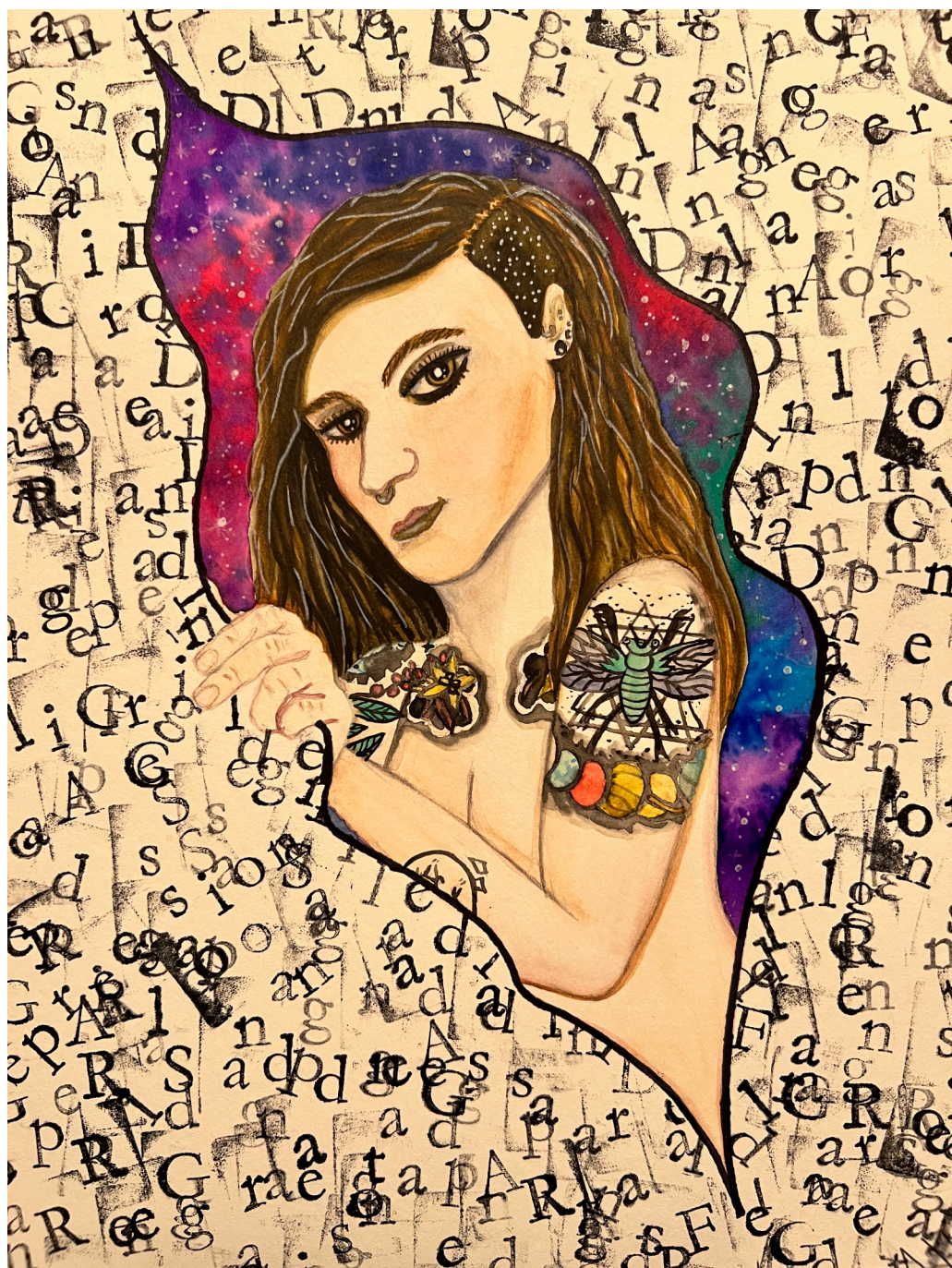




-PRESENTS-





Coming Out
Vöid Höpsön

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Foreword

In late January 2022, I was sitting in my tiny Japanese apartment, planning my return to my hometown of Fairfax, VA. Aching to begin transition after my “egg” cracked mid-pandemic in a foreign country, I was looking at job postings at home with the idea that I would continue working in education as a teacher.

Soon, the news of book protests began to hit my feed. I watched in horror as my teacher friends shared stories of parents bringing books about people with bodies like mine,— trans and GNC bodies— to school board meetings, demanding that stories of people like me be removed for “obscenity”. I watched my friends who dared to speak out get doxxed on twitter. I knew that I needed to join the fight, but in a way that would never be beholden to the people attacking my community.

NoVA Prism Center & Library was born. Even before I departed, I was developing the plans for a nonprofit library and community center that would bring a safer space to LGBTQ+ residents of Fairfax County and the surrounding areas. As far as I could tell, nothing of its kind existed in the area. We quickly found a mentoring org that sponsored us as a 501(c)(3), and the work began.

Right now, NoVA Prism Center is a mobile library, hearkening to the Bookmobiles of old. But what we lack in permanence, we make up for in portability: A local business or community center can be transformed into a safe space focused on providing access to our community, with books highlighting our experiences, lives, and bodies. We bring comfortable seating for reading sessions, and library computers that can be used in confidence to find guidance online for things people may not be able to research at home.

We also publish a zine, The Lantern, which you are holding in your hands or reading on your device right now. This issue is but the first of many, because there are countless stories to tell here in NoVA. And of course, this zine could not be made without the efforts of our contributors or the donors who helped bring this zine to life through pre-orders, so to all of you, we extend our sincerest thanks.

Finally, always remember: when you shine a light, you just might see a rainbow.

With love,

Leon van der Goetz, Executive Director, NoVA Prism Center & Library

bisexual

Michaela Godding

Previously published by Rabble Review, September 5, 2022

“sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender; attracted to both men and women.”

is to say I, the woman
am attracted to you, the man
is to say I, the woman,
am attracted to you, the woman
is to say I, the me
am attracted to you, the you
is to say you, the you
is the only you of you
is to say the you you give me
is the only you you will give me
is to say you are you

and I am me but we
are something else entirely
is to say we, the us,
are attracted to we, the us
is to say we, are attracted to ourselves?
is to say I, the question,
am attracted to you, the answer?
is to say, what I love
is only determined
by what loves me back?

that all language is discourse?
that all labels are sanctuary?
what I know is not what I am drawn to,
but what overflows me,
what I know is that sex
has everything to do with water,
what I know is that you are a flood
and I am a ground-floor apartment.

Before it's Too Late

Gary Shulman, MS. Ed.

Sometimes the life that brings you joy
Like being who you were born to be
Kills the love of those who think
You're the root rot of the family tree
Bigotry is powerful
It makes a parent say
You're still my son
but it disgusts me
Now please.....just stay away
Life is short, but not so sweet
When a parent refuses to see
That which allows a child to shine
Will bless that family tree



Just Some Perspectives

Gary Shulman, MS. Ed.

Funny how anyone who has known bias in life
Can spew hate filled words as sharp as a knife
Forget a long history replete with derision
And manifest cruelty in every decision
I see it today at every turn
It makes my vintage spirit angry and burn
To make others suffer for just being true
To their genuine selves in this red, white and blue
Well I have no solutions, No remedy nor cure
All I can do is open the door
To compassion, to inclusion
Be as peaceful as a dove
And direct all my energy
To kindness and love



What do you believe when no one is around?

Josh Evans Tetzlaff (@josh_evans_tetzlaff)

Model: @ready_w_red

Mission Control

Renee S. Browne (@sophystra)

Distance between two chairs,
Three relatives,
One conversation
Is the length a body can be stretched between a black hole
Disintegrating atoms in snippets of sentences,
We glance at each other on the chairs become galley of a starship.
Mission control is listening.
"I don't understand this non-binary, shim, him, nonsense."

"Girl, me neither."

"They have these kids confused. Just let them be kids!"

I, the astronaut turn to the two in front of me,
Their words not coming through clearly,
Thinking something is wrong-
I check vitals,
Want to get up to peruse a manual but I do not.
I watch as the other two astronauts from neighboring country,
Become new,
Strange,
No longer an ally.
In between these snippets are Caribbean music,
It would be grounding normally but the music hurt.
The atoms are shredding.
The astronauts are laughing,
Skinning teeth,
Saying things about how gender is too much for kids,
Don't say gay was the best thing, that it "worked" for Florida-
I find the black hole tearing atoms from my throat,
The astronauts are laughing,
The monitors are playing information,
I can't seem to turn my head,
The ship is headed toward destruction,
I scream,

We should know who we are. We should know about our bodies. I was abused three
times because I didn't know.
And it is absorbed.
I cannot see if the information has been transmitted.

Expressions are now behind helmets.
I didn't see when they put them on,
There were blinks my eyes had taken,
But I didn't make them.
I feel the atoms of my fleshy cerebrum,
Eking away,
Trying to process the agony but it is exponential.
The truth,
The code,
I am locked inside.
The astronauts are laughing.
In horror, I realize we will self-destruct.
In horror,
I realize the path was set.
My hands are gone now.
My torso, a chain of flesh unraveling.
Watching in fascination,
I close my eyes to oblivion.
If I could make a deal with God
it would be to end the laughter,
To be on a different course,
Scream into fire-
Become energy,
Unlearn the massive dissonance between us,
Clench their Caribbean rhythms,
Hold and shake,
Turn this mango into chow,
Consume them
And spit out seed and judgment.
The seed would cut through any
Black hole,
Climb,
Grow many fruits,
Thick,
Juicy,

With attitude,
Queer and whole.
Whole and filled,
With atoms bound together by love.
And then there would be real laughter.

Pluck

Arielle Winkler (@BashfulBunnyPress)

you were baby's breath
an accent in my bouquet
that meant more to me
than I realized

you shared yourself with another
your generous scent, your kind nectar
your petals were pulled away
until I picked them up
your rare, rooted laughter was my reward
my comfort was your eternal love

until one day you weren't there
plucked out of my life
by someone who wanted
your petals, buds and leaves
all to himself

he made you believe
you needed to be bound
and used to serve one bouquet
he made you believe
my love wasn't enough
that all I could offer
were plastic stems and nylon petals

now I'm left without your bountiful flowers
your sunshine smile
no longer for me

and my petals wilt further

Chaser

Lilah Wray

I know why you came here
After school
Your mouth still stained
Kool aid red

A bloody smear
On your innocence
My flickering movements
Just bait
that
Your fathomless shark eyes consume
But you never come in.

I am reclining on the surface
My breasts bared
for the noon sun

You couldn't dip your toe in
To the same water
Soaking me
From Birth.

This pool
my palace
Placenta sacked
Body wracked

My cerulean haven
Nothing more
Than Your nightmare.



A Child of Flowers
Renee S. Browne (@sophystra)

To Fathers, Just Because

Gary Shulman, MS. Ed.

To all the fathers who did their best
To do it right, to rise to the test
To all the dads be they one or two
Straight, Trans or Gay,
in the red, white and blue
To all the father figures
All permutations galore
Mentor, role model, teacher
One thing I know for sure
If you reached down deep
Into that scary place
Threw expectations out the window
Allowed your heart to race
While you loved your child
Unconditionally
Whatever he, she, them
Turned out to be
Then bravo to you
For you did it right
You did it pure
You fought the good fight
You saved your child from a terrible fate
For you chose to love
and not berate
You loved your child
just because
That is enough
APPLAUSE! APPLAUSE!



Instructions (2022, colored)

Leon van der Goetz (@NoVAPrismCenter)

With much love to Neil Gaiman, whose works have lived rent-free in my head for much longer than I realized.

This community is too young
for old wooden gates and unknown paths,
but follow the trails
in the Reston Woods
at twilight.

Lose yourself on the unpaved path,
cross the wooden bridge,
rest under the pawpaw tree that
shouldn't be here,
and find yourself in the faerie ring
of morels (or hen-of-the-woods, in autumn).

When the fox crosses the field,
follow her.
Do not look away; she will try to trick you.
The oldest tree in the forest
hides a secret door.
Go through it.

An ancient being,
androgynous and beautiful,
waits in the cottage.
Xe will ask your name to grant passage,
Give xem the dead one (xe will keep it).
It will never cross your lips again.

Leave by the front door
with pride.
Go down the path
and exit through the blackened gate.
Follow the river
and join the herd of deer;
run deeper into the forest.

You will cross a clearing
carpeted with wild ramps.
Do not pick them;
take nothing from these woods.

The deer trail is ahead of you,
walk until you come upon a village.
(You're not in Maryland,
for all this looks like the Renn Fest.)

When you enter the central hall,
take their offer of clothing.
Choose joy (this is not a place of judgment).
Exit the changing room.
Do not look into the mirror,
not yet.

The one who plays the king
is not a king (but you can trust him).
When he asks your name,
Give him the name in your heart.
Accept his blessing.

Before you leave,
find the hall of mirrors.
Each reflection is different;
touch the one that reveals your soul.

As you depart,
the villagers will ask for gifts.
Give them the clothes you brought with you,
you won't need them anymore.

Return the way you came.
Do not look at your reflection
until you cross the wooden bridge again.
You will return to the pavement at the stroke of midnight.

Do not be afraid of the joggers,
though your clothing may seem strange to them.
There are few at this hour.
When you get home,
look into the mirror (for perhaps the first time, feel joy).
There you are.



Galatea

Lilah Wray


I'm sorry
I was done
Being played with.

No longer your toy
No longer just for fun
No longer the silent one

You will contend with my hips
My curves
My full lips
No less
Than you deserve

You saw a Teddy bear
And called it a friend
But i am a woman
Of flesh
Blood
And sinew
The same as you

No longer a friend
You made me an enemy
Yours to miss
You only love things
you can squish





Metamorphosis
Girasol O'Neill (@solmakesstuff)

For Adam

Lilah Wray

We had a disagreement
Though the books will say different.
They'll say I was disagreeable
They'll say I was difficult
Because I didn't want to be made small by my love.
Because i believed love to be a partnership
Not a chain.
They'll say I stole his seed.
But how could I steal what was given to me?
They'll say " you have to be strong"
Then cry
"you're terrifying."
They'll say
" you have to be patient "
Then tell you
" you're cold."
But I am not a mattress
Nor am I a blanket
And though i glow i am not
your moon
nor your stars
Though i burn
I am not required to warm you.
I am
Imperfect
Gluttonous
Rage filled
Insatiable
And i was never made to lie beneath you.

Needing a Drink

Arielle Winkler (@BashfulBunnyPress)

I haven't needed a drink
in what feels like years now
the burn feels like a stranger
much like you
I need it when it hurts the most
when the absence is almost palpable
it feels more instant
than it did before
the heaviness
the head rush
thoughts of you, you, you
I'm disoriented, stumbling
now I know how it feels
to love them and not want to let go
it's been years since our end
why doesn't it hurt any less?



Safe Space
Vöid Höpsön



FIND US ONLINE

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facebook.com/NoVAPrismCenter
Instagram: @NoVAPrismCenter
Twitter: @NoVAPrismCenter

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Your donations will allow NoVA Prism Center & Library to do critical startup tasks for our projected opening in 2023.

NoVA Prism Center & Library is a fiscally sponsored CORE Cause charitable project of CORE Foundation Inc, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, EIN 20-5997764. Donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

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