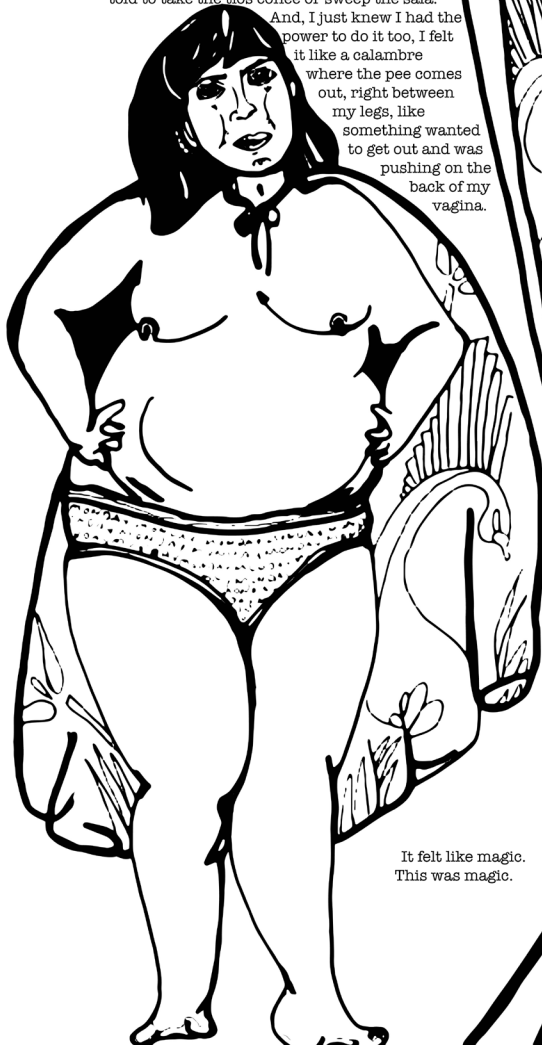


# PINTADA DE ROJO

Anel I. Flores

When I came back outside, my cousins started a new game and I wasn't on any of the teams. My brother was peeing behind a tree, minding his own business, and no one cared. I hated that I couldn't pee like the boys because I always had to go in and risk getting told to take the tios coffee or sweep the sala.

And, I just knew I had the power to do it too, I felt it like a calambre where the pee comes out, right between my legs, like something wanted to get out and was pushing on the back of my vagina.



It felt like magic.  
This was magic.



When I released my pee in the shower, it felt like a balloon filled of magic burst out from my stomach. I wanted to do it again, so I ran outside and drained the manguera of cold water into my mouth until my panza pushed out and down on my bladder. I was ready to release. I wanted to be able to aim the magic in every direction. I wished and wished there would be a way. No one was home, as usual, so I went into the bathroom and locked the door just in case.

The toilet roll would be the perfect tool. I pulled the trails of paper from the brown tube and tucked it in between my lips. The edge of the cardboard gently scraped my skin. A tinge of electricity ran down my legs and warmth flooded my stomach.

All of a sudden peeing standing up became less important.

ANEL I. FLORES Pee Like a Boy, 2018. Black and White Illustration Print on Paper 24" x 36".

Being sentenced to hell for love felt like the dumbest thing I had ever heard of. She said I was unnatural, a perversion, an abomination, vile, a sinner. My lungs hardened and I couldn't breathe. I knew she loved me by the way tears striped her face. I knew she loved me by the memory I could still hear of her singing in my ear every morning to wake me up for school. I knew she loved me by the desperation of her voice as she prayed to the Virgencita. I knew she loved me and I loved her. But it hurt too much and I was unwanted and looked down upon in my home.

The ground had fallen out from under me. Everything I ever knew to be true love, turned into a dark empty hallway. Every kiss I had been awoken with by my mam's sweet song and lips, turned into a lie.

All I could see floated away, frantically, and my head grew too heavy to lift up.

Raven tried to mesmerize her with his eyes, tried to calm her down, but nothing worked.



And, then we will not be together in heaven.

Pray to the virgencita to cure you.

Reza conmigo.

You can not do this to me and your father. We love you and we want you to inherit the kingdom of god. If you are gay, you will go to hell, mija.

You know I love you, mija. I love you and our lord loves you. Give it up to him.



ANEL I. FLORES *Pray the Gay Away*, 2018. Black and White Illustration Print on Paper, 24" x 36".

Mami stood by the church and I stayed away.

When we kissed, bubbles exploded from my heart like foam from a busted Big Red can, fallen and rolling away on the floor. Everything inside me flipped inside out. I didn't know if I'd ever get all the wild-winged creatures sprung from my stomach, back into my body, or if they'd gone free. And, maybe I was set free just the same. It felt like that, at least, while I kissed her and while she kissed me. When I opened my eyes and found hers closed, I wanted to hide and I wanted to laugh at the same time.

I wanted to run up and down the streets telling everybody about this feeling, to see if they had ever felt it before. If they hadn't, I wanted to demand that they must know what it was like to kiss a girl. Kissing her was otherworldly, magic, electric, shaking my bones like a space shuttle taking off from the deepest cavity of my soul, throwing sparks of fire about my skin and filling me with white clouds.

Her mouth opened up. Then my mouth opened up. She was soft and warm inside. I swallowed her, inhaled her candy scent. She pulled my face closer, with her hand pushing forward on the back of my neck. She took me into her. I tumbled down her throat and into the soft cavity of her stomach.

For the first time I felt the experience of love's physical and chemical reaction. I felt the tenderness of my heart, and I held on to her.

ANEL I. FLORES *Five Ways to Love a Girl*, 2018. Black and White Illustration Print on Paper, 24" x 36".

My parents weren't coming home for hours. Last time dad came home from hunting, he hid the key for the gun case on top. If I stood on the couch I could reach it. Ana Gabriel sang from my abuelita's boombox in the kitchen.



The beans tasted better than a bullet bursting a million blood vessels in my mouth.

mess I left from work  
nietecita, p



Partnered with the fact that she was also deaf in one ear, I knew she couldn't hear me. I would get the key, open the case, load the gun and end my sins, once and for all, without startling my sweet abuelita. Until, of course, she came for me to eat.

My brain would be all over the wall, the way I've seen it on tv shows, and she'd freak, not from the amount of for her to clean up before my parents came home, but from the loss of her other half, her baby, her preciosa, cabrona, niña, her favorite, her anelita - me

ANELI FLORES. *My Body, My Choice*, 2017. Black and White Ink on Paper. 11" x 17".



