

HEARING VOICES

Chatter from The Willow

Vol. 5



WILLOW
ARTS
COMMUNITY



MANIFESTO!

2021

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Edited & Designed by Allison Carroll
Mixed Media Product | The Embark Press
St. Catharines, ON
ISBN: 978-1-7753648-5-6

Cover art is "Heads Will Roll", analog collage on paper, by Lisa Forstinger



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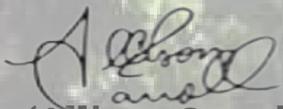
Letter from the Editor

To say that we've endured many changes at the Willow this past season would be a gross understatement. After losing Rodman Hall as a creative space, director Shauna MacLeod worked tirelessly to secure a new facility for us Member Artists to call home, and we've since found it at our new location, the Silver Spire United Church on St. Paul Street. The new space includes a gymnasium, an auditorium, offices, and a brand new space for creating and collaborating together, once it is safe to do so again in person.

During a time of continued uncertainty and isolation, Willow members persevered, overcoming numerous challenges and artistic barriers to create, as always, beautiful works of art speaking to their shared resilience, and to their collective, ongoing recovery from mental health and/or substance use issues. While this past year was very much about survival, I'm hoping that this next year (and our brand new space!) will inspire efforts of growth, reflection, and renewal. Due to the ongoing pandemic, we were given an ample amount of time to sit with ourselves, which, in many ways, was a luxury -- one that our busy lives doesn't always afford us. One trend I've noticed over the past year is that many public figures, and even folks of my acquaintance, gave themselves better permission to explore how they'd like to present themselves and their work to the world. This trend, in part, gave birth to the idea for Manifesto. I wanted to give Willow members an opportunity to ruminate on their sense of self and/or personhood, and the peace and healing that can be found in celebrating, unapologetically, who we are.

I'm endlessly in awe of the talent Willow members possess. I'd like to thank each and every one of you for your contributions, and for sharing your gifts with us all. Stay safe, and I hope to see you all again soon!

Sincerely,



(Allison Carroll)

Editor and Willow Member Artist

Niagara Falls | Natalie Cooney



Meal For One | Emily Gillespie

Depressed, single and broke

Meal for one

Eating canned soup with too much salt

The nutritionist says I should do my own cooking

But the soup was on sale

And who can afford...?

Besides it's just me

Long faded memories of family dinners

Potlucks in college dorms filled with laughter

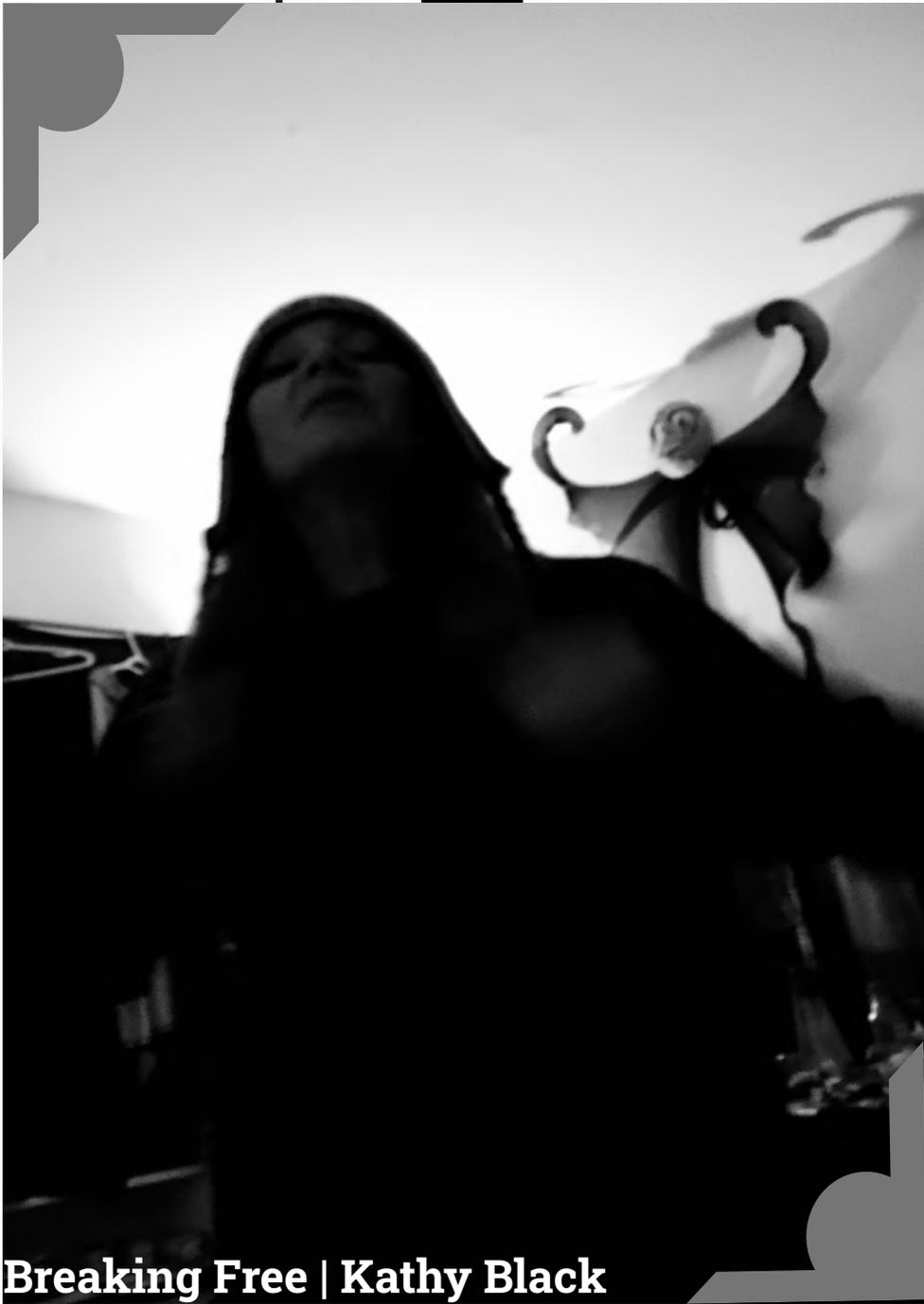
The table set for two with an ex

It's just me now, and the bloody can opener

Congratulate myself for stumbling off the depression nest on the couch

Swallow cold soup

Microwave also broken



Breaking Free | Kathy Black

Being Mentally III

Being mentally ill

Is both a blessing and a curse

You take your pill, You get your fill

and end up in a hearse.

Too bad, so sad,

you should have watched your purse.

Lots to blame. Be ashamed.

Start again. Rehearse.

But let's be real,

turn on a heel,

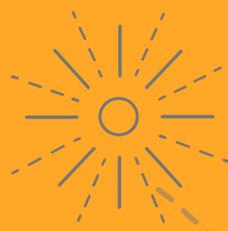
heart and mind will burst.

So don't be afraid

a little Tirade,

you are not the first.

by Rita Lianga



Magic

**I'm learning how to sit again, and how to dance
I'm learning how to choose the right words
I'm learning that it's okay to be by myself
I'm learning that the only person's expectations that I need to
live up to are mine
I'm learning about what really matters
I'm learning how to imagine the other side of the story
I'm learning how to listen
I'm learning to appreciate and release and feel
I'm learning to understand
I'm learning that generational trauma can stop at me
I'm learning that I had the magic all along**

**Nobody else can write your story for you.
It is YOUR story.**

You decide which parts of it stay, and which parts of it can go.

**Your gifts are needed.
Your story is important.
Your light is invaluable.**

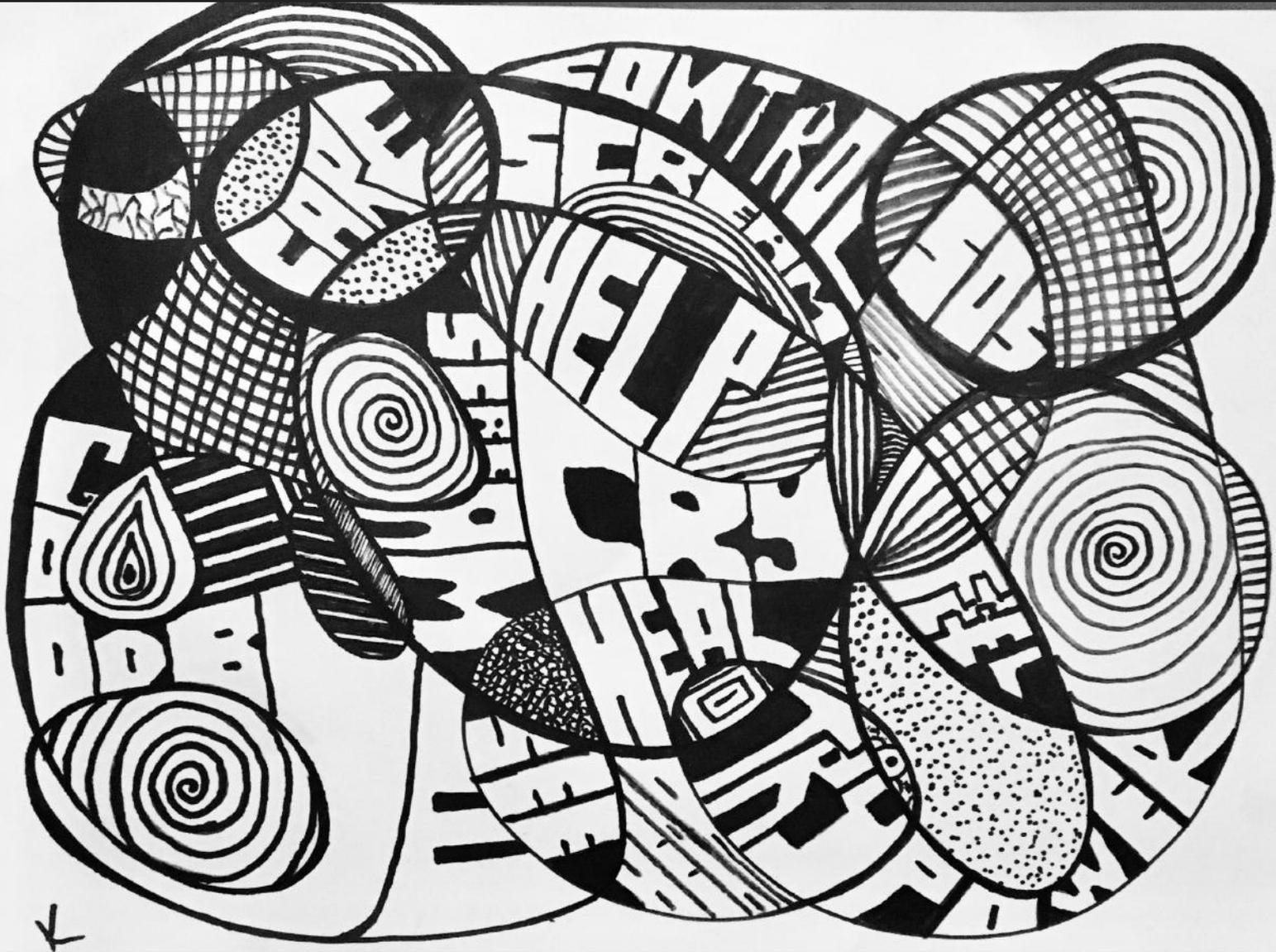
**If you are alive and breathing, there is a reason.
If you are alive and breathing, your presence is needed.
If you are alive and breathing, it's because you were meant for
magic.**

Samantha Marchionda



Untitled | Lucia C.

Dysfunctional



Kathy Black

THE LABOUR OF SURVIVAL

**The labour of survival
Makes you stern and strive for
The elimination of your arch rival
But do not seek reprisal
Instead come back to the arrival
Of when you were primal
You belonged. We were tribal
No shunning no denial
No one lonely or suicidal
Our life was vital
This is no elaborate recital
But the labour of survival**

- Rita Lianga

Trauma | Emily Gillespie

I was mentally ill when I got here

No doubt

But the city added a few more layers to my trauma

Gave me names

Forbidden diagnosis

A diagnosis layered in so much stigma that I won't even name it

For fear that you won't read another word I say

Checking off how I match the DSM box

I went to therapy

I went to group

I learned a phrase,

“nourishment barrier”

Layers of trauma make it hard to let love in

Love is an essential vitamin my body is too fucked up to process

Always left asking do I ask too much, or not enough 'cause of that damn barrier

Love from this chronically single, mad girl

A Walk With Her | Tonia M'igyver



Cinematic Distortion | John Bacher

Cinema has had a major impact on my life. However, all the portrayals of mental illness that I have seen have been horribly negative. I have never seen the reality of recovery through medical care and prescriptions, just a lot of horrible myths. In researching this article I learned that one film I had viewed, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", was released in 1975, long after the widespread shutting down of mental health facilities first set in motion by President John Kennedy in 1963. Images from the film made people fear seeking medical care.

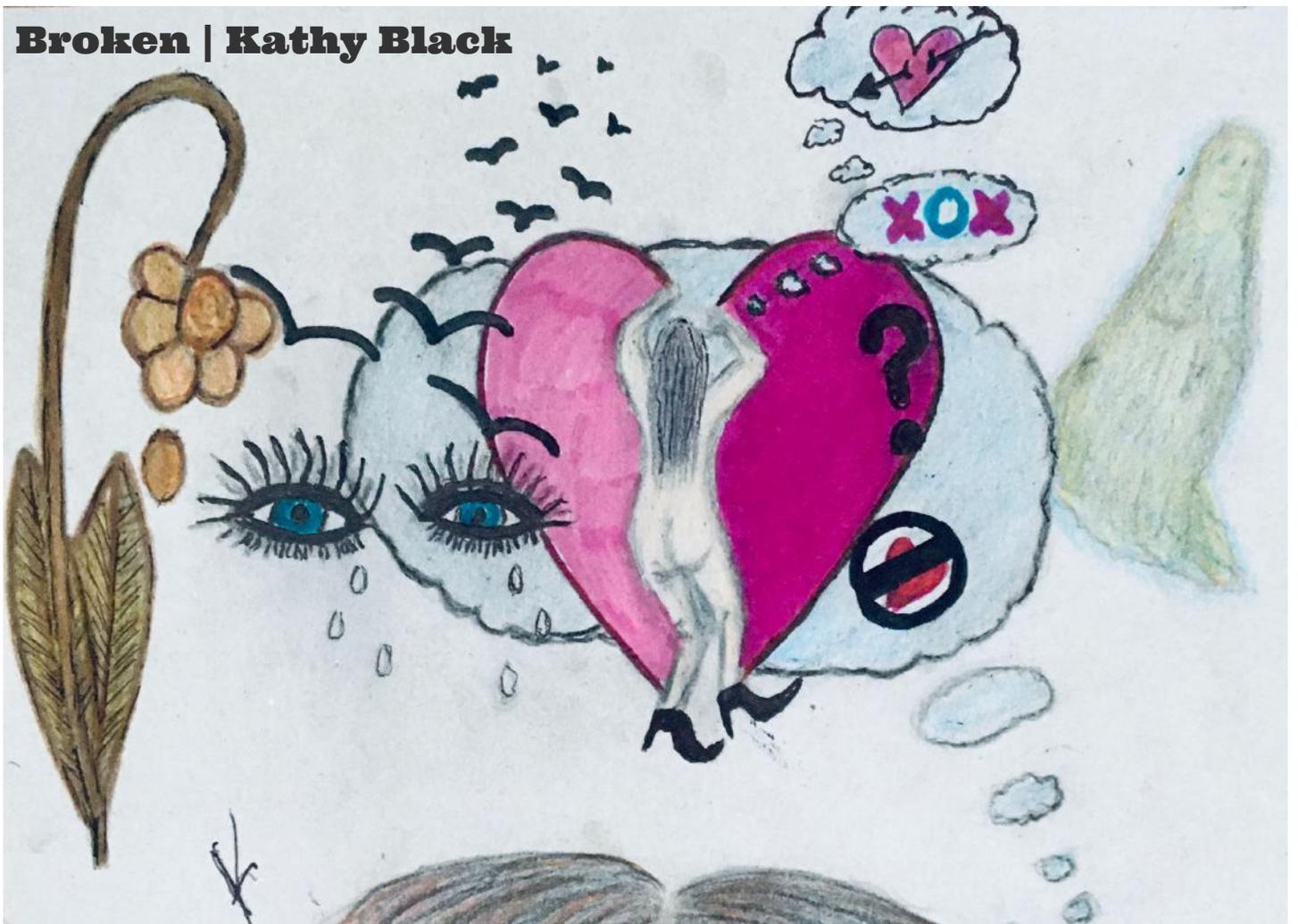
Alfred Hitchcock must rate as one of the most socially irresponsible film directors in history. His movie "Psycho" had as negative an impact on understandings of mental illness that "Birth of a Nation," with its glorification of the KKK, had on race relations in the United States.

Another film that has had a major impact on me is Ingmar Bergman's "Through a Glass Darkly." It was released in 1960 before medications had replaced long-term hospital care. The film ends in a dramatic way with a helicopter taking the patient to the hospital. Despite this archaic scene, the last line of the patient's brother to his father about the patient resonates with me. It stated that since God is love, God is with her. These are words that help in the darkest moments.



Covid Cave | Paul Reslinski

Broken | Kathy Black



Broken | Mike Higgs

**It was one eternal dark night in Cuba
There and never back again
Two for the price of one
Some smoke to remember, some smoke to forget
BUT
Break on through to the other side
Light at the end of the tunnel**

The Purpose Will Clear

I knew there was a purpose to all this when i was young,
but I didn't know then, what is was,
and I'm still not sure.

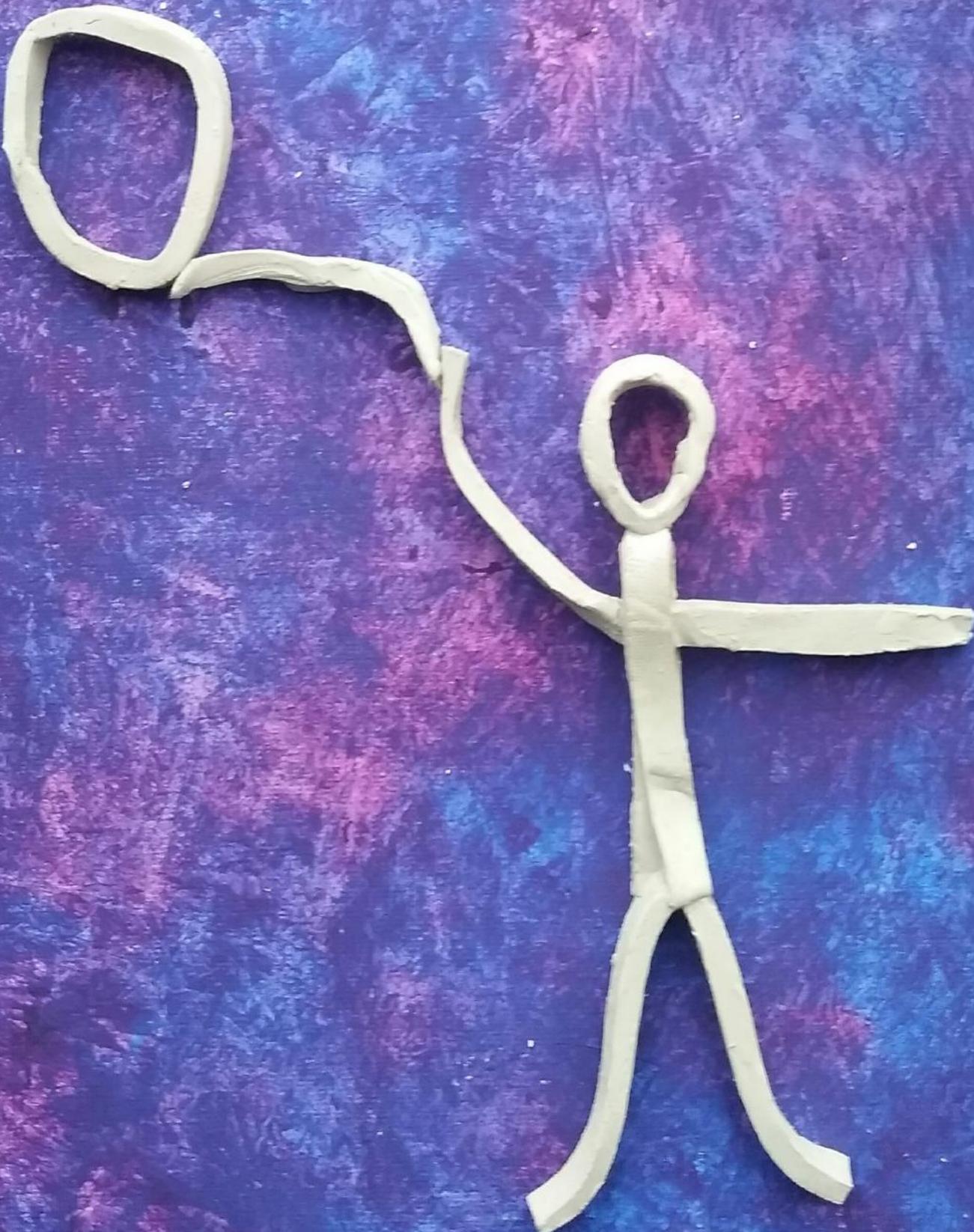
Sometimes the music seems just right,
I'm on the verge of believing,
but then the tempo changes and calamitous drums rumble,
rocking my ears and blurring my eyes,
so i sink deeper within myself.

It's something I've learned over the years,
a mechanism of intolerant acceptance to unwanted change.

Like a turtle, or some egg,
waiting for the environment to improve,
light to come,
rains to fall, temperature to rise,
that sort of thing.
And sure enough,
the world turns
tilts back to the sun,
while the universe expands,
letting the light and the heat
return to the lands, my heart and my hands.
The birds will sing,
soothing my ears,
and my eyes will again eventually clear.

- Josh Christopher Robin Michener





Beauty Knows No Pain | Sarah Burgess

With every redundant stab wound
you viciously leave embedded into my heart,
Makes way for the departure
of this ever flowing waterfall
of acidic fluid, that is, by far,
much more endangering and deathly.
And this too dissipates,
creating more beauty --
more than you'd like.
Unidentifiable,
reluctantly, without a doubt,
I shall persevere,
withdrawing any chance of failure.
I've overcome many;
I'm not about to hold back,
not about to give up.
I definitely won't forfeit.
I'm a survivor --
I'll survive this too!
Won't you change your ways?
Feel for me, my dismay.

Magnolia Flower | Natalie Cooney



I find myself, dancing
with the dried plants,
Tree friends, clouds, and
snowflakes.

The leftover leaves that
refused to drop in the
autumn's swirling winds.
Have a wiggle to them.

Mimicking and copying their
movements and finding
inner connection.
An ancient heart beat
with an expressive universal
rhythm within.

Wild Awakening | Victoria Brecht





Steel Joe Boot

i feel LIke.
coVERed by A roSe tinted hAze,
there'S a labyrinth inside my brain.
at the center is anOther maze,
Drenched In acidic rain.
bEyond the end of that,
another question lies.
do you see the truth,
when you look Behind my eYes?
we're all finally famous now,
look ma, i'm on Tv!
but alas, tHE world tis But a stage,
yet nOne Of the acTors can see!

- DnEVEnC

Art Is In My Everything

**I celebrate ART in SPEAKING,
I celebrate ART in CREATIVE WRITING,
I celebrate ART in CREATING MUSIC,
I celebrate ART in COLOURS,
I celebrate ART in LAUGHTER,**

I celebrate ART in A SIMPLE PONYTAIL!

**I celebrate ART in a UNIQUE STYLE,
I celebrate ART in MOTHER NATURE,
I celebrate ART in MY PASSION FOR
& MY LOVE OF ANIMALS,**

I celebrate ART in MY JOURNEY OF LIFE!

**For Me...There is an ART OF STRONG MESSAGES TO BE HEARD,
And, although "ART" is only a 3 Letter Word,
"ART" IS IN MY EVERYTHING, both as an Artist
and as an Individual.**

"ART" carries Me through the BEST Of Times and the Worst!

**THE CELEBRATION OF ART IS IN THE PRESENT, THE PAST,
AND IN THE FUTURE!**

**ART IS TIMELESS & UNIVERSAL,
And Holds MY ATTENTION & INTEREST,
It has a BEAUTY, A CONSCIENCE & MANY FEELINGS!**

It is True...That "ART" IS IN MY EVERYTHING I DO!

~Jamie/~InSpired Spirit~

=====

Patchwork Girl | Allison Carroll

Sitting by the black water
I say it's a beautiful place,
and I shiver and sigh, while
admiring the distant mountains.
But you say they're not enough.

When even the mountains
cannot keep you, I feel at first
like running, and then giving up.

I swear, there will be a reckoning
like nothing they've ever seen.
I'm stewing, boiling over
with anger, pushing
past it like branches
that grasp and tug,
attempt to stop me up, leaving
thorns in my side, cutting deep.

Like a patchwork girl,
a typical basket case,
I'll put myself back together.
I never learned to knit
from my dear Grandmother –
I let her down. I might not
make anything of myself
but somehow, I think I'll manage.

I have a bone to pick with the crone
who's woven the fraying cords of my fate.
I'm constantly unravelling and
learning to wind myself up again.
Someday I'll be loose, untethered,
completely lost my shape.
There will be nothing left to make
of my sorry self.

Magical like Didion,
death-obsessed like Gideon,
I walk around sick with grief.
It's rotting my gut
and souring the taste of any
earthly delights to pass
through me, but
I think I'm getting better.





Two Bleeding Pilgrims Standing | John Sweeney

A response, upon seeing the police photo of two women, brutally beaten, mugged and robbed by three teen aged boys, on a late night London bus. The women who had been kissing, then refused to kiss, when ordered to, by the group of boys.

Date Crime

Lovers' lips, refuse to kiss, to entertain tonight;
these women aren't some freak show,
for slavish boys' delight.

Mocked and jeered and sneered at,
with actions crude and vain;
for such a stand, they pay the price,
in blood, in tears, in pain.

Two women bludgeoned, beaten, then discarded
on a bus, for loving, just for loving,
should speak to all of us.

These crimes of hate,
more common now, shout out to you and I:
We must each others' family be,
beneath one bleeding sky.

Good men step up with hearts and hands,
as you have always done!

Now as good fathers always did,
now must each brother, husband, son.

For hate is far too common, it's time to take a stand.
And maybe, even, change the rules,
Of what it is to be a man.

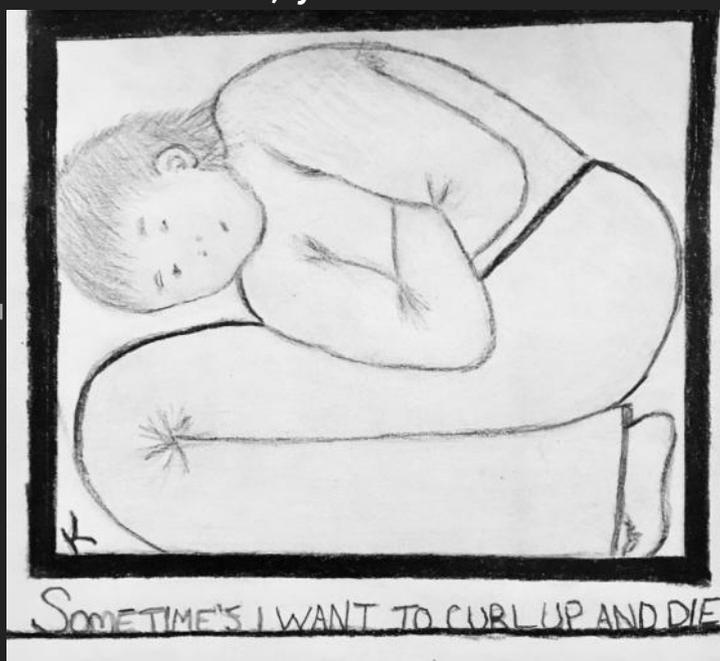
For boys must learn from daddy,
before their passions rule,

the guy who rules his lover's world with force is just a fool.

For good men owe their loyalty, not only to the boys.

When loving wives and daughters
turn into broken toys,
remember, dudes, each woman found,
face down in bleeding mud,
is also your own daughter, mother,
sister, your own blood.

Curl up & Die



Kathy Black

Over the Rainbow | Tonia M'igyver



Queer | Emily Gillespie

Trying on all the LGBTQ+ identity labels

Goldilocks

ISO of perfect fit

Only to realize that none of them are right

Too much & not enough

Too queer for straight

Too straight for queer

Taking the word anyway as my own

Only to whisper it

Always with a question mark ?

Borrowed words

Like library books

Hoping one day I'll grow into the word

To Remember | Tonia M'igwyer

To remember I was made of magic

I donned the finest clothes of silk and sparkle.
Watching with child-eyes as they billowed and flowed underneath me.
With the same ease as air that pushes clouds.
Regarded small feet poking out from the fabric swirls.
Smiled as my soul whispered,
"Those are my favourite shoes"
And together I know on the edge between places, we dance a fated dance.

To remember I was made of magic

I looked at myself in my mirror.
In stranger's-awe I saw my eyes as more than just mere windows...
Instead two golden galaxies opened up to me.
Too vast to be known in entirety by anyone,
even myself.
I loved the valleys and peaks of the unique topography that cradled them.
What has been carved out by love stories long since forgotten.
Recalling I am living fruit from an ancient tree.
Here for reasons I am not meant to know fully.

To remember I was made of magic.

I walked into my mind like entering an old mansion.
This home of mine, familiar.
With perfect hindsight... I can still see apparitions
of horrors stalking old versions of me down passages of time.
Remembering myself drowning
in cracks in the floorboards
and minding chalk outlines.
Just big enough for a child.
I visit them, these old friends.
The mes and the monsters too.
Pay respects and keep space beside them.
Honour where they are still frozen in time.
I whisper "we made it" along with a million thank yous
I string together like necklaces.
Medals of honor.
It got better. We are okay.
I sing songs in the hallways and I dance in every room.
I collected my tears from these years in buckets.
Blessed water with incantation
crafted from kind things I whisper into myself.
They spill out over us like potion and we grow.

I remember I exist in these worlds simultaneously.
As eternal as I am temporary.

Because...
I am made of magic.



Tammy-B | Reach Out



REACH OUT

Finding a time to heal my depression until my heart knows how I can reach for this moment.

Distress Centre: 905-688-3711 (St. Catharines)

24-hour telephone support in the Niagara Region for the safety and emotional wellness of every person in need.

<https://distresscentreniagara.com/>

Niagara Regional Police Service Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST Niagara): 1-866-550-5205 (24/7 crisis line)

COAST Niagara provides mobile crisis outreach and intervention service offering immediate telephone counseling. If required, a mobile team will respond in an unmarked police cruiser and conduct a mental health assessment onsite. For life threatening emergencies, call 911.

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Niagara: 905-641-5222

The CMHA provides immediate access counselling.

www.cmhaniagara.ca



Resources

Community Addiction Services of Niagara (CASON): 905-684-1183

CASON provides comprehensive alcohol, drug, and gambling, addiction treatment for individuals and their families.

www.cason.ca

Niagara Sexual Assault Centre (CARSA): 905 682-4584 (24-hour crisis line)

CARSA responds to the needs of survivors of sexual violence and provides counselling, support and emergency services to survivors and their families.

www.niagarasexualassaultcentre.com

Niagara Region information on Covid-19

<https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/covid-19/>

For more information, visit Niagara Community Information Database (24/7) – dial 211 or 1-800-263-3695

<https://niagara.cioc.ca/>

Willow Arts Community is an arts + peer support organization dedicated to reducing barriers and providing opportunities for adult artists and creatives living with mental illness/substance use disorder in Niagara. We use the arts as an agent of social change by connecting and engaging with the public through exhibitions, publications, and performances to lessen the effects of stigma and social isolation.

This zine was created during the Winter 2021 Arts Training Season, supported by partnerships with Workman Arts Toronto, and with thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program, and The May Court Club of St. Catharines.

(Background art is by Suzanne Nickel)



**WILLOW
ARTS
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**WORKMAN
ARTS**

Generously supported by the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program (SCCIP)

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St. Catharines



**MAY COURT
CLUB OF ST. CATHARINES**

Supporting Our Community