

BENT

EDGE



REVENGE

TRIGGER WARNING: OBVS IT'S A ZINE ABOUT SUBSTANCE (MIS)USE. THERE IS A SPECIFIC BIT ABOUT PARTNER ABUSE AND SUICIDAL THOUGHTS WHICH I MARKED VERY CLEARLY

WITH WRITTEN WARNING & STARS ★, AND YOU CAN EASILY SKIP IT WITHOUT LOSING THE SENSE OF WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. FAIR BIT ABOUT QUEERPHOBIA (INCL. THE INTERNALISED ONE). VAGUE MENTION OF POLICE BRUTALITY.

MORE THAN WRITING A ZINE THAT IS "GOOD" AND GRAMMATICALLY "CORRECT", I WANTED TO WRITE A ZINE THAT IS MINE. SO I DIDN'T ASK ANYBODY TO EDIT/CORRECT IT. IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND THE ENGLISH THAT I USE - GET YOURSELF SOME FOREIGN FRIENDS MATE, THIS IS HOW WE SPEAK. IF YOU WANT TO GIVE ME FEEDBACK, SHARE STORIES, MAKE FRIENDS - HMU!

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IN CASE YOU WONDERED ABOUT THE TITLE, A PRETTY BORING SKE HC BAND CALLED PROJECT X HAD A SONG "STRAIGHT EDGE REVENGE", WHICH I STOLE AND MADE MINE - WITH THAT LITTLE DIFFERENCE THAT MY EDGE IS ANYTHING BUT PUCKING STRAIGHT, AND MY SOBRIETY IS QUESTIONABLE EVEN THO I DON'T DRINK ANYMORE.

Not drinking HASN'T MAGICALLY FIXED MY PROBLEMS, MY LIFE AND IT HASN'T FIXED ME. BUT IT SHOWED ME THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS THAT ARE PERHAPS BETTER FOR ME. AND I'M SO OVER SELF-DESTRUCTION AS A WAY TO REBEL. I'M SO OVER BELIEVING THAT WHITE IMPERIALIST CISHETERO CAPITALIST PATRIARCHY WANTS ME TO BE HEALTHY SO THAT I CAN WORK MY ASS OFF - I THINK IT WANTS ME ILL AND DEPRESSED SO THAT I'M PERFECTLY SELF-CENTERED IN MY WANTS AND NEEDS, IN MY THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS. AND I DON'T THINK I WANT TO BE THIS WAY ANYMORE.

Hope to catch up over teal with you soon.

P.S.

STUFF I SAY TO MYSELF LATELY: I'M NOT ILL JUST BECAUSE I REACT TO THE FUCKED UP WORLD WITH ILLNESS. I'M NOT LOST JUST BECAUSE I'M LOOKING FOR SOMETHING. I'M NOT CRAZY, JUST BECAUSE I FIGHT FOR MYSELF.

AND I'M NOT FUCKED-UP JUST BECAUSE I FOUND WAYS TO SURVIVE, TO LIVE, AND TO EVENTUALLY-YES! -FUCKING THRIVE. SAY IT TO YOURSELF NOW, TOO AND TAKE CARE. ♥

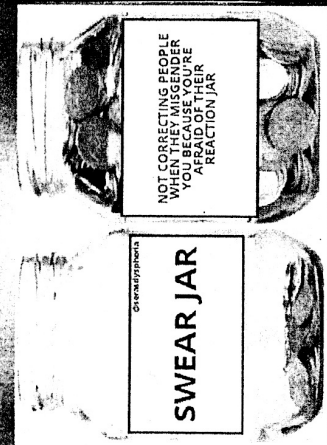


In a similar way I was bit worried about having sex. I'm in my late 20s and before, I never had sober first sex with a new person. And this I know is yet another thing that is so normalised that I am nearly sure most people who have sex and drink can relate to... Anyway, it's less awkward than I thought and it's great to remember everything so well after. I feel it also pushes me to learn better consent, instead of just "somehow" landing in someone's bed after having three beers at a local pub or park. I like how it makes things slower, not only sex-wise but generally speaking.

In the bigger picture, I guess the thing is that I want to see sobriety not as simply as just not drinking alcohol.

I think I get into things because I want to be part of creating an alternative even if for now this feels like an act of an individual rather than a collectively organised action with results in mind. Even if my "alternative" means playing board games and feeling everything you want to avoid feeling instead of a night out that somehow transforms into a week of drinking and a hangover that lasts 3 days. Even if it means that the connections I'm building with others are progressing seemingly slower than before. I want to see sobriety as an alternative to all the unhealthy bullshit I've experienced, to the on the surface relationships, to lack of authenticity and substance. I want to see it as an alternative to carelessness, lack of accountability, constant boundary pushing and seeing shit in others but never in yourself. **I'm done with people whose "good politics" apply only to others, and never to themselves or their actions. I'm done with it almost as much as I'm done with drinking.**

Alcohol offered me answers - and I used to want them but I don't want them now because they aren't answers to my questions anymore.



Not drinking is still not my default but it is my reality. It's only the first step and I see how it's not the thing that is my actual problem. The problem is not that one cold beer, the problem is where it can take me if I'm not self-aware and I don't trust myself that I could just have it without going down the black hole.

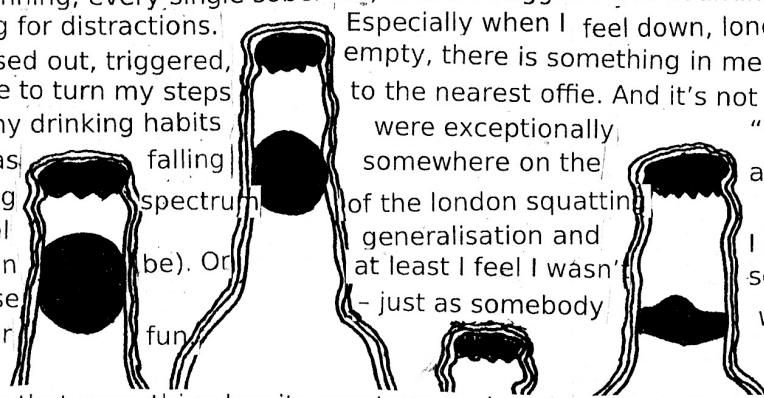
I stopped drinking in summer 2019 and in the beginning I wanted to go sober for 10 days.

I managed to do it twice before - first time a year or two before when I hid myself at my sister's, rolled in a duvet and convinced myself I can wait out the need to drink. The second time because I went to a meditation course where I had no access to alcohol and didn't try to sneak anything in (surprisingly).

So back in the summer 2019 I did the 10 sober days and then more days, then weeks. After the first sober month I thought I can aim for three and after three that I might try half a year. After nearly a year of sobriety I think I should probably quit forever. Not because I don't like drinking anymore but exactly because I'm still 100% sure I love it. It's sunny outside, I'm walking down the street, see a beer ad - and I know I still want to feel the taste and the buzz in my head and body. I wish I was able to have just one nice cold IPA in a sunny beer garden or a green park, just one - but I know I probably shouldn't and I know why. This zine is about this - and some other things that are weirdly related to my drinking.

Not drinking is not easy for me and never has been.

In the beginning, every single sober day was a struggle. I was counting hours and looking for distractions. Especially when I feel down, lonely, stressed out, triggered, empty, there is something in me that still urges me to turn my steps to the nearest offie. And it's not true that my drinking habits were exceptionally "bad", I think I was falling somewhere on the average of the london squatting scene (it's a total generalisation and I know how untrue it can be). Or at least I feel I wasn't seen as a extreme case - just as somebody who is always up for fun.



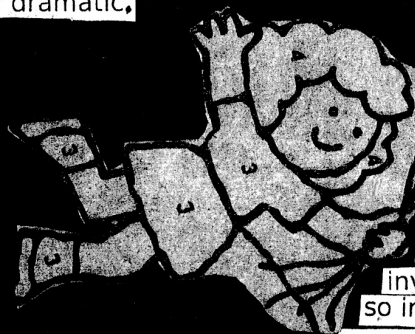
I think that everything has its spectrum and so does alcoholism - and I am somewhere on it even though I didn't reach certain "milestones" like losing friendships or I don't know, shitting myself

I call myself sober although what I actually mean is non-drinking. I still do drugs occasionally and I self-medicate. Of course drugs alter my perception and I can easily get reliant on them, however it was alcohol that was blurring my vision longterm, so abstaining from it feels like being sober. So I call myself that.

In this zine, I mostly describe change in self-awareness that for me wouldn't be possible without stopping drinking. I don't see it as some sort of one and only right portal to gain higher understanding of the world or whatever - I LOVE the fact that I can now say no to a bag of cans but I don't get any moral superiority kick from it. I see not drinking more as part of a bigger process than the sole reason why, and I mostly don't care when drinking works for others. I hang out a lot with people who drink and I mostly don't mind it. I got used to it but in the beginning it can be a hard experience to be around your babbling

friends without being under the influence of the £1.20/a can anaesthetic yourself. (BTW don't get me wrong - all my babbling friends, I love you loads)

The cliché is that alcohol is my way of escaping from things that I don't want to deal with. Since I remember, I always felt lots of tension and I heard lots of criticism inside my head. I can't remember if I ever felt totally at ease... I think I always had this feeling of not belonging. I've tried to be part of something, yet it seems I've always been staying on the outskirts of groups, trying to connect and kinda never really succeeding. And it's not something sad or dramatic.



Some reasons behind this state of things are obvious like family situation/upbringing but some I've been linking to this only recently. Being queer definitely has been one of many factors for me, and it can be a confusing one. It can be an invisible and seemingly irrelevant one, so irrelevant that sometimes it's hard to link it to the feeling of not belonging.

For most of my life I saw myself as a woman

I was worried I would be too stressed out to open buildings sober because I never did, and openings were always a polish beer festival. Some things are scary and it would be easier after having a drink or two but when I do it sober I know it's the courage, not alcohol, that makes me do it.





IN THE PAST, I WOULD JUST HAVE A DRINK IN SITUATIONS LIKE THAT because it was calming and soothing, and I didn't have to continue with this exhausting performance. I want to be open with others but I also want to actively choose who I tell things to instead of alcohol choosing this for me.

At that time I knew some people in the scene who were not drinking or sxe but sober squatter still sounded like an oxymoron.

Although squatting scene certainly is a scene, I'm always second-guessing myself when I use this term. I guess it would mean that "we" all have some values in common, and I know for a fact that we don't... Maybe I should see it for what it is: a solution to lack of affordable housing and a way to live more freely.

Anyway. Stopping drinking definitely means that I lost contact with many people within the community because I don't go to parties as often, and when I do, I don't stay long. When I was part of it, I did feel I'm part of something but I also understand why I felt so alone back then.

When I went sober, I lived in the cutest little

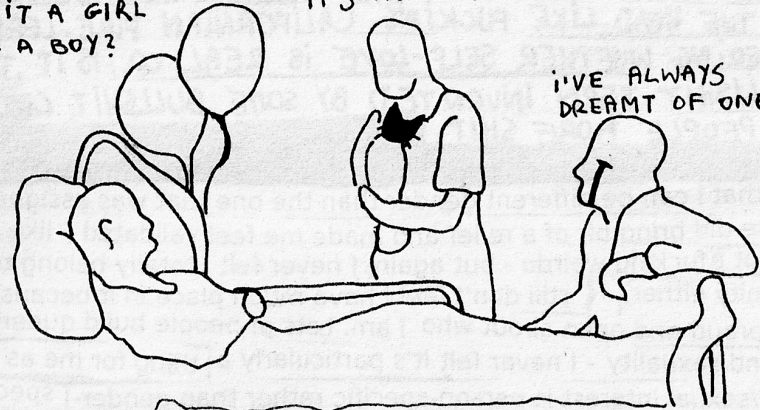
squat by the forest in East London. I got lots of support from my friends who were also my squatmates. I felt they were genuinely happy to see me sober. Since day 1 of my sobriety, I didn't get a single stupid comment, just support and high-fives. This bit went way smoother than I thought but I think I was just lucky, too. It seems to me that in this community (probably in many others as well to be fair), when you go out to hang out with other people, it's more likely that everybody around you is gonna drink rather than not. This setting really facilitated my addiction because it was OK to have 3 beers at friends, then 2 on the way back and 4 at home, and before I knew it, I was replaying this scenario a few times a week.

but I was never comfortable with my femininity.

DOCTOR,
PLEASE TELL
ME...
IS IT A GIRL
OR A BOY?

IT'S A... CAT

I'VE ALWAYS
DREAMT OF ONE



AT BIRTH: TRUE STORY

ASSIGNED CAT

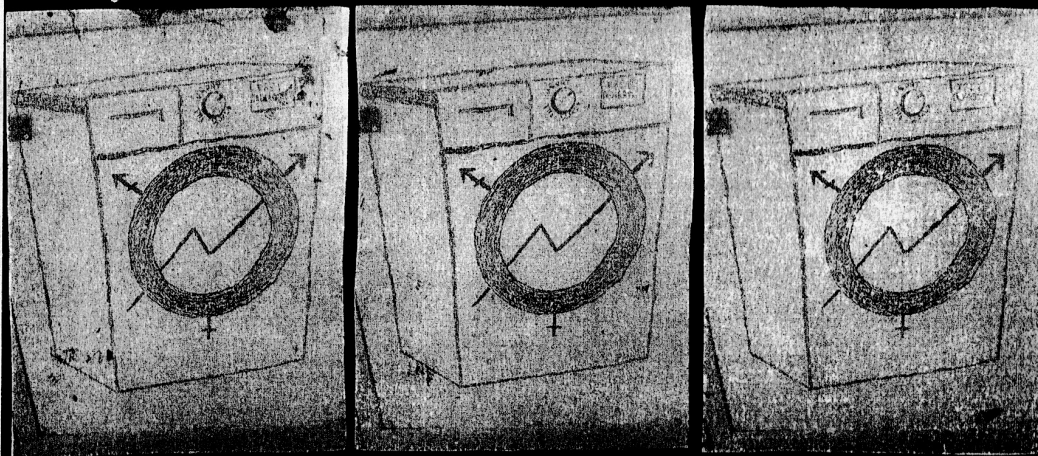
Which now makes total sense to me because I guess you can't really be comfortable with your imposed femininity when you're not really a woman but the world decides you are. Many other things started making sense after I read about being trans: why it felt so weird and uncomfortable to be treated as a woman (not only because of sexism but also on a totally different level), referred to as a woman, why so many of the traditionally understood feminine roles, expectations around them, even some items, can feel alien. Obviously a lot of these things are bullshit for women as well, and many of them feel uncomfortable about them, too, and it doesn't mean they're less of a woman (!)

It just feels uncomfortable in a different way. I remember being a child and seeing wearing dresses as a form of punishment. I remember being described as a girl and being put together with girls - and being confused why. At the same time I never saw myself as a boy and I could navigate hanging out with girls and boys - although hanging out with boys seemed easier. What was constant was feeling like I don't really belong to either (I still feel this way), and I was really stressed out because I wanted but just felt I couldn't. What is constant now is trying to be mindful of my own internalised misogyny, and trying to embrace the feminine while still respecting my gender identity that is not feminine. Trying to rewrite the meaning of items - sometimes I want to look more traditionally feminine, wear skirts and heels and it still doesn't mean I'm a woman or that it's okay for others to assume that.



For long-ish time I thought I'm proudly non-binary but recently I've been discovering layers and layers of deeply rooted shame around both my gender and sexuality. **THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH EITHER, OR WITH ME AS A WHOLE. FUCK SOCIETY WHOSE HIDDEN, "SUBTLE" TERROR MESSAGES SPREAD IN THE HEAD LIKE FUCKING CALIFORNIAN FIRE, LEAVING ME WONDERING WHETHER SELF-LOVE IS REAL OR IS IT JUST SOME BULLSHIT TERM INVENTED BY SOME BULLSHIT CEO TO SELL PEOPLE MORE SHIT.**

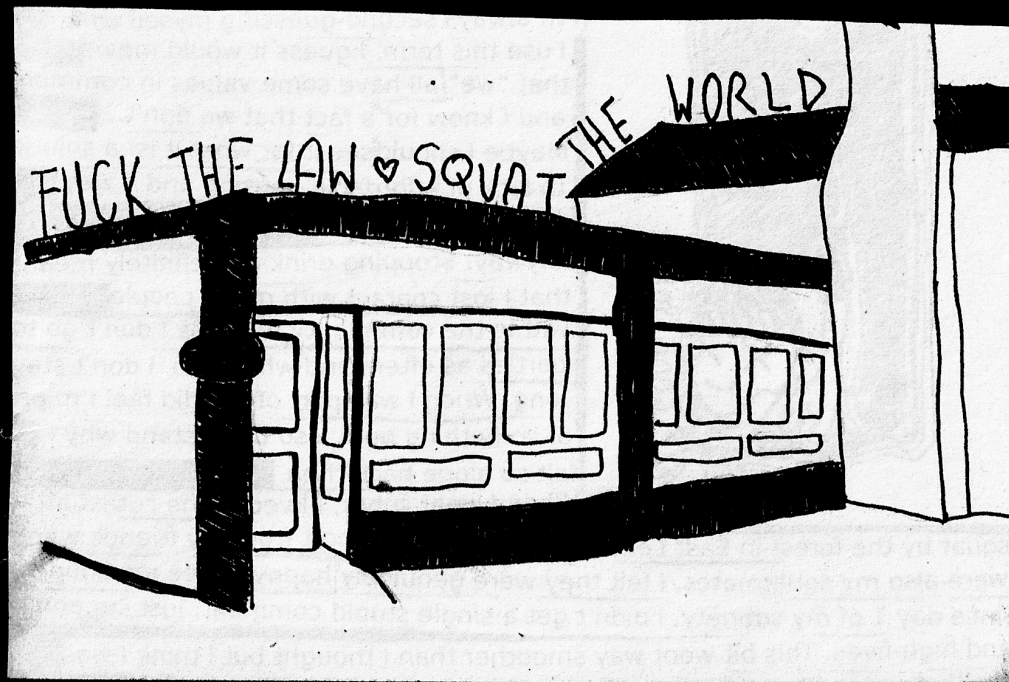
Discovering that I can be different gender than the one that was assigned to me of course did bring bit of a relief and made me feel validated - like wow, turns out I'm not a fucking weirdo - but again, I never felt I totally belong to the queer community either. I still don't feel I have much place in it because I'm so often not proud and open about who I am. Lots of people build queer identity around sexuality - I never felt it's particularly a thing for me as I feel my romantic/sexual interest is person-specific rather than gender-specific, which I guess makes me pansexual...? And therefore queer? Is it queer enough though? I'm so disinterested in sex and romance these days anyway...



And genderwise, if I'm outside the man/woman binary, am I like, trans enough? Do I get to call myself trans if I don't face too much of the shit many trans people, in particular trans women, face? I pass fairly easily and at most, I'm seen as a lesbian woman which is fairly safe in the UK (wouldn't be in many other places including where I am from). When I pass as a boy, I see how my safety decreases: I see it's one of the factors to being targeted by the cops and it worries me to have certain interactions on the street because I think I could be punished if someone realises I'm like a "tomboy that went a step too

But I've learnt that people who genuinely care about me (in their actions, not words only) are the ones who don't dismiss my anger, don't shame me for having it. They might get uncomfortable by it but they won't make me feel guilty about it.

I find it interesting to see how deeply I believed that feeling anger means that something is wrong with me - when in reality, something is usually wrong with more general dynamic of a relationship. It's hard but in terms of receiving anger, I'd like to unlearn pacifying it - this thing that makes me jump to making apologies straightaway, and trying to comfort the person who is angry with me in the moment, instead of taking a step back to see what I can learn from it. Sometimes it's important but I feel that in the long term pacifying achieves nothing, and it has a potential of destroying relationships.



I feel that this level of being close to others is also something that came with sobriety. I feel I care about people around me in a more profound way. I feel that many times alcohol was keeping things on the surface even when the conversation was serious. I remember not being able to talk about things seriously in a way that didn't involve texting - I don't need it anymore. I remember being with people who I liked but didn't know well used to scare the shit out of me. I'd get hyperactive and nervous, laughing a lot and trying to seem relaxed and friendly - I still get that.

One of the things I've discovered about myself during this time was that I'm quite introverted. I sort of always knew it but I think I never liked it, and I was trying to make myself more social by drinking. I know I can be comfortable with lots of interactions only to a limited degree. I still go to parties but I no longer have long hours to sit in pubs and talk about nothing with people I have little affinity with.

I know in the past I was often trying to be certain way - I wanted to be cool and chilled out, it bothered me when I was feeling difficult emotions;

I wanted to not be jealous, not be angry, not be depressed and upset. What I care about more now is authenticity. If I'm jealous/angry/depressed, I just am and that's it, I don't have to go on this ego trip that I don't feel these things because I'm soooo above it when I'm obviously not. If I feel this way, I know something makes me feel this way,

I'm not irrational, and nothing's in a vacuum. I don't have to be better than I really am.

What makes me "cool" is NOT not feeling anger, jealousy or sadness - what makes me cool is being real that I feel it.

Speaking of anger, I find it interesting how we (by we I guess I mean people on the political left, broadly speaking) like anger (in theory) and see it as a driving force. And yet, we're so terrified by it on interpersonal level while simultaneously claiming anger is okay. Isn't my hesitation to accept difficult

emotions coming also from that people-pleasing I mentioned before? Isn't it coming from a place of being terrified that my anger makes people uncomfortable - and I internalised the message that my life mission is to make everyone feel at ease? Anger is difficult because somebody being angry at you might (but not necessarily) mean you have to take responsibility. And responsibility is scary because it can mean accountability.

It's not that I have it totally worked out or that I'm never defensive - I'm scared of these things, too, and I'm stubborn.

far". That maybe I crossed some patriarchal line over here because my hair is too short and my clothes too baggy. Of course my level of safety and comfort is still very high considering I'm a white person in a racist country, so it doesn't feel fair to take lots of space to talk about it but it's also something real and to look out for when you're out and about with your queer friends.

But actually, who the fuck said that I have to suffer in order to claim (queer) identity? That it's only valid when it's based on suffering? That I first have to hit my quota of getting bullied? Turns out I'm way too fucking proud for this.

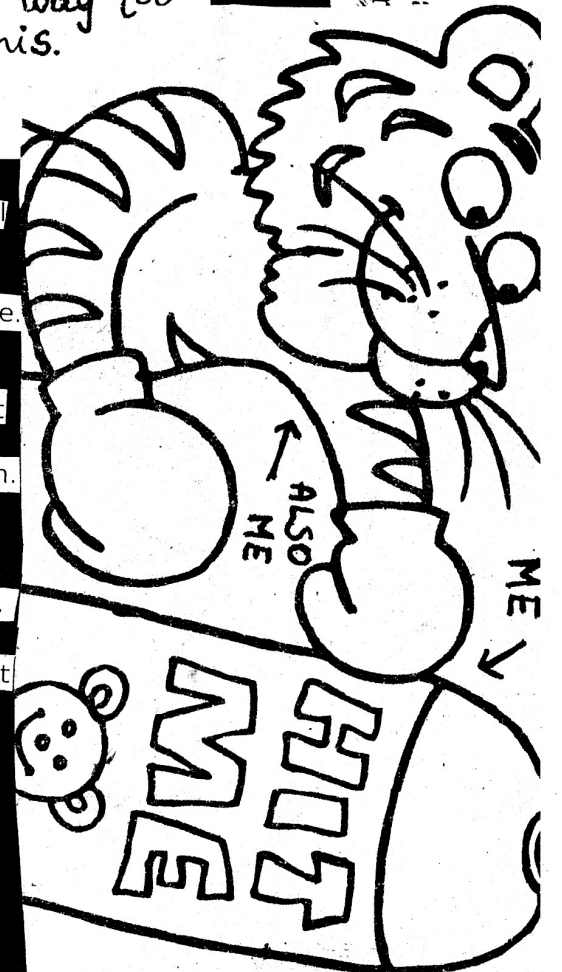
Either way.

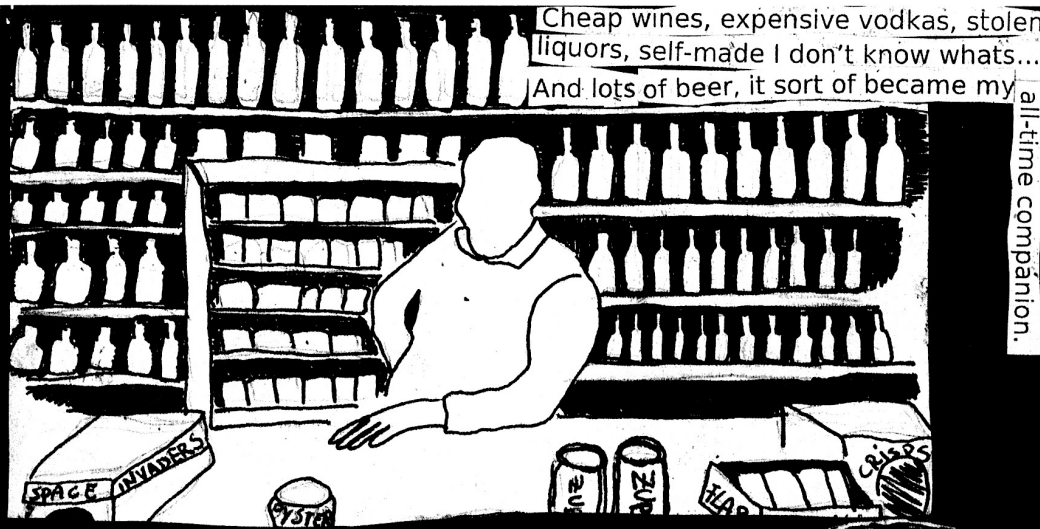
No matter where the tension I've always felt was coming from, alcohol used to help me with it a lot. I could just let go. It meant that when drunk, I could be more myself without shame.

Or, I could do things I would be normally embarrassed to do. Things like: crying and opening up out of nowhere to people I barely knew and then never mentioning stuff again. I could just relax! And opening up suddenly felt sooo easy. So, so easy. If anyone asked about anything after, I could just go with the classic: "haha, ye I don't know, I was just trashed". Stopping drinking meant that I couldn't do it anymore and I then needed to find different ways to communicate these things, different ways to open up and connect.

I started drinking regularly as a teenage punk, and since then, for years, I feel I drank everything with everybody.

Application for:
possession order





Cheap wines, expensive vodkas, stolen liquors, self-made I don't know whats... And lots of beer, it sort of became my

all-time companion.

I drank with people I loved, people I was friends with, but also with people who I couldn't stand, just to be able to stand them: people who were disrespectful at best and people who threatened to smash my jaw at worst. Or just people I didn't like. And lots of cishet, dudes, since they are so often gate-keepers of "alternative" subcultures and as a baby punk I FELT I needed to gain their acceptance in order to be seen as one. I did a lot of that and I was comforting so well while believing that I'm not comforting to rules because now I'm outside mainstream society's shit yeeha! - when the alternative is so often just mirroring the wider society, often in amplified ways.

I drank alone, to not be shy in case I was going out on my own (and I often was). I drank for fun and out of boredom and sadness. Out of loneliness and pain. I just drank a lot most of the times. It was often very fucking fun.

TRIGGER WARNING: EMOTIONAL ABUSE, PARTNER ABUSE, SUICIDAL THOUGHTS. FEEL FREE TO SKIP IT! + MENTION OF SELF-HARM NO. DESCRIPTION
IT STARTS BELOW AND ENDS WHERE I PUT A LINE OF STARS LIKE THIS ONE:
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

The most direct reason for me stopping drinking was coming out of an emotionally abusive romantic relationship around summer 2019. I wasn't aware of the abuse or its scale at that time. I was made to believe by my ex-partner that something was deeply wrong with me, and I took onboard all

of the blame for the bad times and all of the responsibility for the good times to happen. I felt I need to work hard on myself because I believed - I was made to believe - that I'm a horrible person. I felt I need to change something drastically enough to see changes in my life right away. And if I don't, I felt, I would get more ill than I already felt and more suicidal than I was, and although I didn't want to live, I didn't really want to die either... So stopping drinking and continuing with therapy I was already on seemed to be a good combo. It's painful to look back and see that nothing was wrong with me...but I got brainwashed so thoroughly that I remember each time I was going somewhere by bike, I was hoping I'd get hit by a car, and fucking die. I just thought I don't deserve to be alive. I could write a whole fucking zine about this but probably I never will because I refuse to give even more space to my abuser in my life. I'D LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT I'M STATING THE OBVIOUS BUT IF ANY RELATIONSHIP MAKES YOU SUICIDAL, SELF-HARMING AND SELF-HATING, IT'S TIME TO OPT-OUT.



Not being able to drown everything in alcohol meant I had to face it and it's scary. But it's also rewarding because everything started falling into place. I don't believe I can make lasting or significant changes if I'm coming from a place of self-hate. From this place of believing that I have to work on myself soo hard because me in my starting point is trash. I feel I can only change/improve when I understand that I am who I am because of what happened to me, and that I'm okay anyway, there is no obligation to improve. I feel paradoxically it's not a place of avoiding responsibility - it's accepting it in a calm way.

Being sober has changed the relationship I have with myself. It forces me to be more in touch with my feelings, both the pleasant and the difficult. Lying to myself became harder. I'm more able to catch the difference between what I think I should feel and what I actually feel. I feel I'm more aware of the "something's not right" - feeling and I'm less willing to make things go smoothly when it means playing a role and pretending. It can be a surprising experience and it feels like (re-)discovering myself. It's not that I didn't have these boundaries and they suddenly jumped out of nowhere. I think they were always there but I was just "happy" to bury them to make others happy. I feel not drinking made me more okay with my feelings. And since I'm feeling a lot and it's a big part of who I am, it feels that being more okay with my feelings made me more okay with myself.