

TRANSWEEK
NOV 2012

LEAVING
WITH
QUESTIONS

For more splendid^{er}
Iowa city trans* action
get in touch at
transcollaborations.wordpress.com
or email
transcollaborations@gmail



Artwork by Dave Frisina

Things i am and
things i am not

- i am trapped
but i am not trapped in
my body,
- i am trapped
between the rock of your
rules and the hard place
of your expectations.
- i am scared
but i am not scared
of myself,
- i am scared.
of the inevitability of
social violence
- i am depressed
but i am not depressed
because i am trans*,
- i am depressed.
by the ramifications
of your assumptions.
- i am a freak
but i am not a freak
because of what i am
- i am a freak
because your society is
a circus and i am
neither a lion nor
a tamer.

- i am broken
but i am not broken in
my spirit or my will
to be,
- i am broken
in my heart by the
incapacities of this world.
- i am brave
but i am not brave for
being me,
- i am brave
for enduring you.

- ellie navidson
invisiblyqueer.tumblr.com

**An open letter to my fellow CAMAB trans femmes from a place
of hurt, but also of love**

~ from a CAFAB trans femme.

[This is specifically directed at CAMAB trans femme activists who place a lot of emphasis on CASAB.]

I want you to know that I see you, I hear you, and I respect you. I do not want to step on your experiences or pain. I want to reach out to you from a place of love, respect, and solidarity.

Please stop lumping me in with trans men. Please stop telling me I have male privilege when I don't, and recognize that even when I do, it comes with the price of misgendering (just like you.) Please stop telling me that I am privileged for my birth sex assignment, when the majority of the things I have ever received from it are sexism from childhood, rape, abuse (from trans men!) and chronic pain that doctors refused to treat because I was a woman in their eyes. Please stop telling me I do not experience sexism, when in reality, it has shaped my life. Please understand that the scars and still bleeding wounds from my past – most of which were sexism-based – did not vanish overnight the day I came out as trans. They are still with me to this day, and always will be. Please respect me as the utmost authority on my own experiences. Please.

When you say and do these things, you hurt me. When you say and do these things, you misgender me and make me dysphoric, because you are making my CASAB more important than my gender, which I share with many of you as a non-binary femme. Thus you also misgender yourselves and your non-binary femme siblings. When you lump me in with masculine binary trans men, you lump me in with a community and people that have been abusive to me and people like me. When you treat CASAB as something that is always known and obvious to others, you ignore how I am often treated like and assumed to be one of you. You also reify the cis expectation that trans people are always "obvious" and that they can always pick us out. And in treating me and my experiences as less important, you ignore the fact that I have struggled against many of the same things. You drive an unnecessary wedge between me and people of my same gender based on a system we all supposedly rejected and have decried as bullshit. And in doing so, you leave me extremely isolated.

This is not to say that our experiences are identical. This is not even to say that our histories of being treated differently based upon our CASABs are irrelevant or unimportant. Quite the opposite. I want to see an activist world where our relationships to our CASABs are complicated and nuanced and real and legitimate.

I don't feel like your experiences must be invalid for mine to be valid, or vice versa. I think it is much more realistic and respectful to live with the tension that conflicting personal experiences creates.

I want to honor your different experiences along with our shared ones. I want to speak out for you when desired, but not speak over you. I want to fight to ensure that you do not get ignored or lost or forgotten. I want to fight for your inclusion in women's spaces, feminist spaces, queer spaces, and trans male dominated trans spaces. I want to work toward getting you the resources you need and deserve. I want to work toward promoting positive visibility (as opposed to negative or fetishizing hyper-visibility) and amplifying your voices. I want to build a trans feminist community that recognizes how complicated and multi-faceted and far-reaching sexism is. I want to build a gender liberation community that honors our shared and different experiences with sexism. I want to fight femmephobia together, and examine and question how femmephobia and transphobia intersect. I want to share femme space and femme solidarity with you.

I also just want to not be so lonely. I want a trans community of people whose genders are the same or similar. I want to revel in our shared gender experiences and make space for time when we can ignore what is or was in our pants and privilege what is and will be in our hearts.

So while I am speaking from a place of pain, it is also one of hope, love, and solidarity. I hope this will be received well, in the loving spirit it was written in. I hope we can resolve this in a way that benefits everyone and honors all of our experiences.

In love and solidarity –

FINDING ME

I am not only male
I am not female
I am not what you expect
me to be

I am not what you want
me to be

I am not a joke

I am not sick

I am not confused

I am not genderqueer

I am an artist

I am a brother

I am in love

With spoken word

I am a best
friend

I am a person

I AM AN

**AGENDER
TRANS MAN**



-Aiden Evander C.

R	C	Z	S	D	N	E	I	R	F
E	A	O	E	N	A	Q	R	O	R
E	X	T	M	C	K	E	U	S	I
U	M	W	C	M	T	C	R	E	E
Q	Z	E	H	T	U	N	U	L	N
X	O	H	I	O	R	N	A	F	T
S	O	L	F	U	N	A	I	Z	U
A	G	N	I	V	I	R	H	T	O
R	I	Z	E	L	P	R	U	P	Y

Community
Friends
Glitter
Thriving
Self



An Abortion Story

"You don't have to go through with this," she said.

David sighed.

"Yeah, but..."

"No, not 'yeah but.' You *don't* have to go through with this if you don't want to, David." Sometimes having Julia as a best friend was enraging, but she did have a point. And sometimes her crazy lesbian feminist politics were useful. Like right now, when he was considering an abortion.

"Doesn't it cost a lot of money?" he asked.

"Not nearly as much as pre-natal care and a hospital birth."

He cupped his hand over his offending organs. "Why?" he asked them directly. "Wasn't the testosterone injections I gave you enough? You had to go and do this??"

"Oh, Davey." She giggled, and put her hand to her mouth. "It'll be okay. I promise."

He looked up at her and smiled. "For real?"

"Yes."

David sighed and sat down on the curb of their block, and watched two white butterflies circle each other lazily in the park across the street.

"Does Kevin know?"

"No. Not yet anyway."

"Are you going to tell him?"

"I think I better. He's gonna freak out, though."

"I think he'll deal. Especially if I talk to him, too."

"You really think so? I mean, shit Julia – he gave up his 'perfect homo' card to be with me, and now I'm fucking pregnant."

"No, he didn't. You know that, I know that, and he knows that. You're a boy still, yes?"

"No, really," David said, glowering.

"Well then, he's still a 'perfect homo,' as you put it. And if the other cis gays pick on him about dating a trans guy, that's their shit, not his. He's still got us supporting him."

"Yeah, but it was different before."

"How so?"

"Before we could pretend like my shit was all just imaginary – like everyone else was just mistaken, and I really was just like any other boy."

"Well you guys acknowledged that your junk was real enough to use it – obviously."

David blushed a little and looked away. "Yeah, but if I was bottoming anyway, it wasn't *that* different. It was just a little lower and self-lubricating."

"Uhh... David? I hate to break it to ya, but that statement shows how you are *exactly* just like any other boy."

"No, I'm *not*, Julia. And you know just as well as I how disingenuous that statement was."

She looked down. "No, you're right. They *do* treat us differently, don't they?"

David said nothing, but his silence sufficed.

"The last time I tried dating a cis girl, well... you remember what happened."

"Her cis lesbian friends teased her mercilessly, until she finally dumped you because you 'have a penis' and were just trying to trap her into a heterosexual relationship. Did I miss anything?" he asked.

"No. Well, you missed the part where her mother *loved* me, because I was like a gateway boyfriend or something so her daughter could be straight again."

"LOL."

"For real, I think that was what actually tipped her over the edge. She was handling her friends fine, because I warned her that might happen, and Miranda was all about the shock value. She didn't care that they were freaking out – she kind of reveled in the attention. But when her mother inadvertently validated what all their transphobic asses were saying, well. Heh."

"Right."

They sat in silence for a few long minutes.

"So are you gonna have that thing, or not?"

"I dunno. I mean if I do, I'd have to give it up. There's just no way. I'm nineteen. I'm a fucking college freshman. Where would I put it? I'd basically have to drop out. And I doubt Kevin's ready to be a father yet, either."

"And you'd have to stop T for a while," she added softly.

David's face fell and went pale.

"I would, wouldn't I?"

"There's absolutely no way you could have a healthy pregnancy without stopping your testosterone shots. None. In fact, there may already be fetal damage because you didn't realize you were pregnant for so long."

"Right. I mean, I wasn't having periods before, and so it's not like I had an easy gauge there. I actually only went to the doctor because I was throwing up every day for two weeks. I thought I had the flu. Hah. Guess there isn't a way to do this thing half-assed, is there?"

"Not really. At least not until you have it. Then you can go back to business as usual."

"Except for the part where my hips will be even wider, and my stomach will have stretch marks, and my moobs will be leaking."

"I mean, they *do* have drugs to stop the lactation – or induce it, if you're intent on breastfeeding, for that matter – but you are right, your hips will be wider and you might get stretch marks."

"Right. How am I ever gonna pass if I have all that going on?"

"Plenty of cis guys have stretch marks if they gain and then lose weight real fast. It's not an uncommon situation. They're just scars."

"Yeah, but if they have to do a C-section? That'll leave me with some pretty intense and specific scarring."

Julia shrugged.

"So have an abortion."

"You say that like it's the easiest decision ever. Like it isn't destroying a life."

"It *isn't* destroying a life. It's destroying a *potential* life. The only life you'd be destroying is your own if you do this thing out of some twisted sense of obligation instead of an actual desire to bring a child into this world."

"Isn't it dangerous, though?"

"Maybe a little. But pregnancy is eleven times more dangerous than abortion," she replied.

"Well when you put it like that..."

"It makes perfect sense, doesn't it?" she said smugly.

David looked at her, looking so pleased with herself, and shook his head.

"You're too much."

"No," she said, hugging him tightly, "I think I'm just enough."

"Will you go with me?" he asked shyly.

"Duh, bitch."

He shoved her playfully, and she shoved him back.

"I'll make the appointment, then."

When I was 17 or 18, I told my mom I was also attracted to girls.

She said, "Sometimes, you make things so hard on yourself."

I sat yesterday, while trying to pay my bills, and tried the old words on...
Like clothes that no longer fit.

I've been doing that a lot lately.

Yesterday was just the first time I recognized what I was doing

Trying to get those old clothes that were so comfortable, safe and warm to fit by sheer willpower...

Maybe, if I just sit in them long enough...

Then I won't have to go out + invest in

A Whole New Wardrobe.

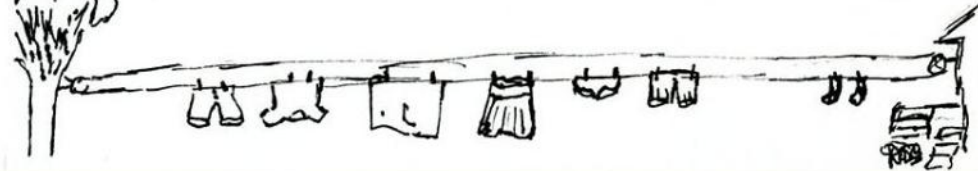
If I just wait...

They'll fit again...

But they don't.

If only it were as concrete + straightforward as ill fitting clothes.

And, it's not in my nature to sit + wait. (isn't that really just settling?) for change.



FEAR

So, I guess Mom was right.
It's a fucking hard world + I'm a bad liar.
... 'course I've never wanted to be good.

JOY

I suppose I'll walk around feeling Naked for a while.

-N

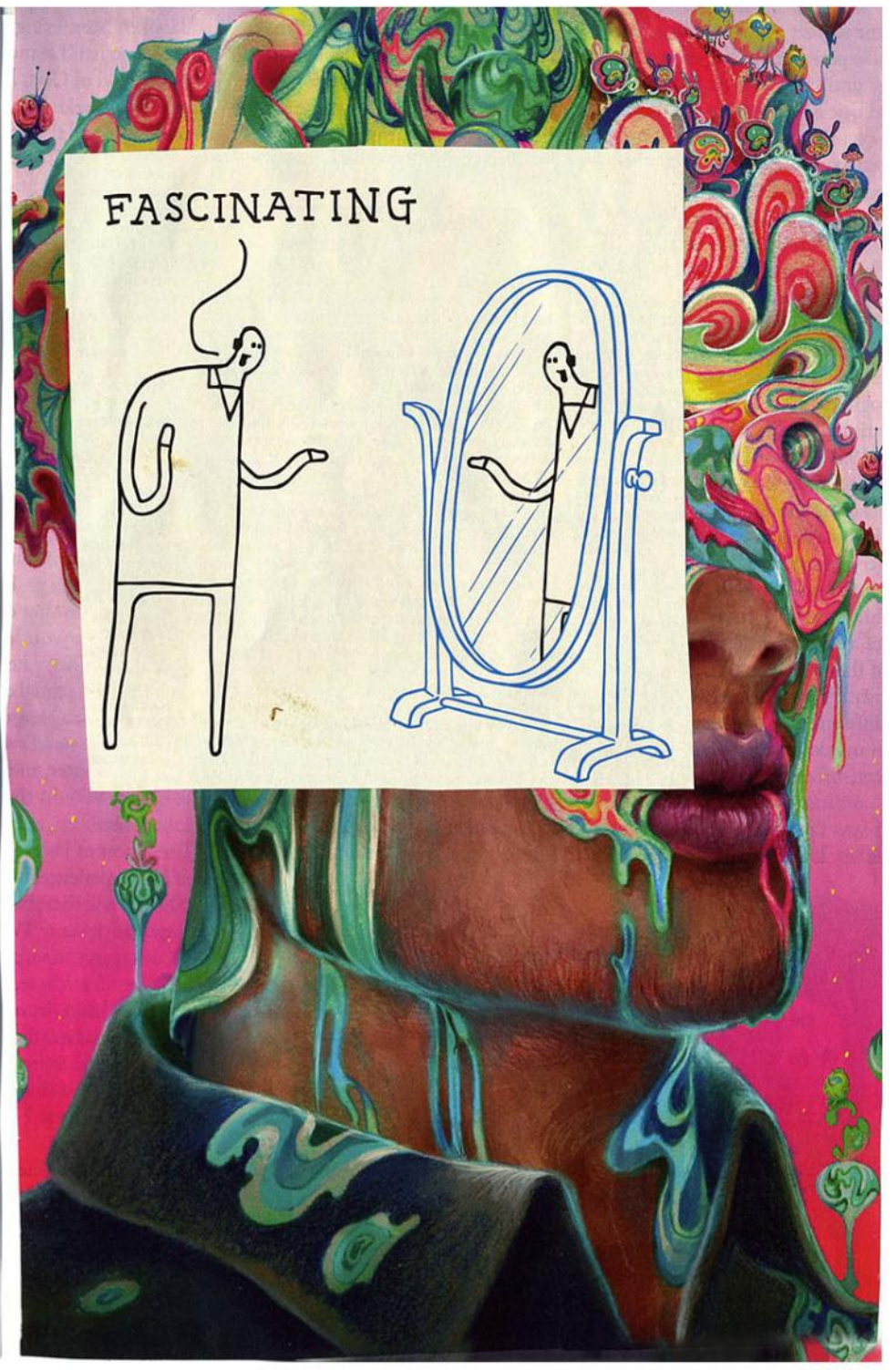
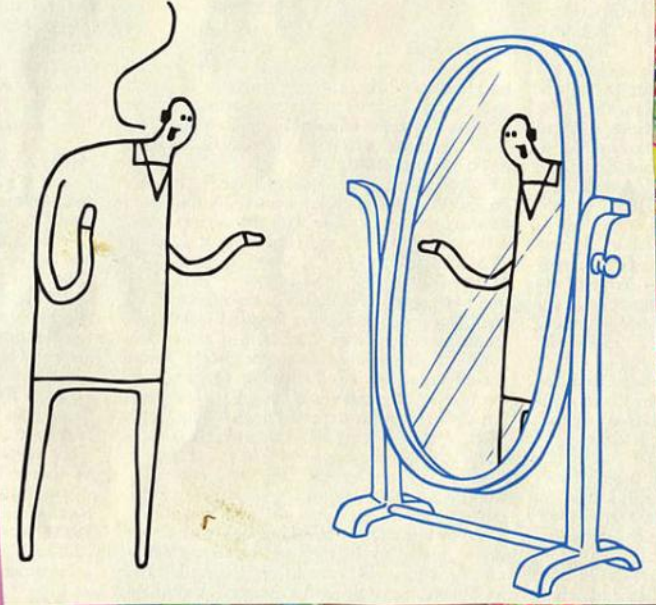
I've lived in gyms my entire life. I've learned to read the questions behind your stares in the mirror, the way questions linger on my body, linger with cockiness, then you stare with confusion, Did SHE refuse to meet and panic through your face to awkwardly answer we learn share the uttering one another, following the gym floor as I resolutely refuse to pick one, to tell you what I am.



- Cathy

At me, you squint that have breasts? If you are a guy - well I refuse to meet and panic through your face to awkwardly answer we learn share the uttering one another, following the gym floor as I resolutely refuse to pick one, to tell you what I am.

FASCINATING



i can't write

my narrative

because even

thinking about it

is...

...triggering!

Steve

It had been another long day at work. I was so looking forward to my usual supper at Bonifacio's, which is not, as you are undoubtedly thinking, an Italian restaurant but a sandwich shop. I was hoping that the cute guy who sometimes ran the register was there again tonight. I'd seen him first about six months ago when I happened to stop in by chance as my regular haunt back then was closed by the health department. Bonifacio's food wasn't great but he was enough reason to keep returning as I hoped to see him again. He was gay or queer, I was sure of it, and I'd been lonely since my boyfriend dumped me a year ago for not being "gay enough" – whatever the hell that meant. Kip was his name and he always smiled at me, in a way I was pretty sure he never smiled at other customers. He was shorter and more slender than me but I could imagine his arms...well, you don't need to know what I could and did imagine. Anyway, I got to Bonifacio's and my heart gave a little lurch I'd gotten so accustomed to when I saw him there, his back to me, doing something along the back counter. I smiled without realizing it, work already being forgotten, happy to see him again.

I ordered and got my usual, but instead of him checking me out it was the owner. He'd disappeared into the back somewhere when I wasn't looking, never having gotten to see his face.

I was eating my reuben when I found a hair. Disgusted, I showed it to the owner, who promised me a new sandwich and my next meal free, which I accepted. I went back and waited at my table.

I looked up when I saw the feet of someone coming towards me, presumably with my sandwich, in a long skirt with sneakers. A new employee? My eyes travelled up, noting a slim waist, slim body, small breasts and...Kip's face?

I was so confused. I didn't understand. I took the sandwich from...hom?, stunned. He said words I didn't hear, a concerned look on his face, and retreated back to the counter.

As I ate the sandwich, confused at who and was Kip was, playing our interaction over and over in my head, I realized one thing. I had still gotten the same unconscious smile on my face when I realized the person? Woman? Guy? – handing my food to me was Kip. And I was still smiling now, even as I wondered about him.

Kip

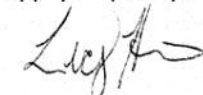
I was really hoping he would come in again today. I'd first seen him about six months ago when he came in, seemingly for his first time, and I'd rung him up. He was handsome, cute in a way that I liked men, taller than me and with broad shoulders I wanted to nibble and bite and...yum. I think his name was Steve. I'm not sure as I'd always been too shy to ask but I think that's what he answered when Liza asked him one time as she rang him up. She has a crush on him too, but I'm pretty sure it's not mutual. In fact, I could be wrong but I'm pretty sure he's interested in me.

And that's where things get complex. Because my experience with cis people has been largely one of disappointment, because they inevitably either think I'm a guy because that's how I usually dress or they think I'm a woman because I have a chest I usually bind. Wrong on either count, of course. I'm me, with a gender I can't name but that's as fluid as rain water scattering across the streets on a hot summer day. So I was nervous about his interest – though I was sure he was gay or queer in some way – because I was tired of cis people breaking my heart as they try to shove me in a box. I was cleaning some knives on the back counter when I managed to soak myself with the bucket I was using. I went to the back and changed into a skirt and blouse I wore to dance class because I got less harassment when I dressed that way. I had to ditch my binder which was really awkward. At least my shoes and briefs were dry; that was something.

When I got back out front, the owner told me to take a reuben to the customer who found a hair in his. I started across the room with it and my heart almost stopped when I realized it was him, my customer.

I continued across to him, uncertain, but fuck it, I am who I am and he would either deal or, most likely, not.

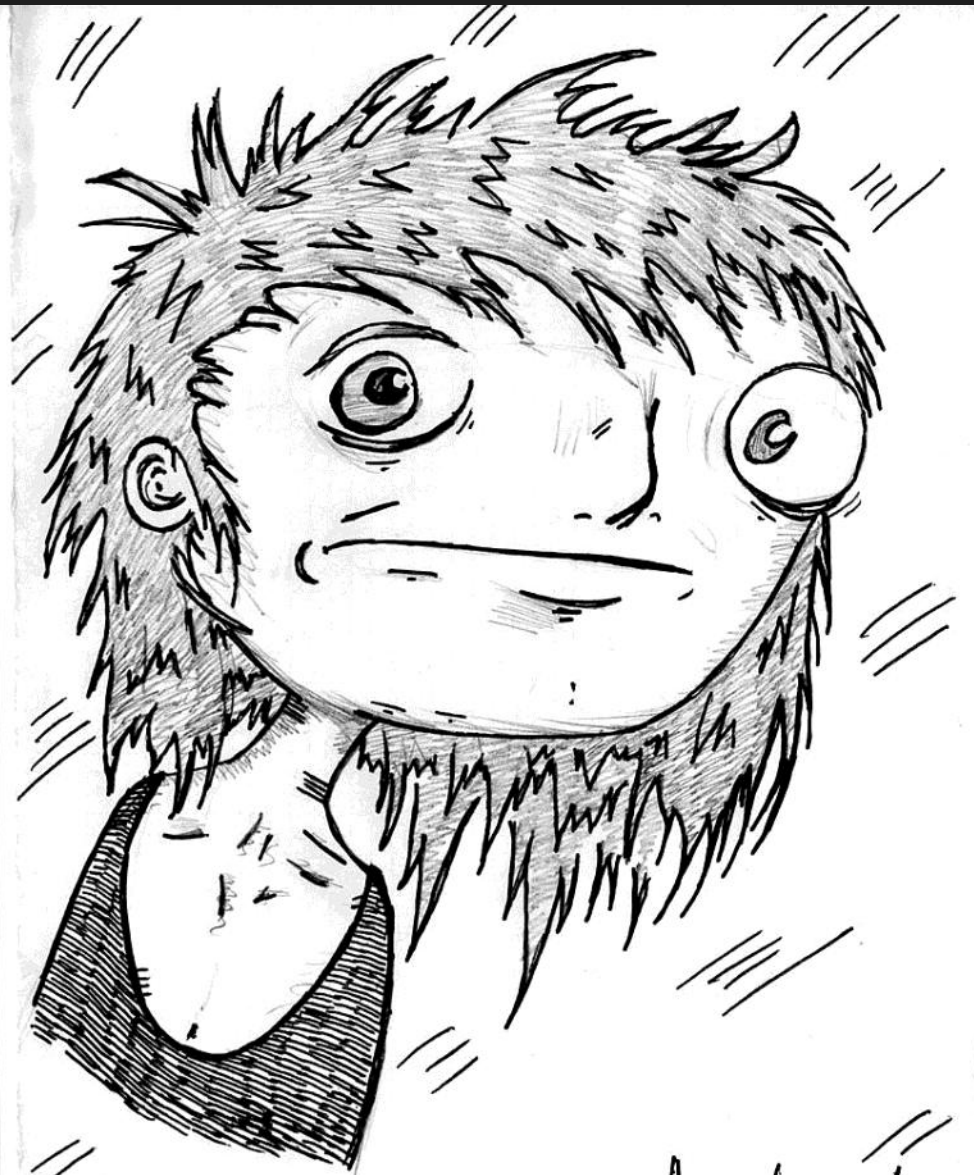
He looked up at me, confusion playing across his face for a moment, but then there was that smile of his again. I told him this was his reuben and to let me know if there were any more problems as I would personally take care of them. I turned and almost skipped across the room, as a smile matching his broke out across my face. I'm sure I'll be finding out a lot more than his name soon enough. Sometimes, people can happily surprise you.


Lucy Honan

FUCK YOU VERY MUCH FOR ...

- RELEGATING ME TO THE MARGINS AND FUCK YOU FOR EXPECTING ME TO EDUCATE YOU.
- PUNISHING ME WHEN MY BODY DOESN'T FIT WHAT YOU WANT IT TO BE AND FUCK YOU FOR NOT GIVING ME ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE.
- SILENCING ME AND RECEIVING ME WITH SILENCE.
- APPROPRIATING PIECES OF MY CULTURE (AND OF ME) AND EXPECTING ME TO ASSIMILATE INTO YOURS.
- STARING. AND FUCK YOU FOR LOOKING AWAY.
- ASSUMING THAT "NORMAL" IS A GOAL SHARED BY EVERY HUMAN, AND FUCK THAT BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BE NORMAL.
- CONFLATE THE ABUSE OF THE OPPRESSED AND THE VIOLENCE OF THE OPPRESSOR.
- EXPECTING MY BODY TO FIT YOUR EXPECTATIONS, AND FUCK YOU FOR EXPECTING THAT MY BODY WON'T FIT YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

_____ AND FUCK YOU
FOR _____.



What in the Actual
Fuck?