

# TRANS SURVIVORS

Zine: with art and writing by

Harley Burns  
Mariam Aduke  
Howl Hazebrook  
Brooklin Wallis  
Lee Arden  
Donna Gary  
Todd Pinch  
Sylvia Kunst  
Seth Anderson-Matz  
Élodie Orlando

Nico  
Julian Flajnik  
Sam Torrington  
gray broderon  
aleksander aleksander  
Jake Ashley  
Ray Bonk  
Lou Hoecker  
Rocky Halpern  
Richie Evans

FORGE is a national trans anti-violence organization supporting trans survivors/communities and providing training to service providers. Trauma-informed. Empowerment-based. Culturally-responsive.



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# TRANS SURVIVORS

Healing in Action



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Cover art:

**Self evaluated by Nico**

“The art I selected is very nostalgic to me, even though I made it recently. it feels the most like home my art has ever felt. It’s a self portrait in many ways, and I find it reflects multiple aspects/concepts I’ve been unpacking while working through being trans and an adult in the world.”

**Seth Anderson-Matz:** Seth Anderson-Matz (he/him) is a queer & trans community minister and public theologian based in Minneapolis, MN. He writes stories, poems, essays, research, sermons, prayers, liturgies, lesson plans, and a hell of a cover letter.

**Sylvia Kunst:** I'm a 24 year old butch-first-woman-second transfemme from central Wisconsin. I'm a factory worker and in my free time I love to work out, read and write poetry, spend time with my lovely polycule and beat up nazis (I wish.) I am the co-founder of a local poetry workshop aimed at supporting queer adults in my area.

**Todd Pinch:** A crafty pal at heart! I'm often found with a crochet hook in hand, books and iced coffee on the side.

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*Content warnings: childhood sexual abuse, self-harm,  
suicide*

fantasy in the world, color and joy are great acts of resistance.

**Ray Bonk:** I am a trans man and art therapist living in the Pacific Northwest. I work with LGBTQ+ teens and young adults, helping them heal from past wounds, discover their authentic self, and develop uninhibited self love and compassion.

**Richie Evans:** Richie Evans (he/they) is a writer, illustrator, designer, and theoretical drag performer currently existing on the unceded land of Tkaronto, ON. Through a combination of undulating, intimate poetry, vibrant doodles, and, generally, any available avenue, his work aims to thread a line through anti-fascism and queer joy, to resistances past & future, across their own, ever-failing body.

**Rocky Halpern:** Rocky Halpern (they/he/she) is a Queens, NY based writer, social worker, clown admirer, and tenderhearted Pisces rising. They often write about trans joy, trans vengeance, D/s dynamics, ghosts, and musical theater. Their writing is featured in A Public Space, Glassworks Journal, Uncharted Magazine, and the forthcoming anthology Absolute Pleasure, to be published by Feminist Press in September 2025. Rocky holds an MFA in creative nonfiction from The New School.

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distributing beautiful, affordable, useful, generous, political, funny, heart-filled books + zines. In addition to “Surprisingly OK: What Healing Trauma Feels Like,” from which the piece in this zine is an excerpt, Lee's other zines include “PALS: The Radical Possibilities of Friendship” and “LIKE THIS: A workbook on sex, desire, boundaries, and logistics.”

**Lou Hoecker:** Lou Hoecker (they/them) is a queer, transmasculine carpenter, artist, poet and lover of the ocean. Born in the south, but predominantly growing up in Maine, Lou recently moved back to the Maine area after living in New Orleans and elsewhere for many years. Their poems tend to explore themes of gender, connectedness of the micro and macro, substance use, mental health, grief and of course the sea. When not covered in sawdust or scribbling lines into notebooks, they can be found in the ocean, with community, tinkering on the fiddle and watching birds.

**Mariam Aduke:** Mariam Aduke (she/they) is a Nigerian Artist, and advocate for inclusivity. Their work explores transformation, survival, and self-reclamation through poetry and crafts.

**Nico:** I'm a trans artist from the Midwest, recently moved to the PNW. My art is a reflection of things I see and feel in the world, processed through framework of the life I've lived so far. I want to see more color and

## About the Issue

When hate impacts us on a community level, we need collective healing. While creating this first issue of the Trans Survivors zine, we hoped to find pieces of art and writing that stood on their own and spoke to each other beyond the individual level.

The pieces we've included, and many of the pieces we did not have space for, approach healing in different ways—from stoking hot the fire of anger to visualizing the landscape of a body in transition, from weapons forged into tools for growth to linocuts of bold protest art. With this zine—hopefully the first of many—we hope to share these expressions of vulnerability, strength, and resilience to support our collective healing.

We're grateful to every person who submitted, whether your piece was accepted or not. Your work is your story, and we hope you continue to share it with the world.

Caleb Weinhardt

Communications Coordinator, FORGE  
Editor

& the FORGE staff

**Howl Hazebrook:** I'm a queer trans man originally from Michigan, who now resides in Milwaukee! Before I had the words and the space to opening express my identity, I have used art to do so. I'm extremely passionate about creating, no matter what kind of work it is!

**Jake Ashley:** I am a 25 year old transmasculine butch living in Chicago. Expressing my gender experience through art is an important part of my transition, sharing it is a pillar of my own gender affirming care.

**Julian Flajnik:** Julian Flajnik is a transgender artist born and raised in Austin, Texas. His work explores themes of what it means to be human, including the combined horrors and joys of having a physical body, often by utilizing color theory. They didn't feel human growing up and still feel that disconnect today: this topic is the focus of their work.

**Sam Torrington:** I am a transmasculine nonbinary person who is a child sex trafficking survivor. I am a PhD candidate in Gender Studies who is determined to finish while working a full-time job. When I'm not writing, I'm working in a garden, relaxing with my partner and cat, or learning something new.

**Lee Arden:** Lee Arden is a white settler in Tiohtià:ke // Montréal, a genderless transsexual, a long-time zine-maker, and the founder of Sheer Spite Press, a small press and zine distro focused on publishing and

documenting the way their mother expands the way they think about parenting, sexuality and purpose, proudly embodying motherhood and butch.

**Élodie Lloyd:** I am an all-round creative and hobbyist with the attention span of a goldfish. In lieu of finding some direction in life and maybe finding a ‘real’ job, I have opted to write fairy stories, play dragon games and make doodles of my imaginary friends. My mother would be so proud.

**gray broderon:** as a queer and trans artist, much of my work is self-reflective, unraveling the processes of becoming, knowing, and the connection to the infinite of our world. inviting radical vulnerability, I try to incorporate anything that feels relevant in the moment, blending past and present, digital and physical, reality and fantasy, to create works that capture the chaos in which we exist, but highlight the hope and beauty that can be found in little insignificant moments.

**Harley Burns:** Harley Burns is a non-binary multidisciplinary artist working in oils, clay, watercolors, and linocuts in Asheville, NC. Their work explores gender identity, trans (in)visibility, interior and exterior spaces, and a more expansive view of self-portraiture.



**Beginning to Bind by Harley Burns**

“Last summer at Penland School of Craft, I participated in a performance that explored the public nature of trans identities. I asked my class to join me in front of the dining hall at lunchtime where I removed my shirt and invited my classmates to bind my chest. By inviting others to engage in my gender expression, I acknowledged the dynamic nature of how I am perceived and asked others to externally affirm who I know myself to be intrinsically. This work illustrates the deeply vulnerable and voyeuristic nature of being visibly trans in public.”

**So I danced!**  
**from Becoming- echoes of an African Demigirl**  
**by Mariam Aduke**

So I danced!

Danced like it was a baptism,  
rhythm of rebirth echoing in my veins.

Each step a surrender,  
a shedding of the skin of the past,  
Maybe I'll be clean?  
Maybe I'll be new?  
Maybe I'll be unbothered?  
wirling, unwrapping the weight of all I carried,  
until I was bare, stripped to soul and bone.

danced through shadows,  
through memories of her hands, heavy and thick,  
danced through the fear I can not name, the fear  
woven into my breath  
and I breathed them out, Cursed them and spun  
them away.

And when I stopped,  
I stood still, a stranger to myself, yet closer than  
ever—

**Contributor bios**

**aleksander aleksander:** aleksander aleksander is seven magpies in a trench coat. They are also writer whose work is featured in *The Ave*, *Gypsophila Zine*, *Citizen Trans\* {Project}*, *We Do Need Permission to Rise* (Beyond the Veil Press 2025), and *Capitalism is a Death Cult* (Sunday Mornings at the River 2025). They migrate between the Salish Sea and the Great Plains but are most at home with their brilliant partner, their glaring of cats, and surrounded by books. You can read more of their work at [aleksanderaleksander.com](http://aleksanderaleksander.com).

**Brooklin Wallis:** Brooklin Wallis is a Kitchener, Ontario based activist and politician. She grew up writing spoken word but stopped after dysphoria and life events put her into survival mode. She now spends her time fighting for housing, queer rights, and running for office in Kitchener.

This is her first piece in 12 years.

**Donna Gary:** Donna Dante Marie Gary Marcus is a nonbinary femme poet, storyteller and Chicagoan. They enjoy writing poems about their newly budding relationship with their mother who also shares a bisexual and queer approach to gender. They enjoy

I recently found out the organizer of a t4t sex party works for the same big gay nonprofit as me. They saw my partner beating me with a heart shaped paddle and smiled sweetly, telling us what a beautiful couple we make.

Are we community?

Are we coworkers?

Are we an HR nightmare ménage à trois?

Is now a good time to mention my partner also works for big gay nonprofit and it's where we fell in love? Is it good for the community, to get fucked? To barely make rent in exchange for the privilege of hearing liberals tell me I'm doing SUCH important work during these trying times?

I get a break from holding space to find there are no spaces left to hold me, nowhere to go where the community isn't also escaping to.

The bagels taste like shit but I eat them anyway. My world crumbles in my hands but I show up with a glue stick. I am nothing if not a resilient masochist.

"This piece is about transformation, healing, and reclaiming oneself after carrying the weight of the past. As a Nigerian demigirl, I often navigate the tension between familiarity and change, between who I was told to be and who I am becoming. 'Becoming' captures that journey, the shedding, the reckoning, and the moment of stillness when you finally recognize yourself."

## Community Outreach by Rocky Halpern

Big gay non profit is rough with me. Breaks my limits hard and soft alike. Apologizes with day-old bagels and wilted cream cheese in the breakroom, left over from a mandatory training about pronouns. They tell us that we'll get through these trying times together, and that now is the time for us to come together as a community.

Is it good for the community, for us to get fucked together, side by side by side? It's a sacred act to witness what the destruction makes of someone just like me. My Domme takes a beat from being a terrorizing pain top to be terrified, to be terrorized by what she loves being taken from her: lover, family, friends, work, 'mones, community, life.

It's a sadistic scene gone too far, the kind that would make anyone safeword. There are no safewords in big gay non profit.

It's all about community and how community is so important. And it's true because we're all we have. And it's exhausting because how long can we keep passing the same \$20 back and forth? It's also confusing, because no one can define what this nebulous community is.



## Transgender Creature by Howl Hazebrook

"This piece explores my identity as a trans man and how I use werewolves as a metaphor for it. As a result of being dehumanized and othered for being queer, I have found comfort in being a creature and lycanthropy. It has become a way for me to reclaim the way I was treated and affirm myself as I healed from my trauma."



I could write a long list of all the things cis men have  
said in the cover of night  
Of all the ways my body has moved that only my bones  
can remember.

But to survive,  
Is to say, enough!

To say yes I am broken, but I am also whole and holy  
Beautiful and monstrous.

Throw off my robe on the beach full of strangers,  
Plunging into icy ocean water.

To survive is to lay down in the middle of the road in  
the pouring rain  
Watch the pelicans dive bomb into bayou waters  
Wipe the silent tears from my lovers face  
“You broke me open” they say.

To survive is to break open.

Find the remnants of hope in the rubble  
Make love with grief  
Take god by the hand  
And when you find that cliff edge of unbearable  
Say thank you, I am  
enough.

## **My Legs are Valleys by Brooklin Wallis**

My legs are valleys. My hairs are its trees.

My moles are boulders and rocks speckling the  
landscape,  
Red spots and ingrowns are old stumps and saplings  
bursting from the ground

My torso an ocean of waves of stretch marks and tides  
of breath

The arms I fear look masculine, forests of hair and skin,  
and lakes and rocky crests of callous

The scabs and bruises, my earth - repairing after fallen  
trees and deforestation, and falling from  
trees, and shaving.  
My scars proof of past reparations. And proof of past  
harms.

My skin, bending and breaking and cracking like the  
dirt and moss that covers the forest floor,  
hiding the root systems and stone of me, underneath

My breasts young mountains, growing like mountains  
do. Slowly peaking out from land and sea,  
making landscape where once was not.

Armpits and ankles small ecosystems of sweat and  
ponds that I keep clean to prevent those  
ecosystems from creating new ones.

My muscles and veins the rivers and aquifers that  
carry water and blood and food and estrogen  
to the land made of nails and hair and height that then  
adapts, as nature always does.

My body a planet of meat and bone, reacting to  
changing climate of hormones and temperature,  
to asteroid impacts and tattoos, to heartbreak and car  
accidents, and to young love and  
hurricanes by doing its best with what it's given.

The symbiotic relationship between me and her is  
paradoxically what *me is*. And you know  
what? I like that I finally get to like myself.

Is to chase the line of white powder into the sunrise  
Stumble into bed as the neighborhood rooster sounds  
the alarm

Warning, the terror will still find you  
Warning, the morning presents you with yourself.

To survive,  
Is to see god in your reflection in porcelain sheen as  
you hug the toilet  
Purge the night from within  
The hands that tugged the hands that wandered

I once broke a mirror, glued shards to canvas,  
Painted a portrait of myself,  
Cut hands out of magazines, tacked it all together  
And said there i am.

Hands grabbing at flesh unrelenting as broken  
reflection stares back.

To survive,  
Is to first laugh in the face of death  
And later let the grief envelop your body  
Become familiar with wandering in pea soup fog,  
The fog horn blaring its mournful tune.

To survive is to fall in love with the deep gray mist.  
Kiss the map of scars on your skin.

**Hydroplane**  
**by Lou Hoecker**

To survive,  
Is to hold god in your hands  
Tenderly cradling  
And say, enough?

To watch the car seconds in front of you  
Spin out, hydroplaning across three lanes of traffic  
Time melting and molding,  
Landing in a muddy ditch  
And say thank you, we're still alive.

Fragile beings in eggshell skin made of flesh and blood,  
bone and sinew.

I tore my intercostal muscles once from too much sex  
and being hugged too hard  
Body jolted skywards toward cracked ceiling drywall

I tore at the darkness, time and time again  
grasping grinning giggling

I stole memories from my friends  
because the alcohol had taken most of mine.

To survive,

**How is life different now, from day to day?**  
**by Lee Arden**

After a decade or so of actively and purposely working to manage and heal from trauma through therapy, research, trial and error, and most importantly, through learning how to build and maintain relationships of trust and care with other people, here are some of the moments that surprised me, when I was able to act or react a different way from what I had been used to.

- I see a friend down the block, walking their dog. In the past I might have gotten anxious about the unexpected encounter, or not wanted to bother them, and just pretended not to see them. Instead, I run over to say hello.
- A friend teases me in a way that I don't like and I ask them to stop.
- It's 10 AM and I've already drunk most of a pot of tea. I notice I'm feeling wired and edgy, so I cut myself off from caffeine for the rest of the day.
- In conversation with a friend, I say something careless and realize a few minutes later that it might have hurt them. Instead of pushing the discomfort down, I stop to acknowledge it, apologize, and see if they want to talk about it.
- When a coworker says something racist, I can manage my discomfort well enough in the moment that I can talk to them about it in a firm, empathetic way.

- Someone from my past gets in touch. Our relationship had been a big mess, and I felt angry and resentful about it for a long time. But it's been long enough that I no longer have any strong feelings about it, so I ask if he'd like to go out for a walk sometime and talk.
- I write an article for work that I'm proud of, but my boss asks for it to be completely reframed. It's annoying, but I make the changes without taking it personally or believing it to reflect on my skill as a writer or worth as a person.
- I am writing this zine and I noticed my legs are braced, tensed hard against the chair. I relax them, or I decide to call it a day.
- It's a long, hot, summer day. I drift from one social engagement to another, hands sticky with ice cream and sunscreen, moving playfully through the city, exploring alleyways and photographing interesting scenes. It's easier to be in situations that are a little too hot or loud or tiring or planned back to back with other things or weren't planned ahead of time at all. I don't need to take quite as much caution with myself absolutely all the time.
- After many years of recurring nightmares where I am screaming, melting down, desperate for help and being politely ignored, the people in my dreams now sometimes come to my assistance, notice me, care for me.



### **Healing the Wound Will Not be Easy by Ray Bonk**

“In therapy, when talking about grief and loss with my clients, I refer to the Tonkins Model of Grief, which suggests that grief doesn't shrink over time, but rather, life grows around it, encompassing new experiences and relationships while still acknowledging the ongoing presence of grief. This is a fact many trans and nonbinary people live with day to day in the United States, especially as the future seems especially bleak. Let us remember to cherish each other and continue to persevere, grow, and experience joy, even if it feels easier to just give up.”

Bountiful Harvest  
by Jake Ashley

sink my hands into the soil.  
dig. pull the weeds.  
roots between my fingers. dig.  
where is it? dig.  
dirt under my nails. dig.  
how do i leave here? dig.  
dirt in my teeth. dig.  
it must be inside of me. dirt fills my pores. what am i? dig.  
dirt fills my stomach. dig.  
twigs cut the inside of my throat. i swallow the earth.  
still.  
only the Earth around me breathes. knots form in my  
follicles.  
seeds, sprouting from my skin.  
reaching for the Dirt.  
roots stretching up to the ground. break the soil. bright.  
photosynthesis.  
Garden of Me. Fruit.  
swell under the sun.  
Bountiful Harvest.  
I am new. I am whole.  
taste the Fruit of my labor.  
it is sweet.

This is an excerpt from my zine *Surprisingly OK: What  
Healing Trauma Feels Like*, available from Sheer Spite  
Press ([sheerspite.ca](http://sheerspite.ca))

**somewhere in this poem i forgive my mother for  
giving me her face and her addictive ass  
personality and a need for odes just to get out of  
my own head**

**by Donna Gary after Nikki Giovanni**

i'm a sinkhole.  
a swollen mouth, you gumball

i'm a jawbreaker  
ruthless and sweet, no mercy for your waste of  
teeth

i'm a car radio on full blast,  
an undiscovered cave of sound. i eat your echo  
for lunch.

i'm the old school sample,  
you sourpuss auto-tune.

you the line we all forgot.  
i'm the bridge, the chorus, the flow.

i'm the foot tapping groove your mama warned  
you bout.  
i am contagious and bone rumbling.

i worship my shadow because i bring night.  
you so jealous, you forgot

“When I made these linocuts in 2022, accompanied by a pamphlet detailing recent anti-trans policies, it was as a sort of ‘hey, pay attention.’

The waves of this specific legislation burgeoning in Western governments felt unfamiliar, and I grappled with a need to navigate it on some sort of larger scale, to make things clear.

Now, all of it is cloyingly familiar. It clogs up every artery of my life, laws & restrictions passing and being repealed faster than I can ever keep track of. That part of this project is gutted now, eternally outdated by a current swirl of fetishistic right-wing fervor.

What I'm left with is the prints, with a feeling of ‘wake the fuck up.’ We have escalated to active combat. We need to take up arms.”





## Hands Off! by Richie Evans

how not to be me.

i know why people get caught up.  
i know where the shook go.  
i know why the beat stops.  
I know where every jam goes.

i was there  
when melody had it's heartbroke  
and rhythm ran it back.  
i remember the unforgivable.

don't even look upon me,  
you eye thirst, you swag thief.  
this vision ain't free.

i am why  
every sound has a cost.  
don't pick up that phone.  
don't you start with me.

i am the sweat after the epiphany  
the crooked promise of the future  
the cavity growing in your mouth like a  
tapeworm.

before i was ripping  
the band aid off your existence,  
i was my mothers ain't shit.

i swallowed her traitor  
and sucked on her skank.

praise her reckless  
or you'd be left bored and docile.

don't even try to visualize her.  
your brain too sucka,  
your heart too chicken,  
your hope too bonkers.

if you're swallowed by me,  
my mama will blackhole you for breakfast. i'm a

record loop cuz she a playa.

you were audaciously trippin  
if you thought you could escape  
this poem without sacrifice.

don't go beggin cuz i ain't on that.  
forgiveness don't make you immune to hurt.

i'm so hurt  
i split you for fun  
and to show mercy.

time works differently for beings who move in  
lightyears and are raised in multiple universes.

**dandelion rebellion**  
**by aleksander aleksander**

they call us weeds but  
look how we grow – resistant, abundant, prolific

they call us weeds but  
we are an ancestor's most fervent prayer  
deep-rooted  
we have always been here

they call us weeds but  
we are a child's greatest wish  
carried by their breath  
we will always be here

for each of us cut down,  
thousands dance freely in the wind  
scattered across cities dirt roads gardens lawns  
we are borderless, timeless, limitless

we are living transformation  
and those who are transformed will transform  
the world

when you bury us, you bury seeds  
that inevitably, impossibly  
bloom in coming spring

She created a new identity for her new self, so as not to sully the fantasy of Sister Miriam, her idealised self. And then she fought. Slowly, painstakingly, she started to think that perhaps she had truly deserved all the things she had been gifted with before. But she also learned that they were no longer going to be handed to her on a silver platter. If she truly wanted them, she would have to fight for them.

So where do I go from here? Perhaps for once I will play in a game in which I haven't accidentally spilled a whole bottle of myself onto a character sheet. My latest character is a demon child that has escaped from a tower sequestered away from the world, now trying to forge an identity for herself other than the life her parents set out for her. She knows that society won't accept her, nor does she accept herself. She chooses to be known by a name that no demon would ever use. She conceals her horns and tries to talk like other people. But perhaps they know. Perhaps they treat her as a demon. But she's never been a human, so how can she be sure? I look forward to playing as this character. She couldn't possibly be me, because we both know that demons aren't real.

But I digress. If anybody ever asks you about my gender, just tell them a wizard did it.

my mama raised me with multiple versions of myself.

i am the ocean, you sippy cup.

i know a truth ain't but a perversion of reality.  
don't try to keep up.



## **Guns to Gardens by Todd Pinch**

The months that followed this revelation were not good to me. Beneath the avalanche of changes that hit me all at once, it would have been easy not to notice the departure of Oengar and her graverobbing companions from my fortnightly routine. As my life spiralled, I desperately searched for a ray of sun to guide me. My next campaign was Dungeons & Dragons, for which I created a paladin. Athletic, pretty and with an absolutely single-minded devotion to her convictions. At the time, Sister Miriam of the Blade was everything that I was not. But she had a secret. She was reliant on a power she could not control, one who could take all of these things away if they so chose to. As she grew in power and lived a life of selfless heroism, I felt my own power grow. My health improved, I became confident and on rare occasions, I saw a face in the mirror that I fancied might someday resemble hers.

But she was living on borrowed time. Eventually, she failed; and her patron finally saw fit to rip away the gifts she had convinced herself she deserved. What she was left with was the withered body of a man, his features tired and spirits broken. Like Oengar before her, Miriam's experience was prescient. Almost as soon as she lost her beauty, confidence and gender euphoria, I followed. While she was wondering if her entire worldview had been a lie, I was wondering why mirrors were suddenly being honest with me again. But of course she pushed on, because that's all we can do.

**A Wizard Did It**  
**A reflection on roleplaying games by**  
**Élodie Lloyd**

As a younger man, I joined an online campaign of Old-School Essentials. To this day I have only seen the face of one of the disembodied voices I played alongside. I chose to play as the wizard Oengar Idrimex. Like all the best wizards, he wore black robes and thought rather highly of himself. Once you looked past his arcane power, however, my character was rather unremarkable; young, seedy and just trying to make tuppence in the treacherous depths of the Barrowmaze. What set him apart from the characters my friends played was his survivability. Exploring the cavernous depths of the earth and facing down hordes of undead instilled in him a healthy fear of death. While the others changed their characters as each old one died in increasingly gruesome ways, I did not. Over time, I became Oengar Idrimex. As far as they knew, I had no other name. But then I noticed something strange. Oengar was not a 'he', but a 'she', according to my dungeoneering companions. 'Should I correct them?' I wondered. 'Have they forgotten?' I mused. 'If I am Oengar, and Oengar is no longer a man, what does that make me?' And that was when I realised that I had been wrong, and they had been correct.

"As an active member of a Presbyterian Church in Southeast Michigan that assists in gun buybacks and destruction, my piece represents that good can come from everything. I forged this trowel using traditional blacksmithing techniques, in the spirit of turning swords into plowshares; guns to garden tools."



**Peach with a mustache  
by Sylvia Kunst**

but she shaves it the very next day  
hair disappearing like amoeba flooded  
by germicide

Oh! But her biceps, THOSE she'll keep, winding  
bulging serpents, as well the fuzz splattered  
all across her tummy and dripping down over  
her crotch, her balls

She's all natural, baby

& with a mop of mullet slicked back cascading  
down her neck, a waterfall or high dive,  
perfect form on a 400 lb  
squat-

& you know she's keeping *it* forever  
a final fuck you to the natural order, that  
fascism of biology, slithering out of each  
iteration, perfected anew  
reptilia in all her glory  
butch bitch.



**(winding) path to healing by gray broderon**



I'm washing off my razor, taking care to clean all of its crevices. I rinse off my brush, gently separating its hairs, clearing it of all the soap. I hang them up to dry. I splash lukewarm water on my face, feeling for spots I missed. I dry myself off. I see my face in the mirror and watch as I rub moisturizer on my cheeks, my forehead, my chin, my neck. Trying, in the best way I know how, to love and take care of myself.

**As In**  
**by Seth Anderson-Matz**

Trans as in how are you holding up?  
Trans as in have you eaten today?  
Trans as in have you had any water?  
Trans as in do you have your documents ready?  
Trans as in did you get your passport?  
Trans as in just checking in.  
Trans as in be safe out there.  
Trans as in text me when you leave.  
Trans as in text me when you get there.  
Trans as in call me if you need me.  
Trans as in help me.  
Trans as in at least we have each other.  
Trans as in we only have each other.  
Trans as in we will never not need each other.  
Trans as in you're my family now.  
Trans as in I'm your family now.  
Trans as in we've been doing this forever.  
Trans as in we've been trying to tell you.  
Trans as in this is nothing new.  
Trans as in I'm still scared.  
Trans as in don't get distracted.  
Trans as in stop staring at me.  
Trans as in I just need to pee.  
Trans as in flesh and blood.  
Trans as in scar tissue and bruised thighs.  
Trans as in my other choice is death.

Trans as in I can't believe I'm still alive.  
Trans as in it hurts to be alive.  
Trans as in I wonder if they are still alive.  
Trans as in I remember the day they died.  
Trans as in please stay.  
Trans as in it's good to see you.  
Trans as in I'm glad you're here.  
Trans as in every day is a risk.  
Trans as in every day is a riot.  
Trans as in everything is connected.  
Trans as in un/real.  
Trans as in in/congruous.  
Trans as in dis/inherited.  
Trans as in praying to my trancestors.  
Trans as in power to the people.  
Trans as in queer.  
Trans as in holy.  
Trans as in fuck you.  
Trans as in fuck you.  
Trans as in fuck you.

I wonder where his razor is now. I wonder if it still feels his touch at night, when its guard is down. I wonder if it can hear his voice. Does it feel fear at approaching footsteps in the junkyard it now calls home?

--

It's hard to remember why I forgot that this happened, how I could forget that this happened. They say the brain forgets to protect you. Who protects me now?

--

I never ended up cutting myself, but I feel the urge constantly. I learned to self-harm in creative ways, but sometimes the simpler method is enticing. I dream of the release, imagining an invisible line being drawn down my arm, around my leg, around my neck. Slashing the places he touched me so I can never be touched again.

--

I remember when my grandfather comforted me after he raped me. He held me in his arms as I dissociated. Tonight, my cat laid on me while I dissociated.

--

Did it remember what was it like to be held against a 7 year old's neck? Did it feel my panic? My surrender? Did it watch while he raped me? Can it tell me if this is real?

--

I went to a gynecologist for a pap smear. I screamed and jumped across the room. She tells me that there are scars inside of my body. Whose body?

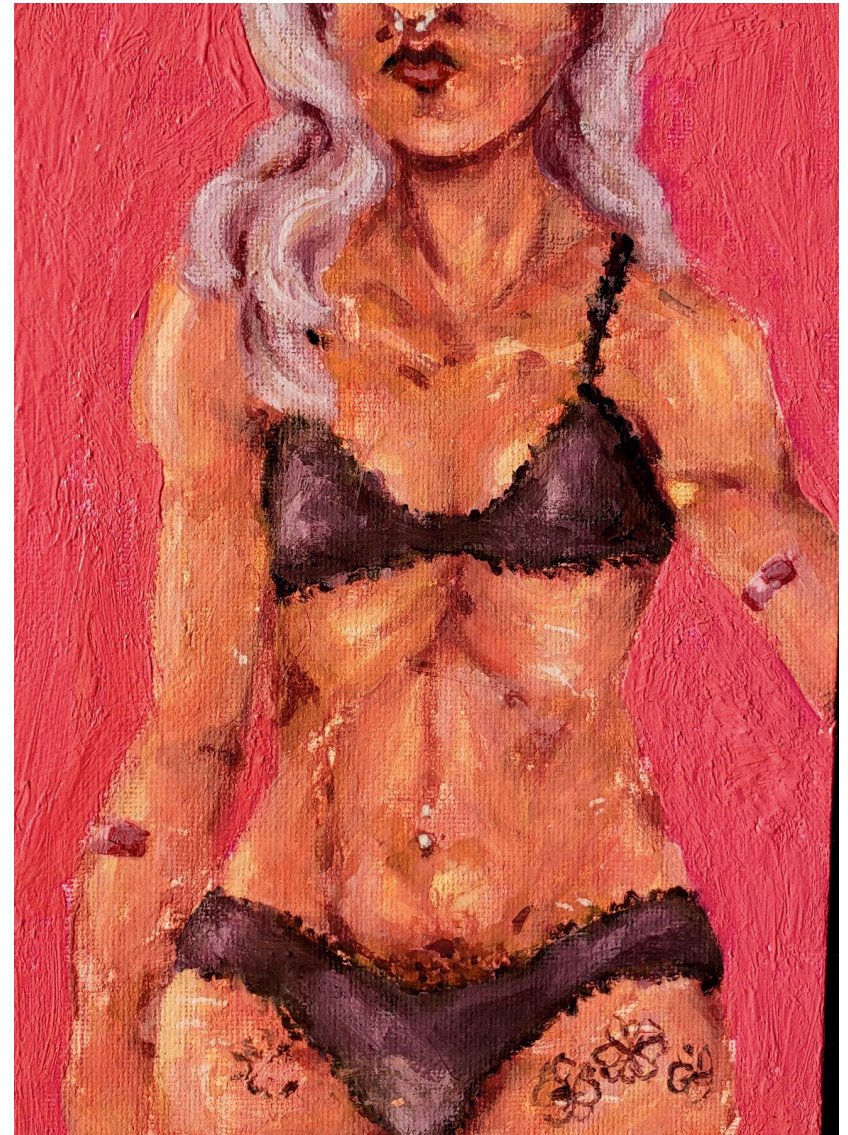
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The razor glides over my cheeks. I'm careful not to nick my face, not to apply too much pressure to the blade. Some days it feels like my body's been through so much that it might break. My face is red and inflamed; it hasn't yet settled into our new hormonal norm. I know I should give it a break and not shave, let us recover and heal, but I can't.

--

I'm not sure there's a therapy for when you remember being raped and trafficked by your grandfather. I don't know if you can fix a body that's been broken. Even when you heal, there's still a scar. I think my body is made of scar tissue.

--



**Mulberry by Julian Flajnik**

**Razors**  
**by Sam Torrington**

My dad never taught me how to shave, but it came naturally to me when I started. I opted for a safety razor, the ones that generations before me used. They're coming back because of hipster millennials, longing for a simpler time that I'm not sure ever existed. But I love the feel of the brush, rubbing it in circles in my palm, whipping up a thick foam that I spread over my cheeks, engulfing the few hairs my body has managed to grow. We fought for these hairs, but I want to get rid of them. My body feels more at home than it has ever before, but it still feels weird having the patchy facial hair of a teenage boy as a 25 year old.

--

Every time I come back home, my parents want my help cleaning the detritus they've accumulated. In their garage, I found the last remnants of my late grandfather's life: a slide rule, a sharpening block, a couple of zippo lighters, a straight-edge razor. My parents were uninterested in this history. I brought them with me, a reminder of his past, of my past. I wondered if they would tell me their story if I stared at them long enough.

--

I never understood why I wanted to cut myself as a child. I never understood where they got those double edged razors that I saw in infographics warning about the dangers of cutting, the signs that your child may be self-harming. They seemed to be from another era, a time before tumblr could diagnose you with ptsd and childhood trauma. I have a whole box of them now.

--

I've never wanted to die more than when I remembered what happened. My body had never forgotten, but I couldn't live with the memories. I was not supposed to remember. I was not supposed to live. I'm not sure I did.

--

Being read as a man still confuses me. Men will say things to me, expecting comradery over their treatment of women, their attitudes towards their children. I feel too soft, but I refuse to let myself harden for the convenience of men, again.

--

I threw out my grandfather's razor when I remembered. I felt sick, thinking about it sitting on my mantle, watching me.