Unfair Maiden Vol 3

THE HOMECOMING ISSUE



WESELY SUEKER

Cover art by Lottie Jay

UNFAIR MAIDEN

3

FEATURING
- Dream homes
- Treasured items
- Commend strip bullshit & more!

HOME-COMING

TWENTY TWO ZINES

WESLEY SUEKER

WINTER 2021



To anyone who thought this was going to be about school dance antics, I apologize! It's actually about homecoming in the more pretentious sense of the word—finding a place where I belong, making a home I want to live in, that sort of thing. (...Actually, I'll share my homecoming dance story too. When else am I going to have an excuse?)

The catalyst for this zine was when we decided to move within a month and were scrambling to find an apartment. If you've read the UM Summoning Issue, you might remember that a church moved in beneath us and blasted music for hours at night (seriously it was like 90 decibels in our apartment). We'd talked to them directly, we'd begged the landlord to do something about it (or at least respond to our messages), and when I found out it had been giving my partner panic attacks then the only choice left was to break lease and move.

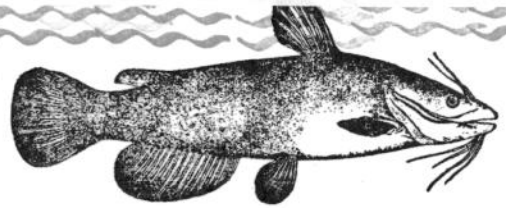
The move was probably the worst two weeks of my life. In fact, check out this diary entry from October 15th:

OCT 15 2021 ● FRIDAY

We're moving after probably the worst two weeks of my life. I've had constant nausea and random attacks of anxiety where my face flushes and feels numb.

Even before this move, where I live has always had the biggest affect on my mood out of anything else. I puke when I'm apart from home for 24 hours (really, it's awful). I'm a loner, I'm a nester, I need to like where I am! My home is my heart!

I AM A FISH!



I NEED WATER!

AFOREMENTIONED HOMECOMING STORY

I went to my first "real" school (as opposed to "alternative" schools I'd gone to before) in 10th grade. The first person I met was a guy named Anthony in 1st period English. He was nice enough and invited me to his birthday party that Saturday.

At the party, he asked me to go to the homecoming dance with him. I figured it must be coming up really soon, like at the beginning of the school year, so I thought "why not."

Turns out it wasn't until mid-October! This guy was trying to lock me down when he barely knew me. I should've known it was because no one else in the school would ever want to spend more than two hours with him.



Anthony was a huge baby the entire time at the dance. I said "hi" to someone in the friend group I hadn't met yet, Anthony pisses in the corner about how I'm supposed to be there with only him. I want to dance instead of sitting at the back of the cafeteria (presumably to make out next to the other horny teens), he fakes a stomach-ache and says I "have" to stay with him. I want to find our friends so we can all hang out together, by the time I'm back he's called his mom to pick him up and I have to hitch home. What a fucking chud.

He just got worse over time when he dated a friend of mine and abused her by saying no one else would date her because she was fat, forced her to do his homework and convinced her to drop out of the play because he didn't get cast. I dodged a bullet... wish I could say the same for her.

Visions of the Wandering Eye

All of these visions spawned when I grew up, places that I felt most safe or most myself. So part of their appeal is just coincidence–I wouldn't have a soft spot for Taos if I hadn't gone there on a school art trip. But now these places have made a home in my brain, and my brain wishes to make a home in them.

And then they keep fucking crushing me! For years I had held on to a dream of living in the Olympic Peninsula. My partner and I looked at many possible towns and cities to live in. On paper, none seemed so bad. But when we visited, even I could see through my starry-eyed dreamscape to the cold reality that, when faced with everyday life, it wasn't going to work. (You have no idea how devastated I was. I cried for the 13 hour drive down the coast).

Each time I am reminded why my dreamland won't be what I think, I move to another in my head that's just as imaginary as the last. It could be a grass-is-greener thing, but I don't think that's true. Each place is an archetype of something I desperately need.

Many of these are stereotyped. All are idealized in the way only dreams can be. Watch in amazement at a desperate exploration–the search for an outside that knows who you are when you can't find it on the inside.

PUNK CITY

BURROWING

defenses, safety, hidden, protection, nesting. a place easy to carve. not encroached upon because few find it worth the effort to steal.

A basement apartment in the once-industrial part of some nameless smallish city, in a neighborhood populated with punk houses, artists and queers. The street white suburbanites won't go down at night because there's people sitting on their stoops and homeless people collecting cans.

The stairs outside go straight down to my front door. My apartment is in a mostly-sunken basement so the windows are high up on thick brick-and- concrete walls, painted many colors over decades so the texture has been smoothed but it's still there. The walls are thick and well-insulated, we never have to worry about noise (ours or theirs).

The furniture is all hand-me-down or rescued from the street. End tables and footrests made from the milk crates left in the alley. Flyers and friends' art all over the walls. The carpet is an ugly color but it means stains aren't a big deal. There are cushions and soft things everywhere, and the boxy TV is set up with old game consoles and pirated shows. The furniture and art and all doesn't go together by default but after a while you're so accustomed to seeing it together that it makes sense this way.

We dye each other's hair in the kitchen sink and sit on the concrete ledge of the retaining wall watching the cat pretend to hunt something on the crunchy brown lawn. The door is always open on Saturday for friends to come by, and you know the only people who will show up are those with no pretentions. We throw spare couch cushions on the floor for people to sleep on. We make zines and play punk music and leave It's Always Sunny playing on the TV and when everyone else is asleep we slip in Disney VHS tapes from our childhood and talk about everyone we ever knew.

Scott Pilgrim (Plumtree)

Hot Night Crash (Sahara Hotnights);

PLAYLIST: Up on the Roof (Dear Nora);

I Want More (Bangs);

Ich brauch' keine Wohnung (The TCHIK);

Morrissey Must Die (The Meatmen);

Trans Day of Revenge (G.L.O.S.S.)

Sabotage (Beastie Boys);

seclusion

A little wood cottage in a tiny town on the outskirts of the Olympic National Forest, waking to a gray and misty morning that lasts until sunset. The house is a short drive to hiking points that lead to little-known rainforest trails, secret paths to the beach where people have left sticks and shells and feathers tied to branches to mark the way. I track time by the skunk cabbages and salmon.

My house has a wood burning stove for the winter and doesn't need anything for the cool summers. There's driftwood and rocks, shells and crab husks set on windowsills. There are bookshelves and art supplies in every room, but generally there is no reason to fill the space and so it remains open. The space is small not out of necessity or expense but because the surrounding forest feels as much like home as the rooms do. You can always hear echoes of the rain outside, even when it's stopped raining.

I recognize everyone in the town and they recognize me, and there is a tacit acceptance of me as "colorful". I offer tarot readings at my house, but if you catch me on a hike or at the beach I'll pull a deck from my bag and do it for free. Besides that I live without many attachments, occasionally filling my social meter by volunteering with the arts festival or working part-time during tourist season to help out. I make art and soup and coffee and I'm happy knowing there's little else I have to do.

running away, forging my own path tinged with some sadness from the knowledge that it would change how I exist. [redacted] a place where I can be sad without the anxiety or embarrassment that comes with it.

PLAYLIST: Lullaby (The Cure); Lost in the Supermarket (The Clash); Selectionist (They Might Be Giants); Life in a Northern Town (Dream Academy); I Shot JFK (Black Velvet Flag); Daydream in Blue (I MONSTER); Heart of Glass (Blondie); You & Me (Tally Hall); Crazy Sunshine (The Pillows);

RAIN FOR REST

NEON EXPRESSION

TAOS

fullness in an empty place

creativity, an inherent toughness,

where living in the environment is such a triumph that everything else is beautifully meaningless

It's hot enough that there's no worrying about sweat or body hair or smooth skin, because everyone that exists in a place like this knows there's no point to it. I am embodying the tank girl riot grrrl punk chik boy in a khaki cargo vest.

My house is a pueblo-style building. Everything is bright and colorful without reservation, bright blues and greens and pinks and yellow murals featuring lizards and cacti painted indiscriminately on doors and walls.

The place inherently fosters creativity because you have to be creative to live in a desert. When even the layers of sandstone rocks surrounding you are bursting with saturated color, when the smallest hint of rain triggers an explosion of flowers and greenery, when the entire earth is creating its own art, how can you not create your art in a place like this?

Grey Matter
(Oingo Boingo)

Direct Action Briefing
(999)

The Wrong Girl
(The Inactivists)

Ecstasy
(Rusted Root)

Sheep Go To Heaven
(Cake)

Underground
(Men at Work)

Everybody's Talking
(Harry Nillson)

The heat can be uncomfortable, but something about it forces you to adapt, and the life you create around it is more in line with your environment. I don't feel pressure to be productive at three pm when it's a hundred degrees out. Instead I lie on the cool tile floor and let the old box fan wick sweat from my head. I sit outside in the shade of the house and soak my feet in a bucket of cold water. Sometimes I take my car to the middle of the desert and lie topless in an inflatable kiddie pool until the sun sets, listening to the crackle of an old portable radio and drawing ugly on a tattered notebook with a stolen sharpie.

MASS TOWN

Stability

PLAYLIST: Time Stand Still (Rush);
Dreaming (Blondie);
Wet (Dazey and the Scouts);
Mr. Telephone Man (New Edition);
At the End, On the Stairs (Thee Oh Sees);
Life's What You Make It (Talk Talk);
The Kids are Alright (The Who);
Lonely Rolling Star (Katamari Damacy)

where i can build something beautiful
a place i can rely on when i can't rely on myself

The house has outlasted all its inhabitants, the town has outlasted all its communities, the clovers always come back to dot the lawns after the snow has melted and the last resident tried to eradicate them with herbicide. Grandma's blankets come out of the basement in the winter, and her fan from the 70s that's outlasted any air conditioner comes in the summer.

I grow vegetables in the yard, and I've been there long enough to know the soil like a daughter. Every year I hoke about getting a sheep to help me with the weeds and a duck to help me with the slugs. I take my zines to the local café and leave them in their little free library, the one with the boats painted on it, and I bring a batch with me to the same festivals I went to last year. The history museum needs a volunteer this year.

There's a sense of value in our work, a trust that whatever you put in will fortify, not topple the Jenga tower that ambition usually feels like. Living in this house and this town is like seasoning a cast iron skillet, something that only gets better with use and wear and time.

I'm down the street from a big old house that belonged to a famous old writer I never read, but I can still admire the hand-carved trim as I walk by.

ALL MY FUCKING LANDLORDS REFUSE TO LET ME PUT NAILS IN THE WALL BECAUSE "I CAN USE COMMAND STRIPS."



HERE'S WHY COMMAND STRIPS ARE CAPITALIST TRASH.

COMMAND STRIPS DON'T FUCKING WORK

If you get one that doesn't stick, your hanging object will fall and BREAK! If you get one that does stick, it RIPS OFF a piece of the wall when you're taking it down! (Yes, even when you're pulling the strip DOWN and not OUT, because you know how to read the fucking instructions!)

Any complaints are placed on the user for doing something wrong (usually NOT BUYING ENOUGH OF THEM), but there are thousands of reports of their failure even when instructions are followed TO THE LETTER! When your first response to someone pointing out a flaw in a product is "you're doing it wrong" YOU ARE TRUSTING THE CORPORATIONS' MARKETING PROPAGANDA MORE THAN ACTUAL PEOPLE.

COMMAND STRIPS ARE FUCKING WASTEFUL

These velcro abominations are made from PLASTIC AND GLUE! They CANNOT be recycled and they are ONE-USE ONLY by design! Nails can be remade into zine staples! WHAT GOOD HAS A USED UP COMMAND STRIP EVER DONE?

COMMAND STRIPS ARE FUCKING EXPENSIVE

These pieces of shit are $10 MINIMUM FOR 8 PAIRS. That's $1.25 PER PICTURE! And that's assuming it only takes one to hang it up when apparently you're DOING IT WRONG if you use less than four fucking strips per picture! You can get a pack of 200 nails for five bucks! You can get heavy-duty double-sided mounting tape for 10 cents an inch! It'd be cheaper to REPAINT THE FUCKING WALL than keep buying these fucking strips!

COMMAND STRIPS GIVE FUCKING LANDLORDS MORE POWER

Before Command Strips it would be reasonable to expect a few nail or tack holes in the wall from your tenants! Now they can force you to use these things or lose your security deposit for ruining their wall with NEAR-INVISIBLE HOLES! Better hope they come off clean or you'll lose it anyway when it rips off a piece of their PRECIOUS BEIGE PAINT!

How much money have Command Shits extracted from renters being forced to use them if they don't want to live in a gray box?

NAILS ARE RELIABLE
NAILS SUPPORT MORE WEIGHT
NAILS CAN BE REUSED
NAILS CAN BE RECYCLED
NAILS CAN BE MOVED
NAILS ARE CHEAP
NAILS ARE ACCESSIBLE

THE FIRST THING I DO WHEN I OWN MY OWN PLACE IS POUND NAILS INTO EVERY FUCKING WALL IN PROTEST

FUCK COMMAND STRIPS

THE THINGS ABOUT OUR APARTMENT THAT WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO COMPLAIN ABOUT BECAUSE AT LEAST WE HAVE A PLACE AND IT'S PROBABLY CONSIDERED A 'NICE APARTMENT' BUT HEY THESE THINGS ARE STILL PRETTY ANNOYING:

The flapper valve on our toilet gets stuck a lot because at some point the float ball was replaced with one that was too big, so often the toilet will get stuck in the flush cycle and keep draining and refilling the water in the bowl, so we have to shake the handle so the valve will settle back into place

The only light in the bedroom is the overhead light which doesn't give enough light for me to read in bed because the book is in shadow, and there's no place for a lamp and we're not allowed to screw anything into the wall so I have to use a clip-on book light which is obnoxious and too heavy for safe use with zines

The dishwasher is FUCKING LOUD it's the loudest goddamn thing I've ever heard and you can't hear anything else while it's going

The washing machines cost $3.50 for a load and it only takes quarters and there's no quarter machine and apparently we're in a quarter shortage or something right now so you can't get any more than $10 of quarters from the bank at a time, and there's a bunch of fucking signs from management that say "do not overload the dryer" like dude if you didn't charge $1.75 per dry cycle when I can't get any fucking quarters then maybe I wouldn't

There are like. Straight-up huge holes in the building's hallway walls with exposed pipes and shit. Our apartment is right next to the back door so we don't usually pass them but that is not safe.

There's a bunch of double light switches that literally don't do anything, like a bunch of the rooms have switches to nothing and I'm always afraid it's gonna turn on an outlet that'll electrocute me or something

The ceiling/floors are so incredibly thin that it feels like you're stomping through the goddamn building and we can hear shit from the third floor

The apartment has matte paint in every room because apparently that's a "luxe finish" that they can use as an excuse to try and charge more rent, even in the bathroom and kitchen which means that the moisture from the shower is fucking up the paint and they're gonna have to repaint it when we move, not to mention that it makes things really hard to clean, seriously just use a semigloss in the bathroom and kitchen what is wrong with these people

They tried to raise the rent by $100 a month for the next rent cycle fuck that especially considering the place was empty for like 3 months before we moved in and we wouldn't have even taken it if we weren't desperate for our previous landlords to do their fucking job

When our oven broke it took them FIVE WEEKS to fix it which is like 10% of the duration of our lease

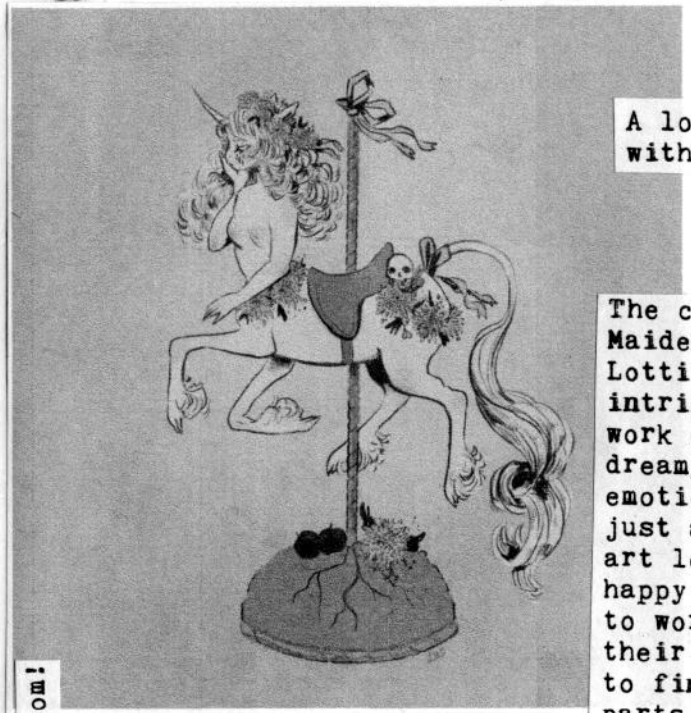
The heating doesn't work in the apartment which frankly we probably can't complain about because we haven't asked them to fix it because it uses gas which we pay for but space heaters use electricity which we're supposed to pay for but we don't and nobody's said anything but like in principle an apartment should have working heat

The way the apartment is laid out there is nowhere convenient for me to put my bike. And there are two doors to the apartment which is entirely unnecessary and just takes up space so we've basically just blocked one of them with my bike and some furniture that wouldn't fit anywhere else

This isn't unique to this apartment by any means but it would be nice to have just like a little side yard or backyard or something where we could let our dog pee without having to take him all the way to the park, also could people put their trash in the fucking trash cans cause the dog manages to find trash to eat every single time we go outside

I'm so sick of renting, spending all this money that goes nowhere. People will fucking say "at least you don't have to deal with maintenance" like I would way rather hire a community handyman I can schedule with and get to know than have to contact a landlord and hope they'll actually fix something and get no word on when or if someone is actually coming over

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: LOTTIE

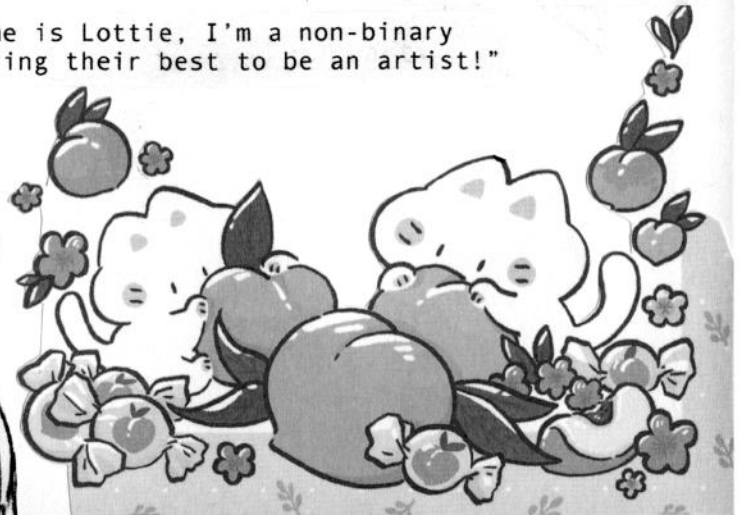


A lovely interview with a lovely person!

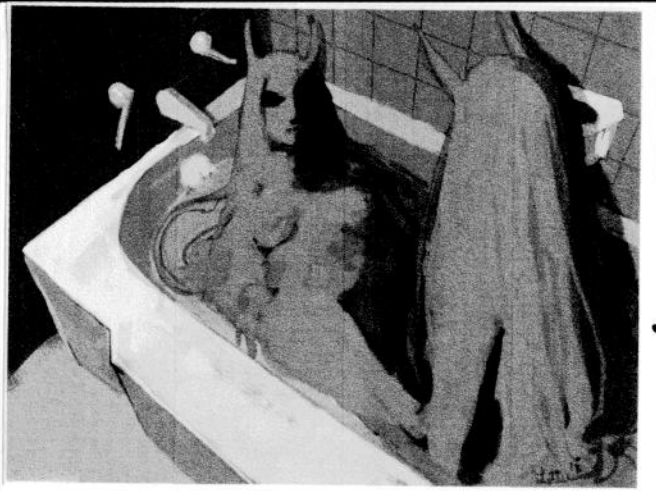
The cover for Unfair Maiden #3 was drawn by Lottie. They have such intricate and amazing work expressing such dreamy and delicate emotions. And they're just as sweet as their art looks! I am so happy to have been able to work with them, and their art inspires me to find and accept the parts of myself that long for beauty in a dark place.

"Hi, my name is Lottie, I'm a non-binary lesbian trying their best to be an artist!"





Check them out at swollenbabyfat.com!



1. What's your favorite art you've ever made?
Probably either of the pieces here.

*Editor's note: these pieces are even cooler in color!

2. What are your favorite things to draw?
My favorite things to draw are pretty things in sad situations. Otherwise, rabbits!

3. What things do you hate actually drawing but do it anyway because you like them?
Hmmm I think hands a bit of a common answer but true! I also have a hard time with eyes, but they're very important

4. Any music recommendations for art making? (Unless you're a work-in-silence type!)
I really like listening to emotional music while I work, so stuff like Mitski, Mother Mother, Metric and St. Vincent are some of my favorites.

5. What's your favorite animal and why? (I'm guessing bunny?)
My favorite animals to draw are definitely rabbits, yeah! Fun fact: I never want to own one, as they're quite delicate needy creatures, my favorite pet animals are simply cats and dogs.

6. What makes you feel safe & at home? Features of your dream house?
A safe environment filled with things and people I love. A breakfast to make myself every morning and sunlight coming in through the windows. I'd really like a bay window one day!

GARD3N
HOT
PASTRAMI
P4RLOR
105

I STILL FUCKING LOVE MY STUFFED ANIMALS



SHADOW

(named from Homeward Bound)
Came everywhere with me, even to Europe. He still sometimes follows me to school on bad days.



MOOSEY MIU

(pronounced like Lucy Liu).
Adopted from a thrift store when I skipped class one day.



PLECOS

These suckerfish (Plecostomus) were friends for our territorial Leopard Pleco. These plush ones stick to things just like ours did, but they eat less algee.





FAWN

She's a soft and kind friend who likes to sit on my altar.



SCABIE

I was the only one in my class who was Year of the Rat. Scabie reminded me that rats are badass! I love being a rat!

HONEY BEAR

Honey Bear once lived with my grandma, and they came to live with me when she passed. He used to live in Alaska, like grandma, and has been in the family since the 60s. She is genderfluid, and he wears an XL - 2XL, same size as me.

DANA



Adopted because he looked like my comic character Dana!



LIONEL

A Christmas gift from my boozehound grampa. He roars!





STINKY

Dad nicknamed me stinky when I was a baby. Mom got him so it would be his name, not mine

COUSIN

Adopted to cheer me up on my 25th birthday. The queer cousin (like me).





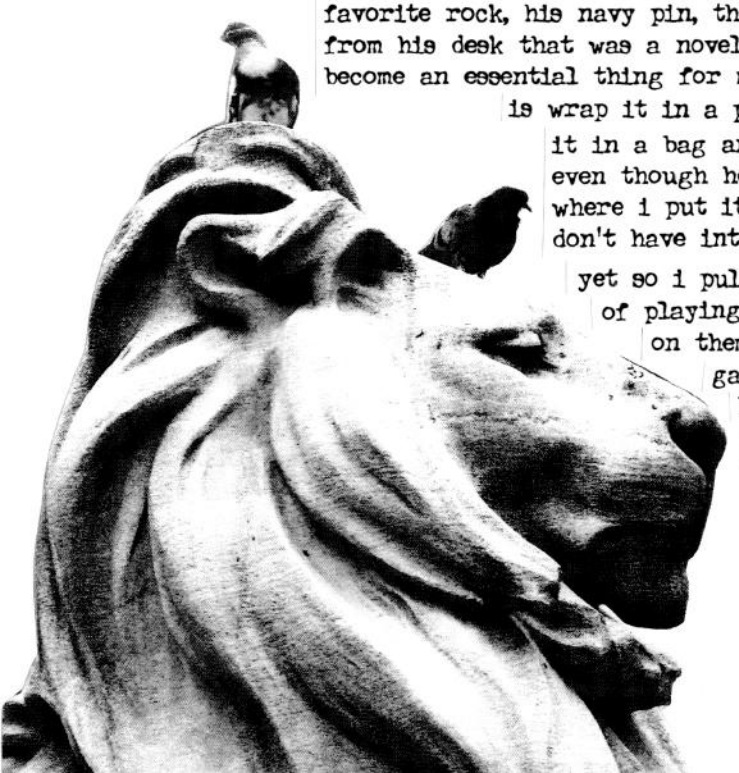
M'BALI

Adopted from San Diego Zoo. Named in honor of their king lion who art in heaven.

something people don't talk about moving is all the grief that comes up when moving stuff from loved ones who've died. people don't talk about it because there's this image of the typical chronology of deaths, with your grandparents' stuff going to your parents and your parents not dying until you're 40. and you're supposed to have a house of your own by then, and your parents are supposed to leave their house to you so you can move through it slowly four years later. and you're never going to move again so when you set your dad's ashes on the mantle they can live there until you die and your kids put your ashes on their own mantle.

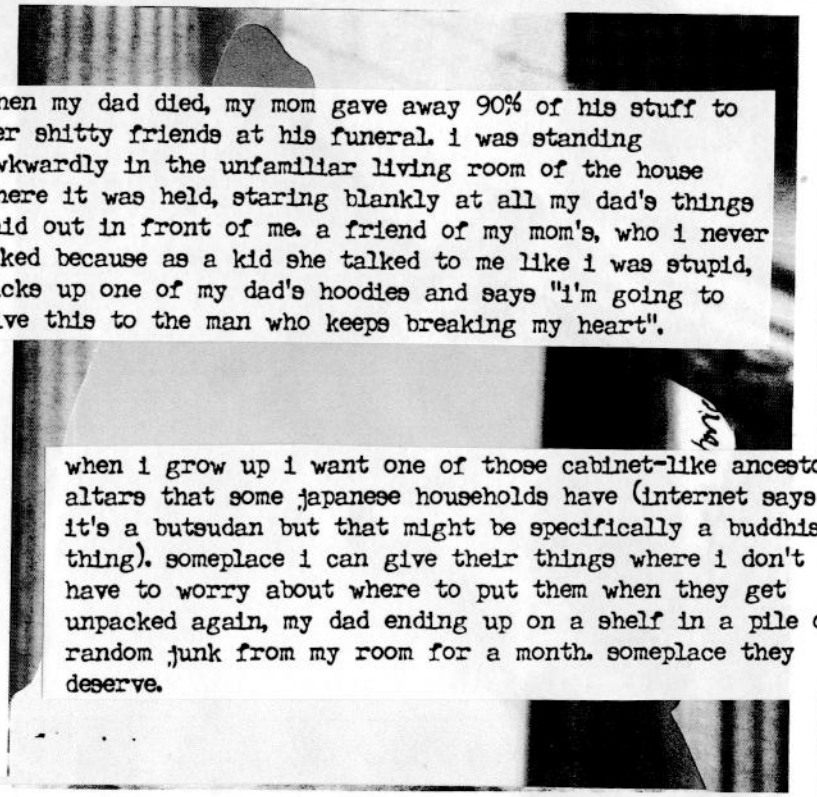
but my whole story is fucked up and i've been carrying around the ashes of three dead relatives while i move every year or two like it's expected of young people, and every time i have to move them it brings everything up all over again. and when i have less than 30 days to pack and less than two days to actually move everything then i don't have time to go through the nostalgia and the grief that comes up because i still have eight carfuls of shitty craigslist furniture to move too.

every time i touch something that was my dad's, or something my dad gave to me, i'm forcibly reminded that these things are all i have left of him. his favorite rock, his navy pin, the worf action figure from his desk that was a novelty for him but has become an essential thing for me. the least i can do is wrap it in a pair of socks and put it in a bag and bring it with me, even though he'll never get to see where i put it in my new place. i don't have internet at my new place yet so i pull out a pack of playing cards with puppies on them that my grandma gave to me on my eighth birthday and it makes me want to cry.



when my grandma died, i was still living at her house until i graduated. my family made a lot of tasteless "jokes" about how i was "so lucky" i lived there because i got to "pick what i wanted" before everyone else got a chance to scavenge the carcass of her life. that whole family is so selfish that they can't imagine anyone else not being like that.

i was with grandma for four years and i loved her very much as i carried her oxygen tanks and cooked her dinner every night and when she needed me to pick up her medication i always made it sound like i was going that direction anyway because she was stubborn and independent and didn't want to feel like an imposition. yet somehow my family thinks it was all a scam for me to get first pick of her china. yeah, i'm so lucky that the person who took me in from my abusive mother is dead. i'm so lucky that now my two best friends, my dad and my grandma, are both gone and now i'm left with exactly one relative who doesn't hate or resent me. it's all been worth it for browning sheet music and sweaters from the 60s.



when my dad died, my mom gave away 90% of his stuff to her shitty friends at his funeral. i was standing awkwardly in the unfamiliar living room of the house where it was held, staring blankly at all my dad's things laid out in front of me. a friend of my mom's, who i never liked because as a kid she talked to me like i was stupid, picks up one of my dad's hoodies and says "i'm going to give this to the man who keeps breaking my heart".

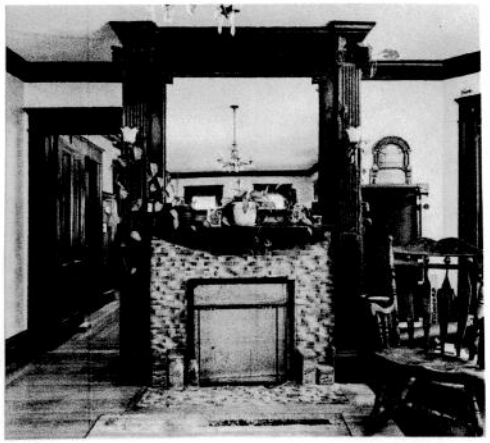
when i grow up i want one of those cabinet-like ancestor altars that some japanese households have (internet says it's a butsudan but that might be specifically a buddhist thing). someplace i can give their things where i don't have to worry about where to put them when they get unpacked again, my dad ending up on a shelf in a pile of random junk from my room for a month. someplace they deserve.

a sour heart to heart moment just like

i've lost a thousand longings







I have a love-hate relationship with the envy-inducing, heart destroying real estate behemoth that is Zillow. When I was a little kid I loved seeing inside houses; I even wandered neighborhoods for open houses and claimed my family was moving and mom and dad told me to look for places. So Zillow is, naturally, up my alley.

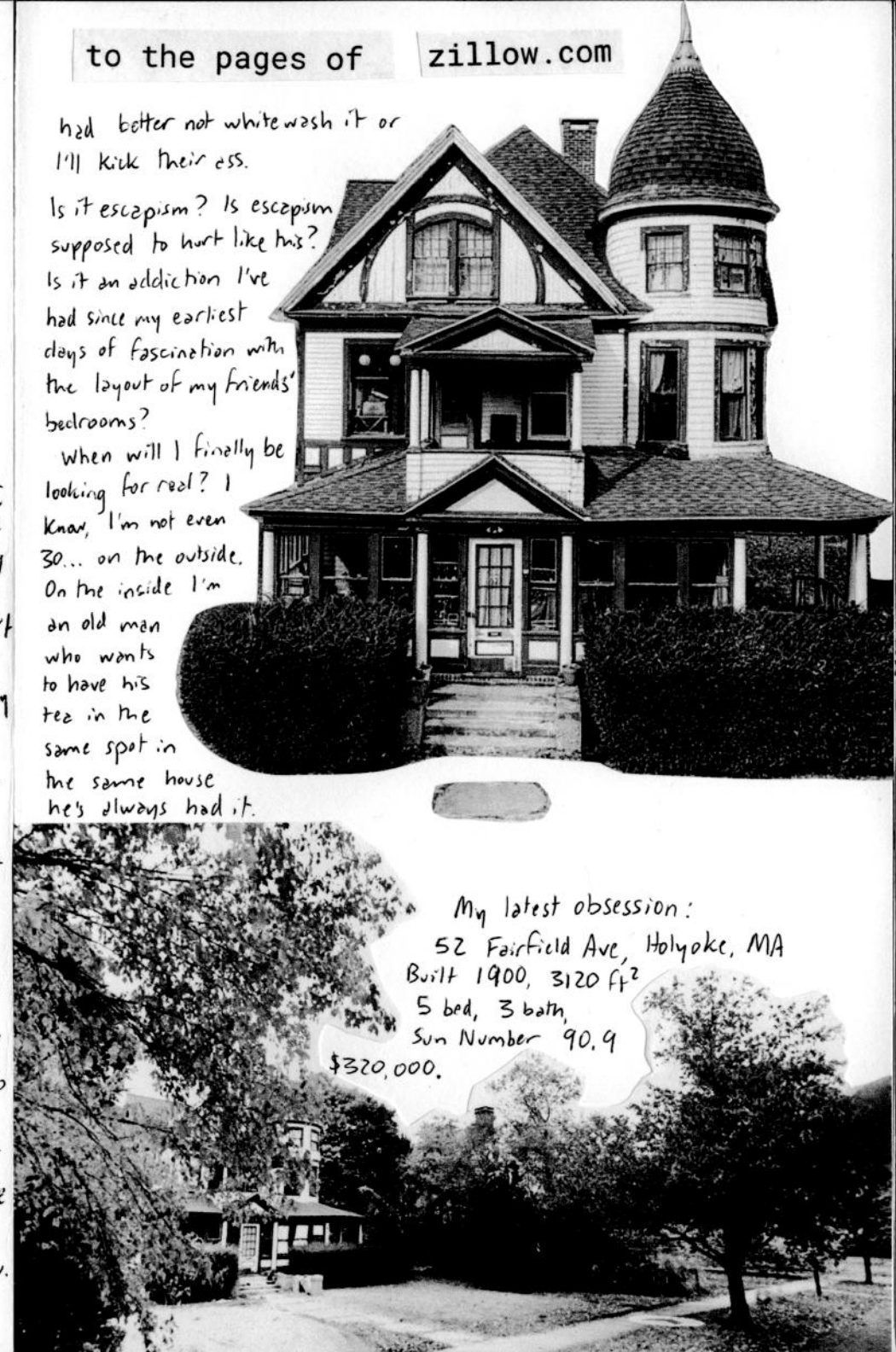
But the dark side is seeing a beautiful house in a beautiful place with a yard and space for an art room and a turret, oh man I've always wanted to ~~live~~ live in a turret, then looking at the monthly rent estimate and discovering it's lower than my rent in a neighborhood I don't like in an apartment without enough space that charges me $3 per laundry and leaves our oven unfixed for five weeks. Looking at these places really fuels my "hurry up and settle down" urges. But I'm still in school and kind of afraid that I won't be able to get a full-time position in a town I can afford a house in (that doesn't suck, whether the job, the town, or the house).

My partner tends to use Zillow as a combination escapist fantasy / research / glimmer of hope. He sends me links to houses he thinks I'll like, and he's always right about it. It hurts my heart every time to look and know the place will never be mine because I'm living at the wrong time in my life right now. But god, have you seen that amazing original wood detail? The new owners had better not whitewash it or I'll kick their ass.

Is it escapism? Is escapism supposed to hurt like this? Is it an addiction I've had since my earliest days of fascination with the layout of my friends' bedrooms?

When will I finally be looking for real? I know, I'm not even 30... on the outside. On the inside I'm an old man who wants to have his tea in the same spot in the same house he's always had it.

to the pages of zillow.com



the long ago

This is the longest perzine I've ever made so far, & yet nothing I write makes it feel finished. Deep down I know why--the whole reason I wanted to m ake this zine was to talk about instability and xx anxiety and dig deep about housing and I still haven't done that. I don't even know what it will accomplish, what the point in putting it all on paper is. Preservation, I guess. Having something I can look at for proofof what's happening, like I don't have to remember it all myself.

I like making my zines "pretty", but I don't know how pretty this part can be.

My entire life has been about being pushed out. And it's reflected in where I live. You could probably go as far back as toddlerhood and claim something about the youuger child getting all the attention, but really it's about my mom. She is a narcissist, and I don't think there was ever a time in my life when we gotalong. Because I was so antithetical to her in a way she couldn't accept. Any instances of me being myself were interpreted asa personal affront toher.

I have countless horror stories, but the one that most foretold things to come was about my cat Solomon. We had a couple family cats already, butthey were old and independent, so to get me to stop asking for a dog we went to the shelther and adopted a friendly mound of orange fur. For an unknown reason about six months into his time with us, he started having issues with bladder control. Whatever the cause, he started peeing on the carpet.

After a few months my mom decided she was sick of it, grabbed him by the scruff, threw him out the door and declared him an Outside Cat. Anyone who let him in would be punished.

My dad fought her on this but ultimately didn't have the energy to keep it up (we now know he had cancer). Dad ended up building Solomon a heated, covered bed and an area on the deck to protect him from snow. But Solomon deserved better. He was such a friendly cat that he deserved a family.

The message from my mom was pretty clear--as soon as you start frustrating her, intentionally or not, you're not welcome in the house anymore...

When I was in high school I had two guilty pleasure genres of TV show: wedding shows and home buying shows. You know, the ones where a bunch of rich people go out & complain about sweetheart necklines and paint colors until they end up spending their life savings on the blandest dress or house you've ever seen (or more often their parents' life savings). The realityx TV formulas used by Say Yes to the Dress and House Hunters are remarkably similar.

It wasn't just the shows that sucked me in. I was constantly fantasizing about my wedding, my honeymoon honeymoon, my dream house. My mom berated me for this. But Dad liked to join in on the fantasies. I'd say I wanted to have my honeymoon in NYC, he'd list off some things I have to include, like seeing a show on Broadway and staying at the Plaza Hotel.

I always knew we were playig pretend, because even if we had the money for it, we weren't the sort to spend thousands on pointless luxiries like that. But Dad knew I sort of needed the fantasies, and he'd do whatever he could to keep them going for me. Dad could see better that I did why I watched those shows. Because I needed to think that when I was eventualy, inevitably pushed out for good, there would be something better waiting for me on the outside.

Mom did end up kicking me out. I was 16, it was the night before my AP English exam, and I'd been in my room all night. Mom went out with her friends, and when she came back the bread she had baked had been snatched from the counter and eaten by our dog. This sparked a four hour screaming session, her standing in my doorway and calling me every insult you could think of for "letting this happen". I knew how this went and stayed quiet, glancing at my textbook occasionally to try to subtly hint I had to study, then being called out for "ignoring" her. It was after 1am when she finally ended by saying if I was still in the house tomorrow morning, she would kill me. "Don't you dare come back here. Ever."

I packed a bag and climbed out my window into the raspberry bushes and found a bench in the open space park a half mile away. The next morning I walked to school and got a ride to my exam. I got 100%.

My dad got wind of this and ended up taking me to stay with my aunt. I stayed for aweek until I needed to get some more clothes.

Dad escorted me through the house to my room. My mom acted like nothing had happened, until we got downstairs and she pointed to a huge pile of dog poop. Apparently this was left by the dog after he ate her bread. She told me to clean it up, because it was my responsibility. (Dad took me to my room and shielded me from the door while I packed). I stayed with my aunt for another two months. I was already set to graduate high school early, and that summer I moved in with my grandma a few states away.

Grandma and I had a good thing. We helped each other. I ended up going to UC Berkeley and I stayed with her to help with rent and picking up groceries and carting around her oxygen tank without making her feel like a burden.

When she died, she left it in her will that I would be able to live in the house (paying the same rent I had been) until I graduated. After that it was to be sold, and my uncle and my mom would split most of the share, with the grandkids getting the rest. Mom was upset that they couldn't sell the house right away, and she took it out on me even though there was nothing either of us could do.

The worst was when she was out to visit and accused me oh-so-casually, like it was common knowledge, of only staying with Grandma because I wanted to live in a "luxury apartment".

I had another year and a half at the place before I graduated. There was a constant underlying fear that she would find some way to kick me out again, that I would have to drop out of school or run away in the middle of the night again. A week before I left she announced that she would be coming out to "celebrate my graduation". My partner and I had to devise ways to keep her out of our bedroom. We left a day earlier than planned.

And now here we are, at the point where I've been in my new apartment in Boston with my partner and our siblings for a year and a half, and we've been fighting with our landlord to keep the church that moved in beneath us from breaking the lease and playing music randomly for hours and days on end that was 90db in OUR apartment. And it all came up again, every instance of being pushed out of my own home and accused of being selfish or lying or just plain evil. And this time it was in a space that was supposed to be all mine. I paid for it, my family wasn't involved, I was supposed to have a home... I broke. As soon as we found a new place (which is more expensive and has lots of its own problems), I broke. I stayed in our room with the lights off, crying and sleeping and desperately trying to follow along with guided meditations on Youtube. I felt tremendously guilty for not being able to help with moving. I also felt more hopeless and suicidal than I had since my dad died when I'd just turned 18.

Here I type now, on a borrowed typewriter in a temporary home, sitting on my umpteenth parking ticket and trying to figure out if the weed smell from the neighbors is better or worse with the window opened, hoping that my partner's nightly anxiety attacks over noise will cease someday, searching online to find a town and a neighborhood and a home we can AFFORD that won't have us desperate to leave in another six months, hoping that someday I'll have the time and space and energy to plant the spider plant my aunt gave me that's still sitting in water after almost two years, longing for a sense of stability in my home that won't end up with me having a trauma response in fears that it will be taken away from me someday.

Is it possible? How long will I stay? When will I stop having to move? When will I be safe? Where will I be calm? When can I have a place where I don't have to prepare to leave? When will my mom release her grip on my heart so I may finally love where I am?

Most treasured possessions





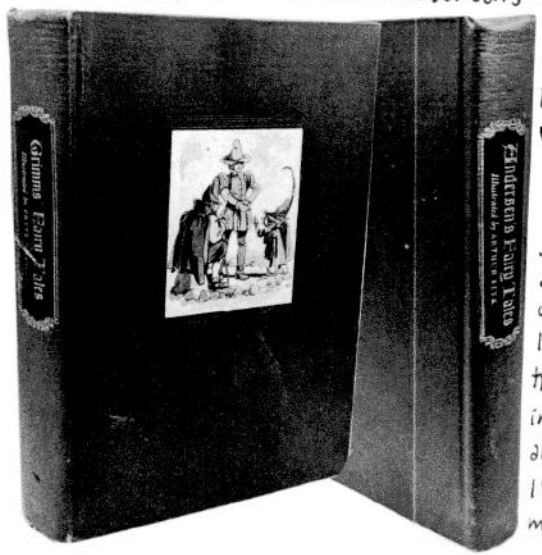
I. (he)Art piece by Jolie Ruin. I didn't even realize at the time, but this is who I want to be. This is what I've been hiding in my heart since I was a kid, all captured with hot glue, beads and glitter.

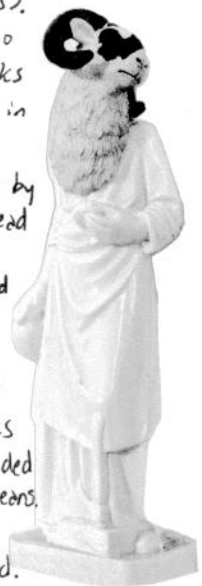


II. Mug my grandma made while she was in prison. She painted on her inmate number, 68901-012. She was an accessory to her boyfriend's multi-million dollar theft from the company he worked at. This mug is such a strange part of who she was.

III. Resin statue of Bast by an artist I can't remember. She reminds me not to be afraid of my body. I have always felt great pride in my body when looking at classic and mythological depictions (despite our differences).

IV. 1945 Grimm & Andersen's Fairy Tales. (Two of) the first books my family bought in English.





V. A statue I made by cutting off the head of a thrift store Jesus figurine and attaching the head of a plastic ram. It reminds me of the Buddha statues in Thailand, beheaded and sold by Europeans. I've made it both more and less sacred.

VI. Playing cards given to me by my grandma. I used to put the cards in order by dog (alphabetical, breed group, cuteness).

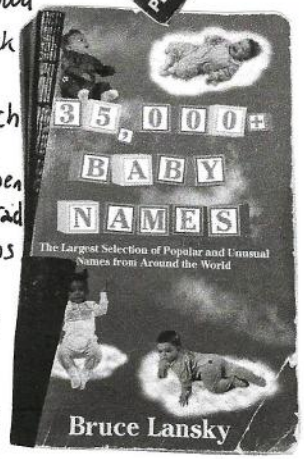




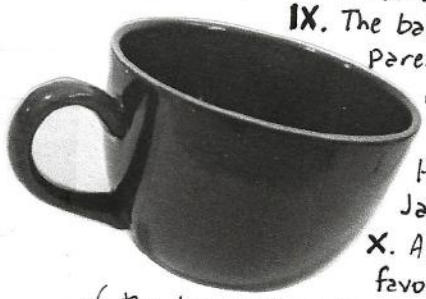
VII. Brass lion I stole from off my mother's desk when I moved. Payback for my childhood.



VIII. Driftwood brought back from Second Beach in Washington state. I visited when I was 13 and when I went back 10 years later, I was afraid my love was mere nostalgia. But it remains my favorite place on earth.



IX. The baby name book my parents used for me. Filled with things I could have been: Heidi, Audrey, Jane, Jade, Melody, Fauna, Abigail, Jasmine, Elke...

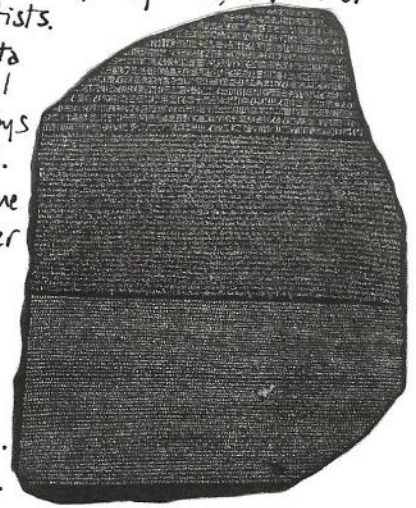


X. A green bowl (red inside), my and my dad's favorite. We fought to use the bowl first out of the dishwasher. No one else understood us or our love of the bowl.

XI. Frog plate from a small art store I bought on closing day. I miss how the store made me feel. Creative, respected, a part of something, a hidden community of artists.



XII. Replica Rosetta Stone (half actual size). It was always on my dad's wall. He loved to tell me the story of soldier Pierre-François Bouchard's pickaxe mark, of the ancient sharing of cultures and the beauty of language. I love it very much.



What is transformation but changing one thing into another? We are all after some alchemy, turning the lead of our lives into golden dreams and opportunities. A witch's specialty: she knows how to bend energy to her will and make something out of nothing at all.

Alchemy, magic, manifestation. It all leads to the same things: changing what was into what you want it to be. There is an endless supply of resources for how you might go about such a change. There is no right or wrong answer for the transformation you seek.

When Transformation finds itself in a reading, it is because you are on the cusp of a significant shift. The winds are rolling in so you better get ready. Even if you aren't aware of it, you've set things in motion. Every thought, every prayer, every action and inaction is a seed of manifestation waiting to take root. You, my most beloved, are about to see this manifestation surface.

Be prepared as this may be swift and unpleasant like a tornado. This transformation will be

(from Seasons of the Witch Samhain Oracle)

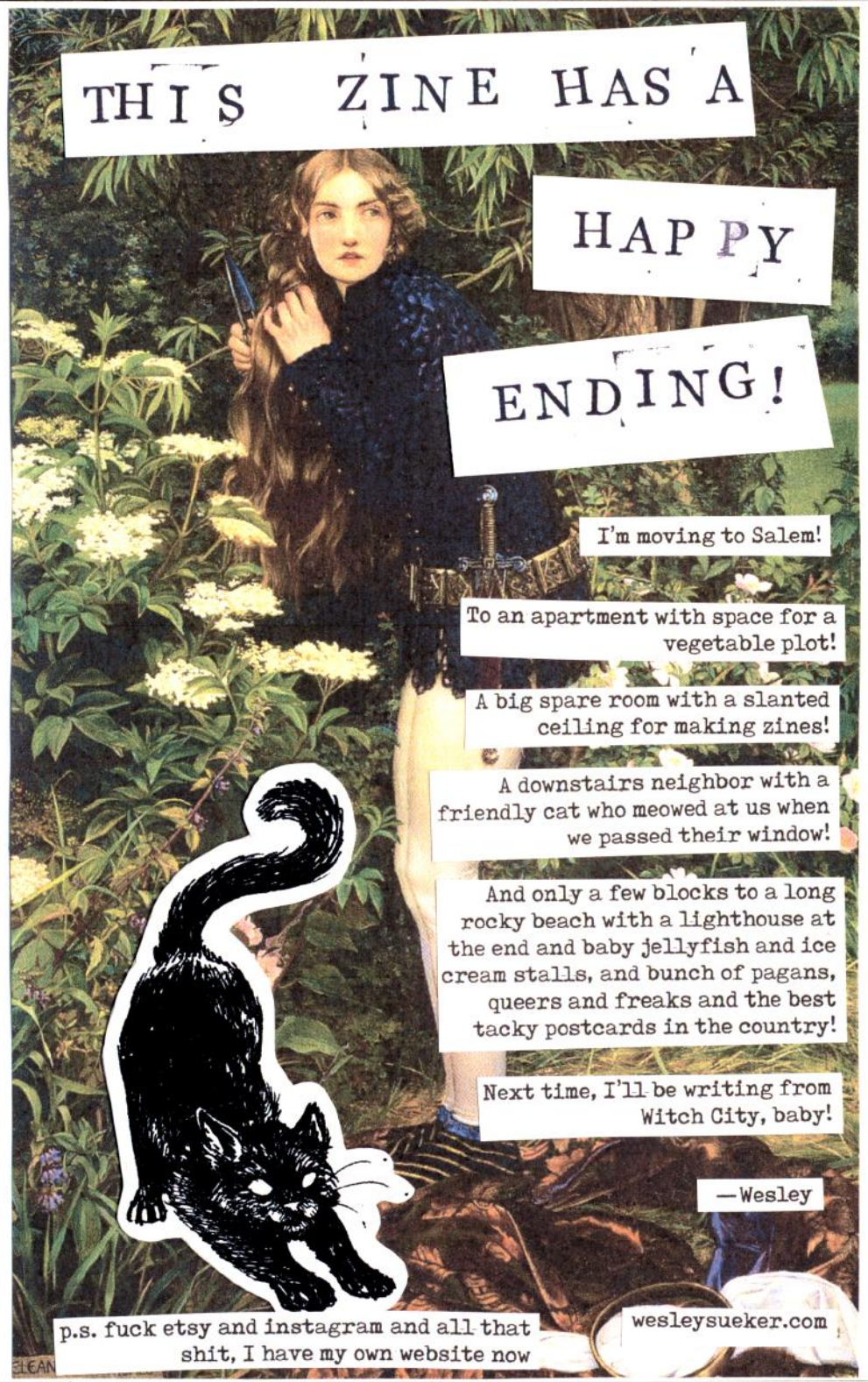
things i'm ⇦ reading

City by Keiichi Arawi
"I decided to pray to the god I made yesterday with the chant of gratitude I made yesterday."

Wyrdwood by Eldred Wormwood
"What is now very clear is that magic, cunning craft practices, are so embedded in rural customs that they are often entirely overlooked by those who seek some hidden occult path."

My Succulant Concrete Heart by enola dismay
"went on a hike. found a tree i was supposed to sit in to write, but when i settled into it, i wasn't very upright. and the sound of the crick's babble caused too much serenity for writing. fuck yeah, these are the kinds of problems i want to be having."





more zines and things at wesleysueker.com

