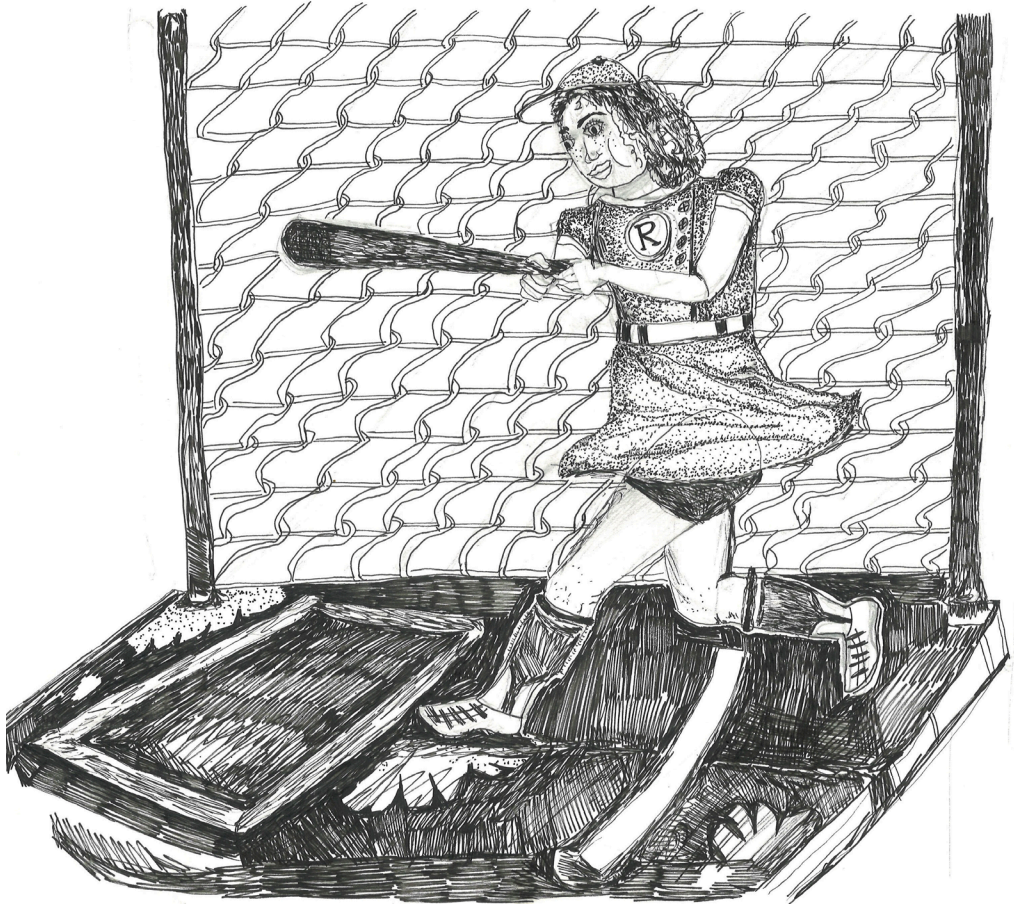


# SUBSTRATE



issue 05

summer 2025





SUBSTRATE is a quarterly zine that asks artists and writers to consider what a better world might look like.

For another world to be possible, we must first--and continually--learn to imagine and deeply believe in it. We seek to practice revolutionary optimism and imagination as one antidote to nihilism, apathy, and despair. We want to exercise the creative muscles involved in remaking futures for us to live in, and we want to do it together.

Thank you dearly to all contributors to issue 05 for making, for dreaming, for struggling, for sharing.

To access and download previous issues, or to submit work to future issues, visit [substratezine.cargo.site](http://substratezine.cargo.site). For feedback or inquiries, please email [corthartle@gmail.com](mailto:corthartle@gmail.com)

cover image: Jenna Marie Alderiso, "Scene from A Batting Cage"  
ig: @poorlycutbangs

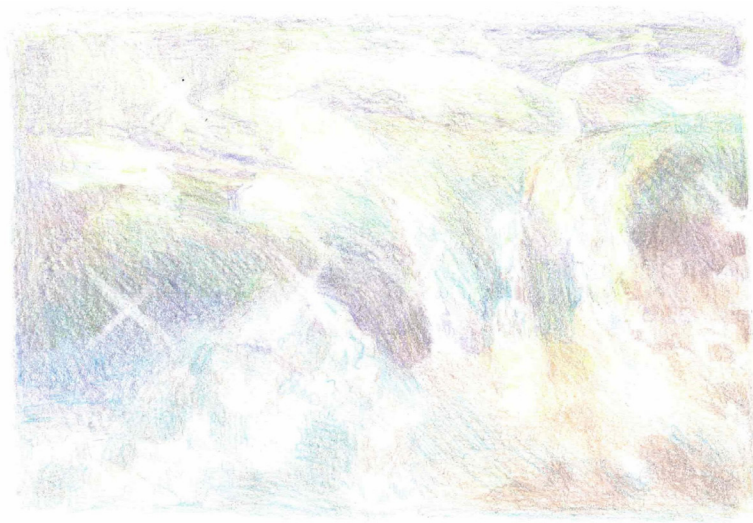


heaven/hell is a place on earth

jagódka siemienko

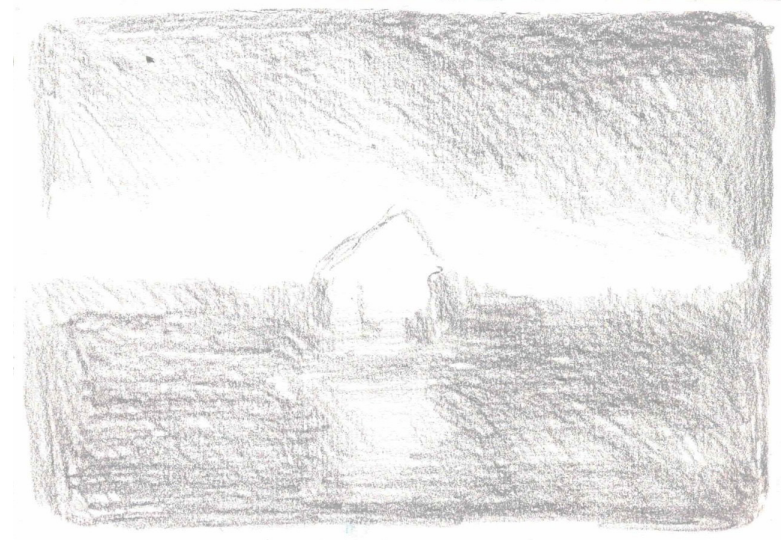






"drawings are based on photographs found on the web, without any substantial attachment. through pieces I wanted to capture beauty and a sense of hopelessness towards place erasure. I increase their value by adding a sense of divinity, something that is felt only from a distance."

crayon pencil, 10,5x14,8 cm



jagodka siemienko, "heaven/hell is a place on earth"  
ig: @jagodkaee



darling, know i cast  
the wound  
i skip bullets  
on the seams of florida water

i tell you to  
gently carry fairy blue,  
sprinkling heaven stars  
down the river

darling, i draw  
waterfalls like a bath  
i step unto ladders  
extending permanently  
for my faggot body

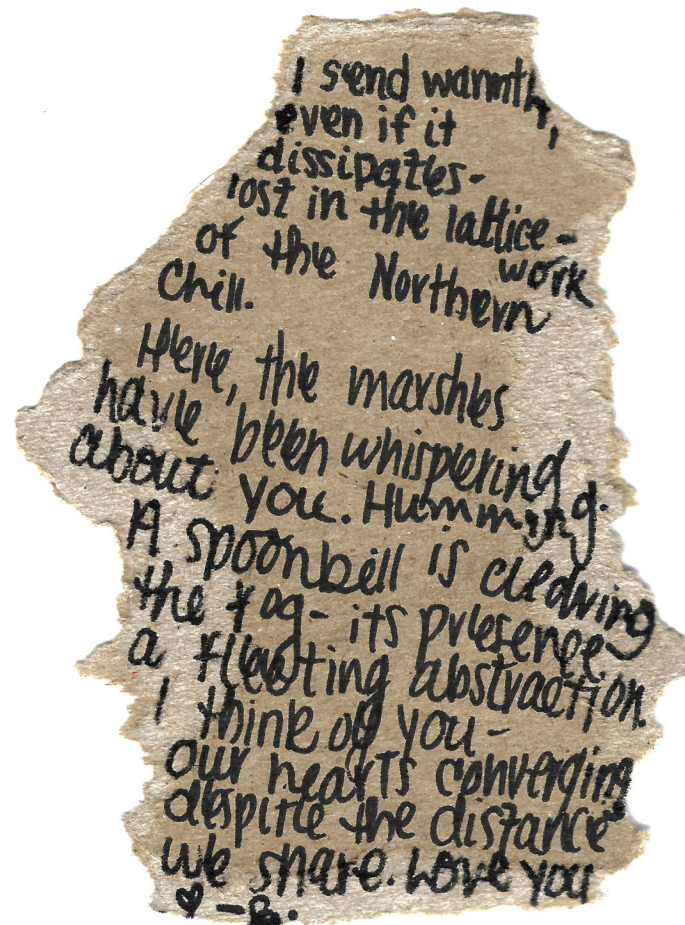
see my skin, drooping  
darlings  
silvered in rose fantasies;  
i bloom from  
my fear of you  
destined to bathe  
in my grandmothers chalice with you forever

como dos pajaros  
nadando en su muerte

el dia que regreso al mar  
yo quiero ver una rosa  
deshaciendo  
sus plumas  
para mi



Dia Hernandez, "Pajaro"  
ig: @hourglasspapi



Beattie Fee, "Hi Snort"  
ig: @southernbelch



allison anne, "of the midst"  
allisonanne.com | ig: @allisonannecollage | bluesky: @allisonanne.com



Reconstruction Log 00038

J. Pleiades



The field of ecological reconnaissance is known for being insular, prestigious, and above all, stiffly competitive. To have conquered several seasons in the Academy and an internship under Drazis Quell only to be assigned a sector of study as apparently barren as sector OXP4X-TETRA would be considered a grave insult by many. I, however, have come to a much different understanding. That is the reason I am currently on my belly in the dirt, concealed by an abundance of hamamelis virginiana, dennstaedtia punctilobula, and helianthus diraricatus, all of which I have thoroughly cataloged in prior botanical entries.

In short, I have come to understand that even the most apparently barren places often contain life if one is persistent and patient enough to track it down.

I watch the clearing ahead of me intently, as I have been since I arrived hours ago, in spite of the heat growing increasingly unbearable as the day ripens. I have tracked my quarry well, and if I am steadfast, I know I will be rewarded. The same heat driving me to lethargy will prove to be more than my quarry can stand sooner or later, and they will be compelled to seek out the spring here to drink. I have learned this—that these ‘watering-holes’ are common gathering-sites for all manner of ecological specimens

A disturbance of the greenery at the other side of the clearing heralds the arrival of my quarry, and I press flatter to the dirt, holding as still as I possibly can. They are flighty things, these creatures. This too, I have learned. The slightest disturbance is often enough to draw their attention, and it rarely takes much more to startle them into bolting.

They emerge from the woodland on long, delicate legs, an adult and her offspring. Mother wears her limbs with quiet elegance, while her young seem merely gawky in comparison. I raise my viewfinder and center the creatures in the narrowed field of vision it provides.

Yes. Yes, these specimens will make a fine addition to my ongoing catalog.

The first click of the shutter goes by unnoticed, Mother and children bowing their heads to drink. The second and third catch Mother’s attention, and she raises her head, ears swivelling in an urgent search for the source of the sound. In quick succession, knowing my window of opportunity is rapidly closing, I snap several more photographs. She must scent my own anxiety on the wind, as in the blink of an eye, she bounds once more for the treeline. Her offspring take some time to calibrate to the new situation, during which I capture more photographs of their abrupt bewilderment, but before long they, too, are skipping away on their own still-unwieldy legs.

It is a careful effort to extract myself from the underbrush without damaging anything. The soil clings to the front of my clothing even after I have retreated from it, compelling me to brush myself down in order to regain some measure of presentability. I may be the sort that roots around in desolate places looking for specimens others may have missed, but I am still a scientist. There are standards to be upheld.

The trek back to the settlement is long and sweltering, but at least there is a stream nearby my destination that I can cool off in. The running water is delicious against the scales of my legs, and I linger for a while as the rest of my body temperature begins to return to a more acceptable degree.

Once refreshed, the short jaunt from the stream to the settlement is fairly pleasant, and when I emerge from the woodland once more I am greeted by a view which has grown familiar to me in recent months. A hodgepodge of wood and scrap metal buildings speckle the large clearing in which the settlement has... well, settled. Some are municipal. Many are residences. All are piecemeal, made of whatever materials the builders had to hand, but made sturdy nonetheless.

My own residence is very near the edge of town from which I departed early this morning to reach the spring where I found my quarry, but not quite so near as one other: a rectangular metal construction with large windows and a side-garden, which belongs to one James Morrow. One James Morrow, who is currently in said side-garden, bent over something with glossy, ovulate leaves, which upon closer inspection appears to be ocimum basilicum.

I must make some indication of my presence as I approach, because he looks up, shielding his eyes from the now-setting sun, and offers me a welcoming jut of his chin.

“Hey, Lux! Great timing, actually—I’ve got something I want you to try. Stay there a second.”

Flummoxed, yet intrigued, as I often am by interactions with James, I approach the boundary of his garden and wait for him to return from within his residence. When he does emerge, he carries a bowl, within which I can see a sort of triangular prism formed of what I recognize to be sweet dough, “pie crust” in this context, and a viscous red ooze filled with nodules of the same color.

James proffers me the bowl with a smile, and cautiously, I accept. It smells... sticky-sweet, like fruits left too long in the sun. James folds his arms proudly across his chest and regards me.

“I think you’ll like this one,” he says, “Have you ever tried cherries before?”

I have not, as it happens, tried cherries before. Certainly not cherries in red ooze. But a scientist unwilling to experiment is hardly a scientist at all. I portion a mouthful into the provided utensil and taste. I can only imagine my intrigue and delight are strong enough to carry on the wind to the other end of town.

“I have learned,” I report, “that I like cherries.”





"I find myself playing a lot of geoguessr these days. It may not be the best use of time as late nights tend to creep into early mornings but it beats time wasted from endless scrolling. Play it enough and you'll find yourself asking questions you would have never thought of like what color are the bollards in Latvia? What kind of trees are there in Vietnam? Are the dogs in Chile different from the ones in Brazil? They are?! Why? And suddenly many games haven't been played at all but I am beaming with the new found knowledge of a peoples, a history, a culture, some great music, and another destination to add to the bucket list. The hours I've equally wasted scrolling have told me there's a lot of horror and suffering in the world but I've spent a lot of time exploring the world and have yet to find anything but bright horizons. In all that time scrolling I haven't seen much of anyone talk about the bright horizons that surround us."

Google Street View/ Microsoft Paint



"My creative practice will sometimes go through weeks or months of dormancy. Call it the weight of the world or the day to day of making ends meet, it's a kink in the hose that results in brushes collecting dust. Sometimes I'll come across a documentary on youtube of an artist talking about their work, their process, or their ideas, and I am suddenly reminded of my own. I'll be given a moment to reflect on the dams I've built up in my head and realize it's time to tear them down. Now any time an idea strikes but I can't find the effort to act on it, I'll untangle the hose and put on an old BBC documentary about Bjork when she was recording her album Homogenic."

Bjork documentary sceencaps/ Microsoft Paint

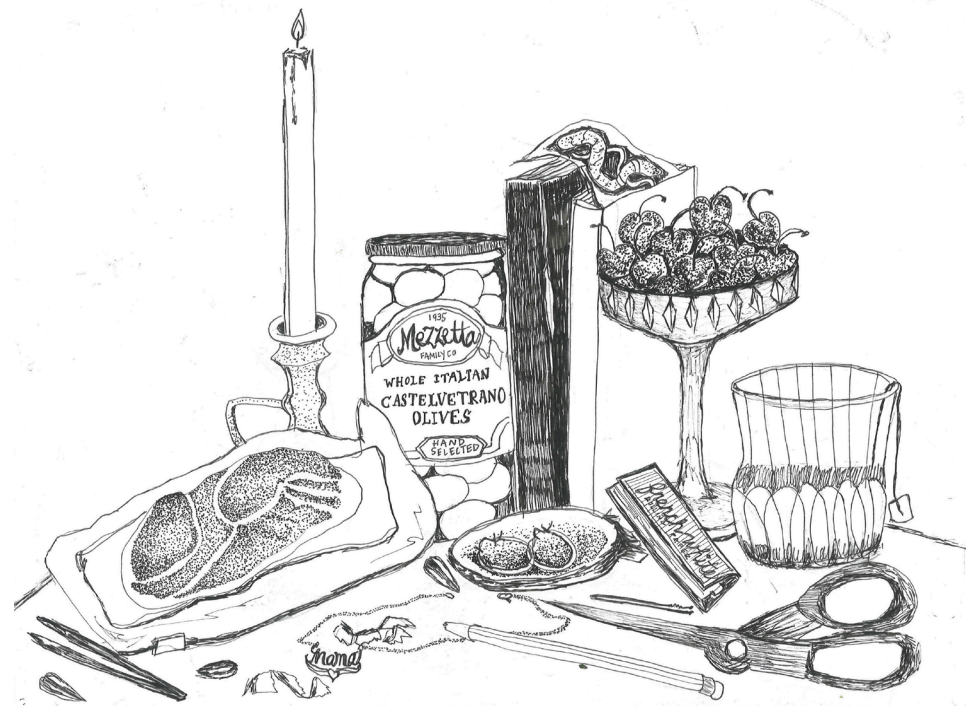
Spencer Domacka, left: "Poulnabrone"  
above: "Show Me Your Palms"  
ig: @rocky.mountain.oysters



#### Summer List:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ★ Swim 1  | ★ Visit the Devil's Chair<br>in Cassadaga |
| ★ Travel  | ★ Cheerwine                               |
| ★ Beach day   | ★ Aquarium date                           |
| ★ Drive-in movie  | ★ Make banana pudding                     |
| ★ Make honey drippers                                       | ★ Swim 3                                  |
| ★ Boat Day (Make friends<br>with someone who has a<br>boat) | ★ 4th of July fireworks                   |
|   | ★ Make a good ass tomato<br>sandwich      |
| ★ Swim 2  | ★ Climb a tree                            |
| ★ Get soft serve ice cream                                  | ★ Stargaze                                |
| ★ Dance   | ★ <del>Write a poem</del>                 |
| ★ Camping at a spring                                       |   |
| ★ Watercolor painting                                       |   |

Justine, "Summer List"  
MolbyOrangeStudios | justinehenry.com



#### Bedside Yearning

Midnight snacks  
A place to rest my pen  
Always in reach  
Holding my earrings  
Spell my name  
Flicker in the darkness  
Day to night  
Spent with my nightstand

#### Scene from A Batting Cage (cover image)

What will I do after I recover from these surgeries? How will I come back into my body? How will I allow joy to exist? Swing, again and again, until my wrists go numb.

All drawings were made in bed while recovering from surgeries.

Jenna Marie Alderiso, above: "Bedside Yearning"  
cover: "Scene from A Batting Cage"  
ig: @poorlycutbangs





have a nice forever is a 10-foot-long sculptural work composed of unglazed ceramic. The piece draws conceptual inspiration from a button currently housed in the Busy Beaver Button Museum in Chicago, IL. A small artifact that carries a deceptively simple, yet hauntingly open-ended message: have a nice forever. This phrase, at once tender yet mysterious, evokes a sentiment of enduring goodwill, but not without a hint of ambiguity. It reads like a warm wish,

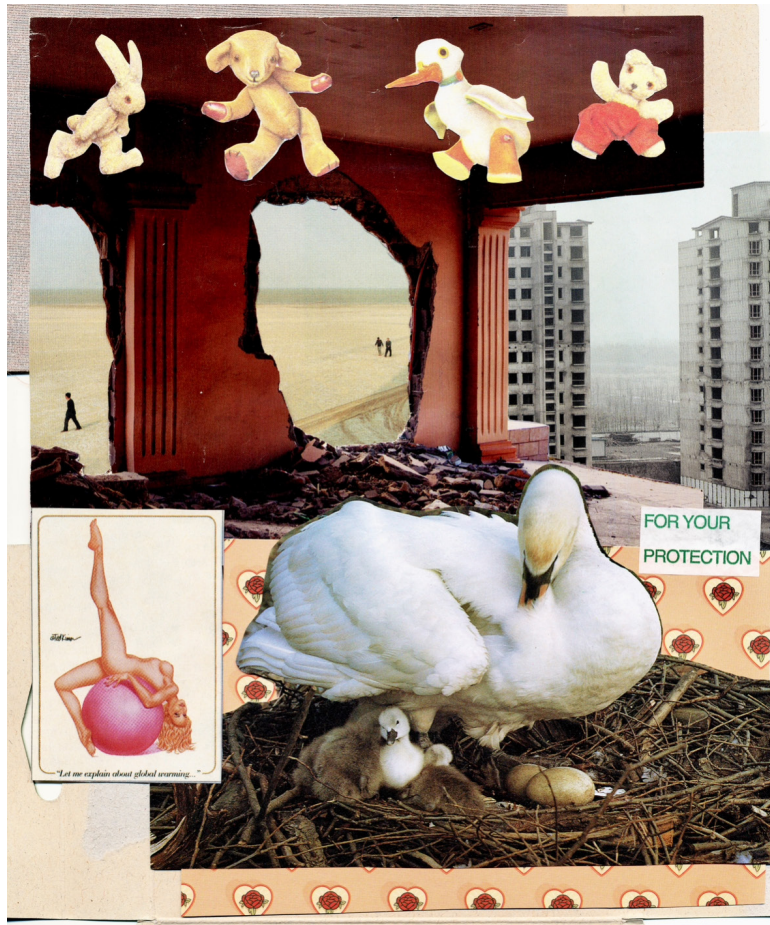
but it also feels like a final goodbye, one that suggests permanence through distance rather than closeness. At its core, this work is an elegy to what was, and a fragile blessing for what might still be- elsewhere, in another life, or not at all. It confronts the inevitability of separation, a truth many resist, yet none escape. "Have a nice forever" also serves as a deeply personal meditation, drawn from the remnants of a formative relationship in my young adult years.

At the time, I believed I had found permanence in another person, a sense of certainty that has since unraveled itself. What remains is memory, a version of myself that is no longer accessible, yet never entirely gone. There is a quiet cruelty in the way things persist only as echoes. How quickly someone you once knew completely can become a stranger in form and feeling. The phrase have a nice forever becomes not only a wish, but a relinquishment. A way of honoring

what was, while acknowledging that it can never be again. In the end, each of us will be called to say goodbye, to friends, to lovers, to versions of ourselves. Death, whether literal, metaphorical, or emotional, is an unrelenting force, indiscriminate in its reach. Sometimes all we can offer is a parting blessing. Sometimes all we can say is: have a nice forever...

gretchen mccloy, "have a nice forever...  
ig: @aspicygreenbean | gretchenmccloy.com





## Interchange

Nonbeaunary

Em Klein, "for your protection"  
ig: @heavenmaybefreedom

When I was a boy  
I had a train phase  
But I didn't want to be 'The Engine That Could'  
I wanted to be 'Katy Caboose'.

Katy the Caboose careening off the tracks  
Freedom like flying backwards down a mountain path  
Towards a cliff at fifty miles per hour  
Getting farther and farther from the steam engine  
Who doesn't even notice she's gone.

The switchback too sharp, being flung from the rickets  
No metal more under her wheels  
No hitch between her and the other cars

She flies

She plummets  
Axles spinning for nothing  
Windows rattling in the rushing wind

She lodges herself between two spruce trees  
Search parties with flashlights can't bring her back to the end of the rail line  
A peace in the crook of the woods.

I think about Katy later  
After I dressed in drag in college  
On a 'dare'

After I read 'The Prince and the Dressmaker'  
For over an hour  
And didn't take it home

In the mirror  
At 27  
I think  
"I can't"

And—

The ties unhitch  
And I'm free

The air whipping past me on my way down the tracks  
There are the waiting arms of tree branches

But I have to let the path shrink from me for a minute  
So that I can fly.



**poem:**

The title is officially 'Interchange I (Based On 'The Caboose Who Got Loose' by Bill Peet)', a poem about the weird connection I made between stepping off the ledge into transgenderism and the picture book I read when I was younger, 'The Caboose Who Got Loose', by Bill Peet. Something really struck my brain in a way that neither 'Thomas the Tank Engine' nor 'The Little Engine Who Could' did.

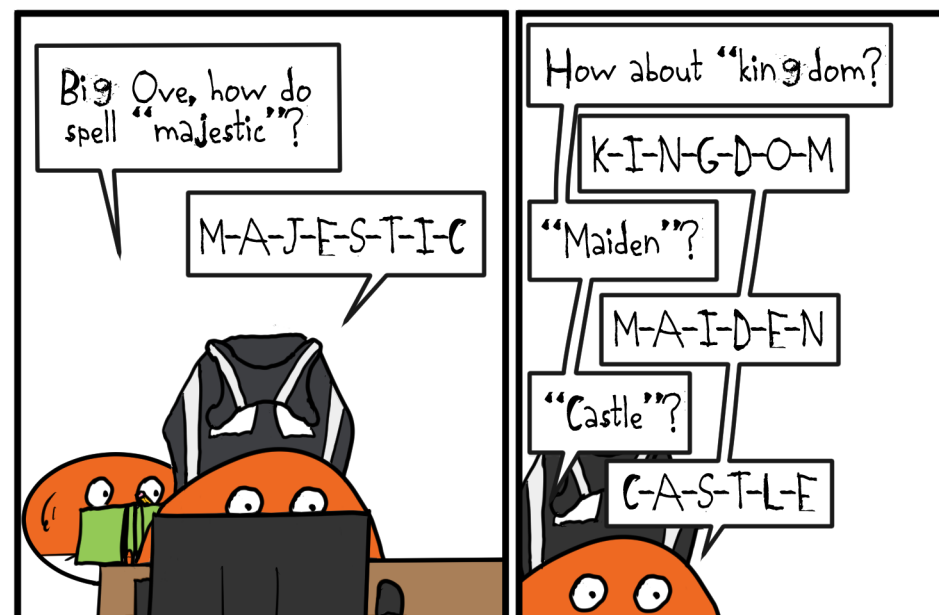
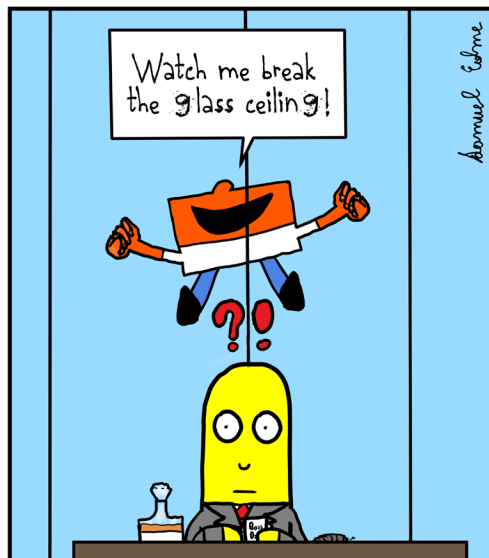
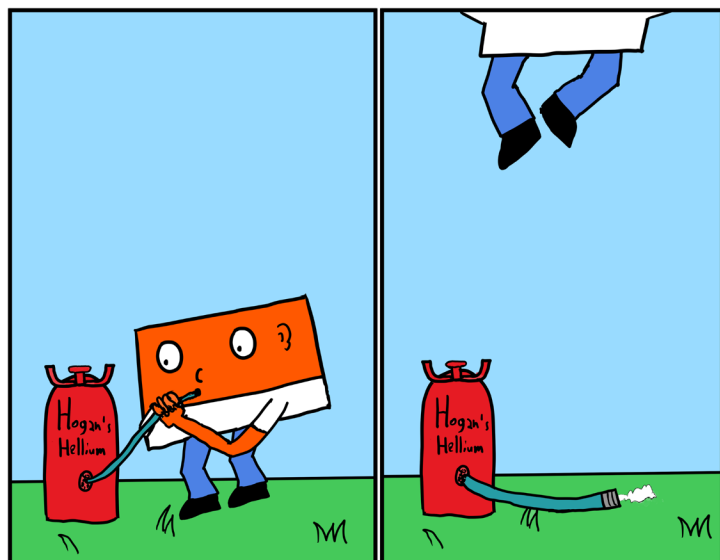
There's something terrifying to a six-year-old about images of a train flung from the tracks into open air.

There's something terrifying to a twenty-seven-year-old about looking in the mirror and no longer knowing who it is looking back and why.

**image:**

This is a supplemental visual piece to the above poem, titled 'Interchange II (Based On 'The Caboose Who Got Loose' by Bill Peet)'. I used Canva free assets in order to construct the image. It's a 'tribute' to the titular character, Katy Caboose, surrounded by imagery invoking flight and transness.

Nonbeaunary, left: "Interchange 3 (Based On The Caboose Who Got Loose by Bill Peet)"  
above: "Interchange 33 (Based On The Caboose Who Got Loose by Bill Peet)"  
ig: @pix\_elbeau







allison anne, "no two ways"  
allisonanne.com | ig: @allisonannecollage | bluesky: @allisonanne.com



# My Computer, My Enemy: Moving Beyond the Digital Detox

it-dont-have-to-sting



## My Computer, My Enemy: Moving Beyond the Digital Detox

*A mini guide to stop doomscrolling, because you will migrate from your phone to your computer.*

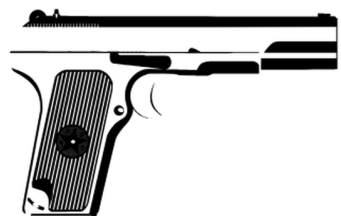
### Siteblockers – make them your best friend

*Unhooked* blocks YouTube Shorts, suggestions, playlists and more. It is available on Chrome, Microsoft Edge & Firefox

*Screentime* is a browser screen time plugin that blocks sites and allows you to see accurate weekly usage. Available on Chrome only.

*Undistracted* Blocks facebook, YouTube, Twitter\* LinkedIn, Reddit, Instagram and Netflix, along with widgets encouraging self-reflection. Available on Chrome, Firefox

*Antigram* blocks the explore page, reels, stories and suggested followers on Instagram.



**YOU'LL NEED AN ARSENAL'S WORTH.**

**\*I REFUSE TO AMEND THIS**

### Back to the Basics

Keep your computer charged in a designated space (that isn't your bedroom), such as the living room, kitchen/dining room, a desk or the basement, et cetera.



**THIS IS THE HARDEST, BUT MOST IMPORTANT PART!**

Try not to move to a more comfortable spot – you'll be more susceptible to doomscrolling.

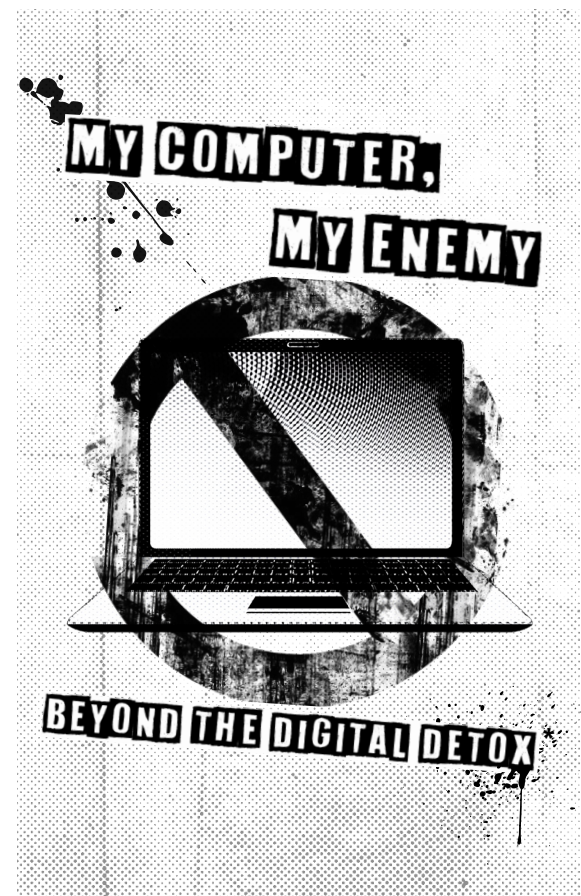
### Extra Tips

*Sticky notes* are good for jotting down things to Google later instead of falling down rabbit holes. *Schedule* pockets of time throughout the day for answering Google searches and other minor computer-related tasks.

*Notebooks, notes apps or journals* are useful for observing and recording how your new lifestyle is going – wins, fears and tweaks that will keep you on your desired path.

a note:

this piece has been reformatted here for readability, but it also exists as a standalone zine with additional information and images. I highly recommend checking it out at the artist's socials listed below – c



"I made this zine to help keep me on the so-called 'straight and narrow' when it came to weaning myself off internet overconsumption. Most of the material I found was on how to use your phone less, but using my phone wasn't the major problem. I decided to wing it and come up with different ways to not only keep myself engaged, but gently encourage original thought and critique."

it-dont-have-to-sting, "My Computer, My Enemy: Moving Beyond the Digital Detox"  
it-dont-have-to-sting.tumblr.com

Your body is not made up of the stars I remember  
Your navel limp of stardew,  
Heart sockets beaten into the north of you  
And the world, of which you are  
It's sky I partitioned  
To love you

Salt begins, then the sky, and the oceans  
Our hands lastborn and locked to the deepest cerulean  
Coagulated of salt  
Crestfallen

The ocean is always at the center of me but there is a  
reason why our bodies point skywards  
Our astrology is nothing like diamonds  
When I am in your car it is my first time living and dying  
You move heaven  
And despite what I profess, stars eventually burst  
You will fade into nothing and remain true



## issue 05 contributors:



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