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# LOVE UNDER THE PATRIARCHY

## HELLO!

Welcome to the first issue of the zine, we hope you like it!! Let us know what you think. We accepted a minimal amount of submissions for this version because we really wanted to get it out in the world. We would love to have more people submit for the next issue that we are already working on, so if you're interested get in touch. If you haven't already, check out the podcasts Renee has been doing, that we are now collaborating on. The podcast is a series of informal conversations between Renee and a guest, usually a friend or community member, on the subject of love under the patriarchy. More specifically, it is about how we find love under the patriarchy, what that looks like in interpersonal relationships, and what some of our experiences have been. It also looks at the ways we can love and support each other so we can collectively defeat the capitalist, colonial, racist, homophobic, ableist, patriarchy once and for all!! We invite you to join us and to send in your experiences and reflections, whether they be visual art, poetry, writing etc.. We do not make a profit from the zine, just try to cover the printing cost. We hope to get money in the future so we may pay everyone for their submissions. Take care of one another, and we love you <3  
- Renee and Christeen

**Find us online at:** [@love\\_under\\_the\\_patriarchy](https://www.instagram.com/love_under_the_patriarchy)  
[loveunderthepatriarchy@gmail.com](mailto:loveunderthepatriarchy@gmail.com)

**You can find the podcast:** *Love Under the Patriarchy*  
on Spotify, Apple, Stitcher, Anchor.fm

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*Sin Miedo* by Andrea Narno



## Love Under The Patriarchy, with Renee Sharpe

The Love Under The Patriarchy podcast came about from wanting to talk to friends about love, and how they do it. It's really an informal counselling session, where no one is an expert, but we are learning to hold space for each other. We are focusing primarily on how to find love, safety, community resistance, relationships, and how to be vulnerable under systems of oppression. The podcast and the zine are a fun and raw way to name our experiences, and celebrate love, because it's the best.

Some of the themes we have been able to explore so far in the podcast are: mental health and wellness, punk, vulnerability, attachment styles, exploring safety in sex, love, and relationships under the patriarchy, love as resistance, healing and meditation, anarchy and life outside of the binary, poetry, redefining our relationships, polyamory, boundaries, sex drives and trauma cuz we gotta keep this real. Also, a much anticipated debrief of the wild - some may say problematic - series, "Love is Blind". It's been fun and challenging, and I feel very lucky to be in this position where people will talk to me about anything, but y'all know I'm working on my boundaries and it's cute and sometimes kinda vile haha. You're welcome. We have a few interviews from last fall that will be released soon, which is very exciting. It takes me a good few months to work through my own shame and vulnerability hangovers to get the podcasts out in the world, but honey it is worth the wait!

This project, like most of the work I do, has also been a way to collect proof that I am loved and connected to love, and that I am not alone in that. This, of course, being the universal experience, (I dies for Tara Brach).

*Artwork, "Renee", by Christeen Francis*

I think that there is value in us being transparent about our process, because it points to the reality that this pain is not just mine, it is part of the collective experience. The more we chat and share, the more we can see ourselves in each other, and know we have a space for validation and connection. That's love, baby. That is the beauty of the podcast. We are holding space for each other with the intention of connecting, figuring our shit out, and moving forward together. Along with an acknowledgement that what we need is not necessarily met by counselling and therapy that are steeped in systems of oppression and capitalism. I've often felt more alone, alienated, and othered by therapists, than truly heard. Sometimes we just crave being listened to, as well as connected to a support network that is not found in a one hour session, that is, if you can even afford to access said services. Now in the meantime, if you're reading this and you're a therapist, hook me up because I need therapy hard haha, yeah bud.

I love love. Love rules. I also love fun and community - which is why I gravitated towards punk so hard as a kid. I feel kinda embarrassed and annoyed when punk comes up as an important part of my life as a 38 year old woman. I feel shame that a youth subculture is what gets me through, I feel pain knowing and watching patriarchal abuse and fucked up behavior go unchecked, seep into our subcultures and communities we cling to for refuge. It also just gets on my fucking nerves, but I'm still here and extremely thankful for the community I found within this hot mess. For many of us, it saved our lives, plus it just ripps. With this, I'm very curious about the trauma bond that brings us here, the attachment styles and co-dependency that bring people to safety in a community. Thanks punk and friends for teaching me how to push back against shit systems, how to create community and interconnectedness, sick bands, best friends, good buds, DIY, accountability, and love.

It's not everything, way cooler work is being done outside of punk by much hotter and diverse communities, for who I am also extremely thankful for.

This shit works! Connecting and holding space for each other works! Intentionally naming our experiences, and creating ways to move forward together in our relationships, is hot and healing and good. Through our conversations, people have found comfort and validation in our openness and vulnerability. These are casual conversations in community, and I am in no way an expert on anything. I have a lot of learning to do, which is exciting, because I wanna learn and move forward together. The goal is always to continue building safe, loving, and accountable communities.

A note on accountability and transparency; the way I approach Love Under The Patriarchy as a project is I don't know shit, or I do from experience, but I'm no expert. I want to remain open, curious, and transparent about my process with people who are doing the same. Sometimes I feel so much shame after our podcasts that I think I should stop talking and taking up so much space as a white cis woman talking about oppression and love - but nah, that would also be a cop-out, would be a bit rich, as it is literally my job to dismantle and undo what I am a part of. Ya know? Plus I love talking and I love being funny, and I love the chance to create more spaces to jam this out. I think there is strength in acknowledging that, so we develop the courage with a sense of safety in conversations that are challenging. The intention is to move towards creating safer communities, while unlearning and dismantling systematic oppression, patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism - all of the stuff. I usually feel such shame after a discussion where we cover topics of oppression that I benefit from, and am a part of, and that's ok so long as it leads to positive change.

What I don't want is that shame to keep me from doing the work in community. I want to publicly hold my actions accountable while working to create spaces where we can work on this together. I want to come from a place of vulnerability and willingness to work / learn together instead of acting out of nervousness / fear of fucking up and getting called out. I want us to feel safe - while remaining accountable, with a sense of urgency to learn to be better allies. The Love in this project is to call in, support, and move forward together. I'm sounding like a hippie here, but stoked to explore this.

I usually run out of steam before I really get into some of the projects I have on the go, and partnering with Christeen for Love Under The Patriarchy is a perfect reminder of how I need to do this work with pals. I always feel separate, and that it's my job to fix things and myself, then I burn out and watch Brooklyn 99 for a few months, which is a great show and a very legit way to spend our time even if we hate cops : ) So thank you Christeen, and thank you to the incredible folks who have been game for such a fun project! This podcast and the zine collaboration with Christeen is just an extension of what we have done our whole lives. Love through exchanging ideas, compassionately listening, and building community.

This, in a nutshell, is Love Under the Patriarchy.

Thank you to the following people who I have interviewed for the Love Under The Patriarchy Podcast: Emily Sorensen, Carla Barton, Christeen Francis, Andreae Callanan, Kailey Bryan, Valerie Webber, Brendon Yossarian, Nicole Boggan, Coral Short, Twinkle, my Nan, Devin Shears, and Philippa Jones. I've also asked every guy I've been hitting on in the past year to do a Love Under The Patriarchy podcast with me, still waiting.

Take care and see ya out there! Keep going! LOVE RULES!

- Renee





## The Softest No

I dreamed of you long ago, during hot nights, nothing left but my feelings from when we were all together in Mexico. I fell in love with both of you then. Which is to say I was in love with the way you were together. I wanted you also for myself but I wouldn't let myself know that yet. I wanted that feeling of warm tenderness that emanated from you. I wanted that kind of love, that kind of partner.

I felt that when you were in my bed. It felt so surreal to cross that invisible line we held for so long. I was in shock because I never imagined we would end up there. Forgive me for when we did, when I was in your arms, I wished you would never let go. I slept soundly and when I woke up you were still there. Then I watched you leave, trying to stay cool as every minute that passed you drove further away from me. Instead of feeling anxious I felt bubbly for four days.

A friend of mine describes my way of being in love as desperate optimism and hope. When it comes to these things – love – it is. It's true that I construct fantasies and hope for the wildest thing – to feel loved. I felt it briefly in bed, in your gaze. Your smile so warm it made me shy and I had to look away. This is not to say you felt it too, rather that whatever was radiating between us in that moment felt a lot like love to me. I felt so seen. So keenly aware.

My dreams are always way better than real life. And when the dream walls I've constructed come crashing down I always tell myself "I told you so, no one will ever really love you." As if that was ever a way to console yourself, shame for dreaming that you are worthy. Sometimes I think it's not the wildest thing, to have someone I wouldn't have to convince to love me.

When I'm with you all I want is to hear you talk. I like the way you pick my brain, and I could sit there for hours picking yours, and that is what we do, delighted at the differences in the ways we think. You talk about how people don't really change but how in relationships partners are obsessed with seeing what their partner could be, their potential, instead of where they're at, and in your opinion where they'll stay. But I think there's a brighter side to that equation; the person who loves you sees beyond your own self-imposed limits and the possibilities that could open should you overcome them. I have to admit that I am guilty of that, it's something I'm trying to move away from. I'm learning now that it can also be a way of asserting control or avoiding your own growth by focusing on someone else's.

We've left it as a tentative to be continued... with me wanting more and you preferring it as it is. Which is to say that I can't help but construct this fantasy around you even though a part of me recognizes it's unrealistic, and you don't want it. In many ways this is me repeating my pattern with you, but your soft no also shifts us out of a codependent dynamic and into something else. Something unfamiliar, but infinitely better, and I'm learning to love you as you are.

-christeen-





We were in bed when we heard someone outside wailing into the night.

We went out on the balcony to look and saw them sitting on the sidewalk down the street, sobbing.

It was halfway through our 14-day quarantine, after Eloisa got back from visiting her family, and we couldn't go out there to help

but another neighbour went out to be with them.

I am really sorry.

-Jenny Lin



**Growing up Under the Patriarchy – CW: Sexual Abuse**

Like many others during the Covid-19 crisis and lockdown, I find my thoughts turning to mutual aid – specifically, what it looks like, and the power it holds to transform a society. It's not a new idea, but it seems like a greater number of people are waking up to it in the wake of the pandemic.

When I think about patriarchy, I can't help but think about how I was raised and how my family, my friends, and my environment influenced my internalized beliefs. I grew up in a house that I can best describe as cold. The house itself was always freezing, but the frigid emotional temperature within was even more profound. I didn't realize how much living in that house affected me until years after I had moved out. Since then I have gravitated towards connection with others in romantic relationships, friendships, and collaborative activist and art projects. I like to think it's because I'm a naturally sociable and empathic person, but I know my upbringing played a hand in shaping this part of me.

Much of the coldness in our house derived from my dad, who was a stern patriarch with Asperger's syndrome (although none of us were aware of it at the time.) He was unable to truly connect or love because, ultimately, he viewed everything as an extension or response to him. No one could do anything right by his standards. My mom tried hard to protect us by keeping us in line while also trying to ride the wild wave of their relationship. Overall though, there wasn't a lot of love to go around, with the exception of the love between me and my siblings – my twin, and my younger sister. My twin was my co-pilot and co-conspirator, even when it meant being dragged down in the mud with me. He was there whenever I needed him, and together we took on a singular identity, becoming simply the twins.

*Sandra*, by Christeen Francis

My sister came along five years after we did and she quickly grew to be the apple of my father's eye. It's easy now to understand how that position was both a gift and a curse, but I couldn't see it that way at the time.

I tormented her for being our father's favourite. When I think of my first experiences of patriarchy, I think about the jealousy and resentment I directed toward my sister instead of my dad. For years I pulled pranks on her until, when I became a tween, I found other ways to bury my feelings, like getting high and being "bad". When I look back on those times I still feel guilty about reacting the way I did. However, things are different between us today. My sister and I act in solidarity with each other, trading notes on whatever's going on and debriefing privately after every family gathering. We both identify as feminists and are attempting to unpack and reframe our experiences through that lens.

My second experience of patriarchy came not too long after the first. A lot of it is lost to memory, but it involves a teenage babysitter who used to get me to do sexual stuff with him while no one was looking. It would be years before I realized that my involvement in this was anything but voluntary. The abuse went on for years until, for reasons that I can't remember it stopped. Maybe I got too old, or maybe we didn't need a babysitter anymore. It was around this time that I began retreating into my shell. My three best friends disowned me. I turned into a "tomboy" (no shade to tomboys) and lost myself in the world of team sports. I was very strong on the outside but I was terrified of my body and I did everything I could to cover it up.

It wasn't until my late twenties that I developed a personal style that wasn't trauma informed.

Sexuality was complicated for me. I didn't date anyone until the end of high school, and even then it was long distance. I couldn't merge the act of sex with the feeling of love or comfort. To me cuddling was an expression of love and sex was just a carnal act. I couldn't imagine both feelings – love and lust – existing together.

There came a time when I was forced to confront this history – to face the patriarchy – for the first time ever in my family. I was seventeen. My dad was living separately from us while he started a new job in a different city. My mom stayed home to wrap up our lives before moving to join him. She made plans to go visit my dad for a few weeks, and suggested that the babysitter come stay with us to look after my sister.

I was in crisis. I offered to babysit myself, I tried to suggest other people, I protested until my mom finally said, "What is your problem with David?" What else could I do? I told her the truth: that he had molested me as a child. I could read the shock on her face. After a moment she said, "Why didn't you tell us? We could have gotten him help..." I was floored. It was one of the loneliest moments of my life, tempered only by the relief of knowing he wouldn't be invited into our house again. My mom never followed up with me after that day and I have mostly dealt with the trauma alone, with the help of friends, and more recently, a lovely therapist.

Like most survivors, I carried on. I gravitated toward collective living spaces, activist groups, and collective projects where I felt more love, connection, and support than I ever did growing up. As a kid I just wanted to make things better, to hold everyone together, to mediate impossible situations.

It's given me the ability to read a room and people's movements, both to determine my own safety and to feel what others are feeling. I'm not sure this was always healthy behaviour – I definitely took on too much of other people's shit – but I think of it now as a secret power I can use for good. I have learned to hold space for another person's grief without trying to solve it. I can check in when I read through another's movements that something is not ok but they are unable to voice it. This is the super power of survivors who have had the opportunity to heal enough that they are able to give back; empathy without taking on the weight of each other's pain is a form of mutual aid we can use to heal ourselves and others once we learn how.

Since I left my parents' house I have been lucky enough to be surrounded by all kinds of love despite the patriarchy.

It takes many forms but always involves the winning combination of love, mutual aid, and solidarity. When it comes to dismantling the patriarchy – or I should say the capitalist, colonial, racist, homophobic, ableist patriarchy – I feel certain that love and solidarity are the only way to do it.

- christeen -





### ***They Tear Everything Down, Eventually - A Story***

We met at a bar in London with carpet on the floor. The bar was across the street from where we both lived and weeks earlier someone had been stabbed outside. In New York one worried about getting shot. Perhaps most of all one feared being pushed, deliberately, onto the subway tracks. Knife crime felt new to us, felt almost distinctly European. I sat alone at that bar, watching my friends while they danced. You came over because you felt sorry for me, because you were interested in me. I never knew for sure which it was.

We were neighbors. I had seen you before. We called you mountain man because you had a beard and shaggy hair. I don't remember our first kiss. I remember that someone we knew got hit by a bicycle and we argued about it. Your position was the correct one and I was angry at you for being right.

We came home to New York. I went with you to a party in the West Village. Elizabeth Olsen was there but she wasn't famous yet. You told me "she's the other Olsen sister" and I told you I didn't know there was a third. We took a cab home. We rolled around on the bench of the backseat. You passed me an earbud and put the other one in your ear. You played Fake Empire, by The National. It was the first time I'd heard that song and afterwards it always reminded me of you.

Something bad transpired between us that night but I don't remember exactly what it was. I got angry with you and I walked home from your apartment in the small hours of the morning.

New York got more expensive. You left the city. I took the bus out of Port Authority and you picked me up at the depot in Philadelphia. You grabbed me around the waist, cracking the bones in my back. You lifted me up and planted a kiss on my cheek. You took me back to your parents' house. They were away for the weekend and we slept in your childhood bed.

You moved back to New York. You got an apartment in Bushwick and I was happy because I lived there too. We rode our bikes to Motorino on Graham Avenue and sat in the garden. You knew about that place before I did. You knew everything before me. Years later they tore that place down. A sinking foundation had caused it to list dangerously to one side. Afterwards I never walked by there without thinking of you.

We met up once at Boulevard Cafe on Bushwick Avenue. I don't think it's there anymore either. Maybe they tore it down. They tear everything down, eventually. We sat in the backyard. The day was brutally hot in that particular New York way. Everything clings. All the smells rise from the pavement. I wore a pink sundress I thought you would find cute. I wanted to go home with you and stay for the rest of my life.

We lived a half mile apart on the same street. I came over to your apartment. I rode my bike down our street towards you. When I arrived you grabbed me, gripped me, held me. I heard a gunshot, you said, I was worried. We climbed into your lofted bed. We spent an hour searching for a movie to watch on Netflix. We gave up. We kissed. You took off my shirt, my jeans. I remember the feeling of your legs between mine. We lived so close together. I thought, for some reason, that it meant something, like our street was a thread that connected us.

Later, another time, we sat next to each other in a corner seat by the open windows in some bar on Bedford Avenue. It was summer. It was always summer with us. You teased me about something. I felt your breath on my neck. You put your hand beneath my dress. You squeezed my thigh. I was drunk and I wanted you but I held myself back. Sometimes it feels like I've spent my whole life holding myself back.

You could never love me through the winter. I dated other people, in-between people. You outlasted them all. You came over to my apartment and we watched *The Wonder Years*. We flopped around in my bed and you told me how beautiful I was. I took a shower, brushed my wet hair until it was smooth. It dripped over my shoulders and down my back. You told me I didn't have to try to be sexy. You told me you already thought I was sexy. I told you I wasn't trying. I told you, this is me, but I could see that you didn't believe me.

I loved the way you crossed your legs, heel to knee, leaned back in a chair. I loved the squint of your eyes when I said something you thought was funny. I loved the way you stood, one hand on your hip and the other raking the scruff of your beard. You weren't afraid of me. I loved you even when you made me feel small.

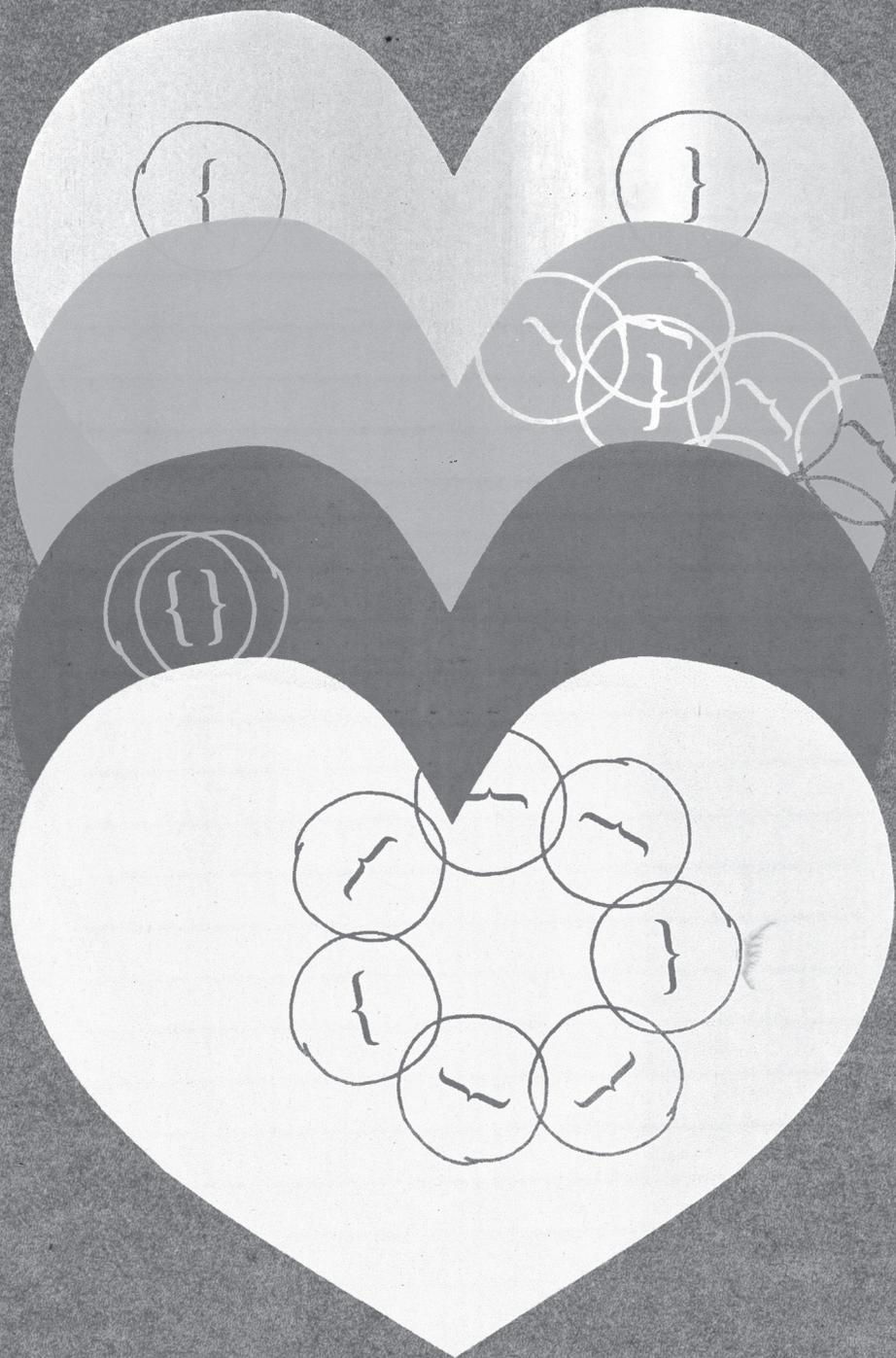
You called me silly nicknames like booger and chicken. You had better taste than I did in pretty much everything but you still sent me songs and asked what I thought of them. I had a wool sweater with a whale on the front. I wore it with cutoff jean shorts and you couldn't keep your hands off me.

But you've always been funny about commitment. You wanted me most when I was unavailable. Maybe you never took me seriously. I felt you withdrawing and I hated you for doing that to me. You thought it was too soon. I never asked you too soon after what?

We weren't inevitable the way you made us out to be. One day you said you were moving to Los Angeles. You told me there was someone out there, that you were getting serious with her. I guess she was serious in ways I wasn't. She's your partner now. Your wife, maybe. You asked to see me before you left and I said no. It made me feel like an also-ran, but I regretted my choice even as I was making it. Now I can't even remember if that was the last time we spoke. I always thought you could read my mind so I saw no reason to tell you the truth. I used to console myself: at least I never asked you for anything.

- Alanna Francis -





### ***Unlucky Love***

I went home for Christmas for the first time in many years. I spent the first two days with my mom, drinking, soaking at a hot spring, I found myself in this particular performative routine with her. It's familiar and unpracticed. We were sitting at a dinner table, beers, a bottle of champagne, and a glass of wine deep. I was asking about family friends, how they are doing. She mentioned my best friend's brother. Single, she said, "he's as unlucky in love as you are."

I've been chewing on this statement for months. Am I unlucky in love? This is not a way that I see myself. What does luck have to do with love? Is love something that just happens to you, not a series of choices you make about the relationships you foster? At that moment though, by all accounts and purposes, it was hard to deny her assessment. I was about six months into an extremely difficult heartbreak. D and I had fallen really hard and fast, but there were crucial issues that we just ignored until it was too late. She was jealous. I was falling back on a type of monogamy held over from years of social norms to mitigate the jealousy. Despite my monogamy, my friendships, one in particular, were the tipping point for her. She knew that my friendships are deeply loving, often sexual, and this threatened her. I refused to face that. We fell apart. And it hurt.

What does it mean to be unlucky in love? Is luck reserved for long-term monogamous relationships? Over the holidays I saw all my old friends, people I've known and loved since grade school or before. I listened as they discussed their lives, complained about married life, how long it had been since their husbands had given them an orgasm, or even tried. Talked about how strange it is to love their children and also feel so stuck. In one such conversation, I told a friend about what my mom had said.

She laughed, but didn't really know how to respond. I took inventory of what I was lucky about. I haven't had sex with someone without getting off in... I don't know how long. Usually more than once or twice. Sex has finally become healing after years of sexual trauma and shame.

My relationships are communicative and open, which allows them to move, grow, or end if necessary. My adult friendships are partnerships, which puts me in a community more resourced in moments of crisis than most of my childhood friends with their property and 401K's.

Still, with all this in mind, the perception that I was unlucky in love haunted me. Coming out is tricky. In so many ways, it's seeking validation from the very places that can't offer it. Being queer is not only who you like to fuck. It's how you like to live. It becomes who you are. A sum of experience and choices and family and love. This story is simplified, of course, even in queer relationships, the heavy burden of expectation derived from a lifetime of various normative socializations causes fractures and breaks in the kinds of possibilities we imagine.

With D, even if I'd faced the reality that my friendships crossed a boundary of monogamy, we both knew I wouldn't change that. The community I had built before meeting D was my major support network. Our relationships are tethered through shared resources, love, and mutual aid, it's the scaffolding for our lives. I couldn't have foreseen in December how important this scaffolding would be in the coming months.

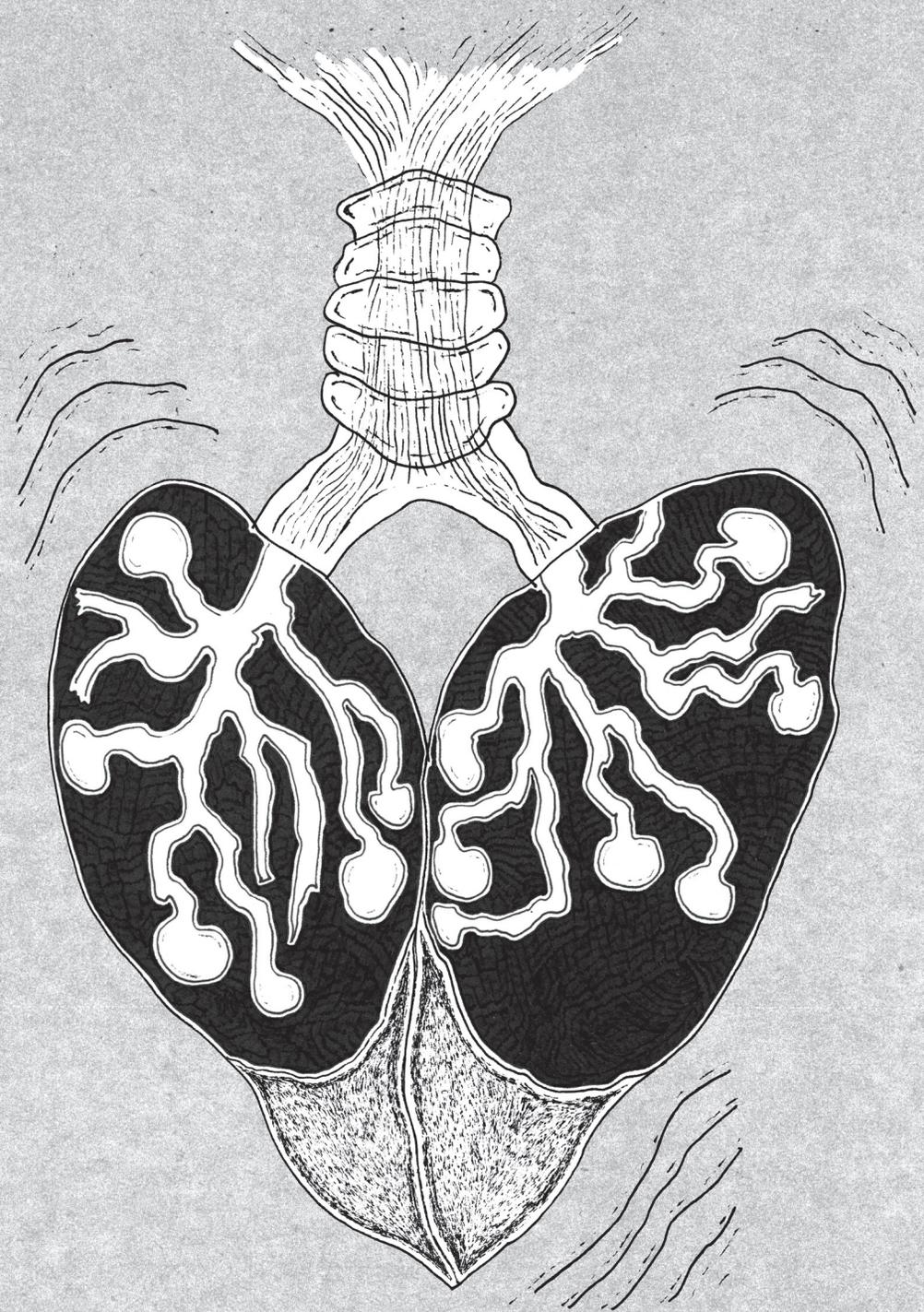
At the time of this conversation with my mom, I was also merely days out of a relationship that formed in the wake of my breakup with D. F was wonderful and I tried to start it out on more communicative and honest footing. I can't do monogamy. I tried setting boundaries by being completely clear in a way that D never thought I could. It worked well, until it didn't. F said yes to all of these things, but wanted more time, more attention. I wasn't able to meet F there. So, the day before I flew home for the holidays, we had a hard conversation, F initiated it, built his own boundaries.

My housemate waited up for me after this conversation, to hear how it went. He challenged my self-deprecating spiral by telling me that I need to date people who have the same orientation to love as I do. Still, despite this good advice, I was in a place of being vulnerable and confused as I unwittingly received this diagnosis from my mother.

In January I started dating C. We met through political organizing, the same way I met D and F. They are charming as hell and we have fun together training martial arts and talking about politics for hours. We share a deep commitment to our separate queer families, partners and friends. I let it start without much concern because it felt easy and low stakes. A good friend of mine warned me at the beginning, "have fun, but don't fall in love with them." This warning came from a caring place, he didn't want me to get my heart broken, as C had broken his partner's heart a few years back. I wasn't worried, it would be easy to heed that advice. I would be traveling a ton over the next few months, keeping things casual and light.

It's now May. My travel plans fell through along with everyone else's because of a worldwide pandemic. We are all now, hunkered down with very few people, figuring out support and love amongst a chaotic isolating (un)orderliness. The promise of detached playfulness that I had planned for disappeared into an intense time of wide scale trauma. A friend recently described our quarantine crews as a game of roulette. When the order came down, you either got lucky with your crew or you didn't. I ended up in this with C and the beautiful community that I've built through this so-called unlucky love. While this kind of love isn't legible to the world I came up in, I guess I'm just really fucking grateful to be unlucky in love.

– Ella



Artwork by Stéphanie St-Jean Aubre



DON'T  
FUCKING

TOUCH ME

### ***Taking on Other People's Problems***

The past couple years, I started to feel pretty smug about how well I was doing, having grown out of some of the insecurity and damaging behaviour I picked up during childhood. Then I did something misguided - in the name of love - that reminded me that I still have a lot of work to do.

Last year, shortly before I traded one country for another, I had a summer fling. We had been flirting for several months, but once I knew I was leaving, we decided to hang out in the park on a beautiful day, and that was the beginning of a lovely summer. We hit it off; she's very intelligent, a scientist, a Satanist, a feminist, and an activist. I got really into her. She liked me too. When summer was over, and it was time to move away, we were definitely sad to say goodbye. Even though we said we would not attempt a long-distance thing, we just kept on talking. She visited me, I visited her. The bonds of friendship and romance grew stronger.

She makes no secret about the fact that she has complex PTSD from severe abuse endured until she was old enough to leave home. I have tried to be available to talk about it. I listen to her joke about wanting to die, even when sometimes it's definitely not a joke. It was often difficult for me to listen to what I perceived as negativity for a few hours a day. Mostly, I had the good sense to just listen, which is maybe all that she wanted. I don't have the best boundaries though, and sometimes I would start to think that her problems were my responsibility, that I could "fix" her. I would make suggestions and try to encourage her to try certain things. She wasn't into meditation, she tried antidepressants but they didn't help much and ruined her orgasms. Things continued like this and I became frustrated, exhausted, feeling helpless; not wanting her to kill herself, but not knowing how to help.

There is a drug that is currently being studied for its therapeutic value, specifically for treating C-PTSD, and early results of trials are promising. This was a solution she was willing to try. Fortunately, the drug is widely available, but it is illegal. Obtaining it is risky, not only because it's illegal, but also because it can be laced with fentanyl. I had a trustworthy source so I promised I would get her some.

The plan was she would come to visit, get the drugs, and my part in the operation would be over. Then Covid happened and everything ground to a halt. At first I thought this would blow over, but as the weeks stretched on I could see that isolation was making her depression worse and I got worried. I decided to ship the drugs. Up to this point I had engaged in some misdemeanor offences but shipping internationally is a felony and this got me nervous. To be clear, she never asked me to do this; I offered.

It was only after I got back from the post office that I began to reflect on the potential consequences. I was afraid of incarceration, but even more so of the shame and stigma. I could tell it was serious for me because I didn't want to tell the people I am usually open with what I did. I mean, part of me really wanted to, but the shame stopped me. I obsessively debated my likelihood of being caught. It's safe to say I was a little paranoid and wasn't able to sleep or focus very well. It was starting to bother me that, while I was having all this anxiety and I would talk to her about it, I didn't feel like she was sympathetic. I mean, she was deep in her own depression so I understood, but I started to feel like the relationship was maybe asymmetrical. If she hadn't asked me to do this, how the hell did I get to this point?

That's a big question, and I'm going to see if I can answer it here. The immediate answer is I put myself in this position. I have always had a hard time setting boundaries and prioritizing my well-being. It's been a major reason my romantic relationships end. I have passively gone along with the other person's choices until my resentment builds; meanwhile, they become frustrated and insecure when they can't tell where I'm at. So why am I like this?

The answer to that might tie into the bigger picture of oppression and domination over generations that played out in my family growing up. In the 16th century, the Spanish invaded Guam, they found a bunch of "naked savages" and decided to "civilize" them. The native culture was almost completely stamped out and replaced with Catholicism. Today, little is known about the pre-contact Chamorro people, except what was recorded in the journals of the Europeans who invaded, who saw it mainly in imperialistic or colonialistic terms, i.e. how it might increase their wealth.

My dad is Chamorro, and he grew up in post WWII Guam, which was (and still is) a US territory. The US also tried to destroy Chamorro culture, to "help them assimilate," and my dad was forbidden to speak Chamorro (a language already heavily overprinted with Spanish). It seems easy to imagine that being part of an oppressed ethnic group, especially a colonized group that is oppressed in their own ancestral land, might fuck you up. I'm not very well read on these issues, but one concept I've heard of is that of double consciousness, wherein you see yourself through the eyes of the people oppressing you. Therefore you value yourself based on how they value you, which is to say, not very much. My dad lived a life where he was forced to assimilate into a culture that robbed him of his

cultural heritage while calling him racial slurs! To manage these deep insecurities and hurt, he was very hard on himself. He spent his teens in the seminary, his young adulthood in the military, and ultimately became a police officer.

I suspect that people often treat others, especially their children, the same way they treat themselves, and it's safe to say my dad was really hard on me and my siblings. He held us to impossible standards, and punished us when we failed to meet them. He was emotionally volatile and unpredictable which leads me to believe it came from insecurity and trauma rather than from a well-intentioned (albeit misguided) parenting strategy. Having this angry, unpredictable man wielding absolute control over our lives taught us one thing: how to not upset him. Rather than cultivating our own interests and selfhoods we learned to manage him emotionally because that was critical to our survival. I had desires to do and try things, but it was easier and safer to be what he wanted me to be.

Fortunately, I had friends point out some of this madness. I was also lucky to come of age at a time when it is more culturally acceptable to be vulnerable and seek therapy. Meditation is popular these days, and that's been helpful for me. I've learned a lot through the romantic relationships I've had, disastrous as they were at times. By my early 30's, I was pretty sure I had surmounted the greatest obstacles on the path toward being able to form and maintain healthy, mutually non-exploitative, adult friendships and romantic relationships; but here I was endangering myself in an effort to manage someone else's feelings or needs without them ever asking me to. Sound familiar?

Ironically, trying to fix someone or assuming the role of a savior in someone's life is likely harmful to them, too. I sensed that she had withdrawn slightly from the relationship, perhaps because

she sensed my frustration that she's not getting better "fast enough." So I see this is quite the mess I've made.

It seems like it goes back to men with guns threatening my ancestors, then my dad, and lends itself to the theory of intergenerational trauma. These stories seem pretty common among those I've talked to, and if anything, my childhood was mild compared to most. I have so many questions like: is this because of patriarchy? Is it intrinsic to male physiology that makes them want to dominate? Am I trying to dominate right now? Most importantly, how do I fix this in myself, and we in the world? At a minimum, it's time to get back into therapy.

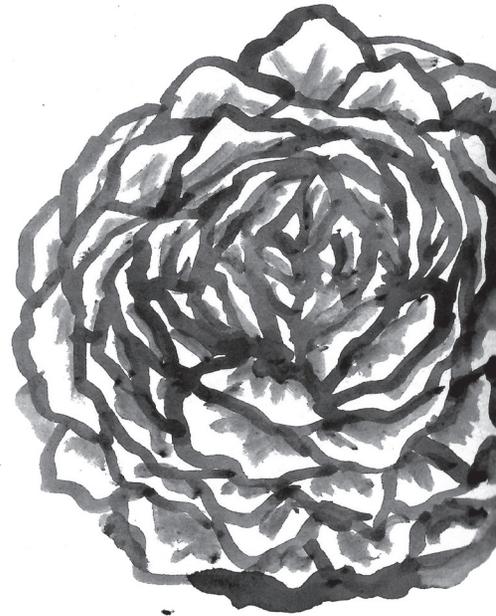
In the end the package made it despite all my anxiety, but it left me shaken up with a lot of questions about my past, patriarchy, and myself. I want to be clear, I think that what I did was ethically correct, but the motives that drove me to do it are suspect, and I will have to investigate this further. However, to end on an optimistic note, we can learn and undo the shit we have learned individually, and as a society, and this is what I intend to do.

PS: The way I tell my dad's story is not the way he would tell it. For example, I once asked him about how he was abused as a child and he said, "I wasn't abused...I wouldn't call it that." But his father literally beat him. That's his perspective though, and I am probably very lucky that it is incomprehensible to me.

- T.Fayi



how i would like to believe in  
tenderness—



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Wanna talk to us about love? Contact us at:  
**loveunderthepatriarchy@gmail.com**  
**@love\_under\_the\_patriarchy**

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## You can find our contributors online at:

**Andrea Narno** @graficanarno

**Renee Sharpe:** @reneeletsgo

**Jenny Lin:** @grumplingzinho  
<http://jenny-lin.ca/>

**Christeen Francis:** @missprints  
[www.christeenfrancis.com](http://www.christeenfrancis.com)

**Alanna Francis:**  
[www.alannafrancis.com](http://www.alannafrancis.com)

**Hazel Eckert:** @hazelmayeckert  
[www.hazeleckert.ca](http://www.hazeleckert.ca)

**Stephanie St-Jean Aubre:**  
@lensemblevide

**Katy Clement:** @shotgunkaty

**Becky Thera:** IG @becky\_thera

**Erik Ruin:** [www.erikruin.info](http://www.erikruin.info)

# LOVE UNDER THE PATRIARCHY

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