIFE

THE FREEDOM OF BEING A SINGLE MOM ISN'T WHAT I EXPECTED

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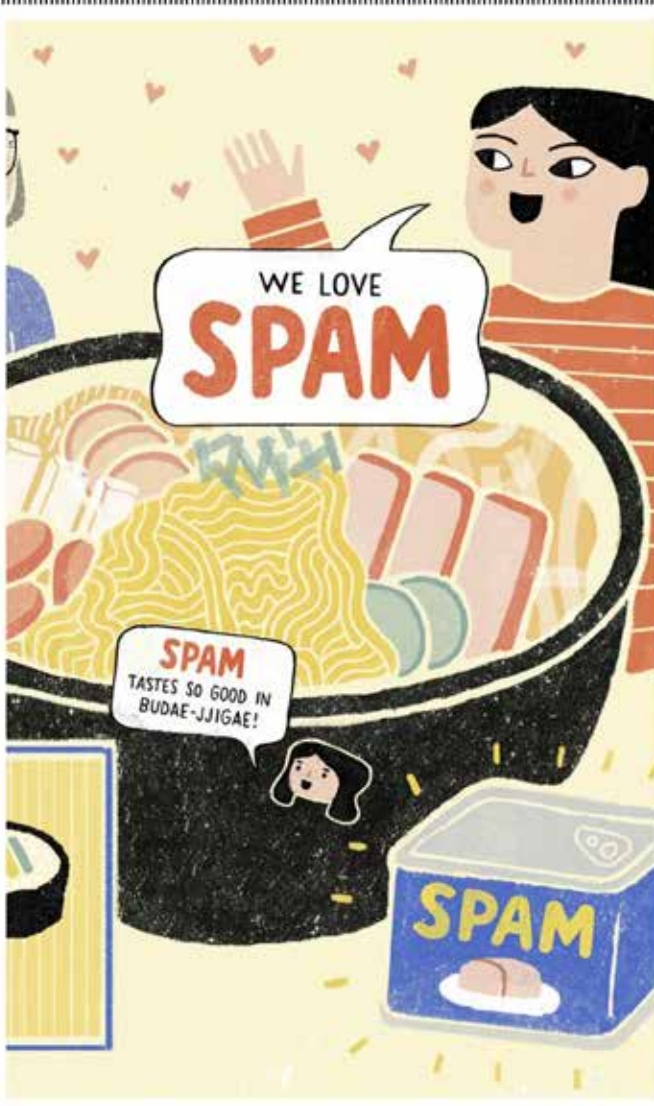
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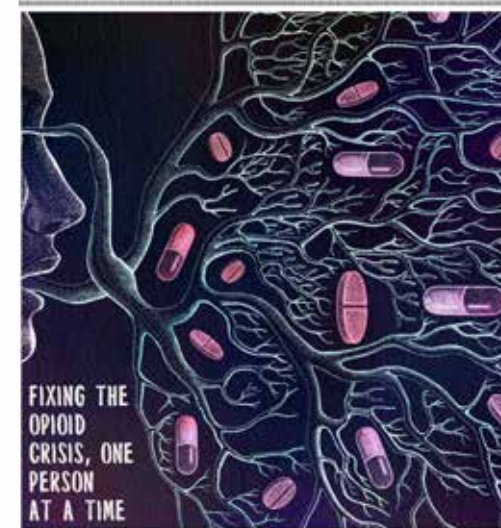
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FIXING THE OPIOID CRISIS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME

BY JAN RADER
FEBRUARY 21, 2018



ILLUSTRATION BY JENNIFER N. R. SMITH

On a warm, overcast morning in the spring of 2013, my company, Engine 4, received a call for an overdose. I was captain of the fire company in Huntington, West Virginia, at the time, and overdose calls were becoming routine. We donned our bunker pants and EMS gloves as we headed toward the west side of town, to an area known for drug use. As we pulled up to the address, a distraught young woman met us outside the door.

"SHE IS IN THE BATHTUB," SHE SAID, POINTING US TOWARD THE PATIENT.

The tub was the first thing I noticed when we stepped inside the bathroom. It was full of pink-tinged water, with a needle floating on top. A belt still hung loosely around the mottled upper

arm of the patient. As I stood there watching the paramedic check her for a pulse, I noticed she was a pretty woman, who was maybe in her early twenties. But there was no pulse, and the water was cool to the touch.

At that time, I really didn't realize that we were in the middle of an opioid crisis, let alone the most deadly drug epidemic in history. All I knew was what I saw as a firefighter and an ER nurse: Ten years ago, I began to see narcotic pill overdoses, and once I started seeing them, they quickly increased. Sometime during 2010 or 2011, we saw the pills give way to heroin as the overdoses continued to rise at an alarming rate.

Huntington has become the epicenter of America's modern opioid epidemic, with West Virginia's overdose death rate at ten

times the national average. Synthetic opioids emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a way to manage chronic pain and end-of-life care. But that quickly changed as pharmaceutical companies marketed them aggressively to physicians as safe for mild pain. Pills flooded the region. With Huntington's workforce employed heavily in jobs likely to produce injuries, like coal mining and timbering, in retrospect, a surge in addiction rates seems inevitable.

Back outside the apartment that spring morning, one of my firefighters was collecting information about the victim from the distraught woman we'd met when we arrived on scene. As we walked back through the apartment, I asked the paramedic if he had notified police. He said yes, followed by a few derogatory remarks

about addicts. Anger took over my body, yet I did not respond. This is not the time or place to address bad attitudes or stigmatize our patient, I thought to myself.

I had witnessed thousands of emergencies in my twenty years as a first responder. This one knocked me for a loop. I kept thinking, What would cause a beautiful young woman to shoot up heroin in a bathtub? What happened in her life that led her to this deep, dark place?

Outside, the patient's mother was sitting out on a neighbor's steps. She was crying as family members tried to console her. I introduced myself and told her I was very sorry for her loss. She thanked me and began telling me about her daughter and her struggle with addiction. I learned she was very smart with a promising

future. But after starting with a legal prescription of pain pills, she quickly got hooked and eventually moved onto heroin. I stayed to talk to the family for a while. Like I had observed many times before, it was clear the struggle does not stop with the one suffering from addiction.

The police arrived to begin a death investigation, and my firefighters were sitting in the fire truck waiting for me. As I climbed back in the truck, they informed me that they don't do that "emotional stuff."

**"FINE," I SAID.
"BECAUSE I DO."**

The drive back to the fire station seemed longer than it should. My mind was processing how quickly a young, promising life could be lost and how families are left devastated.

This call was a turning point for me. I immediately began researching addiction — how it begins and affects the entire family. I also started spending more time with my patients, both in the field and in the emergency room. I asked questions, listened, and treated them with the respect that I would want my loved ones shown if suffering from a disease. This was and continues to be my true education about substance-use disorder.

In November 2014, Huntington mayor Steve Williams asked me to serve the city on a bigger level by joining his newly formed Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy. I jumped at the opportunity to help facilitate solutions. Not only did we start keeping real-time numbers, but we also started a transparent campaign about the epidemic

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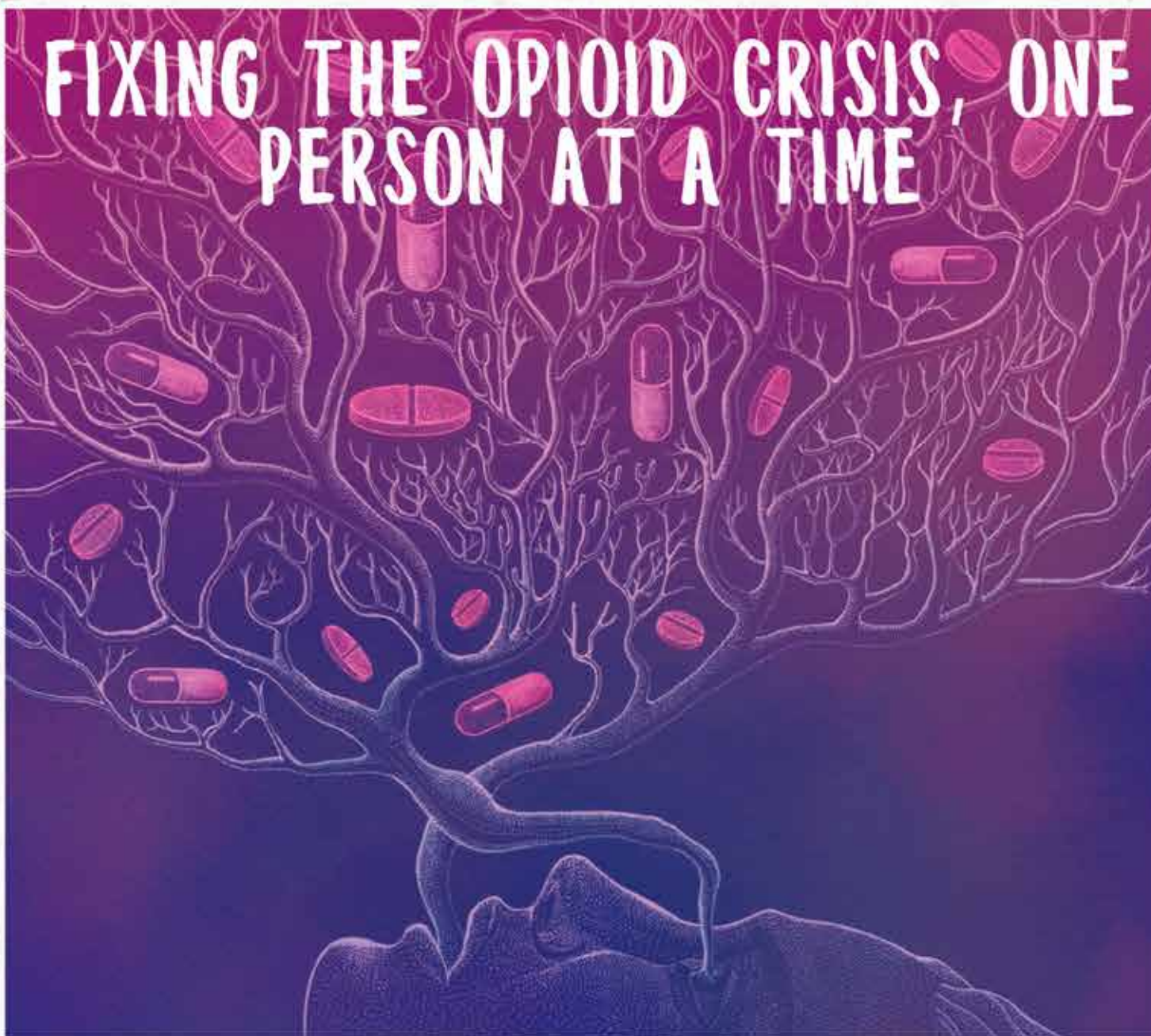
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The three of us shared a purpose: to help anyone who needs it, no matter how many times it takes. We became good friends instantly.

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Substance abuse disorder knows no boundaries. Those who suffer from it are good people who can recover. As Judge Keller, Necia, and I have seen day to day, a kind word and a handshake can change things for a person struggling with addiction. Prejudice against addicts won't end this epidemic. First, we must meet people where they are.



FIXING THE OPIOID CRISIS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME

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WINTER ISSUE 2018

LENNY



FEMINISM, STYLE, HEALTH, POLITICS,
FRIENDSHIP, AND EVERYTHING ELSE—UNFILTERED.

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150000

LIFE



This Is My Country?

By Shubha Sunder

I hadn't realized the strength of my American roots until a stranger questioned my place in this country.

8

"Don't Let Them Use You Up"

By Natalka Burian

My grandmother's secret past and the advice she gave me about men.



Let Life Do Its Thing to You

By Melissa Broder

February horoscopes are here.

CULTURE



The gospel of trees

By Barbie Latza Nadeau

An excerpt from Roadmap to Hell: Sex, Drugs and Guns on the Mafia Coast.

18

Confessions of a recovering deutant

By Kely O'connor Mcnees

Angry at the world? Tidy up your closet and rage-break a fugly vase.

22

I Love Spam, madly, deeply, unironically

By Euny Hong

The lowbrow pork product reminds me of home.

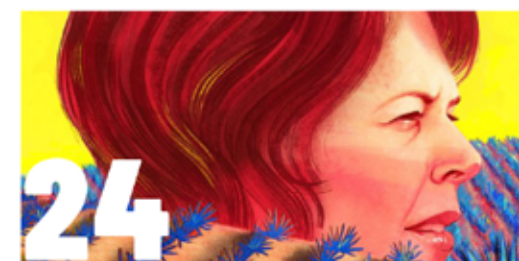


23

A New Memoir Explores the Consequences of Missionary Life

By Apricot Irving

Read an excerpt from Apricot Irving's The Gospel of trees.



How One Woman Completely Changed Tequila

By Elva Ramirez

Maestra tequilera Ana Maria Romero Mena created LVMH's new tequila, Volcan de Mi Tierra, from scratch. Along the way, she broke every rule in the industry.

28

How a Crazy Old French Woman Cured My Chronic Pain — And Healed My Soul

By Abigail Raminsky

I thought I'd never escape the shackles of back pain. All it took was throwing away everything I thought I knew about my body.

30

Get Ready for Same-Sex Reproduction

By Rachel Lehman-Haupt

When artificial sperm and eggs become a reality, the sex of your partner won't matter when you're making a baby.

32

Fixing the Opioid Crisis, One Person at a time.

By Jan Rader

The first female Fire Chief in West Virginia has had a front-row seat to the painkiller epidemic.

34

This Juju Curse Binds Nigerian Women into Sex Slavery

By Barbie Latza Nadeau

An excerpt from Roadmap to Hell: Sex, Drugs and Guns on the Mafia Coast.

37

The Healing Power of Rage-Cleaning

By Kely O'connor Mcnees

Angry at the world? Tidy up your closet and rage-break a fugly vase.



My Lower Half Was Ripped in Two. Would My Sex Life Survive?

By Coleen Kelly Alexander

I lived through getting hit by a truck, but could my marriage?

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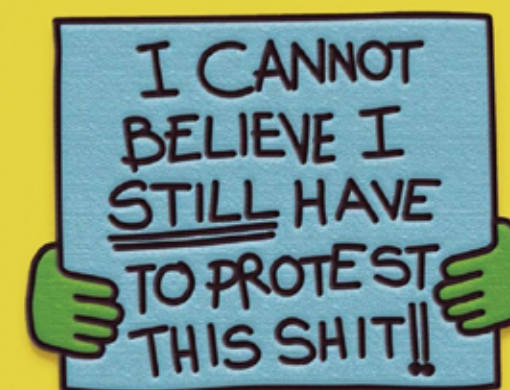
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.....

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LIKE THIS



THIS IS MY COUNTRY?

BY SHUBHA SUNDER

I HADN'T REALIZED THE STRENGTH OF MY AMERICAN ROOTS UNTIL A STRANGER QUESTIONED MY PLACE IN THIS COUNTRY.

The morning after election night 2016, I was standing between a steel post and a baby carriage in a crowded Orange Line train in Boston, staring at my phone, when a man turned to me and said: "Go back to your country." He was white, bigger than I, and older, in his 40s, perhaps. The train was pulling into Back Bay Station, brakes shrieking. Moments earlier, the same man had been behind me, trying to elbow me out of his way, and I'd frowned at him over my shoulder, thinking, Dude, there's a baby carriage, do you mind? Had I not been made aware of his presence before he'd spoken, his words might have left me speechless.

But my irritation had been primed by his jostling, and I heard myself shoot back: "This is my country." The doors slid open; he surged forward with the crowd.

Within seconds, he had vanished into the bustle on the platform, leaving me to face alone the confused stares coming from all sides. People around us would have heard only my words, for he had spoken softly, almost in a murmur. It was as if he were just testing the waters of that new morning, trying to gauge what he could get away with on a crowded train in a liberal-leaning city. It was as if he had been working up

to this moment for months, buoyed by the rallies and the tweet storms of the past year, events that had climaxed just hours earlier and whose full meaning I returned to eventually, with glazed eyes, processing it on my phone.

I've been wondering what made me declare, in the moment of our meeting, that this was my country, a claim I had never made before. When I introduce myself to strangers in the United States, I usually say something like: I'm from India, from Bangalore; I've been here fifteen years; I came when I was eighteen, for college. If they remark that I don't speak with an accent, I'll add that I lived in America for two years when I was a small child; that my father had a sabbatical in Dayton, Ohio, in the '80s, and that I had learned to speak English there as a kindergartner and hence with an American accent; that we had returned to India when I was five years old, and never returned to the United States as a family. I grew up in India, I'll insist, because I like to believe that I came to America on my own, as an adult in charge of my own decisions, that my kindergarten years in Ohio don't count because I had no say then. The words I came to America carry for me the promise of self-discovery, the thrill of becoming the person one can be only when removed from the pressures and expectations of home.

A few years ago, when I was traveling on my own in Novosibirsk, Siberia, my host asked me if my husband was Indian. "No," I said. "He's American." "Ah, but what does that mean?" the Siberian said with a touch of impatience. "Anybody can be American." What he really wanted to know was whether my husband was of Indian origin, whether I had married within or outside of my culture. I was endeared by the impatience in my host's voice, by his notion that the title "American" was so broad in its scope, so widely accessible, that to say someone was American was to say very little.

Within America, as I experienced on the Orange Line train that morning, the same morning that a Muslim woman riding a bus in Oregon was told by two white men that she was a terrorist and a school kid in Washington said aloud to his classmates, "If you weren't born here, pack your bags," the myth Anybody can be American can flip quickly to its converse: Go back to your country.

I had heard those words once before — fifteen years before, in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. I was an undergraduate freshman then, having recently re-arrived from India on a student visa. As I made my way down Market Street in Philadelphia late one October night, accompanied by ten or so other women from my

college, a man shouted those words at us from a passing car. Hearing them had little effect on me; their power was lessened by my ignorance of what a clichéd epithet it was and by my exhilaration at having arrived on my own in America. My friends and I had just been to a welcome party for international students. We'd munched cookies in a grand hall and listened to a dean make a speech, her voice booming from the loudspeakers, telling us all how lucky her university and others in Philadelphia were, how lucky America was, to have us bring our talents, our culture, and our voices from all over the world. During the dance, an inflatable, five-foot-high globe had been bounced into the hall for us to pass around.

Now, out on the street, someone in my group yelled "Fuck you" to the retreating car, and we repeated the words, tossing them into the night air as blithely as we had tossed that globe, feeling invincible in our numbers, our youth, and our celebrated status as citizens of the world.

When I came to America as a college student, I had no idea that I would stay after graduation. But I did stay. I became a fiction writer and a teacher, professions of my choosing. Had I returned to India, I would have struggled to give myself permission to write for several hours a day with no guarantee



ILLUSTRATION BY GHAZALEH RASTGAR

of publication, submerged in the goal-oriented, middle-class ether of my upbringing. Here in Boston, I've been able to labor freely at my craft. Each time I've asked for permission to remain in America, it has been granted. I am a permanent resident now, married to an American citizen. I benefit from the privileges offered to the educated and English-speaking and from the rights that people of color in this country have had to fight and die for. And if I do have to leave, I can return to India without fear of being killed or imprisoned, unlike the many thousands in this country, including the DREAMers, who have no such guarantee.

It is a bizarre strain of cruelty for a country as vast and wealthy as the United States to consider throwing out people who have grown up here and belong nowhere else, while at the same time allowing me — someone who arrived here by choice and not by force — to stay. Such a callous distinction suggests some sort of autoimmune disease, that the unhealed and accumulated wounds of America's history have led the country to attack itself. What I feel in common

with the young unauthorized immigrants is their identity, forged in childhood, as Americans. While my memories of being a kindergartner in Dayton are vague, I know the teachers advised my parents to speak to me in English to help me pick up the language faster. I had come as an Indian kid, speaking only Tamil, and by the time we returned to India, I was an American kid, fluent in all things American: Sesame Street, Curious George, Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, Crayola crayons, and Oreos. My Tamil had all but evaporated. I would regain a fraction of

it over the course of the next thirteen years, in Bangalore, but I would never regain a sense of belonging in India. My Indian peers teased my American accent.

She's foreign, they said gleefully, and those words imprinted on my self-image, never to leave.

Long after my American accent had faded, the sense of being a foreigner, of not belonging in India — a place that was supposed to be my home — remained. When I returned to America for college, I felt an unfamiliar sense of ease. My

accent came hurrying back like a long-lost friend. Anybody can be American, the Siberian said. When I think back to how I was trapped on that train, with the steel post and the man at my back and the baby carriage in front of me, I think of how I am caught between the poles. Go back to your country and Anybody can be American. Over the past sixteen years, my roots in my home country have grown looser while those in America feel deep. But sometimes I wonder if I have sunk my grip into a crumbling cliff face, if it is only a matter of time before I'm told by authorities larger than the man on the train that I am not welcome here.

My American roots are in my identity — the ease and confidence I have here that I never had in India. The fact that the words "This is my country" fell subconsciously from my lips rouses me as much as being told that I have no right to be here. I can no longer pretend I'm from somewhere else. America has taken me over, has taken over my reflexes, to the point that my unconscious believes I, like anybody, can be



"DON'T LET THEM USE YOU UP"

MY GRANDMOTHER'S SECRET PAST AND THE ADVICE SHE GAVE ME ABOUT MEN.

BY NATALKA BURIAN
FEBRUARY 16, 2018

My grandmother was shrewd; my grandmother was a liar. My grandmother fundamentally understood something few people in my small American town did: survival is no joke. When we were children, my grandmother foraged for mushrooms and berries in the woods and ate them, and demanded we eat them. To leave them in the grass or on the plate was wasteful and never tolerated.

When my little sister was born, she asked my busy parents if she could keep the baby — just for a few years — at her

home in Pennsylvania. One of my first memories is hitching a ride with her. I remember a strange man driving a pickup truck and flailing my limbs, refusing to get in. I remember her pushing me from behind and the stranger pulling me up.

I remember the feeling in my throat from screaming, my grandmother's calm head shaking, and her barely-English apology to the driver. "What's wrong with you?" she asked me. "You want to get home, don't you?"

My grandmother, Anna, was born in the Czech Republic. All she ever told me about her childhood was that she had a twin sister who had died when they were young. Beyond that, she told us nothing. What I do know is that after the Second World War, my father was born, in Nuremberg, Germany. I know that she landed in the United States with my four-year-old father in 1955. She was a young, single mother who spoke no English. No one met her on arrival; she didn't know anyone. I know my mother's side of the family did not like her.

She told me, constantly, that I was her favorite. Even though I'm sure she embellished her preference, she did like to talk to me. What she liked to talk about most was men. In my adolescence, my grandmother was repetitive with her advice. If you get married, keep your own money, and always hide it, somewhere your husband would never think of. She talked about marriage in the grimest of terms, dissuading me from it whenever it came up. Unlike grandmothers in movies and commercials who lifted antique wedding gowns out of tissue-lined boxes in front of their girl relatives, my grandmother would wave marriage away — as though physically beating back the institution itself — and say, "Don't worry about it."

She never warned me off sex, though. Go ahead, have sex, she'd say, but always watch them. Always know that they want something from you, and not just your body. Something bigger. Make sure they "don't use you up." This advice, "Don't let them use you up," she always gave in English. It was one of the few phrases in her second language that she used with me, and I assume it was

because "Don't let them use you up" was exactly what she meant and better than whatever euphemistic language she'd been taught about the sentiment in her native tongue.

I asked her once, was she talking about pregnancy? Because I already knew all the ways you could prevent a pregnancy. "Of course not," she scoffed. "You know what I mean." And she'd tell a story, a cautionary tale about a neighbor's daughter, or a friend's niece, who was so beguiled by a man that she gave him everything. She let him stay with her for free, did his laundry, dressed for him, waited around for him.

This giving in — maybe it was even falling in love that she meant, but with an unworthy man — disgusted my grandmother. As a girl, I believed what she told me. When I fell in love for the first time, it tripped an alarm in my mind; this is what she was talking about. I felt confirmation of her theory in some of my early relationships and fascinations, a loss of myself, a pouring out of my time and attention onto people who didn't love me. When I was nineteen, I dated a man well into his 30s, a relationship that makes me cringe now. I remember moments where I felt swallowed by something beyond me, moments where I was not in control of my feelings. I remember seeing myself with my grandmother's eyes and feeling pity and, if I'm honest, also contempt. I absolutely felt what she meant. Her advice didn't stop me from colliding with the wrong relationships, but there was some consolation, and maybe even power, in recognizing what was happening to me.

How did she know to warn me, and why was she so insistent so early on in steering me away from these sinkholes of emotion? She said it was because she understood men.

"I know them," she'd say, leaning forward as if there were another part of that sentence left unsaid, pushing her toward me.

There were always oblique references to what my grandmother had done to get by before, during, and after the war. My mother's Ukrainian, religious side of the family speculated about it a lot. How else would a woman alone survive all of that and come to America? Where did her son come from? Isn't it strange that her family in the Czech Republic doesn't speak to her, doesn't visit? Isn't it strange that she doesn't want to visit them? What kind of shame separates a family that way?

I was told many different stories about the origin of my father, that he was the child of her first husband, that my grandmother had fled her marriage and other children, bringing nothing with her but my father in her belly. None of those stories came from him or his mother. Now they're both dead and can't tell me anything. I knew better than to ask her directly about my mysterious, absent grandfather, but I still came to her with questions, hoping they'd lead me somewhere. I always asked, "How did you make it on your own?" "I was smart," she'd say. "I didn't make any holes in my head."

Once, when she'd been drinking, she told me that she and her friends had worked with soldiers. It was a slurry confession, and she didn't say

which soldiers, or what work she had done, or for how long. She clammed up when I mentioned it another day: Oh that, that was nothing.

It wasn't until my grandmother was in her last two years of life that she would really let things slip. But they were disjointed things, some things that didn't make sense, and some things that did. I'll never know everything she did to stay alive during the war. I'll never know how she really felt. If she'd ever been in love herself. It was a strange relationship we had — we were so close, but I knew almost nothing about her.

Now I think her secrets were another kind of survival insurance, a way to control a life in chaos. In post-Communist Europe, lustration, the practice of purging and penalizing officials and citizens who actively promoted Communist regimes, was meant to be healing. But Polish prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki saw things differently. He denounced lustration, arguing that it would be better to draw "a thick line" where the ugliness ended and not look back. I think my grandmother tried to do the same thing, to draw a line in order to have a place to move forward from.

I am sad for her that she never shared this part of her life with anyone but also grateful for this mysterious legacy and what it meant for me. I am grateful for her warnings, for the real truth she shared with me when so many adult women were spinning love stories or projecting romantic ideals into the minds of girls. What she told me was useful; what she told me was true. After all, survival is no joke.



ILLUSTRATION BY ELLICE WEAVER

LET LIFE DO ITS THING TO YOU. FEBRUARY HOROSCOPES ARE HERE.

BY MELISSA BRODER

AQUARIUS

(January 20 to February 18)

Happy birthday, Aquarius! As the Water Bearer, people often mistake you for a water sign, when in fact you are air — at times an invisible protection for those around you, at times as weightless as space. This month, give yourself permission to be water, too — feeling, flowing, taking up visible space. You've been carrying the bucket around for a long time.

PISCES

(February 19 to March 20)

It's important to be inspired by art, music, and literature. But if you find yourself comparing your life to a piece of art, remember that art is art and life is life. There's a reason why people make art. If life were enough, there would be no need.

ARIES

(March 21 to April 19)

Terms and conditions of being alive: No one really knows why we're here — which is great, actually. Making our own meaning is exhausting, but also, it's better than being told what to do. If you aren't enjoying the mystery this month, find a person to help. You'll be given an instant purpose.

TAURUS

(April 20 to May 20)

The term homo sapiens is Latin for "wise man." This month, consider the wisest people you have known. Look for their commonalities. Was it curiosity, kindness, patience, and/or something else that allowed them to convey what they knew to you in a way that you could hear it? Prioritize this quality.

GEMINI

(May 21 to June 20)

Baby yourself a little bit this month. If you need help, ask for it. If you're tired, take a nap. If you're hungry, reach for food. If your needs aren't being met, express that. Don't be afraid to soothe what aches in you. If you are afraid, do it anyway, and see that the world continues to turn.

CANCER

(June 21 to July 22)

This month, it's time to amplify your throat chakra. Wear blue, the color of this chakra. Speak up even when you are afraid. Sing in the shower, in the car, and try to get a private room at a karaoke place. Eat blue-raspberry Popsicles. Eat ice-blue mints. Eat blueberries. Visualize your throat filled with aqua light. Only say yes when you mean it.

LEO

(July 23 to August 22)

Do you ever look back at something you did in your life and feel so embarrassed that you kind of squeal a little? This month, take a look at some of your most shameful memories and ask yourself what it is about them that gives you the heebie-jeebies. If you were judged by others, were they themselves perfect? If you were judged by yourself, was it a fair trial?

VIRGO

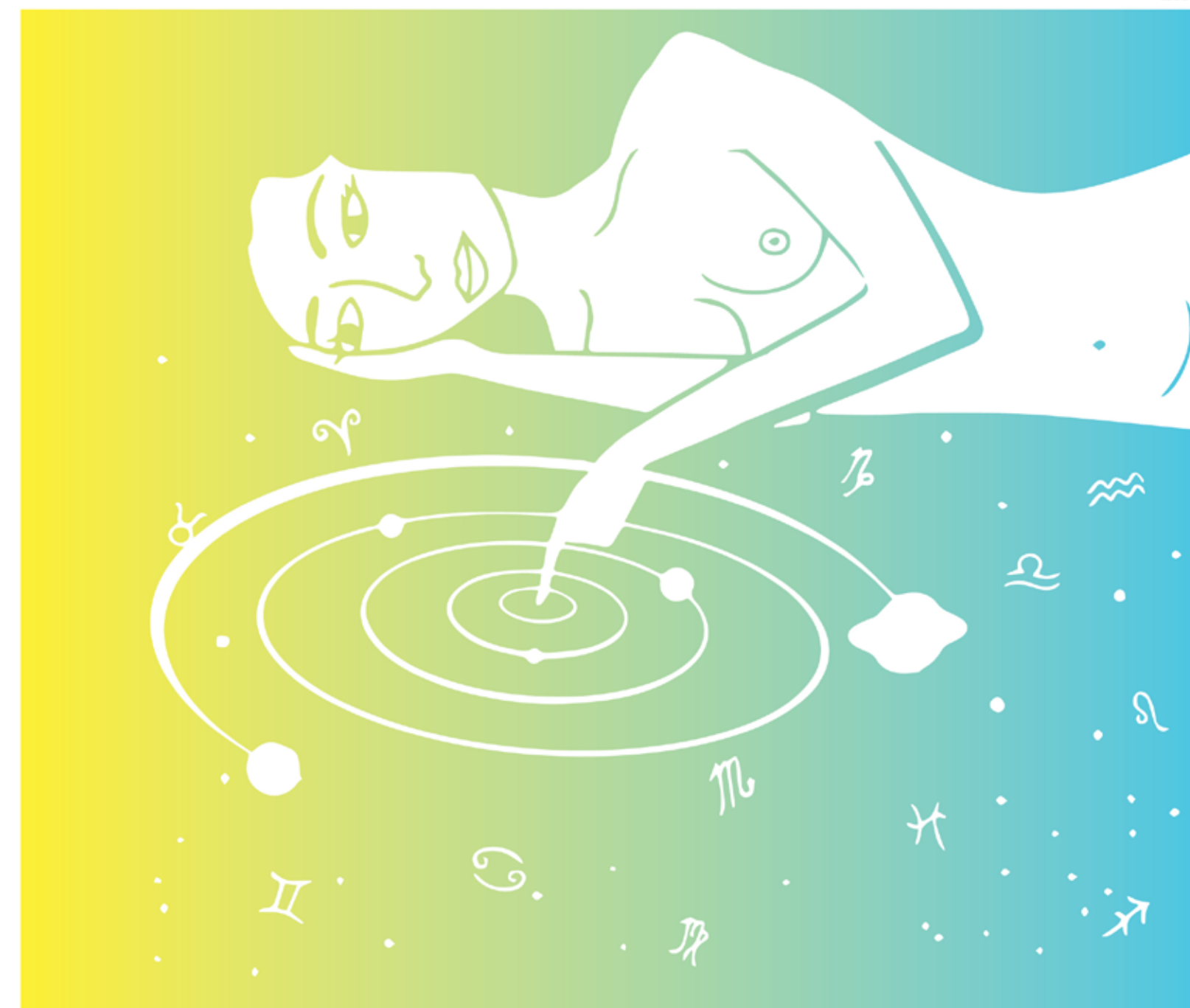
(August 23 to September 22)

Sometimes we don't want to grow anymore. Sometimes it's like, OK, that's enough, I've learned my lessons, can I just chill in this incarnation or mind-state or sort-of-bad-habit that doesn't cause pain to anyone else but me? This month, you may be reminded that we don't always control the pace, frequency, or intensity with which we grow. Let life do its thing to you. There will be flowers.

LIBRA

(September 23 to October 22)

What are the pressures you place on yourself because you think you "should" be something other than what you are at this very moment? Where did you get the idea of what you should be? Is it necessary? Is it true?



SCORPIO

(October 23 to November 21)

Forgiveness seems to be an unpopular concept in our culture right now. Personally, I'm a big fan of forgiveness, not because it lets the other person off the hook but because it allows me to stop replaying a past harm in my mind every damn day. I have not been able to force a feeling of forgiveness. But being open to it, just a crack, is a good place to start.

SAGITTARIUS

(November 22 to December 21)

Sometimes we write off the interests of those we love as things we will never understand, without even exploring them. Maybe they appear too boring, complicated, loud, or violent, and we immediately write them off. This month, take some time to get to know an interest of one person who is close to you. Observe with full attention, ask questions, and participate.

CAPRICORN

(December 22 to January 19)

One thing that's not so bad about having suffered is that our experience eventually can be helpful to others — sometimes even in a way that feels like redemption. What have you been through that others may be going through right now? Where can you find them?

EMOTIONAL RESCUE.

HOW A PROPER CELEBRITY CRUSH CAN BE A MUG OF WARM TEA IN A COLD WORLD.

BY LEESA CROSS-SMITH

There is an aquarium scene in 2012's *Rust and Bone* wherein Marion Cotillard, playing a woman (Stephanie) who has lost both legs to an orca accident at a sea park, goes back to visit the killer whale. She stands in front of the tank — soaked with blue — the prosthetic ankles of her new legs firmly planted into her sneakers. She uses her palm to softly smack the glass once and then again to call the whale over to her. She holds both hands up, touching the glass the same way she would touch the whale, if she only could.

She nods and the whale moves its head in a nodding fashion. She takes her right arm and lifts it, points, and the whale swims away, the scene not ending until the last flick of its slick black tail disappears. In the scene preceding the aquarium one, Stephanie is on her balcony in her wheelchair, doing the same semaphore-like arm motions to Katy Perry's "Firework" that she did before the accident. It, like the aquarium scene, is a scene of both hope and sadness. Healing and wonderfully human moments in a movie that also has scenes of such intense, devastating violence. I had to close my eyes.

Though I was blown away by Cotillard's performance, in truth, I only watched *Rust and Bone* originally because of Matthias Schoenaerts, the actor who works alongside her.

I have a crush on him. My celebrity crushes are emotional rescue when the world is too much. Like a security blanket or a warm mug of tea, they serve a right, proper, selfish purpose — one piece of the puzzle to your girl's chill, emotional well-being. I tend to watch movies in batches, in organized, themed groups. Like the books I choose to read,

I most often watch movies for the actors/characters and not the plot, although there are plenty of exceptions.

But as pretty much a life rule, whenever I fall in love with someone (new to me) on my screen, I will go back and watch most (if not all) of their movies. And this time, it's Matthias Schoenaerts.

I've had plenty of crushes in my lifetime, both real and celebrity. When I was a little girl, I had a crush on the boy up the street who cut the grass with his shirt off. His name started with a T, and he was older than me. I can no longer picture his face, but it was the idea of teenage T, shirtless, riding the push mower that I liked. I couldn't have been any older than ten and had absolutely no clue what sex was or what my feelings were, but I liked looking out the car window when we drove past his house and seeing him out in the yard. I liked thinking about him. That's

most of what it comes down to for me: what I like thinking about. A way to curb my anxiety and anxious thoughts. You could be mine, could be mine, could be mine, all mine. Right?

Matthias Schoenaerts is an incredible actor, and also easy on the eyes. He's very pretty, handsome, manly, sexy, handsome, sexy, manly, wow OK yes exactly, etc. He has a great nose, a great walk. He looks really good with a beard and bed-head. He looks fetching in scarves and sweaters. He tends to play characters who are complicated, quiet, and dark. Characters I maybe shouldn't root for, characters I should probably hate but don't. Like in *Rust and Bone*, he plays Ali, a knucklehead. A boxer/brawler type who has recently come into custody of his five-year-old son. Ali is not a good father. He is neglectful and violent. Should it surprise us when he is so tender with Stephanie? Brutal tenderness and tender brutality are common threads running through Schoenaerts's work, so much so that for a while he had those phrases listed as his Instagram bio.

Ali is physically tender with Stephanie in a way he is not with his own son. There's a scene of him carrying her into the ocean for a swim, of her hitching a ride on his back on the way out. But when it comes to her heart and feelings, he is brutish. He unapologetically sleeps with other women,

takes them home right in front of her. He treats her no differently than he would treat any other woman. Meaning also that he could disappear without a trace, without letting her know he's leaving. When Stephanie wonders whether sex is the same now that she's lost her legs, Ali casually asks her if she wants to have sex with him. To try it out. Just to see. Once, after sex, he carries her into the bathroom to pee.

Some of my real-life crushes amounted to absolutely nothing. One crush was an awful idea and led to an emotionally abusive relationship. One crush ended up being my boyfriend for about a year and is still my friend. Another became a boy I'd kiss whenever we were alone. We'd be walking with a group, we'd fall behind, he'd grab me, and we'd kiss against a stranger's car in the parking lot. We kissed in a pickup truck in the alley behind the coffee shop, listening to *Doggystyle*. We kissed when it was snowing, listening to *Vs* by Pearl Jam. He was never my boyfriend-boyfriend.

In his movies, Matthias is frequently shot from behind, the back of his head gently bobbing as he walks away from the camera. Mysterious. He shows his ass in a lot of his movies. Some call him the Belgian Brando, and like Brando, his body is important to his body of work, in a way that isn't



Mmm: Yes, you could be mine, tonight and every night. Done and done. Not to brag, but I'm a pro at crushing. And now, all my crushes are trapped behind the glass of my TV screen.

**I'll be your savior, steadfast and true
I'll come to your emotional rescue**

Onscreen, the characters Matthias Schoenaerts plays may be dangerous, the stories may be dark, but from a distance, my crush heart is protected. All my celeb crushes are safe, calming places I keep coming back to in my brain. It's more satisfying than lust; I can hold my thoughts captive. But the familiarity or even the idea of a singular person or character provides a simple, soothing sweetness. The world is a mess, but my Matthias Schoenaerts movies stay the same. Even if only for a little bit, they are a balm, an escape. Like listening to St. Vincent cover "Emotional Rescue" by the Rolling Stones for five minutes on the *Bigger Splash* soundtrack. Sometimes that's all I need — five minutes. And shamelessly, I'll take my comforting, emotional quickies wherever I can find them.

relationship on the volcanic island of Pantelleria is interrupted in the worst way when his lover's ex comes to visit and overstays his welcome.

Once upon a time, I had a crush on the boy who would become my husband. A bevy of girls at our high school had a crush on him. We called him the black-haired beauty and would watch him smoke before school and skateboard after. He always wore the same dark-green hoodie and a carnelian ring that clicked when he moved his fingers a certain way. Irresistible. My favorite boy, favorite kisser.

true of all actors. He's usually cast as a taciturn brawler, some kind of protector — a bodyguard, a spy. His quietude is an asset to his characters who are so often paranoid, shattered. In *Suite Française*, he plays a German soldier who has to do unthinkable, unspeakable things, and he is unsurprisingly reserved, brooding. Brutal. The German soldier is also a pianist, a composer. Tenderness. In *Disorder*, he plays an ex-soldier with PTSD now moonlighting on a security team. Kavin-sky-like '80s video-game music lends an electric, anxious pulse to the movie. His character is easily unnerved by almost any-

thing and removes his earpiece when the constant voices and buzzing are too much.

Matthias's love interests in these films are often just out of reach — foreplay without completion or mindless casual hookups with no real emotion (from him). In *Bullhead*, he plays a man with no testicles who injects himself with testosterone every day. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, he plays the dreamy, hulking shepherd Gabriel Oak and is near the woman he loves, but she is always looking at someone else until she finally sees him. In *A Bigger Splash*, his idyllic, sexually satisfying rela-

THE GOSPEL
OF TREES



CONFESSIONS
OF A RECOVERING
DEBUTANT



I LOVE SPAM;
DEEPLY,
UNIRONNICALLY



HOW ONE WOMAN
COMPLETELY
CHANGED
TEQUILA



AT KELIS'S
TABLE



THE GOSPEL OF TREES

A NEW MEMOIR EXPLORES THE CONSEQUENCES OF MISSIONARY LIFE

BY BARBIE LATZA NADEAU



Two years into his unplanned career as a missionary agronomist, my father wrote to Grandma Lois: You said not to wear ourselves out taking care of Ti Marcel. I think in a way it's therapy for me. At nine months old, Ti Marcel had neither hair nor teeth and could not sit up. She weighed under eleven pounds. My father brought her home from the pediatric ward so that my sisters and I could shout some life into her, but she didn't smile or giggle like other babies. Her skeletal arms jutted out from her distended abdomen, and she had wide, un-

blinking eyes and a rib cage like a shuddering kite frame, ready to catch in the slightest breeze and lift her out of our hands, drifting beyond the horizon, lost to the world. My little sister Rosie, who was four years old and eager for a younger sibling, leaned in close and tickled Ti Marcel's feet. I was eight and aware of all the attention I had already lost. I turned away. Her papery skin reeked of scabies medicine and urine.

She had no name. The Haitian nurses at the hospital called her Ti Marcel, little Marcel, and this name — the name of the father who had apparently abandoned her — was one of the few things we knew about her. The fragments of backstory, which we acquired piecemeal from uncertain sources, were as follows: Her mother was said to have died soon after giving birth; unnamed relatives fed her watered-down tea instead of milk, then left her at the missionary hospital. They had not been in contact since that time. Her father, Marcel, was rumored to have fled the country only to be thrown into detention once he arrived in Florida. It was an old, tired story — yet another survivor with a strong body and shrinking options who had risked everything for a chance at Peyi Bondye, God's Country: where coins could be found on the street, free for the taking; where all the children had enough food to eat and all the fathers had three-car garages; distant realm from whence the missionaries hailed; mythical land of the minimum wage.

My father brought Ti Marcel home from the pediatric ward every chance he could find, and took her out in the rain to feel the sharp sting of raindrops on her

bare arms. Cradled against his chest, her ungainly head listed awkwardly on a thin neck.

In the waning and humid dusk, my sisters and I raced in breathless circles around their two-headed silhouette under the zanmann tree

As the months whirled by, my father's letters radiated pleasure. Ti Marcel had learned to sit up. She grew hair. She developed a taste for my mother's home-cooked dinners, mashed into gruel by my dotting father. Baby Marcel is everyone's example of a miracle, he boasted to Grandma Lois. Yesterday she held a bottle all by herself.

Even I couldn't deny the transformation. My father had always insisted that she was a smart kid — he could tell by the way her eyes followed us around the room — and within a few short months, she had blossomed into a determined, curious child. She could follow all the prompts in the Pat the Bunny book when she sat on his lap: Lift the handkerchief to play peekaboo, pat the man's scratchy beard, put her finger through the gold wedding ring.

My father adored Ti Marcel. I considered her a menace. I hated how gently he spoon-fed her gulping hunger, as if he would do anything to rescue her. He never seemed exasperated when she soaked the bed with diarrhea, but if I sassed back instead of setting the table like Mom asked, he'd slam open the drawers in the kitchen and yank my arm while paddling mightily with a wooden spoon. Ti Marcel

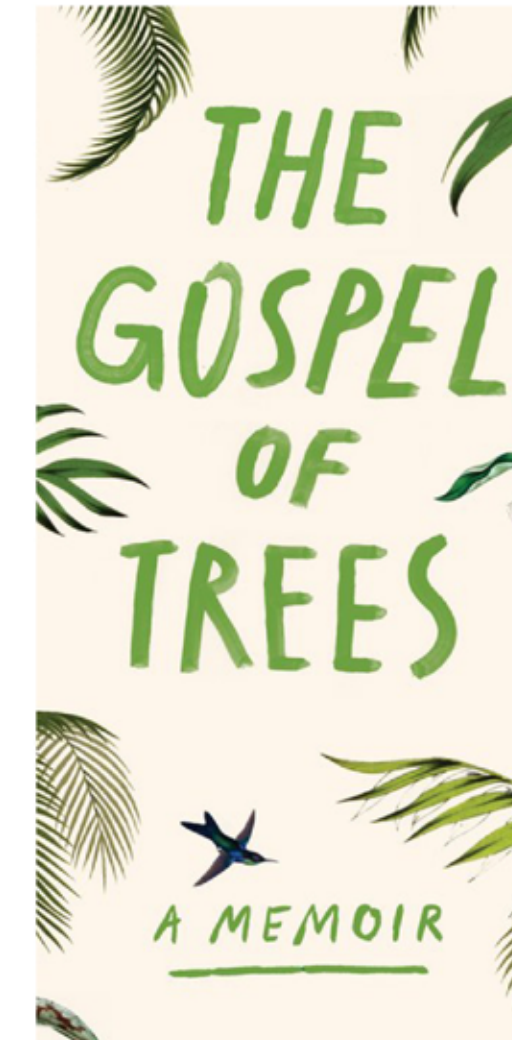
didn't have the strength to defy him, and no matter how little attention he gave, she turned to him like a sunflower.

"Even now, I can remember the texture and shape of my jealousy, wadded up like a loose sock under the heel of my roller skates, grating against my anklebone every time I rounded a corner."

Jealousy jarring and black-heat-abrasive, like the skid of sweaty knees and palms on jagged concrete when I hit gravel and my skates flew one way and my arms another — blood from broken palms and a skinned nose leaking into my sobbing mouth. At eight years old, I didn't care what became of her. I wanted my father back.

With only six months to go before my father's contract at the missionary tree nursery expired, it was unclear what our future might hold. There were no jobs waiting back in the States, and aside from a cabin in the mountains with a pit toilet and pipes that wouldn't last through a winter, we didn't have anywhere to live. Thus, when a letter arrived with the news that one of my aunts in California was willing to adopt Ti Marcel so we wouldn't have to leave her in Haiti, the argument that had been brewing for months spilled out into the open.

My father, swept along by the hope that this borrowed Haitian daughter would soon become a part of the family — even if only as a niece or cousin — wanted to move her out of the pediatric ward permanently. My mother reminded him that Ti Marcel already had a father, even if he hadn't been able to return for her. This, at least, was enough to force my father to stop and consider his actions. He drove the next day to Cap-Haïtien to place a collect call to his sister. Shouting



over a badly connected line in a sweltering phone booth, my father explained that as fond as he was of Ti Marcel, it didn't seem right to uproot her from her family. We would just have to trust that God would continue to protect her.

My father continued to pamper Ti Marcel without any hope of permanence, bringing her home every night for dinner, until my sister Meadow and I complained. Even Rosie was tired of playing with her. Couldn't we do something else for a change? For once, my father relented; that night we played checkers. Meadow, who didn't appreciate getting skunked by my two kings, tipped over the board. The next night, Ti Marcel was back. She had just gotten her first tooth — which, my father pointed out proudly, hadn't even made her grumpy — and we celebrated her first birthday with a chocolate cupcake and a candle that we helped extinguish.

Exactly one week later, like a character in a mystery novel, Marcel — the rightful father — reappeared. It was an otherwise unremarkable Monday afternoon. Herons squawked in the trees, and missionary kids raced on roller skates around the bumpy circular sidewalk as Marcel, still dusty from his three-hour kamyon ride, made his way in silence to the pediatric ward. He had arrived without fanfare, but he had returned to claim his own.

The prison cell in Miami had apparently been a fabrication. As it turned out, he was a farmer with a small plot of land outside of Gonaïves and he had left his cows and fields for the day to reclaim his daughter. No explanation was given for why, if he owned milk cows, his

daughter had been left at the hospital in such a dire condition. The Haitian nurses, bristling with condescension, showed him his transformed little girl, who could now stand against the rail of her crib and bounce with chubby arms. They explained that she had become a favorite of a missionary named Agwonòm Jon, who wanted to adopt her.

Marcel's response was adamant, as the nurses later reported to my father: I don't want the blan to take my baby!

This assertion should have been enough to settle the matter, but by so blatantly demonstrating our affection for Ti Marcel, we had wandered into uncertain territory. Given the historic imbalance of power, it was widely understood that if a blan decided to take custody of a Haitian child, his will could not be thwarted, even by the rightful father. Indeed, before Marcel was allowed to take his daughter home, he was sent first to speak with the missionary doctor, who cleared his throat and decreed that the child — for her own protection — was not yet healthy enough to leave the confines of the hospital.

Marcel reiterated to the nurses in the pediatric ward that his daughter would not be raised by a white man, then melted back into the obscurity from whence he came.

My father, who heard about the encounter only after Marcel had left, readied himself for the impending loss. It seems very right that she should have a real father, he penned in a letter to his mother later that afternoon. But there

was already a catch in his throat — so much so that he added later, as an afterthought scribbled in the margins: I'm glad she didn't go today. I will miss her when she does go. As far as I was concerned, the crisis was over. Now that Ti Marcel had a home waiting for her, I could cuddle her without envy. I wove her hair into soft braids and read her fairy tales on the cicada-humming porch while she sat on my lap and reached for the pages.

Life was looking up again. There were newborn baby bunnies to smuggle from their cages, a kite-day competition at Jericho School, and my new Easter dress, which spun like a gilded teacup when I whirled around the living room. What did it matter that our passports were missing? We were seasoned adventurers by now. The world was full of surprises.

The Limbé Baptist Church celebrated Easter with a long, slow rhythmic march to the river where the baptismal candidates, robed in white, waded into the water singing. The missionaries celebrated with an all-compound potluck.

Ti Marcel sat on my lap while my parents grabbed each other's waists and barreled across the grass with their legs tied together, taking a noisy first place in the three-legged race. I came in second in the sack races. Meadow, who had just learned to jump rope, whisked around our volunteer cottage, humming to herself. Rosie licked the icing off a pan of cinnamon rolls. Ti Marcel, rechristened Marcelle in my father's letters, trilled her sweet-voiced gurgle of Da-dada-dah. She had just broken in three new teeth, as sharp as diamonds. She was almost crawling.

My mother was up to her elbows in greasy soap bubbles, the bread pans

clinking in the sink, when she heard the knock at the door. My father was away at the missionary tree plantation, where he discovered, to his frustration, that the workers were not at their posts, nor even on the peninsula, although they came running as soon as they saw his stoop-shouldered silhouette through the neglected trees. On further investigation, he found hastily scattered branches over tree trunks that he had not authorized the men to cut. He fired them on the spot. Only too late did he learn what he had lost.

My mother felt vaguely irritated as she left the dishes in the sink to respond to yet another interruption. Opening the screen door, she was startled to find Ti Marcel in the arms of a stranger. Marcel, whom we'd never met, explained that he had brought his daughter, Cherylene, to say goodbye.

My mother had just sufficient where-withal to assemble her own scattered daughters and explain to us that Ti Marcel had a new name and that we might not see her again, then helped us gather up the books and toys and clothes we'd amassed over the previous seven and a half months of pretending that she was our sister.

My sisters and I tagged along as far as the carport to watch Cherylene leave. She seemed happy enough, tucked against her aunt's hip, her chubby legs showing under her dress as her father,

straight-backed and purposeful, strode out the hospital gates.

"It was just as well I didn't read my father's letters until years later."

April 16, 1985 letter to Grandma Lois: Well my trip went well... Sure enough no one was working... There's more to the story but I'm tired and am really writing about something else. When I got back I found out that Ti Marcel was gone. Her father and his sister had come to get her... I'm glad I wasn't here. I would have cried.

When I opened that letter for the first time, in my twenties, I was surprised at how the dust-winged specter of jealousy fluttered out at me from the page. I had to blink angrily to keep its claws out of my eyes.

Having finally located our missing passports, my father wasn't about to leave Haiti until he'd seen for himself that Ti Marcel was being properly cared for. Though she had missed her first check-up at the hospital, he and my mother returned pleased from their surveillance mission. Some of Cherylene's relatives had emigrated to Canada, and the money they sent back helped to pay the living expenses of the rest of the family. Marcel had been tending his gardens a few miles outside of town, but Cherylene stayed during the day with one of her aunts in a well-kept house with cement floors, electricity, and a television — which was more luxury than my father allowed us. She

looked cute and healthy and had barely recognized my parents after a month away. She was crawling all over the place and was strong enough to stand and inch along the wall — it wouldn't be long before she was ready to push off and walk on her own strong legs.

Rose was so happy to see her. We all were, my father updated the grandparents. Two weeks later, we leaned our heads out of the car windows and waved frantic goodbyes as the missionary compound disappeared behind us.

"A kamyon swerved around us going the opposite direction, the blare of its bugle-call bus horn followed by the clamor of chickens as they fluttered away from the thundering tires."

Men on the roof straddled shifting bags of mangoes and manioc, their laughter exploding and then fading to silence as they hurtled past us toward an uncertain future. As we lifted above the runway on a missionary plane, Haiti receded, the dense green thickets of bamboo, Leucaena, and cactus giving way to barren hills. Into one of our going-away cards someone had tucked an unexplained pamphlet: "Are Missionaries Unbalanced?"



CONFESSIONS OF A RECOVERING DEBUTANTE

CASTING OFF THE WHITE DRESS AND STOMPING ON IT.

BY C. MORGAN BABST

We sat around on folding chairs, pinning ostrich plumes into one another's hair, sharing college gossip. Near the door that led into the bowels of the Municipal Auditorium, our chaperone was shouting about curtsies — demonstrating, in her tight satin skirt, how we were to bend at the knees without bowing our heads. Our bodies must not betray one trace of submission, she said; we were debutantes, not subjects, after all. Her breath — tuna-laced, necrotic — tossed our feathers. They bobbed as if they were in the bridles of carriage ponies. This felt apt.

My father was offered goats for me once at a dinner party Uptown. The host's friend, just back from a stint for Shell, had a son as yet unmarried; he thought we'd be a good match. A camel and four goats was the right price, he said, for a basic model like me, but, given what my daddy had paid for my schooling, maybe an Arabian horse should be thrown in too.

He laughed, looking down my dress. I took my mother's scarf from her chair. My father, bless him, barely chuckled before he started talking. My father has a talent for talking; he can go on for hours about things that interest no one but himself: circuit-court rulings, collegiate a capella, etymologically incorrect usages of common words. That night, hud-

dled under the coral pashmina, I didn't even try to interrupt so that, by the time dessert arrived, the rest of the table had forgotten about the goats.

My father chuckled again as he took my arm and lead me to the dance floor of the Municipal Auditorium, through a tunnel, into the spotlight. The carriage feather bobbing above my chignon, I felt a little bit like a linebacker, a little bit like I'd died. Patting my hand through two layers of kid gloves, he whispered: Just like a yearling sale.

He meant the subversion to be obvious. Meant the whole thing, I think, as a lesson. Meant for me to see the antique pistons that drive the debauch of Mardi Gras: classism, racism, patriarchy, the commodification of my sex. I suppose he believed some things are best learned by doing.

One thing I learned: The "Greatest Free Party on Earth" is paid for by debs' daddies. I shared this revelation with my college friends in Connecticut, trying to get them to stop making those faces at me. They were horrified by all this: the white dress, the pageant. They spoke to me in those tones that people use to speak to the brainwashed, lecturing me on the history of something of which they were not a part.

I tried to explain how funny it was. That all this had origi-

nated in a joke — Mardi Gras as a reprisal of Roman Saturnalia, a sort of class-based opposite day. I quoted Bakhtin — "All were considered equal during Carnival" — explaining that every socioeconomic stratum had a "krewe" that threw its own parade and ball. I got into the innate symbolism of rhinestones and the hermeneutics of the Zulu parade, whose African-American members wear whiteface under blackface, a send-up of minstrelsy that consternates still today. I told them about the hot-sauce heirless, who'd passed out, drunk, on her way to the throne. I made fun of Rex, the "King of Carnival," who proclaimed his throwing of lead-tainted plastic pearls to be pro bono publico. It was cringeworthy, sure. But I figured it was my civic duty to be cringeworthy too.

It was early January, one ball down, two balls to go (some girls do as many as six during the weeks of Carnival between Epiphany and Mardi Gras Day), when Jonas called me on the common-room phone. Jonas, a friend of a friend, had New Orleans roots; he'd agreed to escort me to one of the balls over spring break.

"My dad says to tell you that I'm Jewish," he said.

"Yes, Jonas. So?"

Then I figured out what he meant. As I scrambled to assure him it was OK, it dawned on me just how OK it wasn't. At these particular balls, anti-Semitism was out of vogue, but racism was still in.

Carnival was de jure desegregated with the Mardi Gras Ordinance of 1991, which stripped parading privileges from krewes that refused to open their membership across race and gender lines. Dorothy May Taylor, a city-council member-at-large, argued that New Orleans had an interest in the makeup of these private clubs — they were powerful business engines, generators of jobs and opportunities unavailable to those excluded from membership. The "Old Line" Krewes — Comus, Momus, Proteus, and Rex — were indeed made up of the city's business elite. The Old Line excluded plenty. The Old Line would not change.

I have woozy memories of the Carnival season that followed, the last before the ordinance went into effect: eating cold hot dogs at the Boston Club while watching the last march of Momus's stilt-walkers; pumping the keg for people who showed up to parade parties in T-shirts portraying Taylor as "The Grinch Who Stole Mardi Gras"; the low tones of my parents' friend in Comus, the Oldest of the Old Line, as he discussed the doom of Carnival. Comus, Lord of Misrule,



ILLUSTRATION BY TIFFANY PAI

would never parade again. Instead, to this day, his minions spend Mardi Gras Day on foot in the French Quarter, clanging cowbells, a tarnished remnant.

We were still invited to the Comus balls, even after they stopped parading. I should

have known better than to go. Should have known better than to giggle when one of the women there, brittle in her mothballed dress, berated me for attending underaged. I should have recognized her — gatekeeper to the secret inner sanctum of the "elite"

— should have stuck out my tongue. Should have backed away to the outside, slammed that gate. But instead I went back at sixteen in pearls, then eighteen, in my lilac dress. At twenty, it was me out there under the spotlights, wearing white as if for innocence, wear-

ing plumes. My father wants me to tell you about the ice. How, during the brief period the New Orleans Brass played ice hockey in the Municipal Auditorium, the dance floor was laid over the team's rink. How a fog of frost hung low in the air and I shivered in my gown. How, after curtsying to the king and queen, I walked backward in heels (one must never turn one's back on royalty) to my place on the dais. How, as I stood there, my feet went slowly numb from the cold.

It turns out I was wrong about Bakhtin. Carnival in New Orleans is not a time of anarchic equality; no oppressive hierarchies get turned inside out. No, with each handshake, each time I was congratulated for being white, and rich, and coddled, each time I was presented like a gift to "society," I learned that Carnival was where those structures were reinforced. And we girls up there in our white dresses made a wall.

I couldn't articulate all that then. I was twenty and well-conditioned — I'd not yet learned to unmask ugliness when it bowed to me in disguise. Instead, my body rang with unspoken rage, my mind vacillating between depression and revolt. I had been zipped, only half-willing, into that white dress, and I wanted to take it off. So I took it off, over and over again. Left it strewn across my parents' stairs and at the foot of my dorm bed af-

ter a party (titled “Debutantes and Bondage” — I kept the handcuffs on all night). I took it off and streaked the quad, took it off and posed nude for photographs, took it off and stood around at naked parties with my friends. I took it off, giving my body away in huge handfuls, just to prove it was my own.

Since Katrina, the Municipal Auditorium has fallen into ruin, a symbol, for some, of the city’s mismanagement — there’s not enough money, not enough energy, not enough time. For others, it stands in for other structures we wish would fall. Each year, the parades still roll, and new krewes — fresher, integrated, sometimes funny — are slowly eclipsing the Old Line. The balls are thrown now at the downtown hotels, the trumpet’s fanfare absorbed by acoustic tile. Now, at midnight, via the long escalators at the Sheraton, Comus descends in rhinestones from his throne.

When my grandmother died last year, her cedar locker disgorged its contents, and the dress returned. It hangs from a hook in my grown-up closet, its satin breast stuffed with yellowed paper to approximate a woman.

“I want a party, Mama,” my five-year-old says, sticking her head up the dress’s skirt. “I want to curtsy to the queen.”

“We’ll see,” I smirk.

“I do!” she insists, wrapped in white satin.

“You might not later, love,”

I say. As I pull her into my lap and begin the explanation from the beginning, the dress falls finally to the floor.

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I LOVE SPAM MADLY, DEEPLY, UNIRONICALLY

THE LOWBROW PORK PRODUCT REMINDS ME OF HOME.

BY EUNY HONG

I am skilled at classical French cooking. I have a Higher Certificate from the Wine and Spirits Education Trust. I also, however, love Spam. (In case you were wondering, Spam pairs well with Gewürztraminer.) I kept kosher for a few years (long story). When I broke away from the dietary laws — because I was quitting smoking and could not maintain so many forms of self-abnegation at once — the food item I cheated with was Spam. It symbolizes both the part of me that is Korean and the part of me that is American — two identities that are difficult to unite. More important, I associate Spam with relaxation, being present, and not worrying about what you can't control. Why? Because Spam evokes beaches, pineapples, funny tropical shirts: i.e., Hawaii. It's the one place in the world where I can be un-stressed-out, and it happens to be the only U.S. state that loves Spam as much as I do.

Mainland Americans have given me no end of grief for this. First rule of Spam Club: You never talk about Spam Club. Otherwise, you risk social death. Case in point: When I was at university, my friend Mike told me that his freshman-year roommate threw out Mike's Spam and gave him \$5 to cover the cost. But Mike and I both had a really good excuse for this embarrassing proclivity: We're of Korean extraction,

and Korea is the world's largest consumer of Spam outside the United States. How did Korea become hooked on the laughingstock of all supermarket products?

A bit of history: Spam has been manufactured by the Austin, Minnesota-based Hormel Foods Corporation since 1937. It became widespread in Korea during and after the Korean War (1950 to 1953), when the U.S. government shipped loads of Spam to Korea, at a time when fresh meat was hard to come by.

Korea was by no means the only beneficiary of this largesse; during and after WWII, the U.K. also turned to Spam to supplement monthly meat rations. In fact, articles on Spam's role in wartime Britain bear titles such as "Spam: Did It Save the Nation?" (Here are some nostalgic British WWII-era Spam recipes.) Unlike the U.K., however, where they poke fun at Spam, Korean Spam consumption was unironic. While modern-day Brits no longer regularly eat Spam, it has remained part of the diet in Korea. In September 2017, Korean sales of Spam reached 1 billion tins. And Spam's Korean co-distributor, Cheil Jedang, announced in January that its top-selling New Year gift box was Spam. In my day, the tins were usually packed in velvet-lined boxes and wrapped in white satin ribbon.

Spam is an important part of Korean home cooking. It's the sine qua non ingredient of kimchi jjigae (stewed kimchi) and budae jjigae — literally "army stew." My mother, a biochemist with a particular fear of foodborne illnesses, was virulently anti-pork, making it sound like a veritable menagerie of revolting organisms — trichinosis, tapeworm, hepatitis, all reproducing at exponential rates. Yet we always had Spam in our pantry.

Apparently Koreans are now accepting their love of the lowbrow: David Chang, the Michelin-starred Korean-American chef, is extolling Spam. Spam's enduring popularity in Korea surprises me, because I had assumed Koreans were now prosperous enough to abandon any food item that you need a key to open. This is a common phenomenon, though — hardship habits die hard. Some Germans raised on the substitute coffee product "Ersatzkaffee" — either during the Second World War or subsequently in the former GDR — occasionally used the bad stuff over real coffee much longer than was necessary. Wartime food is a symbol of survival.

I am constantly surprised by how many non-Koreans have never seen Spam, so I'll describe it. It's like gefilte fish but made from compressed processed ham. As with gefilte

fish, Spam is surrounded by a clear gelatinous amniotic fluid. After you open the tin (now it's regular pull-tab, but when I was growing up, you needed to twirl open the top with a key), you hit the bottom until the Spam block pops out, though most of the time you need to go around the edge with a knife. When it exits the can's vacuum seal, it makes a slurpy noise, like when you push cranberry jelly out of a tin.

When my family lived in the United States, my parents were really into long road trips to national parks, which I enjoyed about as much as those kids did in the movie National Lampoon's Vacation. And my parents must have been victims of Manchurian Candidate levels of Midwestern American suburban brainwashing, because they really did sing folk songs in harmony while driving — "I've Been Workin' on the Railroad" comes to mind.

At the end of a long day in the car, we'd stay in these cheap hotels, where my mother would violate the hotel fire code — and every basic tenet of the social contract — by secretly making rice and frying up Spam right on the floor of the hotel room. She'd use a rice cooker and hot plate THAT SHE HAD BROUGHT FROM HOME. On one such occasion, I spilled my Spam and rice all over the hotel carpet, leading her to yell at me, "This hotel will never let Oriental [sic] people stay here again!" To which I replied, "Erm ... why should they, really?"



So Spam, in other words, evokes all kinds of memories: changing house, boring road trips, and my cheap-ass family.

There is no substitute for Spam. When I lived in France, where Spam was unavailable, I was forced to resort to a depressing Danish knock-off. A few years ago, I went with some Korean-American friends to a trendy Korean restaurant in New York (not David Chang's, a different one). We ordered the aforementioned budae jjigae, the army stew, so named because it was invented using random U.S. Army-provided rations, like Spam, hot dogs, and waxy government-manufactured cheese. This restaurant's upscale version, however, was made with homemade ramen noodles, high-quality mozzarella, and what looked like Spam but was too fancy. It felt wrong to dress up a poor man's dish, like making puttanesca sauce with caviar or cottage pie with chopped truffles. Which probably does

exist somewhere. I'm not a purist about food, but I do object when I feel that people are just missing the ontological essence of a dish.

The healthy versions are not nearly salty or greasy enough, and the salt and grease are precisely why Spam goes so well with rice. By far the most common form in which I've eaten Spam is in the form of kimbap. Imagine maki rolls — the kind of sushi that is rolled into logs and cut into small cylinders — but instead of fish, they contain vegetables, a thin omelet cut into strips, and, in our house, Spam.

Kimbap wasn't really dinner food. I associate it primarily with picnics. As a sullen teen, I hated those picnics with a passion you can only imagine. They were hokey affairs with long hikes and teachers screaming at you about what a nice fucking day we were having. Invariably, some tool would bring a guitar, and everyone would be forced to sing. To this day, I hate acoustic guitar. But then

there was my Spam kimbap. It was a reminder that this hell passing for a picnic was only temporary, and that somewhere out there was a mother with whom I battled daily but who had nonetheless gotten up at dawn to make me Spam kimbap. My mother, in addition to the frugality, had a psychological hang-up about food. She hated cooking and resented that it was considered the domain of women. Perhaps because of her hostility toward cooking, I hated food until age twelve or so. I remember wishing it were possible to take a pill instead of having to eat dinner. Consequently, I looked like a famine victim.

When I hit puberty, though, my metabolism kicked in, and I developed a normal teenage appetite. This concerned my mother. When I was five-foot-six (167 centimeters) and my weight crept past the 115-pound mark (52 kilograms), she put me on a kale-juice diet. And trust me, kale was not easy to find in those

days. Yay, body dysmorphia. And yet, paradoxically, she also served me greasy, salty, insanely caloric Spam, always fried. Why, you ask? Well, isn't it obvious? Fried foods are always evocative of love. The smell of frying itself is mouth-watering — be it Spam, tempura, croquettes, or chicken drumsticks. Even people who don't like you can make a sandwich. I mean, what is the office deli platter if not hard evidence of that? But no one who hates you will fry you some Spam.

I remember from those school picnics that some of the other kids' mothers didn't use Spam in their kimbap, instead using surimi, that pink fake-crab thing. Surimi — now, that's bad parenting. Life is too short to have more than one dubious processed-meat product in your kitchen: Let Spam be it.

HOW A CRAZY OLD
FRENCH WOMAN
CURED MY CHRONIC
PAIN, AND HEALED
MY SOUL

GET READY FOR SAME-
SEX REPRODUCTION

FIXING THE OPIOID
CRISIS, ON PERSON
AT A TIME

MY LOWER HALF
WAS RIPPED IN TWO.
WOULD MY SEX LIFE
SURVIVE?

A GIFT IN 2018:
SLOW DOWN



HOW A CRAZY OLD FRENCH WOMAN CURED MY CHRONIC PAIN — AND HEALED MY SOUL

BY ABIGAIL RASMINSKY

To a dancer, the floor is paramount: it is both a physical and a psychological partner. You learn to depend on it, to lean on it, to leap off it. One of my favorite pre-class rituals involved lying on my back in the studio, bundled in thick sweatpants and a hoodie, feeling my bones make contact with the wood, those solid, orderly slats. It felt like meeting an old lover. Like coming home. When all else failed — I mangled the steps, I felt clumsy or lost — the floor was always there.

At 26, I'd been a downtown modern dancer in New York City for almost five years. It was a life I'd cobbled together in the rinky-dink fashion we thrived on in those days: with a farcically cheap rent-stabilized apartment in Brooklyn, a flexible job slinging coffee, and good yoga-teaching gigs all over town. I had, in some ways, arrived, although I didn't believe there was a fixed destination, and if there was, I was sure I hadn't gotten there. There was always more, more, more — it was a career that required saying yes to everything. The day-to-day of it was so far from glamorous that some wouldn't dare even call it a career, but as it turned out, it was my kind of life, one built on and through my body, a body I had, since childhood, found immeasurable joy in using to its fullest.

One evening in dance class, I kicked out my leg and felt a sharp pain in my lower back. I hobbled to a corner of the studio and got down on my hands and knees to assess. I didn't know it then — wouldn't believe it for years — but the floor, my home base, had been pulled out from under me. Six years later, I found myself in a hovel in Paris. An old French woman named Noëlle had her fingertips on my spine and was screaming "Up! Up! UP!" in my ear. By then I was 31, and I had lived with chronic pain since that day in class. For years, I kept dancing. Cooks work with burns, medical residents with sleep deprivation, dancers with pain: this was my logic. Eventually the ache in my back and hip crept down my leg, causing debilitating nerve pain — sciatica — that stayed there, no matter what I did. My career fell apart. With it, any sense of my identity toppled. Restorative yoga, acupuncture, massages, physical therapy, an anti-inflammatory diet, Chinese herbs, cortisone injections, fistfuls of Aleve, narcotics, disk surgery. When none of those provided any relief, I got on a plane to France. My friends and family thought I had gone insane. Perhaps I was, finally, unhinged, but this

is what pain does to you — it stalks you, insinuating itself into every facet of your life, growing in volume, until there's nothing else left.

Although Noëlle had been B.K.S. Iyengar's first Western-yoga student, she was entirely unknown in the yoga circles in which I'd traveled (or, really, in any yoga circles). She'd even appeared in Iyengar's biblical tome *Light on Yoga*, which features photos and detailed explanations of every single posture in the alignment-based practice. Noëlle was in the only photo Iyengar shares with another person — in a striped bikini, sitting on the floor, with her legs extended in front of her. Her face is being crushed into her thighs, because Iyengar is balancing in a quasi-handstand on her back, his hands scooping around her ribcage. They look like some sort of Chinese circus act. "She's going to fix me?" I asked my friend Alison, who'd opened the book on my lap. She'd been similarly debilitated, and had been miraculously healed by this bikini-clad yogini. "She's really old now," Alison said. "But yes. Trust me."

I had no one left to trust, so I went. This is all I knew: Noëlle taught *Aplomb*, an offshoot of Iyengar yoga that did away with actual asana and focused on the minutiae of posture. The gist of it was: by relearning to stand, my sciatic pain would disappear. Noëlle had spent decades studying people who did physical labor — stevedores, fish-

erman, farmers — without pain well into old age, and she had made a simple discovery: we all have a natural alignment that should allow us to live with ease and mobility until the very end of our lives. The secret to this pain-free posture? The pelvis had to be tilted forward, or, in yoga parlance, un-tucked. In regular-people lingo: the butt had to stick out. From this base, the spine could elongate up naturally. Any pain caused by a herniated disk would be alleviated with this freed-up space between the vertebrae. Given Noëlle's age and history, I expected clarity and wisdom — a transcendental experience, perhaps — but her directions were incomprehensible, and the posture was impossible to "get." The minute I walked into her apartment, I had to toss out any knowledge I'd come through the door with. Tuck! I'd been told in every single yoga and dance class I'd ever taken. It protects your back! Squeeze your butt! Suck in your stomach!

"Non! Non!" Noëlle yelled, gesturing angrily at my pelvis. "What is this? Who taught you this?"

Should I take her seriously? I couldn't tell. This was not the mala-bead-laden, aging Catherine Deneuve of my dreams. She was a haggard old woman who lived in a smelly hovel — her threadbare clothing was stained, her hair unwashed. Most alarming, she had no bottom teeth. But her posture was the most perfect, easeful thing I'd ever seen: regal and relaxed. If that's what would get me out of pain, I wanted it, desperately. Day after day, I'd show up in her minuscule Grey Gardens-esque apartment, nerve pain ringing down my leg, and do ... nothing. Stand. Sit. Stand again. Try, over and over, to relax ever more in my body, to fall into some sense of mysterious "aplomb." Mostly, I failed. Mostly, she sighed or yelled with exasperation. Mostly, I'd wonder which of us was crazier. She'd put her ancient hands on either side of my spine and guide me — but the guidance was so subtle it was like trying to change your life with the tip of a feather.

You're working too hard! Noëlle would admonish. Do less!

Do less? I'd long understood this directive to mean Take to your bed with an ice pack and two Aleve. I'd spent much of the past few years there. But during a workshop one weekend, when I was so despairing that I tried to slip out of class to do exactly that, Noëlle cornered me in her indomitable way. What will you do in your bed? You have to go on living!

Obediently, I began to allow myself the joys of wandering in and out of boutiques, of

riding the long escalator up to the Pompidou, of sipping café crème in the Marais.

And after months of daily practice, something started to happen. I began to sense small improvements. Under Noëlle's tutelage, my spine slowly cooperated, the disks buoyant, freed from years of compression. My chest, resting weightlessly atop my rib cage, opened. It was slow, frustrating, often imperceptible, but the shift was seismic. I was granted hours — then days — free of pain. Noëlle put into question not only all I knew about anatomy but also all I knew about the nature and trajectory of

progress itself. I'd spent years seeking help from experts, and my body had shunned them all. But now something profound was happening within me: I was learning to stand on my own. I was learning that my body could change after all, and not because of some surgeon's skills. I could learn to be in it differently. When I was dancing and teaching yoga, I was in the business of understanding bodies. When I got hurt and couldn't figure out a way to make the pain go away, I just wanted someone to fix me with a scalpel, a needle, a pair of hands — anything to get it back to "normal," to the way

it was, as if that were a static place. The most shocking part of the injury wasn't the pain itself, nor was it the fact that I no longer had control over a body I had spent two decades learning to master. It was that I no longer knew or understood that body — what would piss her off or quiet her down — and thus didn't know myself. The center would no longer hold.

But Noëlle, in her utterly unorthodox fashion, pushed me to meet this new body, this new person, and eventually to accept her, simply by teaching me to stand well, as I was, on my own two feet. I didn't dance again, and the pain does

ILLUSTRATION BY AMBER VITTORIA



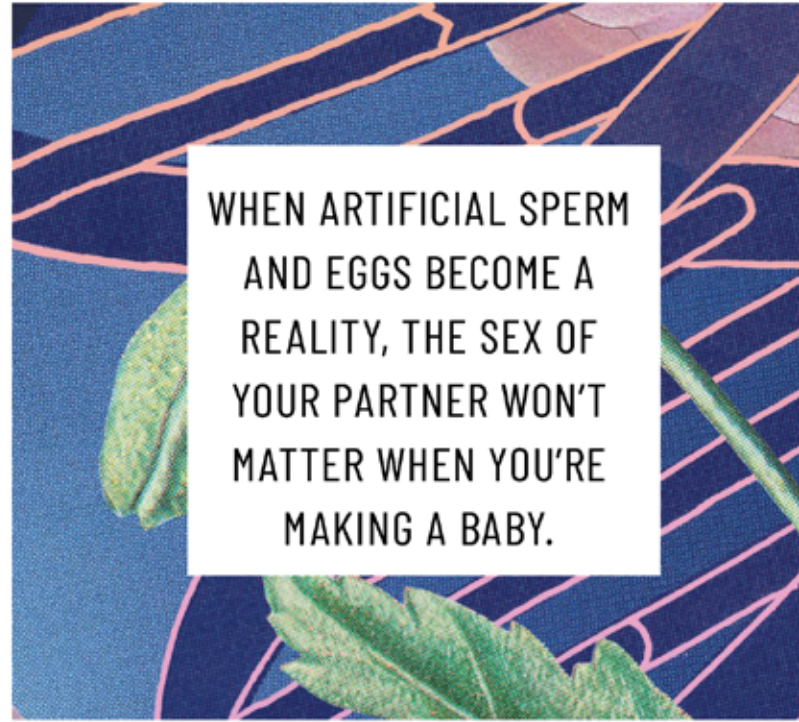
GET READY FOR SAME-SEX REPRODUCTION

BY RACHEL LEHMANN-HAUPT

Renata Moreira's one-year-old daughter is just beginning to talk. She calls Renata "Mommy," her other mother, Lori, Renata's ex-wife and co-parent, "Mama," and the man who donated the sperm that gave her life "Duncle," short for "donor uncle." The couple's sperm donor is Renata's younger brother. "I frankly never contemplated having kids because I didn't have any role models," Moreira begins as she tells her daughter's origin story. But when she met Lori at a bar in New York in 2013, the gay-marriage movement was in full swing. When the couple decided to marry, they saw many of their friends starting families because of the new legal protections that marriage offered LGBTQ families, and they, too, began thinking about their options. After months of research and thinking about the values that were most important to their family, they decided that a genetic connection to their kid was a high priority. "It wasn't that we didn't believe in adoption," says Moreira, who is the executive director of Our Family Coalition, a nonprofit that works to advance equity for LGBTQ families. "But the idea was that we wanted a child that was related to our ancestors and the genetic code that carries."

Moreira is Brazilian, of indigenous and Portuguese ancestry, and Lori is Italian. Given that they both wanted to carry on their genetic heritage, they asked Renata's brother to donate his sperm, to be matched with Lori's eggs. The family's fertility doctor used in-vitro fertilization to conceive an embryo in a dish and implanted it into Moreira's uterus, making her into her daughter's "gestational carrier."

Even as the social stigma around gay parenting lessens — the Williams Institute at UCLA estimates that as many as six million Americans have a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender parent — LGBTQ families that want a biological connection to their children have a lot to think about. A same-sex couple who make a baby must work through an arduous puzzle of personal values, technologies, and intermediary fertility doctors, egg and sperm donors, or surrogates. But that could change dramatically before long. A developing technology known as IVG, short for in-vitro gametogenesis, could make it possible for same-sex couples to conceive a baby out of their own genetic material and no one else's. They'd do this by having cells in their own



bodies turned into sperm or egg cells.

The science of IVG has been underway for the past twenty years. But it really took off with research that would later win a Nobel Prize for a Japanese scientist named Shinya Yamanaka. In 2006, he found a way to turn any cell in the human body, even easy-to-harvest ones like skin and blood cells, into cells known as induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS cells), which can be reprogrammed to become any cell in the body. Until that breakthrough, scientists working in regenerative medicine had to use more limited — and controversial — stem cells derived from frozen human embryos. In 2016, researchers at Kyoto University in Japan announced that they had turned cells from a mouse's tail into iPS cells and then made those into eggs that went on to gestate into pups. There are a lot of steps that still need to be perfected before this process of creating sex cells, also known as gametes, could work in humans. If

it does work, the first application likely would be in reversing infertility: men would have new sperm made and women would have new eggs made from other cells in their bodies. But a more mind-bending trick is also possible: that cells from a man could be turned into egg cells and cells from a woman could be turned into sperm cells. And that would be an even bigger leap in reproductive medicine than in-vitro fertilization. It would alter our concept of family in ways we are only beginning to imagine.

Sex Cells!

There is now a small international group of scientists racing to re-create the mouse formula and reprogram human iPS cells into sperm and egg cells.

One of the key players is Amander Clark, a stem-cell biologist at UCLA. On a Friday afternoon, she walks me through her open lab area and introduces Di Chen, a postdoctoral fellow from China who's working on creating artificial gametes. We enter a small room with a

microscope, a refrigerator incubator, and a biosafety cabinet where students work with iPS cells. Chen invites me to peer down the microscope and shows off a colony of fresh iPS cells.

They look like a large amoeba. Getting cells like these to become viable eggs or sperm requires six major steps, Clark says. All of them have been accomplished in a mouse, but doing it in a human will be no easy feat. (In 2016, scientists reported that they had turned human skin cells into sperm cells, a development that Clark calls "interesting — but no one has repeated it yet.") And no one has yet made an artificial human egg. Clark and other labs are essentially stuck on step three. After the steps in which a cell from the body is turned into an iPS cell, the third step is to coax it into an early precursor of a germ cell. For the work in mice, one Japanese researcher, Katsuhiko Hayashi, combined a precursor cell with cells from embryonic ovaries — ovaries at the very beginning of development — which were taken from a different mouse at day twelve in its gestation. This eventually formed an artificial ovary that produced a cell that underwent sex-specific differentiation (step four) and meiosis (step five) and became a gamete (step six).

Other researchers, Azim Surani at Cambridge and Jacob Hanna at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel, have gotten to step three with both human embryonic stem cells and iPS cells, turning them into precursors that

can give rise to either eggs or sperm. Surani's former student Mitinori Saitou, now at Kyoto University, also accomplished this biological feat.

It's an impressive achievement: they've made something that normally develops around day seventeen of gestation in a human embryo. But the next step, growing these precursor cells into mature eggs and sperm, is "a very, very huge challenge," Surani says. It will require scientists to re-create a process that takes almost a year in natural human development. And in humans they can't take the shortcut used in mice, taking embryonic ovary cells from a different mouse.

At UCLA, Clark refers to the next three steps needed to get to a human artificial gamete as "the maturation bottleneck."

Those amoeba-like iPS cells that Chen showed me are sitting in a dish that he lifts off the microscope and carries to the biosafety cabinet. There he separates the cells into a new dish and adds a liquid with proteins and other ingredients to help the cells grow. He puts the cells into an incubator for one day; then he'll collect the cells again and add more ingredients. After around four days, the cells ideally will have grown into a ball that is around the size of a grain of sand, visible to the naked eye. This ball contains the precursors to a gamete. Clark's lab and other international teams are studying it to understand its properties, with the hope that it will offer clues to getting all the way to step six — an artificial human gamete.

"I do think we're less than ten years away from making research-grade gametes," she says. Commercializing the technology would take longer, and no one can really predict how much so — or what it would possibly cost.

Even then, same-sex reproduction will face one more biological hurdle: scientists would need to somehow make a cell derived from a woman, who has two X chromosomes, into a sperm cell with one X and one Y chromosome, and do the reverse, turning an XY male cell into an XX female egg cell. Whether both steps are feasible has been debated for at least a decade. Ten years ago, the Hinxton Group, an international consortium on stem cells, ethics, and law, predicted that making sperm from female cells would be "difficult, or even impossible." But gene editing and various cellular-engineering technologies might be increasing the likelihood of a work-around. In 2015, two British researchers reported that women could "in theory have offspring together" by injecting genetic material from one partner into an egg from the other. With this method, the children would all be girls, "as there would be no Y chromosomes involved."

Yet another possibility: a single woman might even be able to reproduce by herself in a human version of parthenogenesis, which means "virgin birth." It could be the feminist version of the goddess Athena springing from Zeus's head.

The Genderqueer Nuclear Family.

The question remains whether society will want this technology — and how often LGBTQ families will choose to use it. Current advanced reproductive technologies are already diversifying the ways we reproduce and opening reproduction to groups who previously may not have had access to it. This is expanding the concept of family beyond the traditional Ozzie and Harriet hetero-nuclear family. Many people who are single parents by choice now include their gamete donors as family members. Many LGBTQ families are collaborations of friends and relatives who become egg and sperm donors and help raise the kids.

So it's understandable that social and legal observers are already thinking about the potential consequences of artificial gametes for the shape of families. If the technology means that lesbian couples wouldn't need a sperm donor, and gay male couples wouldn't need a donor egg, it could, among other things, make it "easier for the intended parents to preserve the integrity and privacy of the family unit," Sonia Suter, a law professor at George Washington University, wrote in the *Journal of Law and Biosciences*.

Ironically, however, the technology also could create something rather conventional — a biological nuclear family, albeit one that looks more like Ozzie and Ozzie. "Collaborative reproduction has paved the way for radical new definitions of family, which really helped to lead the movement

FIXING THE OPIOID CRISIS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME

*THE FIRST FEMALE FIRE CHIEF
IN WEST VIRGINIA HAS HAD A
FRONT-ROW SEAT TO THE
PAINKILLER EPIDEMIC.*



respond. This is not the time or place to address bad attitudes or stigmatize our patient, I thought to myself.

I had witnessed thousands of emergencies in my twenty years as a first responder. This one knocked me for a loop. I kept thinking, What would cause a beautiful young woman to shoot up heroin in a bathtub? What happened in her life that led her to this deep, dark place?

Outside, the patient's mother was sitting out on a neighbor's steps. She was crying as family members tried to console her. I introduced myself and told her I was very

sorry for her loss. She thanked me and began telling me about her daughter and her struggle with addiction. I learned she was very smart with a promising future. But after starting with a legal prescription of pain pills, she quickly got hooked and eventually moved onto heroin. I stayed to talk to the family for a while. Like I had observed many times before, it was clear the struggle does not stop with the one suffering from addiction — it affects the whole family.

The police arrived to begin a death investigation, and my firefighters were sitting in the fire truck waiting for me. As I climbed back in the truck, they

informed me that they don't do that "emotional stuff." "Fine," I said. "Because I do."

The drive back to the fire station seemed longer than it should. My mind was processing how quickly a young, promising life could be lost and how families are left devastated.

This call was a turning point for me. I immediately began researching addiction — how it begins and affects the entire family. I also started spending more time with my patients, both in the field and in the emergency room. I asked questions, listened, and treated them with the respect that I would want my loved ones

shown if suffering from a disease. This was and continues to be my true education about substance-use disorder.

In November 2014, Huntington mayor Steve Williams asked me to serve the city on a bigger level by joining his newly formed Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy. I jumped at the opportunity to help facilitate solutions. Not only did we start keeping real-time numbers, but we also started a transparent campaign about the epidemic affecting our city and county. During this time, I met Judge Patricia Keller and Necia Freeman — two strong women who respectfully and kindly change lives, one person at a time.

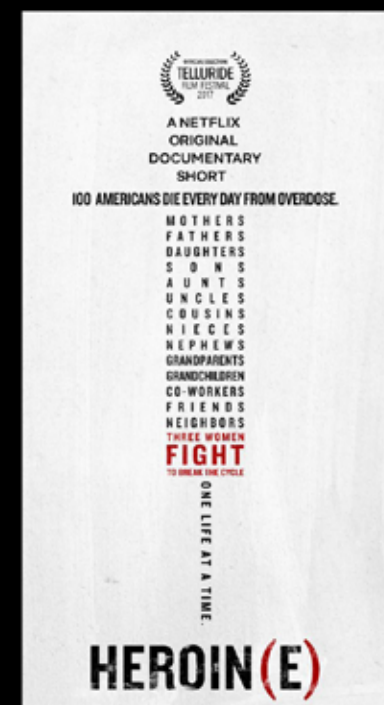


Through Cabell County Drug Court, Judge Keller presides over participants in recovery rehabilitation programs, while Necia helps sex workers struggling with addiction seek treatment through her nonprofit Backpacks & Brown Bag Ministries. The three of us shared a purpose: to help anyone who needs it, no matter how many times it takes. We became good friends instantly.

In the fall of 2015, I was promoted to fire chief of the Huntington Fire Department — I was the first woman to lead a fire department in West Virginia. I continue working with the Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy.

Substance abuse disorder knows no boundaries. Those who suffer from it are good people who can recover. As Judge Keller, Necia, and I have seen day to day, a kind word

and a handshake can change things for a person struggling with addiction. Prejudice against addicts won't end this epidemic. First, we must meet people where they are.



Jan Rader is the fire chief of Huntington, West Virginia. The film **HEROIN(E)**, which is nominated for the Academy Award for Best Documentary Short, captures Chief Rader, Judge Keller, and Necia Freeman's work combating the opioid crisis in Huntington. **HEROIN(E)** is streaming now on Netflix.