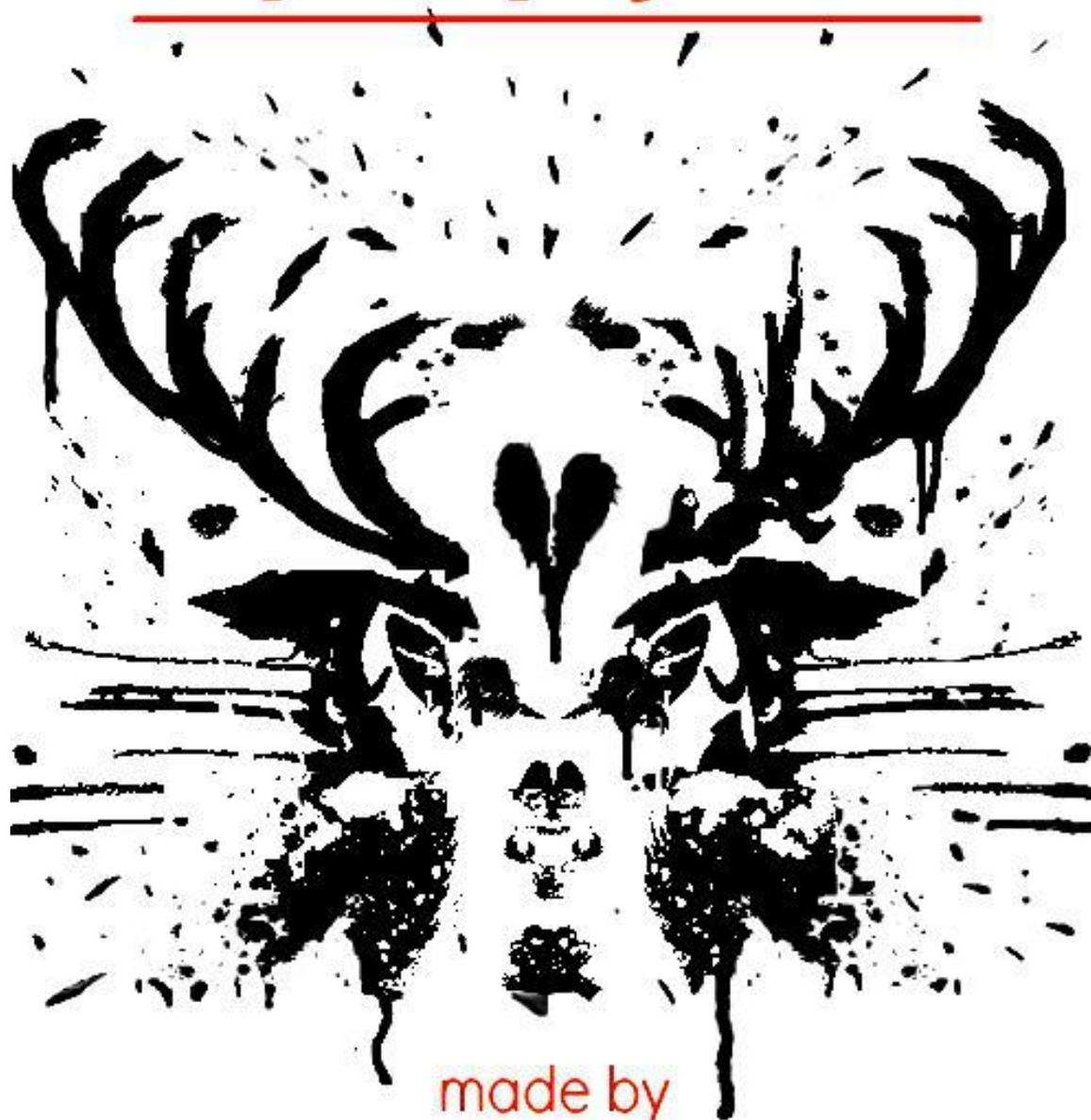

zoophil-psychosis



made by
the chronically ill & mad-proud authors.
made for
the sick who love & defend animals.

What is *zoophil-psychosis*?

noun.

1. A dangerous mental disorder causing a “psychotic love of animals”.
2. A manufactured illness, created by the animal testing industry in 1909, to stigmatize and discredit campaigns opposing vivisection as “crazy” and “sick”.
3. A zine created as a gift for people who are chronically ill & love animals and as a radical resource connecting disability & animal liberation.



About ELK

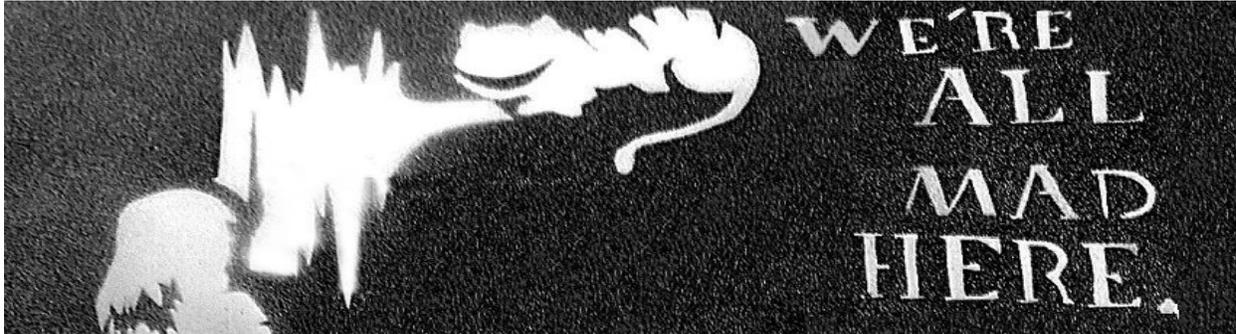
Earthling Liberation Kollektive (ELK) is a radical resource for species-inclusive liberation. We advocate for transformative justice and anti-oppressive politics in response to violence against humyns, animals and the Earth.

www.humanrightsareanimalrights.com

<https://www.facebook.com/earthlingliberationkollektive>

prologue - love among the mad

*"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.
"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."
"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.
"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."*



love is scary.

it is a profound experience, to feel something so intense, growing deep inside you. caring about anyone, anything, with a special passion is both beautiful and terrifying – because the way in which that love is expressed determines if it will liberate us or consume us, if it will make us dangerous to the system or dangerous to ourselves and the ones we care about.

the love that consumes is familiar, institutionalized in media, education, politics and moral laws. it is the love of the colonizer, to steal and poison. it is the love of the capitalist, to objectify and commodify. it is the love of the patriarch, to sexualize and vilify. it is the love of the supremacist, to dominate and fear. it is the love common to our species, to cage and bring to extinction. this is the love of insecurity, distrust, possession, feeding a passive hostility towards whatever cannot be immediately understood, controlled and exploited.

but there is also the love that is wild, forever a challenge to practice with honest intention. it is this kind of love that we experience during those brief instances of hope, fleeting exchanges of vulnerability, within rare glimpses of liberation. it is a love that supersedes the expectations of others, growing fiercer with every attempt to bully, police or smother it.

this love is free, breathing so quietly that it is often forgotten. this love is queer, finding company in every identity and relationship. this love is for the self, recognizing inherent value in every expression. this love is too wild to be defined, to be given words to fully capture its essence.

it is this very nature of wild love that, while defying the symbols we call language, communicates itself across all boundaries and barriers, including species. and this is how we connect with another animal, because it takes love to nurture an ability to relate, to give presence, to watch and listen with intention, to truly empathize. all this is a radical skill, a superpower, a flame in the darkness of night that can guide us like the stars above, to keep us warm as we wait for our own star to rise again. a radical empathy for animals requires a certain quality of vulnerability, and yet in this apparent weakness we are capable of showing our greatest strength, the deepest expressions of who we really are. all this is a language of love, despite any claims to the contrary that suggest this compassion is an illness to be treated, medicated, pathologized, discouraged, feared.

and so, this is who this zine is for, really: for the sick, the chronically ill, the mad, the crazy.
this zine is for the sick struggling to experience this wild love – for those so sick that they begin to forget what it feels like to be loved, and those so sick that now love is one of the few remaining feelings to offer an identity and purpose as we struggle, cope, eat, relapse, bleed, heal, cry, sleep, and resist.

so do not apologize.

do not apologize because your pains, your growth, your sicknesses, your dreams and your fears are all valid and revolutionary.

do not apologize because your words will not be heard anyway, as your voice is not for their ears, but for those truly looking to find and share love.

do not apologize for refusing to conform to the sickness of the world we have been born into, of hopelessness and apathy, of hate and numbness, of a lost communication.

never apologize, for what you feel, however you feel it.

instead, keep loving. keep resisting. keep liberating. for the animals. for others. for ourselves.
in sickness and in health.

we leave this page blank, as a reminder of all those who could not contribute.
those without the words, the time, the spoons or the life to share themselves.
you are loved.

Fredimir

by Wednesday

Another nightmare kicks in – my body is pumping with adrenaline, sweat drips down my face, and distorted images of being abused floods my mind. Even though I am asleep, I can feel my body convulsing and I yearn to wake up but to what? Once I awake, my life would be barely distinguishable from my nightmares and the chronic pain (mental and physical) will return in full force. In the background, the beeps of my alarm blares and I swipe at my phone to stop the noise yet I am not fully awake yet. I turn to my side, I hold the blankets towards my wet face, and then I feel the kneading of my cat into the top of my head.

Subsequently, I swat at my cat in an effort to make him go away, but he continues relentlessly; I can feel his claws dig into me and he starts licking my hair. I toss and turn to keep him off me, but he does not care and does not stop trying to wake me up – I sigh loudly at him and take the blankets off me which makes my cat jump off my bed. I stretch out my arms and carefully get up, my shoulders begin to ache and I gently massage them as I look down at my cat on the floor.

“I am hungry.” He tells me while looking at me with wide yellow eyes.

“I am aware.” I tell him, but he does not budge. He stares at me as his striped ginger tail swishes back and forth against the wooden floor. “Fredimir, I have an alarm for a reason, you know” I continue. I pick up his empty pink food bowl and leave my room while Fredimir follows me into the kitchen. I reach for the dry cat food at the top of the fridge and start pouring it into his bowl; a yawn leaves my mouth and I place the dry cat food back on top of the fridge. Fredimir meows at me hungrily as I walk towards my room and he follows me until I put his bowl down then he devours his food immediately.

“You should take your meds.” He basically orders me.

“Ugh, I’ll get to it later.” I say as I wipe the drool off my mouth. “I’ll take them with my antipsychotic at night, okay?”

Soon enough, he shakes his head at me and then licks his paws which means that I really should take my meds otherwise I will face his frustration later on. I pick up my phone off the bed and put it in my pants’ pocket, ignoring the facebook messages that brighten up my phone’s screen. I head to the bathroom and I open the meds drawer which is currently overflowing with painkillers, muscle ointment, testosterone, antidepressants, and antipsychotics. Looking through them, I take my antidepressant and painkillers first with water – I’ve been on them for years and even though I take them daily usually but, it always feels like a chore.

“Did you take them?” Fredimir says in the distance.

“Yeah, of course I did!” I yell at him.

“You should eat something!” He yells back at me.

I slouch and head to the kitchen; I filled the sink with unwashed dishes prior and I look through the shelves for any sign of clean dishware but to no avail. My shoulders still ache and I feel irritable, but I turn on the tap and begin cleaning the dishes. The smell of soap is unfamiliar to me because I have not washed myself in days and I can almost smell my armpits which causes me to cough violently. Hearing my coughs, Fredimir walks into the kitchen, and he looks up at me while I still have dishes in my hands.

“You okay?” he asks out of concern.

“Mmm.” I quietly reply.

“I am glad you are washing the dishes.” He tells me proudly.

I continue cleaning the dishes until I finish them, then I place two slices of bread in the toaster and I take out a jar of peanut butter out of the fridge. While I wait for the toaster to toast my bread, I towel dry a washed plate and a butter knife, and I place them on the counter. Leaning against the counter, I close my eyes and I think back on my nightmares which causes my whole body to shake fiercely. I feel strangely disconnected to my body which urges me to look at the back of my hands – I put my hands in front of my face and watch them shake and turn. As I observe my hands, Fredimir interrupts me with his meowing, and I shake myself back into reality then look down at him.

“Remember: practice mindfulness.” He reminds me. I nod at him.

I hear the toaster make a sound to signify that the toast is ready and I feel the heat of the toast; I place the two slices of toast on my plate and I finger the crust noticing its change in texture. With the butter knife, I start spreading peanut butter on the toast and I clutch the handle of the knife in my hand, feeling its metallic shape. After I spread the peanut butter on the toast, I touch the peanut butter with my fingers and lick it off my finger – I notice its taste and how it sticks to the roof of my mouth.

“Well?” Fredimir asks while rubbing against my leg. I smile at him.

“Thank you for your reminder.” I tell him sincerely.

I go to sit on the couch with my plate of peanut butter toast on my lap and Fredimir plops next to me; he nudges my arm in order to get food from me but I shake my head at him and begin to eat. With each bite, I feel better about myself and I keep chewing while feeling the peanut butter cover my teeth. The phone in my pants’ pocket begins to vibrate and start ringing so I put down the toast and answer the phone without looking at the number.

“Hello?” I ask tiredly.

“Did I wake you up?” A woman on the phone asks me and I roll my eyes.

“Nah, I am okay. Is this the mental health team?” I lie about being okay, but at least I am trying not to do anything drastic.

“Yes, it is. I wanted to make sure you are alright and that you are coping.” She tells me with genuine concern in her voice.

“I am eating food. I keep getting flashbacks and sometimes I hear voices, but the Seroquel is helping.” I tell her honestly. I hear approval in her voice and I continue, “Is there anything else you are here to tell me?”

“We’ve booked you an appointment with the psychiatrist for next week and I just wanted to check on you.” She informs me.

“That’s great! I am okay, I am just going to continue eating.”

“Good to hear. Bye.” She hangs up.

Fredimir looks up at me and I kiss him on his forehead, which makes him purr and that makes me feel content with life. I pat his head a few more times and then I continue eating but, Fredimir interrupts me, “I am proud of you taking care of yourself.” He tells me.

Bio: Wednesday lives in Brisbane, Australia, and is a vegan that has several chronic invisible illnesses: psychosis, bpd, bipolar disorder, PTSD, Thalassemia, insomnia, and hypersomnia.

hold my ghosts

by Kraek

I tell my friends,
I tell them that I'm trying.
That the ghosts that follow me
Have become too many.
That I'm trying to count them down.

I'm tired, and they weigh on me.
They watch me eat - Grazing and clucking
Ambivalent towards me. Yet there they are.

My ghosts happily greet me in the shower,
As I lather and rinse they wag their tails,
Or hop away from the dripping water.

Some watch from the closet
As I put on the clothes
They made thousands of.
That I paid nothing for,
And they were paid nothing in turn.

They hold my money, they hug my waist.
I walk in and on my ghosts, and so they follow me.
To see, I guess, how they are being used
In their after life.

And as I walk, I see the ghosts of others.
The ones we kill,
The ones we are killing.
Some people don't seem to mind.
Maybe they don't see them
Or maybe they like
The company

But I'm tired, and I'm trying.
I'm trying to count them down.
Because I've lost track
And I can no longer
hold my ghosts

Bio: Kraek is 30 and loves animals. He is blessed with a wonderful partner, a hilarious dog with a human name, and a baby girl whose giant owl eyes fill the world with joy. He writes to pass time, and to drudge up the things that trouble him most. He firmly believes in ghosts, and this piece explores the cost of living, and the hauntings it may cause.

Animal Liberation and the Need for Healing

by Corvus

Content notes: descriptions of animal suffering, activist trauma, mention of abuse and sexual assault.

The intersection of animal liberation and disability has overshadowed almost everything else in my realm of experience. It overshadows my queer and trans identities, my poverty and class struggle, my anti-racist and consent activism, and the mass action black blocs and tiny street marches I've participated in.

Animal liberation opened the gates to my radical worldview, despite its hostile reception in local radical circles. The horrors of animal exploitation, coupled with the massive – often intentional – ignorance of how vast it is, have exacerbated my lifelong chronic health struggles and have caused new health struggles to emerge.

When I saw the call for this zine, I felt an electric rush through my entire body, some mixture of triggered despair and absolute happiness of feeling met by its existence. An anti-authoritarian proponent of animal liberation, I'm torn between worlds: the non-radical white middle-to-upper class cis gender hetero vegans who use racism, classism, and misogyny to promote animal campaigns, and radicals and anarchists willing to put their bodies on the line to combat (some) human oppression, but often dismiss or even ridicule struggles for nonhuman animals. I have undoubtedly made mistakes in trying to bridge these divides. Daily, I watch both sides ignore crucial intersections, knowing in my heart that our treatment of nonhuman animals is deeply connected to our human oppressions.

PTSD ranks among my other physical and mental health conditions. I developed chronic pain and fibromyalgia early in life, no doubt related to a lifelong parade of trauma: PTSD from rape, intimate partner abuse, a life of former drug addiction and everything that entails, and experiences with animal liberation activism. There is a difference between my PTSD from events happening directly to me and my body vs. my PTSD from witnessing damage to the bodies of others. I've cradled animals in my hands who were dying from human cruelty and neglect, and I have held animals in my hands who experienced safety and love through rescue. Unfortunately, the latter has been less frequent than the former.

The decline in my health rendered me incapable of contributing much to anything. I know a huge factor is that I couldn't stop. I used to torture myself. Every time I wanted to quit or take a break I reminded myself that "animals never get a break," so I had to keep going. I watched every undercover video, followed every story. I had no social life. Dealing with bipolar disorder and traumatic disorders since I was a kid shaped how I handled these experiences and how I reacted to them. I worked, organized, sometimes ate, rarely slept. That was my life. Two experiences stick out as precipitating my downfall.

I participated in a rescue that came out of a massive animal hoarding "shelter" situation paired with multi-state corruption. An undercover investigator had gone to several state and private

shelters asking for help to shut this place down. No one would. I was on the steering committee of a small animal rights group (doing the work of a large one) and when we tried to discover why, we found many of these shelters had been sending animals to this hoarding facility. We found falsified veterinary and intake records, “inspections” that showed no problems, evidence of rescues in other states shipping animals to this facility, and we even had the head of a non-local animal rights group come out in support of the place because it was “no kill,” despite an investigator from his own organization warning about the place years earlier. It was even rumored this facility sold animals to laboratories. Finally, we found an in-state organization willing to take the case, but they only sent enough people for the original rescue and understaffed the aftermath. I was working full time at my day job while pulling 12 hour shifts plus 2 hour drives on the weekends while other volunteers worked around the clock trying to help the hundreds of surviving animals. Animals’ eyes were falling out of their heads and sometimes their skin would tear off when you picked them up. Hundreds cried out in pain around me but I could only get to one at a time. Many died in their own filth before I could get to them, no matter how fast I tried to go. The stench alone was unbearable. I would come home and strip down in the basement, terrified I would carry the systemic calicivirus home with me on my clothes and infect my own animals. I would hear and see cats running through the house who weren’t there. I would obsessively check my own rescue animals for signs of the virus. I couldn’t get the smell out of my nostrils. I couldn’t get the memories of their cries out of my mind. All the while a media campaign vilified the evil “animal rights activists” for shutting down a sweet lady’s nice cat “rescue.” Half of the animals survived, miraculous considering the illnesses they suffered. I stopped pulling volunteer shifts when my health wouldn’t allow it any longer and hated myself every day for it. How could I abandon them? I split off from the organization entirely when it became more about prison than about the animals. While I understand the impulse to imprison animal abusers, I couldn’t support using a system profiting off slavery and oppression to “solve” animal slavery and oppression.

Later, I co-founded an anti-authoritarian and anti-animal testing organization, where I ended up doing the vast majority of the work. Not because the others involved were lazy, but because they had a healthier set of boundaries and less of an obsession than I did. I lost sleep doing research and organizing and was barraged with nightmares about animals when I did sleep. Some radicals supported our work as non-single-issue while other radicals shunned and ridiculed mentions of veganism or including nonhuman animals in our fight against oppression. I worked at a local university (doing human research) and used my position to access information about nonhuman animal research being conducted there. I was constantly on edge, living in fear of getting caught. FBI agents and private security surveilled our protests and events right out in the open, in suits with wires hanging out of their ears, behind tinted windows with surveillance equipment on the dashboards. I’d assumed they would try to be sneakier, but I guess not. Researchers at the university were studying pain by putting rats on hot plates, addicting macaques to cocaine and depriving them of water, measuring the progression of untreated HIV/SIV in nonhuman primates, and many other horrific things. I wanted it to stop. I needed it to stop. It didn’t stop.

The organization disbanded when it didn't have the resources to continue, emotionally or financially. The labs still stand tall around the city, but I know we started much-needed conversations. That was something.

Having endured these experiences and more, I can't say I blame people for shying away from this work. It is hard, hard work. It comes with huge cost and small reward. The cost is even greater when you are chronically ill. Every time I see a new undercover video, my thoughts are not only with the animals depicted, but also the investigator(s). Are they ok? What are they doing to take care of themselves? If I had any advice to the new activist with mental health struggles, it would be this: You can't do it all. It's ok not to do it all. It's ok to sleep and eat and take care of yourself. It will never be enough and you will always be enough. And that's ok, because it all matters. Every life you touch and save matters.

When I try to talk about these things, I can often see and feel just how much they are not taken seriously by radical and non-radical communities alike. I believe healing is lacking in both communities. In one, because people fight and fight and fight oppression until they burn out and in the other because they ignore and ignore and ignore it. But it still exists. It will always exist. And while I (try to) know now that I am safe in this moment, and what people have done to me is not who I am, what I have watched and experienced humans doing to other animals has left a vast cavern of pain and loneliness inside me. I do not know how to heal this pain. I do not know how to confront this trauma in a world that can't even acknowledge the massive exploitation and suffering of nonhuman animals, let alone the trauma of witnessing said exploitation.

I have been hyper-sensitive since birth. I have a degree in psychology and worked in the field of research for 5 years and clinical for 3 before my health issues took over and left me completely unable to work. I know full well why people do what they do to animals and why people ignore what happens to them. I know the farm workers beating animals while making minimum wage do so because, in order to endure the exposure to such cruelty, they must reduce the animal to an object of vilification in order to survive the job psychologically and survive financially. I understand scientists who abuse and exploit animals for their research went through several years of school where every objection they may have held against harming animals was met with ridicule and threat of expulsion, while also being told it is a necessary evil to save lives. I understand well why people ignore animal liberation as part of radical thought or a day-to-day thing we must fight for. People have their own struggles and can't imagine adding another thing to care about. People cannot handle the reality that while they are fighting oppression on the surface, underneath there is a vast and horrific level of exploitation which they contribute to directly. When we grow up accepting something for so long, it becomes difficult to change. The Milgram experiments on authoritarianism (where people willingly delivered (perceived) punishing shocks to another participant because the experimenter told them to), the bystander effect (where the more people are around during an incident, the less likely someone is to help the victim), the just-world fallacy (the world is good, so anything bad that happens to someone must be the victim's fault), and so on.

The guilt one must feel and overcome in order to confront animal liberation (or any other systemic oppression perpetuated by one's demographic, like my journey as a white person confronting white supremacy) is overbearing and heavy. It takes a lot of energy to acknowledge what we have done and still do to nonhuman animals and even more energy to understand how that informs how we have harmed and still harm our fellow humans. Many people at the intersections struggle so much with oppression directed against them that they can't bear acknowledging they may also be oppressing someone else. And of course, class-privileged vegan campaigners urge that we vote with our dollars, rather than change our hearts and minds and interactions with nonhuman animals. I say this as a vegan, but also as someone who believes veganism is only one of many steps we must take towards seeing other animals as deserving and equal.

These understandings of human nature frustrate me. They remind me of every single atrocity in the world allowed to happen that we all look back on horrified and think "I would NEVER do a thing like that," when in reality, most people would have. I can only hope that one day, we will look back on the factory farms, fur sheds, laboratories, breeding facilities, and so on and think the same. Even though we would be wrong about our ability to take part in socially accepted atrocities, I hope one day, someone looks back and says, "Remember when people used to torture nonhuman animals under the guise of understanding humans better? Yeah, and they did that to other marginalized groups of humans, too." And of course we'll be learning our lessons forever, because intersectionality means that systemic oppression cannot end if only one facet of our unjust world is addressed. But, I do hope that one day, all of this trauma will mean something more than the pain, frustration, and burnout I feel today.

Bio: Corvus is a queer trans butch from the Middle Atlantic region of the U.S. who writes as a hobby and outlet. Their writings have been featured in *Bound to Struggle 5: Praxis*, *Letters to the Man: Responses to Patriarchy, Sexism, and Misogyny*, *Steel City Revolt!*, and in various other feminist and anarchist publications. They also blog more rarely than they should for [Queer Mental Health](#) and [Industrial Anti-Oppression](#) and still hold a dream of working on a farm sanctuary some day, despite their disabilities.

I would like to thank Adrienne and Noah for their help in proof-reading and editing this piece.

Why Am I So Easy To Replace?

by Milda

This piece questions the view where everything and everyone can be replaced and seen as worthy only if "useful" for someone else's agenda.



Bio: Milda Bandzaitė lives in Lithuania, Germany and the UK, creating behind the alias AIWS. They are a autistic queer vegan artist and their work mostly portrays the cruel and dark world, as well as questions humanity and its imperfections. WWW.AIWS.LT

Norman

by Mary Fantaske

Trigger Warning: Descriptions of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and of extreme animal cruelty.

I lead an extremely busy life, what with my schooling, my part-time job, and my romantic partner at the time, and I liked it that way. Even though the stress from this lifestyle could be quite high at times, indeed I once had a complete emotional breakdown when I was in the middle of studying for an extremely difficult test known as the GRE and my laptop decided it would be a good time to shut down. However, besides such moments, I was content.

Then the fighting between my partner and I started, and I use the term fighting here intentionally because these were not arguments, they were something more sinister and damaging. My partner had a way of always spinning the fights so that I believed they were my fault, a tactic I learned much later is called gaslighting. As a result, I began wondering if there were something wrong with me, as if I were defective, and so even when he began pushing me, and leaving bruises on my forearms from grabbing me, even when I began feeling sick to my stomach, and having extreme vaginal and external pain after penetrative sex, even when my throat was raw and my scalp sore from him holding my head and pushing it violently down during oral sex, to the point where I was gagging and crying, I stayed with him. I stayed because his emotional abuse had succeeded in making me believe that no one but him would put up with me, for after all, I was clearly a disgusting, horrid person that no one else would want to be near me, let alone start an intimate relationship. Finally, one day I realized that this relationship was as toxic as a slow-acting poison, quietly damaging each and every one of my organs, and leisurely, yet deliberately, filling up my mind and soul until I realized I was drowning and only had a very short time in which I could save myself. There was nothing different about this day, and so even now I am unsure as to how I came to this realization but, even if I still did not fully grasp the idea that I had been being seriously abused for years, I still did. He was engaging in his usual behaviour of threatening to leave me if I did not allow him to have intercourse with me, reminding me that I would never find someone else who loved me if I did not oblige, and so I let him push himself into me, feeling my vagina tear as he viciously rammed himself into me, each thrust feeling like a knife. I could feel the hot tears slowly sliding down my cheeks, not so much a product of the physical pain, for tragically I had gotten somewhat used to it, but the result of the poisonous feelings of shame, incredible sadness, and extreme, intense anger. These feelings that I had been unconsciously holding inside for years, only continued to spill out of me once he left and they gave me the courage to end our relationship. Unfortunately, this did not mean that he disappeared from my life; he called and texted constantly, sometimes using other phone numbers to trick me into responding, and worst of all were the threats he made to either hurt me or those important to me, or to commit suicide. Even though I continued to ignore his every attempt to get me to take him back as a romantic partner, I still felt his presence at all times, clinging onto me like sticky burrs. And so, I decided to leave the city for awhile.

I was accepted to work at a nonhumyn animal sanctuary as an intern. This sanctuary was for farmed animals who had been abused; it was a place where they could live out their lives peace, while being looked after at the same time by caregivers who loved them, some who valued them enough to even call them family. At this time, I was vegetarian, and considered myself to be a great lover of animals. However, when I heard that I would have to live a vegan lifestyle while on the sanctuary property, I thought this to be a little extreme, for what cruelty was involved in creating cheese, or scrambled eggs? Surely no one died for these products? And so my mentality at this juncture in my life was that I would eat vegan while working on the sanctuary, and then go right back to consuming my “beloved” cheese once back at home. However, everything changed when I met one of the best friends I had ever had in the entirety of my life; not only did I decide to become a vegan, after learning how he and his brothers, whom were male calves born into the dairy industry and thus being considered “useless”, were simply thrown on a “dead pile” to starve to death, but I also felt healed from the abuse that I too had suffered. This is not to say that I do not have scars on my soul, sometimes resulting in nightmares or panic attacks, but I sincerely believe that had I not met this friend, I would be in truly worse shape than I am now. Another wonderful consequence of my spending time with him, and learning from his incredible wisdom, is that I began to see the commonalities between the terrible treatment of womyn in our society, which, as a result of metaphorical objectification, ranges from daily catcalls and concealed sexism, to the abuse I faced along with rape culture, and the way in which we oppress nonhumyn persons, especially farmed persons, through both metaphorical as well a literal objectification, resulting in such callous treatment ranging from using them as breeding “machines”, to brutally slaughtering them and cutting them up for humyn consumption. This realization would later end up being the springboard from which I started my thesis research. Therefore, it would be fair to say that this dear friend of mine, completely and totally saved, and changed my life, and so ever abundant love, I write the following tribute:

For you, my friend, and my love,

When I first met you I was ignorant both of your beautiful and much of the world around me. I guess when we met I was hoping to find something, but finding you was certainly not what I was suspected.

I first saw you from a distance, although still this was the closest I had ever been to someone like you. Your skin was a beautiful shade of pale orange, like the colour of wheat lit up by sunshine, with white highlights. I was interested in you because of your difference, but, as much as I am ashamed to admit it, did not think that you were someone particularly special.

The first time we spent together was honestly a result of my feeling lonely, dejected, and broken, after having just somewhat escaped from an extremely abusive relationship. For some reason, as I strode up to you, I did not consider the possibility that you might reject me, perhaps because deep down, I must have somehow known that you were kind and virtuous. I walked towards you, feeling the crunchy, yellow blades of dry, summer grass beneath my boots, while a gentle, warm breeze played with my hair. I sat down beside you and followed your gaze, unsure of what you

were looking at, but then thinking that perhaps you were not looking at all, but were instead just feeling the world around you. It was then that I got an inkling of your peaceful nature and wisdom. We sat there for awhile, without you really giving me so much as a glance, until you looked at the apple I had forgotten I brought with me as a snack. As your eyes moved to gaze down at the apple, they connected with mine for just a single moment. And yet, during that moment I saw so much in your gorgeous, deep, marble eyes, and instantly I felt my inner being warm as I felt both comforted, and cared for. It was then that I broke our peaceful, heartening silence to ask if you wished to have some of the apple, and so I used my teeth to break it apart into pieces we could share. After doing so, I took the chance to really concentrate on looking into your amazing eyes, and found my thoughts and emotions gliding into those profound, cavernous, marble ponds, and became lost in that I found I could not separate my energy, my feelings, my being, my soul, from yours. For the first time in years, I felt truly content and calm, as if your eyes had covered me in a blanket, warm from just coming out of the drier; I felt connected with you in a way that I had never felt before with anyone else, and, despite us having just met, I felt genuinely, and purely, loved. You then kissed me lightly on my hand, and then my cheek, touching the tears I had not even realized were there, little beads of joy that were the result of realizing that in those short, yet eternal moments we had just shared, you had healed me.

From then on we spent hours together everyday, sharing both apples and kisses. I found myself falling into your love as if being gently guided into a warm pond, so calm that there were not even ripples to be seen, where I could just contentedly float, and everything was wonderful. You were beautiful, magical, and ethereal; you were a genuine angel.

When it was time for me to leave, I had no idea as to how I was going to bear it. Indeed, it was only with the courage you passed on to me, as you kissed my cheeks and hands with your rough, cat-like tongue to the point of being raw. Only with you telling me with complete certainty that our love went beyond apples, kisses, naps in the warm sunshine, and cuddles. You showed me that I had to share our story, so that everyone I encountered could understand this special, pure love, assembled with happiness, mutual respect, happiness, and intersectional compassion, to show that angels do indeed walk among us, one just has to take the time to truly see them. I kissed the tip of your nose and the top of your forehead, allowing my tears to drip onto your face, to merge into streams around the perfectly heart-shaped mark that I had come to know so dearly. I knew you were right, but my humyn self was still worried about not being physically in your presence, especially since you were older, and had not much time left in that body, and so, as I knelt there in the golden field with you, I bent my head down one last time, pressing my forehead against yours, and then kissed that soft, felt-like heart. I could feel the wetness of my tears on my trembling lips as I whispered, "Thank you for loving me. Thank you for teaching me true compassion, serenity, meditation, oneness, and love. Thank you for healing me. Please do not die before I can come back and be with you once again. I love you".

I never did get to see you again, to feel your giant hug or rough kisses. You died very shortly after I left. It hurt, oh gosh did it ever hurt my heart, but I could still feel your love around me, like the warm, caressing summer breezes we enjoyed together, and as painful as the twinges in my heart and soul were, I was okay. You knew in all your wisdom that I would be. You knew that I needed to meet you, and so you stayed on this earth, in that body, just long enough to heal, and love me, so others may learn and heal from my telling the story of your beauty. Angels who are too good for this world may only remain on it for so long.

It is many years later as I write this, but I still shed tears in your honour. For I will not lie, it hurts. My heart aches every day that I can no longer converse with you in the way we did, that I cannot hug your warm neck, nuzzle into your white heart, and smell your always sweet scent of grass and sunshine, and that I cannot kiss your cool, smooth nose as I lean against your belly. But instead of mourning privately, I listen to your last advice you communicated to me, which was to share our story so that people, ignorant as I was, will learn how special your kind is, and to fight for you, both via peaceful, gentle activism, and by yelling at the top of my lungs for those who are not so lucky as we were, for those who are exploited and tortured, who will never sit in a grass field, and feel the warm sun on their backs, or the sweet taste of apples in their mouths. I will die screaming for your bovine brothers and sisters.

This is why I attend vigils outside slaughterhouses. For they, after having plastic shoved in their ears, after being excruciatingly dehorned, and some, castrated, all without anesthesia. After being crammed into feedlots, where they all end up covered in their own waste, and where the sick receive no treatment and are instead left to suffer. After being shoved onto a filthy truck through the use of electric prods, where they have spent days, no matter the weather, some being so ill that they cannot even stand up, they arrive here. They can smell the blood, and even if they do not know exactly what is about to happen, they know that it is something that they should be scared of, and so they panic, tripping over each other in the over-crowded trucks, some trying to kick their way out. Here, in the short moments we, those who are bearing witness, get to spend with them, we tell them that they matter to us, that they are loved, and offer them apples, that they should get to enjoy as they are free in a field, as my Norman and I used to. The trucks then back up into the slaughterhouse, unloading these innocent, beautiful, nonhumyn persons by once again, using electric prods, to force the terrified animals into a place where they can sense the death in the air. Here they will be hung upside-down, and have their throats cut in a sawing motion; as the blood pours out of them they can see their family experiencing the same agonizing torture, and they kick and scream, fighting for both their lives, and those of their herd-mates. They are then dismembered and skinned, and horrifically, they are sometimes still alive during this process, as their suffering is not worth the slowing down of the kill line. This is because, to the industry and our society, they are mere objects.

Just as I was an object to my old “partner”, to be used as an emotional punching bag and sex toy, these lovely, innocent beings are objects to be used for food. The feelings of womyn, nonhumyn persons, disabled persyns, and others who are marginalized, are of no consequence, because we

are simply considered to be a means to an end. Because we may not stand on two feet (such as nonhuman beings and some of the disabled), and because we may not be thought of as rational thinkers, we are considered to have no intrinsic value, and thus our exploitation, our suffering, our pain, and even our deaths, no matter how agonizing, are considered acceptable. It is this which my amazing, beautiful bovine love, Norman taught me to fight. He showed me that all life is precious, and that when this is realized, we can become one with each other, in the deepest, most profound sense, as our Mother Nature intended.

Bio: Mary. Ethical inclusive vegan. Environmentalist. Feminist. Queer. Cis (she/her pronouns). 20s. Chronic illness warrior.

A love letter to the persecuted awiinsinh miinwaa anishinaabek

by Violet Femme

It's tough being colonized.

I really feel for awiinsinh that are stolen from their homes, put into smaller spaces without their consent and then killed just because of who they are.

I feel like anishnaabek live this story, too.

And when I take a few moments to understand how my life is interconnected with the animals that are intrinsically connected to this land, sometimes I'll cry. Not always, because I've developed an immunity to pain.

Maybe it's a skill to be able to hold my tears back. Every time that I hold my tears back, I feel like the tears are building a wall, ever more high that protects me from the pain of colonization. Avoiding hurt based in hate is a skill. I haven't perfected it yet, though. But then, sometimes, I get lucky. I see stories that inspire the fire deep within my soul.

A few weeks ago, a whole herd of bison reclaimed their ancestral territory in so-called Saskatchewan. It was awesome. There was no one to tell them where to go, there weren't any imaginary boundaries restricting their freedom, it was like they were free.

I wish I was free.

I wish I could live in the ways of my ancestors without any one telling me that it's wrong,
savage,
backwards,
un-civilized.

Because, back when it was just anishnaabek here living with awiinsinh, there wasn't torture, there wasn't mass production, there wasn't a disregard for life. It was just us living in harmony with the world. We were healthy then. We were all free. Now, my people have diabetes, now anishnaabek are dying. All because of who we are, because we are removed from our ways because they say we are

savage,
backwards,
uncivilized.

We got sick because our bodies aren't used to the sugar, the flour, the lard – all the foods they gave us to make us more like them. Now, that my people are decolonizing their food choices, it's happening again. We're being defined as

savage,
backwards,
uncivilized.

My heart hurts because my people have been through so much at the hands of the people who tell us the same things over and over again. We aren't enough of this. Let's be more like them, when being like them makes us sick.

But please, tell me once again, that I need to evolve because of the ways those people treat animals. I think, maybe there's confusion. It isn't anishnaabek that have industrial facilities for the warehousing and mass murder of over medicated animals. Something about this story reminds me of residential school; because it was also those people that stole our mothers and warehoused them in school far from their mothers and tried to kill the Anishnaabe spirit within them.

Remembering this makes me sick. But I think I will feel better to see things the way they used to be; back when we were
savage,
backwards,
uncivilized.

Because as far as i can see, being like them just makes us sick. At least, they aren't being killed for their food choices. We were. In fact, the kanadian government recognized our relationship with awiinsinh and killed them off to the point of extinction. They removed our food sources with a terrible violence. Not only have they tried to kill off awiinsinh, but they are also killing the land and water that awiinsinh miinwaa anishnaabek survive from. And yet, because we hunt, we are the ones who are
savage,
backwards,
uncivilized.

Awiinsinh are sick and so are we. The land and water are poisoned. This makes me sick. But hey, let me be clear. Our connection to awiinsinh isn't subsistence based only. After all, we are anishnaabek. Our communities are rooted in clan systems that emulate the behaviours of awiinsinh so maybe, we too, can be like them. Our systems have nearly been eradicated. Deer clan, Bear clan, Fish clan, Moose clan, Turtle clan, Crane clan, Martin clan. We honour and love creation, not because it is ours but because it is part of the world that we live in. We resist their ways so that we can live our original ways once again. G'zaagin awiinsiinh.

It's time to fall in love again.

The contradiction is probably too much for them to handle but I won't call them names because they can't understand the honour, the ceremony, the interconnection that happens when we harvest awiinsinh so we can be healthy once again. So maybe once again, we can live in balance. So we can be anishnaabek once again.

I'm done talking about being sick now because I'm evolving towards a place where I refuse to allow others to define who I am any longer. All life is sacred. Mino b'maadziwiin kdo g'zhitwaa. The next time they want to stage an action at an industrial facility that murders defenseless

animals, I hope they call me. We can work together to destroy the systems that kill awiinsinh, the land and the water. But if they come to me with colonial criticisms of our ancestral ways of living – i hope they take some real time to understand the ways those people are killing my people, take some time to understand colonial capitalism and how we are not the ones to be blamed for the disconnection between human and awiinsinh.

This is a love letter, mostly to anishnaabek and maybe, me too.

Maybe, I'm letting myself know that despite the ongoing persecution for being who we are, we will continue to be who we are – no matter what they call me, no matter how they judge me .. because I'm sick of being sick. This love letter pads my heart so that our ways of living will stop being villainized because, you see, I love awiinsinh just the same way they do, probably more. But I don't expect them to understand because I wrote this letter to awiinsinh miinwaa anishnaabek because we both face the same persecution, over and over again.

This letter is to remind us that we're going to be okay. The time for sickness is almost over because, like the bison at the beginning of this letter, we are reclaiming our territory, our identities and our lives.

Bio: Violet is a shapeshifting anishnaabe kwe from the shores of the Great Lakes

***anishnaabemowin, of the anishnaabe language, translating to “animal”, but meaning more of a sideways seeing, walking beside us, denoting the importance of animals to balance human life.**

Sleep Ceremonials: A Mad Story

by Vittoria Lion

The animals who bring offerings from the forest have come for me. When I was given a pass to go home, I went to the stockyards instead to avoid confronting my mother and father. I climbed the chain-link fence and complained to the animals that the only vegetarian meal in the hospital was American cheese on white bread. They suggested that they could aid me in escaping discretely in exchange for a favour, which I agreed to, and I slept in the dirt outside the pen that evening. The creatures have kept their promise, and now it's time for me to repay them.

Twelve-thirty in the morning. With only the moon softly blink, I climb the ravine in my stocking feet, groping for branches. Black bulls weave in and out of my nausea, their faces glowing under fluorescent lamps for the festival of the dead, grazing asphodel. Those who survive the parched throats and insomnia of the journey there find no space for sleep upon arrival, and hens are violently woken and hung by their feet shortly after they fade into each other's wintry wings. We tend to associate the lives of animals with bodily suffering, and this appears to make sense, since the display of their bodies with their enclosing barriers desecrated is the primary spectacle in which they are presented to us. Yet, if we ask ourselves who is most discontented with civilization above all, we find that the suffering of animals is primarily the suffering of the psyche.¹ In order for me to be declared sane, I must regard the interiors of my own body with constant suspicion, but the absence of stigmata and other strange blemishes on my skin is deceptive; the nightmares that animals have do not affect their market price. Even sows in farrowing crates have their sleep ceremonials, which go unnoticed by men with shock prods.² Hospitals and slaughterhouses are very particular about regimenting sleep – indeed, one of the first things they take away upon your arrival there is your ability to choose when to go to sleep and when to wake up. The machines don't stop during the night, because otherwise humans and animals alike would forsake sleep to weave blankets from the suffering of the world. On the killing floor, the creatures hide me between their bodies so that I won't be found, the blood of their brothers and sisters soaking through my pyjamas. Their curls are warm and they ask me to stay still, but I can only tell them in vain that closing my eyes is impossible. The flames of a black sun pass over us as we lie down, brushing our arms and legs, and I wonder from what strange part of space it spins, what forms of life it must have given rise to...³

I explain to the animals that others must not recognize me. At six in the morning, around the time the hospital breakfasts are served (always including bacon and eggs, which I refused), the dismemberment begins, and they beg me to heal them. I run to the tannery down the street, salvage what I can from the garbage bin, and sew their pieces together with strands of my hair and wrap their wounds in the wounds of others. We enfold our broken remainders in our arms and make out our reflections in glass eyes. A procession of animals walks into traffic, blocking intersections with limbs missing, lying down on sidewalks and breathing clouds.

Having given up on the ability of modern psychology to purge my malady, I read the work of Julia Kristeva and wrote fairy tales of wandering in a pressurized womb, of an alchemist's oven slowly baking my bones to charcoal in preparation for the final flourish – “A miracle!” / That

knocks me out.”⁴ I imagined pipelines carrying black bile snaking across the countryside. Edna St. Vincent Millay notwithstanding, I learned that the unconscious is the kingdom where nobody ever dies, where all that is needed is to toss a basket into the ocean and dredge up everyone you've known, alive and together.⁵ Millay could describe the death of a cat with an unashamed tenderness in her poem, but the preoriginary clarity dissipated and she felt the need to conclude that animals are “nobody that matters.”⁶ Reduced to the sheer heaviness of their corporeality, all animals are Holbein's dead Christ, and there would perhaps be less shame than we think in burying each other in cardboard boxes with our names spelled out in stickers.⁷ Like many young children, I stressed about whether or not animals went to heaven as a little girl; I think that the more poetic answer might be that they don't. We learn about dying through encounters with the world of animals, and I think that there are moments of clarity during our fits of madness that allow us to imagine their constant bewilderment. Like that grotesque “icon” which understandably never overlooked an altar, they force us to contemplate a world without a happy resurrection, where no one is mysteriously exempt.⁸ Lori Gruen writes that studying the ways in which animals mourn may help us to more easily swallow what will be on the table at the universal burial feast, and I wonder if this is the primary lesson to be learned from their grief.⁹

In spite of my lapsed Catholicism, one of my favourite demonstrations took place inside a church. Our images of animals in various stages of slaughter were uncannily mirrored by the stations of the cross on the pillars. On one side, there were uninteresting deaths to be regarded with indifference, and on the other were illustrations of exceptional suffering and death to be grieved for millennia. Areas of contradiction always have a quality of holiness.¹⁰ Yet the expressions on both sets of faces were the same – the eyes staring, the skin sagging, the mouths drooping open. Having survived mass extinctions and borne the worst burdens of the work of our repression, animals share a list of stations of the cross that vastly outnumbers that of our species, and there is perhaps no one better to share our food with at this time. To be grown up is to sit at the table with all who have died – not only “people”¹¹ – and to also see ourselves as members of that group.¹²

However, Christianity is still a pagan religion at its core. Through reverence for the cycles of living and dying, the cult of the god of madness who Nietzsche drew inspiration from, and gratitude for all that is lush and loving, I can perhaps perceive my alternating euphoria and retreat from the world differently.¹³ The madwomen who came before me were said to be strong enough to uproot trees and tear men from limb to limb so horribly that they no longer appeared human, and I dream that the same magic will allow us to make the factories become silent so that we can start to hear the rustling of leaves within ourselves.

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it's just a diet – a story of how what and who we eat is always personal

by lena wren

Imagine your mind has become your body's biggest predator. That your own brain has morphed into a merciless and direct threat to your own existence. Like being your own prisoner, you are tortured by thoughts that demand you pursue your own self-destruction: every day you are forced to effectuate your own death. Your body hurts in ways few can imagine. You are constantly in a state of utter exhaustion, yet you're performing at levels few even reach when they're healthy. You are breaking down, maintaining a feeble but convincing facade. You're scared, but you can't show it. You can't stop. You are dying in front of everyone who claims to love you, and no one is saying a thing. Their silence is their consent.

—

I remember seeing my ribcage from my front and my back and measuring the size of my arms with my fingers. I remember the intoxicating feeling I had the day I discovered that the tips of my thumb and forefinger could wrap around my bicep and touch.

I remember feeling my heart flutter like a light, about to go out. No one knew.

I remember the pain of my cracked bones. Muscle fatigue, my body like flesh draped on bones and muscles with no free will or feeling.

I remember the flatness, the sensation of being unaffected by anything.

I remember sinking deeper and deeper into this universe, and the deeper I sunk, the less I could recognize the surface.

I remember the feeling of exhaustion, the immense amount of effort it took to move and think and exist.

I remember running for track practice, and then leaving and running some more.

I remember lying because it seemed I had no other choice.

I remember hiding out alone like a frightened fugitive on the run, crying myself to sleep, wondering if I'd wake up and if death was the only form of available relief.

I felt as dead as a living being can be, but in a way, it felt fearless. I could face death and pain; I was impervious to loss and heartbreak. Nothing could touch me; nothing could hurt me more than myself.

—

Seven. The ground was wet and the air thick and heavy. It had rained last night. The kids made their ways to the bus stop on the corner; some were accompanied by a parent, others walked alone. All had backpacks hoisted tightly onto their backs; most had a lunchbox in hand. I could see them lining up in the driveway two doors down. The bus would arrive in about seven minutes, and I wasn't going to be first in line today. I walked briskly, hoping to snag second. It was a Thursday and my class had gym today. I never liked gym; the boys scared me and I wasn't all that good at sports. Sure, I was athletic enough, but I was a "smart kid," in the accelerated group for everything. School wasn't hard. I had friends. I rarely had homework. And all the teachers liked me.

I arrived at the bus stop with five minutes to spare. The sky started to sprinkle again. I looked down to shield my face from the rain.

Earthworms, everywhere. Some of them were a little dry, sticking to the pavement. I thought of the way my skin hurts when it is dry. Some of them were smashed from footsteps and the wheels of cars. And some of them were slowly squirming toward the grass simply because something in them wanted to survive, a drive present even in seemingly insignificant beings. I had five minutes. So I started picking the struggling worms off the road and tossing them into the grass so they had a chance at living.

It rained again that night. I thought about the worms.

Eight, at the toy store. The teddy bears had been carelessly tossed onto a shelf, some upside down, some with their heads hitting the bars, all packed in like sardines. I rearranged them. Now they could all see out, and not a single one was being poked by the metal shelf. It felt like it mattered, even though it didn't.

Thirteen, my yearly physical. "You've gained five pounds since last year," the doctor said. "How do you feel about that?"

"Fine," I said. But the truth was that I had been feeling fine until that moment. The doctor's question implied I was supposed to feel *something*. What was I supposed to feel?

Five pounds. I was thirteen. I was growing...

But five pounds...

I felt shame.

Fourteen. I was picking out a sandwich at the airport, thinking about greyhound racing: humans racing dogs, and when the dogs lose, they get put in little crates to starve and die. I had met a few greyhounds that had been rescued from these conditions, and although they were happy, their bodies were laced with scars from the racetracks and the crates. It always made me feel so sad; no one should ever have to live that way: cold, alone, condemned, enslaved.

Suddenly, I couldn't separate the greyhounds from the thin slabs of flesh we call "cold cuts".

Cold cuts: pieces of bodies mutilated and removed just far enough from their recognizable living state to appease us and allow us to consume without interference from our conscience. No one should have to die for another to live.

I ordered a vegetarian sandwich and silently pledged to myself that I'd never eat meat again.

Fourteen. I looked at my thighs. They looked too big. I felt gross and unworthy. I hated my body.

And then a thought occurred to me: I could do something about the way I looked. I could make myself into what I wanted to be. So I threw away my lunch. It felt sneaky, even dirty. But it felt good. It felt powerful.

—

Fifteen. I had my first period. I cried. They always asked you that question at the doctor, right after they asked about your weight.

“Do you have your period?”

An answer of yes felt like some sort of weird failure. Amenorrhea was a symptom of a good anorexic, one whose body was too thin to produce a period.

I was failing, so I would work harder.

—

Sixteen. I was losing weight. I could see pieces of me disappearing from my body, and it felt safe and comforting. Invisibility was safety, and I was becoming invisible.

—

But the world goes on, and I did too. People laughed. They ignored. They said they were envious of my “self-discipline”. They got angry with a distorted sort of jealousy: “you’re so *thin*.” They threatened me. They screamed at me. They denied my experience, calling everything I said a lie. They told me to “just eat”. They cried, saying it was too hard to watch me die.

And then, they left.

“I can’t be your friend if you continue to act this way.”

I was screaming and no one heard me. I was bleeding out, and no one offered as much as a band-aid. I felt forgotten and misunderstood; my condition wasn’t “real”. I was dying, and it really seemed like no one noticed. If they cared, it seemed like it was only because they wanted it to stop so they didn’t have to see it anymore.

I was disappearing, and it seemed like that’s what people wanted. I had no value apart from my ability to vanish. It hurt.

—

“I can’t watch that,” she said about the video of the cows panicking in terror as they were prodded down the chute leading to a kill-floor.

“I can’t watch you do this to yourself,” she said about my disease, as if it was my choice.

She turned her back and walked away. She “just couldn’t watch.”

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Seventeen. “Ten,” the nurse said. She wrote “10” on her log sheet next to the phrase “beats per minute.” This was the third time they had checked my vitals that day. My arms were bruised from all the 6AM blood draws.

I had told them I didn’t eat meat when I had arrived the week prior. They looked at me suspiciously with disapproval, then said I couldn’t follow a vegetarian diet while on the inpatient

unit. “A lot of anorexics say they’re vegetarian as way to easily cut out a whole category of foods.”

I felt angry. Deciding not to eat meat was the only decision I had ever made about food that had been for a non-disordered reason. I didn’t want to eat animals because to me, a pig was no different than a dog. Both were beings, not products.

And there I was — mind entirely wasted from years of starvation, body inches away from death, spirit entirely broken from the subjugation of my person by anorexia — having one of the only remaining remnants of my true self questioned and discarded by those who had authority over me in that moment.

It was then that I fully understood what it feels like to be stripped of your autonomy. I was forbidden from making decisions about myself. I was locked in a unit; anything I wanted required permission. I was watched 24 hours a day. Someone else controlled what went into my body. If I “misbehaved,” I faced consequences. And I wasn’t allowed to leave until I put whatever they wanted inside me.

—

What it feels like is rape. It is messy and scary and you are not in control.

Violation after violation. No escape. Shame. And the terror, it never ends.

I remember every night, crying myself to sleep silently in fear.

And it didn’t end when I left the hospital.

—

I have an eating disorder: anorexia. And it’s not disordered eating, a few periods of restriction, and occasional feelings of body dissatisfaction. No, it’s a full on, fucked up eating disorder, and it has led me to the edge of death more than a few times. I didn’t choose it; it chose me. And where some have seen extraordinary self-discipline, exceptional self-control, amazing focus and determination, and tremendous success, I have experienced a hell that can never be mitigated by any supposed named benefit it appears to provide.

That free range pig? He’s the same. Sure, his maimed flesh has been labeled free-range (the reality of which is questionable), but that didn’t make the long moment where he waited behind his friends in terror, smelling the smell of death any easier. That didn’t make his bleeding out after being savagely hung by his leg and having his throat slit any less violent.

That cow? Just because she isn’t being raised *only* to die doesn’t make the forceful penetration of her vagina any less barbaric. It doesn’t make the deep distress and depression she feels when her baby is taken away from her any more justified. It doesn’t vindicate a culture who forces her to endure the pain of rape, infanticide, and slavery. Her nipples are squeezed till they’re bleeding and raw. Her baby is killed. She is weak from having to produce so much milk. And she is eventually murdered by a hammer to the head.

Those chicks? The males are ground up alive; the females will be housed in the dark, six to a cage not big enough for one.

And all of them, they will not go easily or peacefully. They will all struggle and fight to survive till the moment their heart stops. They will scream in agony, they will shriek and wail, they will thrash and writhe.

There is no redemption in the creation of such a hell.

—

I can tell you something I know to be true: nothing willingly gives itself over to death; no, we all struggle and fight till our last breath.

My body has survived over twelve years of deadly abuse at the hands of my disease. I have survived only because life — all life — has a tremendous drive to live and will fight to survive against seemingly insurmountable odds.

—

The farmed animal does the same. When she walks onto that kill-floor, she does so not of her own volition, but by brutal force. Along with her family and friends, she fights to survive through failed shots at her head by stun guns, through beating, through hanging, through the violent slitting of her throat, through submersion in boiling tanks of water, through every act of torture she must endure in the name of a diet.

In her darkest hour, there is not a single bit of comfort to be found. She knows she's being killed, but there is nothing she can do. She screams. No one hears her. She wails. No one stops. She mourns. No one is there.

I always knew I was dying, but that part stopped being scary. It was the abandonment, the screaming without being heard, the teetering on the edge of death in terror that formed my hell. It was having my struggle denied, minimized, disregarded, and normalized that hurt. It was having my value and purpose defined by an entity outside myself that terrified me most. "It's just a diet" — an expression used to justify ignorance and apathy toward my condition. "It's just a diet" — a statement used to sanction the deliberate holocaust of billions of innocent beings, each with its own conception of purpose and a good life.

—

It is not easy to care. It hurts, because the human soul wants to relate. We instinctually suffer with each other. By nature, we feel with and for others, and we shut this instinct off in favor of simple bliss. We ignore it because feeling is hard.

But feeling is brave and strong. Love is courageous, because what you love will you will defend. I needed someone to be brave and strong for me when I needed it most; but instead, they turned their backs.

I will not do the same.

Like those worms, my skin is dry. Like those greyhounds, I have starved. Like those pigs, I know abandonment. Like those cows, my suffering has been ignored. Like those chicks, most people "just couldn't watch."

My silence is my consent. My inaction is my moral baseline. If I truly care, I can't turn my back every time it hurts.

Personal choices aren't simply choices when they result in the death of another who didn't want to die. Slavery is slavery, in any form. Torture is wrong, no matter who is the subject. And pain is felt deeply by every sentient being, even if our tears don't look the same.

They don't want to die.

I didn't want to die either.
And we could all use someone who's brave enough to feel our pain.
"It's just a diet."
But the suffering doesn't stop when we close our eyes.

—

Altering my life to reflect what I know to be true and right has been far from easy. As someone with an eating disorder, making any sort of dietary change is immensely triggering, especially when it involves cutting something out of my diet. My body and my brain react harshly, responding with a sort of PTSD from the days I was dying in front of everyone and no one seemed to notice. It triggers a sort of innate internal fear, a hopelessness, anxiety, anger, frustration. It is painful, and it feels unfair.

But if I allowed the triggering nature of eliminating all animal products from my diet to prevent me from doing so, it would be equivalent to adopting the mindset of an abuser.

"I have to eat this because I have an eating disorder."

"I abuse because I was abused."

It is my moral imperative to make sure the cycle stops with me. My own struggles do not justify complacency; rather, they should inform my ability to feel compassion for the unwilling victims to a destructive diet.

I have a choice; they do not.

I have autonomy; they've been stripped of theirs.

The cycle has to stop with me, because I — more than anyone — know that it is far more than "just a diet."

Them
by Joanne Sea

When my dear friend and chosen life partner, Rufus, was diagnosed with two kinds of cancer last spring, I wasn't sure how I would survive without him.

He saved my life.

When he first came to live with us, his ribs protruded abruptly from his sides. There was a **cigarette** burn mark on his back. He was picked up by the pound in rural Ohio. With only days left to live, he was sold to a small animal rescue organization. The day we picked him up, he slept soundly in his crate in the back of the car through several hours of driving.

He saved me.

He was so anxious to be left alone (the opposite of my problem). He loved everyone he met, immediately, and he convinced lifelong **dog-fearers** to pet his head and let him in their houses.

The day Phoebe came to live with us, she didn't know how to walk on a leash so I carried her. She was afraid of everything (**still is**). She didn't know how to play with a ball or jump on a bed or walk up stairs.

She saved my life.

When we went into the laboratory, barks erupted from every direction. Tiny beagles hopping up and down, vying for our attention. She stood quietly, looking out from behind the bars.

"What about this one?"

"Oh, you don't want that one. She has epilepsy. She probably won't get adopted."

She saved me.

She takes a pill twice a day and has regular vet visits. She calmed him down, she provides companionship and she's in charge; he provides protection and scopes out new situations for her.

The first year that seasonal depression hit me really hard was the first year they were both there for it, too. I was unemployed, deep in debt, and the traumatic things I had seen in my activism were finally catching up to me.

They saved my life.

I wouldn't have done it for myself, I'm certain, but I would do it for them. I would take them outside in the morning and lay in the grass with the sun on my face. They would lay with me in bed and watch Netflix movies. When I felt so alone, they would look at me with all the love in their eyes.

They saved me.

We understand each other. They get it - what it's like to have past traumas, what it's like to be anxious. I get it - what it's like to be sick, to take medication, all the doctor visits. We help each other, the way only people who understand pain can. We love each other, the way only people who know hope can.

I thought they saved my life. But no one can save me. It was me, recognizing a part of me in them. They showed me my own strength. Because of them, I felt something again after the emptiness of those cold days. I allowed myself to love them.

I saved my own life.

Bio: Joanne Sea is a temporary expression of the universe through the form of a woman who doesn't like being told what to do, likes long walks on the beach (for real though, as long as dogs are allowed too), and writes a lot more than she talks. You can read more of her writing at unfoldingthemyth.wordpress.com.

Anonymous

I'm an animal rights activist with one of those damn invisible ailments. None of my AR colleagues / friends know the full extent of how I feel, and most aren't aware that I've been 'diagnosed' with fibromyalgia. For the last decade, and more, I've had continual mental and physical exhaustion each day, with feelings of numbness, occasional muscle pain and lop-sided headaches. I don't think that anyone can really relate to how tired one can feel when sleep doesn't help to refresh or renew.

I really don't feel if I started mentioning I have fibromyalgia (come on, is it really a thing?!) that my fellow activists would 'get it'. After all, I'm the keener who attends everything and is always 'out there' and 'up there' supporting/chanting/writing/posting. I'm also quite proud of the fairly high profile actions I've managed while my health has been 'compromised'. It's actually quite amazing what you can accomplish when not feeling 100%.

I really hope no one has spotted the chronic tiredness lurking behind my authentically cheery smile. When I'm at AR events I do feel energized, and my troubles do recede when I think of what the animals endure. I'll rarely cancel - having a headache feels like a valid excuse, but saying you're too tired? Everyone's tired and stressed, coping with their lives and knowing about animal cruelty.

I'm certain that I don't want new vegans to somehow think my ills are being caused by my vegan lifestyle, and I also don't want to feel as though I'm complaining, so I just continue to fight daily for the animals; attending all the demos I can, helping organize with others, undertaking physical labour at farm sanctuaries, doing online activism and fostering domestic animals.

I'm the one who proudly tells the public when doing outreach how good veganism is - for the planet, the animals and of course their health... and I'm not lying. Thank goodness I know many healthy vegans, people with eyes shining bright, who are endurance athletes, physical trainers and those who cope also with tough mainstream jobs.

I used to have a good 'day' job too. But then the fatigue and the headaches became too much and I gave that up. Luckily I have a partner who still earns, so I didn't have to apply for welfare. I'm now asked if I'm a full time activist - and in a way I am - to the best of my abilities. Full time for me though, means nothing is really doable in the mornings, and whatever I am able to do, I may be dragging myself there and sometimes enduring rather than efficiently undertaking whatever shift/activity I'm committed to.

On a brighter note - I live in a nice home, surrounded by furry companions, and my partner helps tremendously. I can walk and take transit. We can afford to go to the movies and can still plan for occasional vacations. My social life has definitely suffered though. I'm able to find the energy and drive for activism, but sitting/standing/dancing and 'just' socializing - hmmm, not so sure.

Will I stop fighting for animal rights? No. So what keeps me going? Animals don't have a voice, and really deserve our help - in any way we can offer. They endure so much suffering in so many

ways. Meeting them face to face certainly fires up my activism. Bearing witness with 'The Save Movement' has been life changing for me - seeing farm animals arrive at slaughterhouses, and looking them in the eyes really has hardened my resolve.

Finally, knowing so many amazing compassionate and kind AR activists and wanting to be there to support them really does help me to keep on working for animal's rights. That's my little gem of advice here - if you're struggling with a chronic illness, I'd suggest trying to find support from your activist community. You don't need to confide all/any of your woes if you don't want to. Having positive people around you lets you share and take prided in the small victories - for example one person taking a leaflet or accepting your advice and wanting to learn about veganism. Also, look and see what the bigger organizations are doing - much progress is being made for animals and the internet is really helping spread awareness. Keeping up with the positive developments for animals could be just enough to keep you going too.

Patron Saint of Animals

Zappix Art's piece incorporates elements of old paintings of saints, coupled with animals to create a sort of current era patron saint of animals and also shows personal self harm scars and autistic sensory fascinations of textures such as wool (on an alive sheep of course!) ^-^



Bio: Zappix Art lives in North Brisbane, QLD Australia. They are a gender fluid, 20 year old, mentally ill, autistic cool cat artist with a passion for animals and art.

ZOOPHIL-PSYCHOSIS

my friends

by Connor

broken, braced
sullen-faced
bed-ridden again

it is not the being sick
that bothers me
so much as the
whispered
stigma

and if I ever do find a means
to hack it
in the rat race

to monetize my suffering

i will remember
who was there
when there were
none:

the cats
and the distant
coyotes –

Bio: Connor is a male-gendered artist and cannabis, disability rights and mental health activist from NJ, US, and someone who has been organizing with the Icarus Project in NYC since the Fall of 2014.

On Being an (In)Activist:
A self-reflection essay on activism, chronic illness, and ableism
by Nyxx

I was born into the animal liberation movement.

When most children were donning towel-capes & pretending to be superheroes, I was joining my mother at anti-vivisection demonstrations at the University of Washington. I felt like a real-life superhero for the animals - an unstoppable force of compassionate justice. Every stranger I spoke with and flyer I handed out felt like we were one step closer to freeing my non-human friends from a lifetime of torturous captivity.

I was born into a chronically-ill body.

When most children would come to school with a cold, I would be in bed with pneumonia. Bronchitis, ear & sinus infections, sprained ankles, torn tendons; I spent a lot of time in that bed. Depression and anxiety seeped into my being before I even hit my double-digits. By the time I entered adulthood, I had been diagnosed with Fibromyalgia, Celiac Disease, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD, Dysthymia, Dyspraxia, and Anxiety/Panic Disorder.

I am an activist.

At least, on my good days when my joints don't feel like they're filled with gravel, my mind isn't racing while trying to process layers upon layers of information, I'm not throwing up from severe pain & dizziness, and I'm not having a complete meltdown because I am in complete sensory overload. When you're a walking grab-bag of illnesses and disorders, you never know when you'll catch a break from the multitude of symptoms that plague your every step. When I do participate, I require more recovery time than most. All too often, I fear committing to attending protests, demonstrations, fundraisers, and meetings. It worries me that I may take on a role of importance at any particular event, only to awaken with a massive flare-up of symptoms and have to inform someone that I cannot fulfill my expected duties.

Nobody talks about ableism in activist spaces.

Few people ever have to consider it. That is how privilege works. We as activists express a desire to uphold anti-oppressionist values, yet there are moments in which I feel like I'm a complete disappointment and slowly becoming less valuable to the movement. There are days when my head is too heavy to lift from my pillow and I am paralyzed by anxious thoughts of not being "good enough" for these animals I hold so dear to my heart. Sometimes, they make me want to quit- to throw in my activist towel and accept a life without it.

But I am still an activist.

Even with this differently-abled mind and body, activism means not giving up in the face of adversity. It means staring down insurmountable obstacles and tackling them head-on. We challenge tyrannic corporations when most passively accept the horrendous atrocities they commit every single day. We raise our voices when others are silent. We lock ourselves to the weapons of our enemies when others walk away. We disrupt the unethical status quo while most seek to inoffensively maintain it.

Uplift and support your chronically-ill comrades.

Don't shame us for our unexpected sick days, or our inability to shoulder the same load as you. Remember that we are fighting more than animal exploitation and corporate greed; we are also in an unending battle with ourselves.

Bio: Nyxx is a chronically-ill activist in Portland, OR, and they are currently affiliated with No New Animal Lab, Northwest Animal Rights Network, Portland Animal Liberation, and the Student Animal Liberation Coalition of Portland State University.

No Love without Justice

By Clementine Morrigan

My resonance with non-human animals has always been rooted in a shared desire not to experience capture, terror, violence. My vegetarianism started at the age of six when I understood what meat was and where it came from. I have never eaten meat again. As the years went on I began to understand the expansiveness of cruelty toward animals in so many of the industries we take part in. I started cutting out more and more things, first gelatin, then rennet, and so on. Today I'm a vegan. But I don't believe that my dietary practices are the most ethically superior or that they make me morally pure. I write this as a white settler currently living on occupied Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Anishinabek land. I recognize that I am complicit in many violences simply by being here, and many more by having this computer to type on. I see veganism as an act of solidarity with non-human animals, but I take issue with many of the mainstream vegan movements tactics and strategies. I do not believe that killing for food is inherently wrong, but I do believe that capture and torture are.

As a child who was experiencing sexual abuse I resonated deeply with the helplessness and terror of caged animals. As a disabled person living with the legacy of violence in my body and mind, I continue to feel that resonance. It's not that I 'love' animals. I want justice for them, just as I want justice for all people, plants, ecosystems, weather systems, and for this planet. My traumatized body is here as an act of resistance and defiance to violent and oppressive systems. I am committed to continuous learning, continuous work and continuous care in seeking justice.

Bio: Clementine Morrigan is a queer femme traumatized sober-addict witch, writer and artist.

They are a white settler living on colonized land known as Toronto, Turtle Island.

Clementine's work spans genres and mediums, including essays, poetry, creative non-fiction, zines, illustration, short film, self-portraiture and sculpture. More of their work can be found at clementinemorrigan.com.

feed me

by ravin maad

feed me,
give me yourself,
i need it now,
share some please.

i starve,
give me your hope,
before it is too late,
give me more.

i hunger,
for the color,
for the meaning,
i can't stop now.

i am you,
who are you,
if not me?
we are fed.

Temple Grandin Sees a Psychoanalyst

By Tori Ofelia

When Temple Grandin was younger, perhaps around the same time she had contemplated becoming a vegetarian, and she still believed that her dreams had meaning (enough to bother writing them down, at least), she recorded the following one morning: "...October 25, 1971. Swift was a six-story building. Only the first floor of this building was a slaughterhouse, and when I found a secret elevator, it transported me to the upper floors. These upper levels consisted of beautiful museums and libraries that contained much of the world's culture."¹

At night, she had been alone with the dead, plummeting deeper and deeper into the water that they swam in, the water from which she had ingested microorganisms and poison that danced on the walls of her head. Whether she sensed it or not, I cannot know, but they were holding her down so that she could not breathe and reminding her that the assembly line to the spiritual flowering of our being is paved by Tyson Foods, Cargill, and meat-packing institutions of many other kinds.

The doctor who taught compliance for a living was suddenly confronted by something that she had no language for. Earlier, she had looked in the phone book, hoping to find the number of someone capable of providing explanations for her odd nighttime predicament. Within the space of a few weeks, after a brief conversation, she entered the office of a psychoanalyst with a thickly-bristled tail and very large ears, who suggested that she take a therapeutic soak in the dip vat of the John Wayne Red River feed yard to humanely drown her fears (after all, a cold bath was the recommended treatment for some maladies of the psyche not long ago).² She found this to be most convenient, as she had access to the facility, and she signed the consent forms in a hurry to leave. The doctor criticized her for this, doubting that she had the patience to come in for an hour for five days each week, but she replied that she had perfected the pace of the kill line and that there would be no time for subterranean travels with the current demands of her job. When evening began to fall after a long day, she stripped and submerged herself, allowing each breath of accumulated silt to weigh her down. She was used to putting her body in place of the bodies of animals, but the one instant in their lives that she could not replace at all was death.³ However, unknown to her, chemical organophosphates settled in her lungs and caused fur to sprout in the convolutions of her brain, producing, among other effects, "vivid and wild dreams."⁴ Since she claims that she was born without an unconscious, her victims gave her one as a gift.⁵

Freud had described a similar house to Ludwig Binswanger in a letter many years before this incident occurred.⁶ The lowest level of his house, the basement, contained horrors that his guests unwittingly dined and conversed on top of, enjoying symphonies, sculptures, and oil paintings.⁷ The upper floors of both houses have beautiful music coming from them, but they are still slaughterhouses at the end of the day. A difference, however, is that Grandin's unconscious is represented as a factory in her dreams; could there not be a better example of Deleuze and Guattari's view of the psyche as a "machinic assemblage"?⁸ The mind has often been represented as a "house" or a "theatre," and I have visited my own house in dreams before.⁹ My house was built from sugared petals in decay. At first, nothing appeared particularly strange about that house other than the emptiness of its rooms, which reminded me of bones with no

marrow. The drawers appeared dusty and unused; all that I found in them was a knot of hair from an indeterminable species and a charred rib belonging to a small animal. Then the insulation of the house, the part that was hidden within the walls, enveloped me like multiple arms. I saw that it was made from human limbs and the carcasses of animals, and it leaked from a hole in the ceiling as a fluid. Crossing the threshold of that house marked my third descent into melancholia.

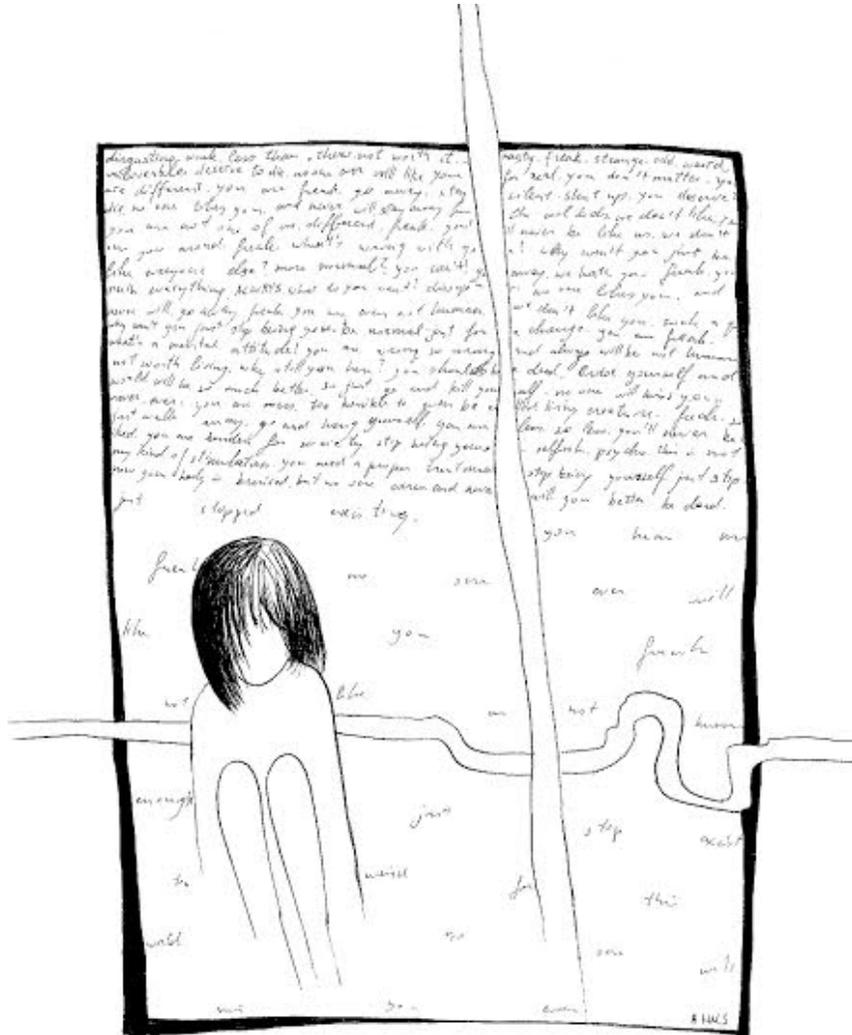
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- 2 Grandin, "Stairway to Heaven," 198.
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Nemesis
by Milda

This piece talks about the struggle being seen as lesser than everyone else in today's world and how the hate from the outside world turns into self-hate.



Bio: Milda Bandzaitė lives in Lithuania, Germany and the UK, creating behind the alias AIWS. They are a autistic queer vegan artist and their work mostly portrays the cruel and dark world, as well as questions humanity and its imperfections. WWW.AIWS.LT

ECTs shocking origins

by Mike Hyde

CN: Animal abuse and psychiatric assault

Many people are unaware of the fact that shock treatment, now known as Electroconvulsive Therapy or ECT is still common within the psychiatric system. Dr. Peter Breggin estimates that a couple hundred thousand Americans a year are subjected to this procedure.¹ Unfortunately exact numbers and statistics for other countries could not be found.

Even lesser known is ECTs origins. Invented in fascist Italy in 1938 by Psychiatrists Ugo Cerletti and Lucio Bini, their inspiration for it came from observing hogs being rendered docile when shocked with a cattle prod on their way to slaughter.^{1,2} This process has changed over time and is now known as electrical stunning and involves the application of two electrodes to pass an electrical current through the animal's brain rendering them unconscious³. The "Humane" Slaughter Association recommends at least 200 volts be used.⁴ Similarly modern ECT involves the application of two electrodes, usually to both sides of the person's head¹ which passes 100 to 200 volts of electricity through the brain.² This causes a major convulsion, seizure, coma, and a flat lining of brainwaves.¹

ECT was first tested on dogs, with one group ending up so badly brain damaged the inventors were obliged to discontinue.² From there it was tested on a homeless man against his will, who during the procedure shrieked "not another, it will kill me" and one of the inventors later confessed that at the time he thought "this ought to be abolished"²

As a product of the eugenics era, it's not surprising that Nazi doctors also employed it on concentration camp inmates.² What might surprise people is it's use in combination with LSD and the power of suggestion in attempts to brainwash people at the Allen Memorial Institute in Montreal in the 50s and 60s. ECT was the first stage and was meant to wipe the mind which it did and continues to do today, with memory loss being one of the most common side effects.² Sometimes completely erasing memories of events and occasions as well as skills learned before the procedure.

ECT is also used as an implicit threat to make people comply as demonstrated in the testimony of psychiatric inmates.² Within those testimonies there is even "a sense of being led to slaughter" according to Dr. Burstow and a survivor reports that "I felt like an animal"² which makes sense given it's origins and the fact that electrical stunning is still common in slaughterhouses today.

On top of all this ECT is not effective. Studies have shown it works no better than a placebo except when it is being administered and even then it is only marginally better.²

If you are also outraged that this procedure not only continues but is actually on the rise in some parts of the world I urge you to get informed and involved. Most groups working on the issue of psychiatric abuse actively oppose ECT.

For annual demos on ECT: ectjustice.com/protest.php

To find or start a group in your area: mindfreedom.org/member-folder/as and theicarusproject.net/content/groups

For more information on ECT: ectresources.org and madinamerica.com/category/ect

For more information on anti-psychiatry, animal liberation, and their connections: anpanl.blogspot.ca

1. Simple Truth 10: Electroshock is Brain Trauma - Dr. Peter Breggin, available on youtube.
2. Psychiatry and the Business of Madness by Bonnie Burstow
3. aussieabattoirs.com/facts/stunning-killing
4. hsa.org.uk/downloads/publications/electricalstunningdownload.pdf

Bio: Mike Hyde lives in Ontario Canada, and is a psychiatrized person who was labelled/diagnosed by the system at a young age, so he has a lot of experience navigating that system.

He's anti-psychiatry and believes that making our world less distressing, developing non-hierarchical and decentralized alternatives, practicing mutual aid and interdependency, and not being judgmental towards those who experience things differently from what society considers "normal" would be much better than continuing to allow psychiatry to have a monopoly on "care".

He's a vegan and in the past has organized with the Grassroots Ontario Animal Liberation Network, Kitchener Ontario Animal Liberation Alliance, and the Canadian Animal Liberation Movement. He has mostly anarchist leanings and works on many other issues as well with a focus on poverty, pro-feminism, queer struggles, and environmentalism.

Can't you hear them?

by a. beeswax

*"And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane
by those who could not hear the music."*

"Do you hear them now?" He asked again.

She didn't respond.

With face buried in hands, she remained still, slumped in the chair. Her skin felt dry and her body trembled slightly from the cold air that seemed to seep into every room of the institution.

Taking a deep breath to steady herself, she paused and listened.

The dull hum of the lights above her persisted, and she heard too the soft scribbling of pen against paper. The pain in her head continued to ache, so that she felt the slow repetition of her heart beat pulsing blood through ears and forehead.

Slowly, with exaggerated movements, she swayed her head in her hands back and forth, answering the question.

More scribbling.

"Now tell me what you see," he continued, sliding his hand across the bare surface of the steel bolted table between them both.

Her eyes dilated as she tried to refocus her attention, peering out from behind her hands that still covered her face. Squinting against the fluorescent lighting that soaked the small room, her eyes roamed about the papers before her, studying the messy blots of black ink that covered the papers.

Then she saw it. Amongst the random smears and puddles, she saw a small pair of black eyes staring up at her. She saw too then the long, slender antlers perched atop their head, gracefully crowning the creature before her.

"An animal..." She answered with hesitation.

The pen began to scribble again.

"What do you see?" She asked, as she looked up to meet his steady gaze, her voice dry and cracking in her sore throat.

"Do not mind what I see – I am not sick," he answered, turning his eyes back down to his notes. "Now, how long has it been since you've eaten an animal?"

The thought of eating brought back her attention to the pangs of hunger that stabbed at her insides, gnawing away in her stomach with each meal here that she could not eat – that she would not eat.

How long have I been here? She wondered, staring off lost in thought, before noticing again the single window across the room.

"Many years now," she answered absently, watching the sunlight sparkle on the wall as it poured through the window glass.

"And how long have you felt depressed about life?"

"I am not depressed," she said sharply.

"My professional opinion would disagree," he said, raising his voice.

"I am not depressed – I am mourning the animals."

"Your symptoms of prolonged stress and negativity, caused by past experiences of trauma, have led you to embrace a series of delusions about society. Your mistaken belief that animals are suffering enables these delusions. To put it simply, you are mentally sick with excessive empathy to animals."

"But they are suffering. I heard them."

"I have been conducting experiments upon animals for over twenty years – and never have I heard them communicate a feeling as complex as 'suffering'."

"Maybe that is because you aren't listening to them when –"

"I am eager to study your illness more," he interrupted. "I wish to understand better what has caused someone of such a typical background and upbringing to suddenly fixate on the lives of animals. You must understand that this over-concern, this excessive sensitivity, is a nuisance. Why do you wish to share the pain of an animal?"

"I can't help it ... I cannot ... I cannot not feel it."

More scribbling.

"Would you say that you hate human beings?"

She began to respond but held back her words, choosing instead to push back her chair and, in slippers, shuffle over to the window. Feeling the warmth of the Sun against her pale skin, she leaned against the glass to look outside.

"Unless you can convince me otherwise, I am inclined to diagnose your behaviour as some unique form of hysterical neurosis. It seems to have been ruining your own life for many years, but because it has more recently begun spreading delusions to others..."

He continued to keep talking aloud, even as she slowly stopped listening, turning her attention outwards, to life outside this room, beyond this institution. Her eyes, sore from crying, roamed the view from the window. She must have been on a third or fourth floor, she thought staring down, watching as different people rushed past, oblivious to her. Late for work and for appointments, she imagined. A large maple tree stood nearby, silently towering above as the people flowed by it, oblivious to its presence too.

"... continued disregard of bodily safety, coupled with insistent denial in your own culpability in exaggerating this illness while spreading it ..."

Why was he still talking?

“... decided you remain a significant security risk to the public order and economic freedom of the pork industry...”

Why am I here?

“... and so it is my responsibility to certify you into our facility for a minimum of ninety days, at which point you will receive another examination to assess whether you are ready to stand trial for your crimes. Do you understand?”

She took a labored swallow, fighting again the scratching dryness in her throat. She opened her mouth to take a breath, but felt her body begin to shake as tears – more tears – ran down her face. She sobbed without shame, however, unable to hold down her feelings of frustration and fear that she experienced in this place. She felt so isolated from everyone she knew. She felt so anxious now about the pigs.

Then she heard it.

The singing of voices.

Her eyes looked about before finding a small nest, perched atop of the maple tree branch closest to the window. Shaded from the sunlight, sat a family of birds chirping, singing together in a circle, facing outwards.

Beautiful!, she thought, studying their small beaks, their soft colorful feathers, and slender throats that produced such a pleasant harmony.

Her cries turned into a cry of surprise, laughter.

“Do you hear that?” she asked.

“Hm? I don’t hear anything,” he said, rising from the table and moving to leave the room.

“Can’t you hear them?” she said again, smiling in the warm sunlight.