



a quarterly micro-magazine of non-binary writers that's sweet and stings

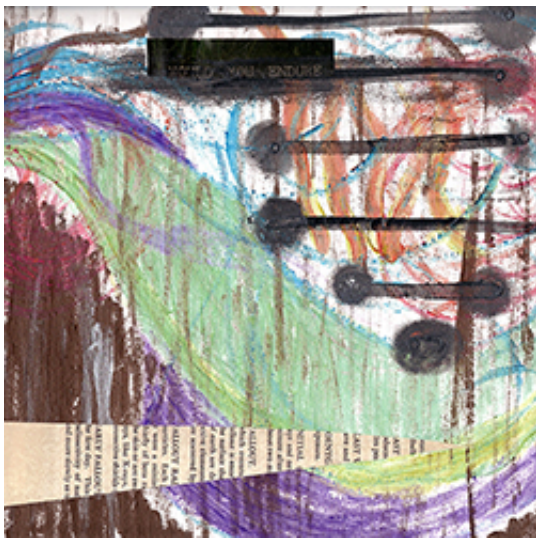
One CNF Prose Poem by Erica Rivera

ends

there's a girl out there watching and she is my god. a year of living as my gender and i have not yet died. i don't want a *pushcart* or *hugo* or *nebula*. i don't want a *nobel* or *pulitzer*, to write a *national book*. i want to be free. i want you to be free. i want you to be freak, however you please. however *you. please*. there's a girl out there watching who gave everything up so she could freak and fuck and please whoever; so you could have what? every pleasure: whenever, wherever. how and who and where and when are all the same—what, did you think synonyms were supposed to be simple? every award is the same: part of apartheid's so lovely we're meant to cheer and applaud. there's a girl out there watching whom this literally killed, because you can't break a chain with a word—with the right themed submission call, with the lofi-iest zine from the lowkey-iest distro. but a blade in the right spot will sure as hell do

it. i hate to write, *i hate to write*, and this feels at least as shameful as being trans. there's no biomedical roadmap to cure my disdain for expression, except maybe stories of sisters refusing to speak—to anyone but each other, in a language their own. there's a girl out there watching and now probably laughing, saying, “girl, i literally laid the roadmap out for you.” and she did. and she has. i could make more money selling smurf pussy than writing another fucking t-slur-y chapbook, reminds me the priestess of hard-hitting prose. there's a girl out there watching and no one knows her name except for the people she loves, and i love that for her, maybe someday for me. writing means nothing, but all before/after might; writing is a means, a series of beginnings. like the transition of a gender, there is no such thing as *end*. instead, there is more. *more, more, more*—i want for you/me/us *more*. i want absolutely everything, which is the promise of a friend, of a family, of the mundane. there's a girl out there watching and she is my god, i don't whisper her name when i pray anymore, but what's the use of a whisper when everything's heard. what's the use of a language when everyone knows. what's the use of a fall if nothing gets broken.

Erica Rivera (she/her) is co-editor for *Art, Strike!*, an online art/literary publication unique for paying collaborators what they ask for out of a shared fund-pool. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Sophon*



*Lit, en*gendered, manywor(l)ds,*
and *The Emerson Review*. For fun,
she likes to watch TV and pretend all
the characters are trans. Her author
photo is a rainbow of colors
streaming across a brown
background streaked with vertical
white; a small flame at top-right is
fenced by horizontal black lines, the

words **WOULD YOU ENDURE** atop, in white at the base of a black
rectangle; a sideways, triangular cut-out of a text on surviving
nuclear war slices through the bottom.

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