



ZINE
2021

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**The Hodag as a Queer Icon;
Or,
Why Am I So Tired All The Time?**
by Charles Payseur

I mean a hodag spends their time
lost
in the woods
lost not because
they don't know where they are
but because
that's where they belong
to time
to space
to circumstance

lost

and I mean haven't we all been there?
or wanted to be there?
haven't we all spent more time
than is healthy
slipping through the trees
ignoring that we can always hear a highway?

The Hodag doesn't exist
is a hoax, a scandal,
fake news
doesn't exist
but is hunted
by big men with big guns

is hunted and caught
is staged and photo-opted
forced to pose, for the camera yes,
but also to pose a threat
the hidden danger
slavering out of the darkness
and forcibly tamed

Thank God! For America!
Think of the children!

tamed and made into a mascot
another tourist attraction
and cautionary tale
don't lie don't swindle don't cheat
and of course they'll tell you
every part of you is false

your tall proud horns
your rending beautiful teeth
your frog-wide smile
your saucer-large eyes
your thick sharp scales
your claws that drive furrows in the earth
your cry like civilizations falling
your fiery, poison tears
that fall, that are falling

all you must do is deny
every part of you

but no.

No because out there now
the Hodags are gathering
returning from the cities where they've learned
handkerchief languages
and the heat of dance
where they've been all along in fact
and I mean,
they've been everywhere
are everywhere

once myth, they are opening
cafes and bookstores
restaurants and bars
they have escaped Smithsonian investigations
sad little charlatans
every attempt at forced extinction
and their teeth are sharp
their bodies long and deadly
and tired
so fucking tired

but look
the shadows under the trees are moving
no teddy bear picnic
but a swaying party all the same
and surprise

the hodags have found each other
lost still
but not alone.



Scars of gold by Len Johnson

[untitled]

by G. V.

on the day i burn my clothes all my clothes i burn the ticks too
look in the mirror and need a change what change fire and flame
and heat incineration ashes ashes. when i strip naked i see them
there, gorging themselves i must be delicious to them an easy target
marvel them their greediness how they stuck and suck without my
notice. pass

the spoon. the one for the dog. i wish to scoop them like ice cream
rip them out like the care for a stray have i come home yet? the first
is on the throat dim the voice i cannot speak with what's not mine.
the tick squirms and wriggles its back bloated patterns the face of
everyone on the internet tv and those helpful ones who speak speak
speak, so caring they understand and let them explain please i only
hurt my cause. i pop them off still wriggling insisting they make a
difference and everyone's engorged concern goes to the fire. twins

next my calves my legs pairs and pairs of twins some sick binary
joke. one here, one there, i will be here all day tugging pulling
yanking waging this war ripping off sentient sacks of my own
blood my own valueless blood they've fed on for too long. damn
them they've dragged down my feet kept me from running
dancing leaping leaping. they are reason and rhyme and reasoning
resonating echo echo echos of one another. i don't

need this. into the fire into the now bloody fire the smell of my own blood frying. the screams of the ticks indignant owed my flowing life. and last the mother tick under the arm close to the flow of the heart. so big so swollen so dominating hanging there no wonder i've been immobile all these years. if everything is a lie do i

exist? if i burn my clothes all my clothes my reality my unwanted collection of ticks am i allowed to rise a whole person at last like after the worst sleep of a life groggy and confused not refreshed but here yes here and thinking maybe maybe. the mother tick has too many limbs even for that size and they are all waving. glee. i am vulnerable and a delicacy no more. i grab the hard body with my hand and yank yank yank the mother tick pulls free hypostome

lingers. harpoon to the heart harpoon direct in the heart. if i tear it out do i bleed to death i don't know but the fire has earned this meal too and death is better than the mother tick sucking me to husk. i dig it gouge it out i am untethered maybe for now. i add more clothes the last of my clothes, cover the parasites i can hear the ticks shrieking as they burn but they all

deserve
to die
and i
deserve

Thank You For Staying: A Love Letter Celebrating YOUR Mental Health

Hello You,

We probably don't know each other. As I am writing this, I don't know a singular thing about you. I don't know your name, your pronouns, who you love, or what you look like. I have never heard you sing, laugh, or tell a joke. The only thing that I know, for certain, is that you are reading my words or having them read to you and I am endlessly thankful for that. It means you are still here, still fighting, and still alive.

Walking upon this planet can be hard enough as it is, but being a part of a targeted community can make it feel insufferable. I'm sure that I don't need to explain that to you because we all see and feel the pain around us. It's palpable and seemingly endless at times.

We often say and hear the words "Love Wins" but how often are we stopping to celebrate the internal victories in the battle along the way? Yes, legislature and culture have progressed through many painful decades but our threats in this nation as LGBTQIIA+ persons exist beyond the laws and the opposition, but they can also fester within ourselves. Self-hatred and self-harming behaviors aren't our allies, but they are too often riding alongside us.

I know intimately well how hard it can be to make the choice to stay alive or conceptualize a future. If you are a person who has to make the choice every day to stay, know that I am writing this letter for you... because I want to shout from the rooftops about how loved and wanted you are.

You're a marvelous person and we are lucky to have you around. Your radiance extends beyond the Chippewa Valley and Wisconsin. Our universe is more luminescent with your brilliance in it. You are not the summary of the bad things that have happened in your life nor are you defined by those things. You are absolutely phenomenal and deserve to feel a glowing joy that washes over you like warm sunlight and steady nights of peaceful rest.

Taking the steps you need to in order to get there looks different for everyone and I can't possibly guess at what that looks like for your unique path, but I know you are capable of navigating it. Whether that is a rehab program, medications, therapy, or a different route: you CAN do this, I have faith in you. You have been doing it, one step at a time, and I honor that. I celebrate you and your internal victories that others cannot see or you may not share. I am proud of you and thank you for staying.

Supporting you from afar,
Racheal Sue
(She/Her/Hers)

i'm tired of going on

journeys

to be

myself.

all

i want

is

to

be

myself

and go on a

journey

journey by anonymous

Sometimes God and the Bible

by David Rask Behling

Sometimes
God and the Bible scare people,
and so we run away,
from places where people gather
to sing and pray and do God's work.

Sometimes
we run away because of
stories about the Lord God smiting
whole cities, wiping out men, women, children,
and even the animals.
People ask Why the animals?

Sometimes
we refuse to listen because of
the rules about God's punishing
the people who are different
like eunuchs and the disabled.
People ask Why the queer? Why the cripples?

Sometimes
we get angry because of rules about stoning
rebellious children or selling them into slavery.
People ask Why the children?

Sometimes
we run away because of
what the Bible does to us, how
we take words from the Bible and insist
we are the only ones with the authority to speak

the words of the Bible, dispensing
with justice or making judgements
without love or mercy.

Why the kittens and goats and chickens?
Why the innocent living in the wrong place
at the wrong time?

Why the people who love whom they love because
that's how God made them?

Why the people whose bodies
aren't perfect or undamaged?

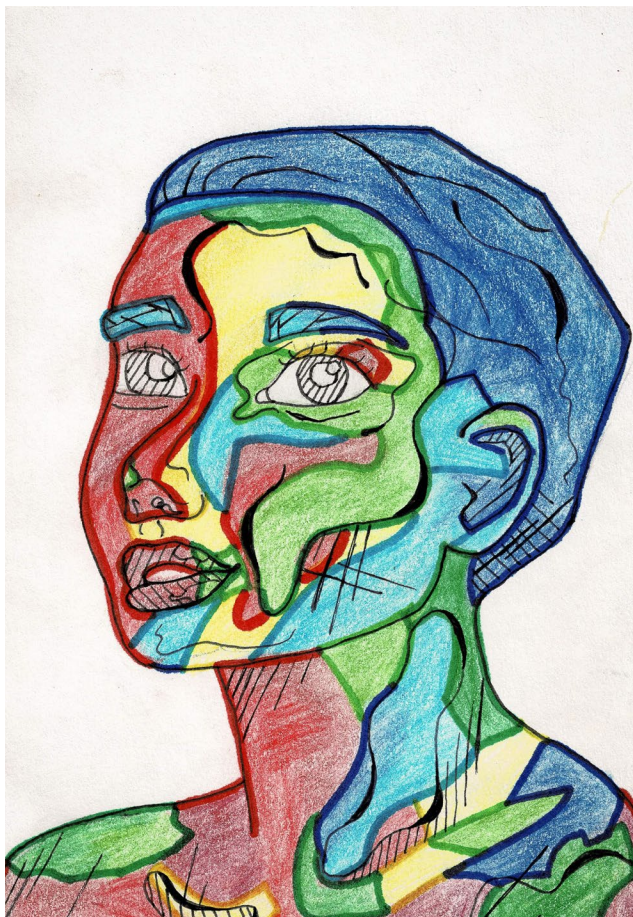
And why the children?

Why the children?

Why the children?

But sometimes
when we stop asking questions
because we are afraid of what the answers might be,
a still small voice can be heard underneath
the prejudice and hatred preached
in too many pulpits,
a still small voice telling us
about God's unconditional love,
and about the hope of a different way of living.

Sometimes
when God's still small voice escapes
the prison of church doctrines and judgements
some of us stop running
and we turn
and we listen
and we gain strength from that love
and from each other.



Woman Underneath by Carissa Grace

Ice and Chocolate

by Cheyenne Nardin

Snowflakes nestled in her hair, stark in comparison to her rosy cheeks and matching rubbed and raw eyes. She had been crying.

“Are you okay?” I asked, closing the front door behind her.

She unzipped her coat to reveal a pint of ice cream. Rocky Road. “We broke up.” Then she pulled two spoons from her pocket. “Join me?”

“It’s winter,” I chided, taking the spoon anyway. “Do you wanna talk about it?” Instead of answering, she moved toward the couch. “It’s not your fault.”

She settled onto the cushions, leaving space for me. “No, it is.”

“You deserve better anyway. He was a jerk.” I grabbed a nearby blanket, enveloping us within as I joined her. With the snow falling outside, it felt like a Hallmark movie. But it wasn’t. It was my best friend who was snuggled up against me. Just friends. And as her friend, it was my job to comfort her through breakups. “I love you. You know that, right?”

“I know,” she whispered. “I love you, too.” Hearing those words from her mouth was cauterizing: simultaneously healing and searing. It wasn’t in the way that I loved her. “Hey,” she whispered, drawing back my attention. I turned to face her, and suddenly her lips were on mine. Cold and chocolatey.

I pulled away. “What are you doing?” I asked, leaping from the couch and sending the pint of ice cream to the floor.

She didn’t answer, just stared up at me.

Of all the times I’ve imagined kissing her, this was never what I wanted. She didn’t want me, just attention.

Just a rebound.

“No, you don’t get to do that. You can’t just—”

“I don’t understand,” she said. “I thought you wanted this.”

“I did. I do.” I wanted it more than anything.

“Can I tell you something?” She continued despite my silence. “I was at his house to watch a movie, eat some dinner...And I brought up a story. About you. And he sighed. He asked why I talked about you so much, why I couldn’t go one dinner without bringing you up. And I said, because you’re my—”

“Best friend,” I finished. “Yeah, I know.”

“And then he said that I loved you more than him. It was meant to be a joke, I think. But it was true. I realized I would much rather be eating ice cream with you.”

“Because I’m your friend,” I reminded her.

“You are,” she said. “But if you want, we could be more.”

“You’re just—”

“So I broke up with him and rushed here with ice cream.” She looked pointedly at the floor, where it had started to melt. “Which you just ruined, by the way.”

“Wait,” I said. “You broke up with him? For me?”

“For us.” She stood, her breath cool on my face, and paused, waiting for me to make the next move. “I love you. You know that, right?”

I pressed my lips to hers, closing the gap between us.



The Zine will return next year, and we hope you consider submitting your fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or art! Updates and news can be found at cvlgbt.org/library or email questions, queries, or submissions to library@cvlgbt.org.