

# SOFTIE



Mulberry





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by  
MULBERRY

New York can be harsh. New York can be hard. In SOFTIE zine, we want to show a softer side of the city. On a nice sunny day Downtown, you can step out of your front door and into a daydream. This is a place where everything happens. A miracle strolls into your life. A liar falls in love. A boyfriend turns blue. There's a bear on Canal Street. Two girls skip work to try on a dress. Your AC falls out the window on a sweltering day. A girl with a soft voice chases after a stranger's dog.

Your heels are clicking as you walk the line. You lie down on clouds on your bed. Your body is pinned to the sky. Your brain's full of soft thoughts. This zine is a collection of original poems, stories and pictures commissioned from some of our favorite New Yorkers to mark the opening of Mulberry's new flagship store at 100 Wooster Street, SoHo. They all paint a portrait of the city today, and how it makes us feel. We hope you'll find pleasure and joy in these pages.

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I want people to fall in love with me  
but I also don't want people to get to know me.

I wake up with a headache and wonder  
if what I'm feeling is love

or if what I'm feeling is coming  
from the dangerous part inside me.

APOLOGY OF A LIAR IN LOVE  
By Annie Hamilton

I'm falling in love with someone who does not yet believe I'm a pathological liar. I've tried to warn him: I've sent him my Substacks, my tweets, my "materials" as if he were a prospective agent rather than a really kind and curious lover. When I tell him about my lying habit—I give examples, I give evidence—his mustache crumples and, with cross-eyes, he tells me that I'm actually a radical truth teller (before his face gives way and he turns a sort of blue).

The hardest thing for him, for anyone, to understand is that I am both.

I want to tell him that I only lie about the "little things"—my whereabouts, my opinion of the movie we've just seen—that I only lie about myself, but that isn't true. Some of my most important stories are lies. My lies have changed the trajectory of my life. Sometimes, on good days, I feel that I've lied my way into the life I want.

After ten years of trying to "make it" as an actress in LA, I moved back home to NY (where I grew up) and my life ... began.

I began to become myself, I began to behave not necessarily in an authentic way, but in a way that I had read about and had always wanted to emulate.

Perhaps even better than authenticity.

This "It-Girl" article in the *NY Times* changed my life: job offers and meetings rolled into my inbox, all three big agencies suddenly wanted to meet with me, movie stars tried to become friends with me and sometimes even sleep with me—yes, I care about that—I'm told that I'm going to make some money soon, I'm getting better auditions. People claim to be interested in me in a serious capacity for the first time.

I also got sober thanks to Narcotics Anonymous four months and ten days ago. My thing was speed. I mean, it still is, I just can't do it anymore.

(I don't think any of the special things that are happening to me would be happening without my sobriety which is why I'm mentioning it.)

Two weeks ago I performed my third show at The Jane Hotel, where I have a residency, and where I write a different hour-long monologue each month. I perform a character of myself: an Annie who simultaneously shows off her greatest flaws and who also hides behind the spectacle of declaring them.

This last show discussed my "problem" with men: my addiction to them, to collecting their validation; my inability to get a boyfriend.

What I didn't mention in the show is that my four years of singledom has probably been the result of not being able to tell the truth, to really let somebody in, to be present with another person without any armor and without manipulation.

All of the phone calls and the emails and the strangers saying hi to me on the street who claim to be fans of mine (who might or might not have seen any of my "work" because who HAS), make me feel like I'm important somehow and I lie in bed at night wishing I had someone to share my little successes with.



And then, after four months of abstinence  
and four years of being single, three days  
after declaring I have no idea how to fall in  
love or what love even is: I met somebody.

And I do tell him made up stories  
and I do proclaim I've gotten better at lying  
and I have and I also say exactly what's on my  
mind and exactly what I believe to be on his.

And I'm scared.

I'm scared I only know how to sabotage,

I called up my friend A to tell her the news.

Not only have I, until now, thrown myself  
at unwilling participants, but I'm also  
not supposed to be entering the dating  
world—my sponsor's rules for my recovery.  
I told A that I'm worried T will figure out  
how bad I am, that he will see I'm an  
emotional criminal, (and maybe even a  
bonafide crook from time to time).

She comforted me:

"Your lying has never gotten in the way  
of our friendship. I know you do it,  
I know the problem is real, but I trust you.  
I trust you so much. You only hurt yourself."

And that's true, too. I can have intimate  
relationships but I sometimes get  
the feeling nobody really knows me,  
despite our closeness, despite the  
coffee dates, despite the swapping  
of secrets and clothes.

I don't want to give up lying because I don't know any other way.  
It's easier, I want people to like me, I want people to be impressed by me,  
I want to be special.

I want people to fall in love with me but I also don't want people to get to know me.  
Which is why I wake up with a headache and wonder if what I'm feeling is love  
or if what I'm feeling is coming from the dangerous part inside me that lies even to myself.

Am I capable of love, of being loved?

Is the love that I give real or is it  
a pantomime I've choreographed  
to make myself seem more valuable?

The man that I'm falling in love with comes from  
an extremely tight-knit and loving family.

I do not.

I was trying to explain to him that in getting into this relationship,  
it's hard to be reminded of my mother, father, and brother,  
who are alone, who will probably spend the rest of their lives alone.

He told me that the reason I'm me  
is because of my family. That without  
my father's bankruptcy, and my brother's  
illness, and my aunt's witchery, I wouldn't  
be the artist or person or even lover I am  
today. I wanted to tell him I loved him,  
even though it's barely been two weeks.  
It's not that I didn't already know  
this about myself; I did.

I've just been waiting for a man to  
appreciate this about me my whole life.

We stared into each other's eyes.

He asked me what I was thinking about and, without thinking,  
I told him that he just wrote my next show for me.

For a split second he looked scared,  
and then he broke out into powerful, joyous laughter.

I don't know what will happen,  
but I know what I wish will.

I'm scared I only know how to sabotage.





SOFT SPOT  
By Honor Levy

meet me in the fontanelle  
between the baby bones  
here in this soft spot  
in the membranous gaps  
where ossification is incomplete  
and sutures unformed  
that is where i want to be  
with you finally  
in flux and fragility

maybe here we may be maybe able  
to know no to feel no to see  
the possibility of a soft solution  
to that hard problem  
of anything and everything at all  
of what's inside and outside  
our confused fused little skulls  
of mind and body  
of this and that  
of what it's like to be a bat  
to know a sound so soft it serves as sight  
a softness so strong there's no need for light  
with flight and fuzz with fangs and fur  
for real or for a real for the real is soft  
in all the right spots soft enough to be  
all the things it is and all the things it's not

i have a soft spot for you  
hard to get to under fused baby bone  
these sutures need two to unglue  
softness is so hard to find alone  
it has no wikipedia page of its own  
hard redirect always a guarantee  
soft and only lost and lonely  
You know how that one goes

And comes and goes in the gray matter,  
in all that really matters,  
in soft tissue, in easter lamb meat,  
under satin sheets, anywhere skin meets  
softness makes matter matter  
Like echo echo like lol lol

And so there is no need for me or the cure or dr. harlow  
for freudian analysis of an anime body pillow  
for proof that a baby bounces when dropped  
for radical tenderness to trend or the pastel cringe to stop  
for experiments with wire monkey mother effigies  
for muddy satin ribbon imagery or anymore attempts at poetry  
for softness is already reality always has been always will be







UNTITLED #1  
By Seashell Coker

captivated by your love  
fascinated with the words you choose to use with me in mind

you turned the darkness into light

or so i thought.

perhaps you've led me deeper into the night  
my heels clicking as i teeter the line between  
falling into the pitch black abyss that is you  
or resuming my monotonous days wearing a cracked mask of indifference.

one thing for certain is my yearning,  
my yearning for a taste of something abandoned long ago

the rush, the ascent

lying on a bed of clouds as you administer liquid love in its purest form.

please keep a steady pace  
as i'm terrified to fall from the private paradise that we have created for ourselves

will you protect me?

from the pain so visceral it could be felt in my bones

will you protect me?

from the intrusive thoughts hacking away at my brain like an ice pick  
i would like to walk with you, and you alone  
for i know if my legs fail me you'll be there to carry me the rest of the way









SKY SONG  
By Precious Okoyomon

give your body for abstraction  
bite your tongue and eat it  
this is corrective therapy

now into one alienated and alienating blahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh  
now into the meat of the word

don't speak to me in obscurities  
Re-creation  
strip down  
carry nothing  
but light only light

no longer

clutch to guaranteed space but

recreate space  
temporalize space  
the universe as adapting space  
a love that gives space  
a love that is space  
tactile palatial and self-immolating

become the room  
let the silence undo you  
release into the mourning light

life rubs up against matter inner core against inner core

try not to be afraid you don't have to be afraid

no to the fragility of language

no to the ego

no to the colonial context of thought

no to fake tenderness

no to liberation without destruction

no to self-destruction

no to masters

the light washes the body clean lay throbbing in the sky  
to live affixed to the circuitry of the world

the body is pinned to the sky in blue

reborn in this energy<sub>caught and released</sub> lucid intangible realities of dust

the sky sweeps it all away<sub>regulate the unconscious play of the mind</sub>

Have you ever seen pink moonlight?<sub>it's frightening</sub>





LAST NIGHT I FELT AFRAID TO DIE  
By Cristine Brache

remember to turn off the lights

wherever you don't want to see

remember I am a feather in love

and this world is a thief

how sick must it make us

(mop me up and send me the bill)

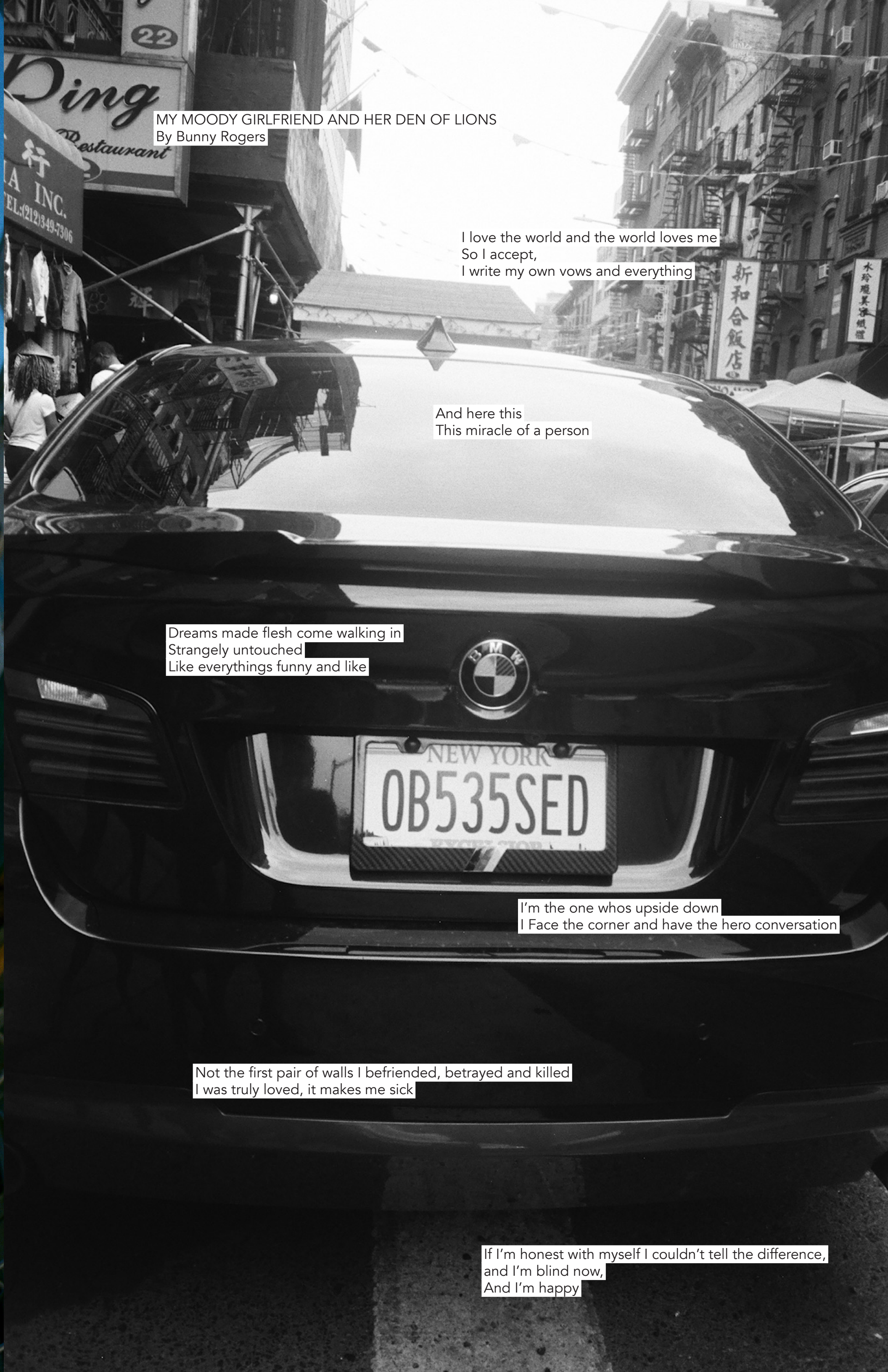
in another life, I find my fantasy

Where the void respects me forever

What hope is there

If feathers can no longer fall to the ground with grace





MY MOODY GIRLFRIEND AND HER DEN OF LIONS  
By Bunny Rogers

I love the world and the world loves me  
So I accept,  
I write my own vows and everything

And here this  
This miracle of a person

Dreams made flesh come walking in  
Strangely untouched  
Like everythings funny and like

I'm the one whos upside down  
I Face the corner and have the hero conversation

Not the first pair of walls I befriended, betrayed and killed  
I was truly loved, it makes me sick

If I'm honest with myself I couldn't tell the difference,  
and I'm blind now,  
And I'm happy



Sabrina drops her bag of shoes in front of the shop first. Clara, tired from the day, stops beside her to check the time. It's 3 o'clock. All day they've been transporting the unused items of a recent campaign styled by Ursula Melián; as her assistants, it's their job to re-turn them to their designers. She's expecting them back at her office in an hour. For the third time this afternoon they've walked by Casa de Novia, and each time their heads turned in unison towards the window newly dressed for spring. Tulle wraps around pillars, tiny birds hang on strings, garlands of yellow and pink drape from left to right across the window. The girls take their time eyeing each detail as the scaffolding shields them from the sun. It's the first sweltering day of the year, but the heat already feels old. A pink curtain opens to reveal a single mannequin wearing the store's latest acquisition: an off-the-shoulder flounce sucks into a corseted bodice covered in silver embroidery; layers of crinoline supported by a hoopskirt spill out below the waist. The gown's construction is sealed by a skirt finished in the same pattern as the top. Yes, this is the sort of dress you wear to introduce yourself as a woman or bride. Unsure of being either, Sabrina and Clara's eyes search the dress's layers, their shiny faces stuck in the reflection of the glass as the day's traffic carries on behind them.

Sabrina ruminates. Clara becomes impatient. "I'm going in," Sabrina says as she steps over her bag.

Clara picks it up and hesitantly follows her in. Ursula knows how long it takes to get to the showroom downtown; she even keeps track of potential train delays. At the office, racks of clothing are waiting for them. No. There is simply no time.

Sabrina is smiling as she searches through the racks of white.

"I just want to see," she winks.

Clara has always felt envious of Sabrina's instinct for knowing when to break a rule.

"Okay," Clara submits. "Five minutes."

The woman behind the register does not look up at the jingle of their entrance. She's bent over the counter entranced by a scroll of her phone. Bits of her feed can be heard with each upward flick of the thumb. The sounds are in sync with Sabrina's hangers scraping the rails from which they hang. It takes two seconds for each woman to decide they dislike what's in front of them. These are the only sounds in the empty shop. Clara places the bags of shoes by her side and waits by the door. Here she can admire the pink ribbon tying up the corset of the dress in the window.

Sabrina continues to push through rows of satin and silk wrapped in plastic garment bags, swaying in her wake. The clerk looks up

for a moment to see if she's making a mess. A sign behind her reads: CASA DE NOVIA EST. 1987. Mauve countertops suggest the store has maintained its original design. The hum of an AC can be heard in the back. Clara feels the sweat on her back turn cold. Perhaps the purity of the dresses requires refrigeration, she thinks. Taking one step deeper into the store to get a closer look at the train of the dress in the window, she catches Sabrina in her periphery, pointing and opening her mouth to ask a question.

"Can we try that one on?"

Clara rushes forward to push her finger down, "No! No thank you, you don't have to take it down, it's fine."

But the clerk is already rounding the corner behind the register and calling for help. "Marta! Ayúdame a sacar el vestido de la ventana!"

An older woman appears, still chewing on what could be a late lunch, and gets to work on untying the ribbon. Clara has to stop this. It's 3:10.

"We are on the clock," she tries reasoning with her friend. "You cannot just try on a dress for fun."

"I'm not," Sabrina replies. "You are."

Sabrina has always taken Clara's shyness as a secret desire to be daring. She's watched Clara blush on set when photographers ask her to stand in for a test shot. She has aspirations of styling clothes, but Clara could wear them for a living if she wanted. Everyone knows that. Her height and measurements are fit to model, in the old 20th-century way. Sabrina and Clara's mutual envy and admiration makes them sisters. After working together for two years and living together for four, Sabrina knows when to push.

"Please just try it on, I would if it fit me. Just try."

Clara wants to refuse, but feels softened by the two clerks talking excitedly in Spanish. She can imagine them dressing the window and wondering where the dress would end up. Sabrina helps them carry it into a room Clara hadn't noticed. She follows them, not wanting to be left alone with the shoes.

The dressing room doubles the size of the shop and reminds Clara of the showroom they're supposed to be headed towards. A circular platform in the center is illuminated by three lights in the ceiling. Mirrors and curtains orbit around it.

"Stand here miss," says the first woman as she slide her phone into her back pocket.

Her demeanor has changed from when they first walked in.

Clara feels guilty for trying on a dress she won't buy, so she asks,

"What's your name?"

The woman replies, "I'm Celia.  
Can you please step over here?"

Just as Clara begins unbuttoning her jeans,  
she feels the hoopskirt being lifted over her head.

"Wait! Can I take off my shirt first?"  
Marta and Celia nod their heads impatiently.

Clara throws her shirt as hard as she can at Sabrina.  
She laughs as she records her friend being swallowed up.

CONT.-->





it’s better to remember how things  
felt instead of how they appeared.

Memories can be reduced to images.

“Finsta only! Ursula follows you on main.”

Fine, Finsta only. Sabrina has tested Clara enough today.

Marta stands in front of Clara and motions for her  
to place her hands on her shoulders.

As she does this she feels Celia’s foot on her  
lower back as she yanks the corset into place.

Clara is shocked at being handled this way,  
but she enjoys the constriction. She has  
always been proud of her threshold for pain.  
Clara is the only assistant who wears heels to  
run errands. Sucking in one more sip of air,  
she holds her breath while Celia gives her a  
final tug. Marta rushes to her knees to fluff  
the bottom of the skirt, while Celia throws the  
train into the air and watches it spill around  
her. Marta leaves the room and comes back  
with a tiara. Clara watches her reflection from  
behind as she places it on her head.

The dress is on. Marta and Celia hang back in  
the doorway smiling, arms folded, enjoying  
their work. The mirrors offer panoramic views  
of the dress’s construction, and Clara takes  
the time to look at herself from all sides. Look  
at her here, and she’s a teen debuting as a  
woman. Look at her there, and she’s a bride  
in her dressing room, moments from walking  
down the aisle. She knows she isn’t these  
things, but right now, she believes she could  
be. Lifting her shoulder towards her chin, she  
watches her ponytail swing as she looks back  
at the ribbon trailing down the skirt. Sabrina  
picks up her phone.

“Could you just give me one of those, like ...  
”Sabrina twirls a finger in the air as a stage  
direction.

Clara knows what she means. Without a  
word, she spins and the hoopskirt expands  
and takes flight, engulfing the platform  
below. She lands in a squat with her arms  
splayed outward. Marta and Celia gasp.  
Clara is smiling, too. Her beauty isn’t op-  
pressive; she shares it with everyone. Sabrina  
records this motion, making a loop around  
her friend. The studio bulbs above make the  
silver embroidery burn. Clara is looking up  
into the light and becomes absorbed. Oh,  
but now Sabrina’s phone is ringing. It’s Ursula.  
Clara is now aware of how tight the bodice  
feels. It has to come off. She looks down at  
the ground and notices the rough blue car-  
pet. She hates this place. She tries to pull off  
the dress herself, and becomes angry at Mar-  
ta and Celia for trying to help. She cannot  
believe she followed Sabrina into this store.  
Clara needs this job. Sabrina steps back into  
the store to take the call.

“Hi, sorry. Yes we’re still headed downtown.  
Oh, really? Okay. Yeah. Okay. Fifteen of  
them? Yes, we can do that. Yes, I still have  
the card. I’ll text you what they have.  
Okay. Bye.”

Sabrina comes back into the dressing room,  
picks up Clara’s t-shirt, and hands it to her.  
Her torso is exposed, as the dress hangs  
halfway off. She was too busy eavesdrop-  
ping on the call to notice. All three of them  
are looking at Sabrina expectantly.  
She makes them wait.

“Well?”

“She says her meeting is running late and  
she wants us to make another stop. We  
have to pick up fifteen black tank tops and  
shorts in every size for next week’s e-com-  
merce shoot. You still have the credit card,  
right?”

Clara rolls her eyes. Everything works out  
for Sabrina. “Yes,” she replies as she pulls  
her t-shirt back on. “I still have the credit  
card.”

Celia interjects, “Can we see the video?”

The four women crowd around Sabrina as  
she extends her arm and replays the mo-  
ment they’ve just lived. Marta and Celia  
are proud; the window worked. Casa de  
Novia lies forgotten in the Garment Dis-  
trict, unable to grasp new modes of adver-  
tisement. Sabrina’s video proves sight and  
touch are still viable tools for seduction.  
Clara likes feeling beautiful, but detests  
seeing it played back to her. This is why  
she’d never be a model: it’s better to  
remember how things felt instead of how  
they appeared. Memories can be reduced  
to images. Yes, she much prefers the other  
side of a camera. Fashion images are not  
real moments, they are gestures point-  
ing to what could be. Sabrina plays the  
30-second clip four more times. She loves  
to see how clothes move, how they are  
worn and can transform the wearer. If only  
fashion could be about this, not carrying  
bags of shoes. The moment is over and  
Sabrina feels sad. She plays it again to re-  
member. Marta whispers to Celia in Span-  
ish, and she relays the message.

“Can you tag us on Instagram?”

Yes, they will. In a couple of days so their  
boss won’t track their steps. Each woman  
picks a corner of the dress to transport  
it back to its post. As the tallest, Clara  
steps into the window to help maneuver it  
over the mannequin head. Sabrina is next  
to her. From here they can see the tape  
holding up the garlands and the paint  
flaking in the corner. Holes in the tulle are  
carefully folded to face the back. The glass  
of the window radiates heat from the  
outside. They look out together, watching  
the flow of people they will soon rejoin.  
Back in the shop they slouch towards  
the bags of shoes, and Celia writes down  
their handles on a ripped piece of paper.  
Clara puts it inside of her phone case,  
knowing she’ll remember their promise.  
Each woman hugs the other and the girls  
promise to come back. Maybe they will.  
A burst of sounds enters the store when  
the door opens, and they’re gone. Silence  
again. Marta watches them disappear into  
the subway station at the end of the block.  
Celia goes back behind the counter to

continue her scroll, and Marta rejoins her  
after giving the dress a final fluff.

Marta turns to Celia and asks,

“Viste como se dio la vuelta?”



GOLDEN SUNSET SUN LENS FLARE (MAD MEN)  
By Olivia Kan-Sperling

The jacuzzi is so warm, just like honey.  
And so, you can allow  
Your eyes to close.  
And, thinking back on your day, memories might surface now—or stay down a little bit longer. (Either is just all right.)

In the meantime, you might imagine  
That you’re an airline stewardess, relaxing after a long day in the sky

In the Sixties! In fact, it’s the summer of love,  
And you’re super in sync with it.

And so, little by little, maybe some images are coming in. Just one, or two.  
Smiling. Bringing people drinks.  
The ice, cool and clear, and every time a perfect cube.  
A large cube, expensive, the kind for whiskey:  
Two, by two, by two

Inches. Small droplets of water condensing on every glass, catching the rays of the setting sun,  
which is both warmer and weaker up there, before running down the side,  
onto every grey plastic tray, forming a ring of water there, around the glass.

And you allow these images to evaporate off the surface, and others to come up:

Now, remark the exits.  
You moved your arms straight down the center  
Of the aisle. You’ll never see an emergency landing.  
You’ll never have to take off your heels before slipping down  
The inflatable slide, into the Pacific Ocean.

The sun flaring sharply off the sunglasses of the man in 6A: business class, and he can look  
However you like.  
But most of all he looks like Don Draper.  
And he’s really, really going places.

But hey—so are you.

The jacuzzi is just like honey. An infinite series of black-and-white concentric circles is expanding,

circle by circle, alternating colors, straight from the center.

You’re up so high. The air smells of jasmine.

Though you don’t know it yet, the person who will invent bubble tea has already been born,

in Taiwan (a place you may fly some day). Dolphins are healthy and there are so many of them,  
but they are not in the jacuzzi. And if you were to dive into the cool, deep pool—

the water would close over your head in a perfect oval.



The only time I ever raised my voice was when the AC fell out my window. No one was home, so no one else really heard it. The neighbors never enquired but the police surely did. Not because a woman was screaming in her kitchen but because the AC that had fallen nearly hit a pedestrian and her dog. The 50-pound chunk of metal landed directly between her and her dog, ripping the nylon leash in half. When I got downstairs to make sure no one was hurt, the woman was on the phone with the police, claiming I almost killed her and her dog that had sprinted off the moment the leash was cut. She wasn't sure if she was supposed to chase down her dog or wait for me, the culprit, to be handed off to the authorities. I didn't know what to do with myself so I began picking up debris from the now-unrecognizable AC unit. I couldn't stand to hear the woman wail and sob into the phone, so I interrupted and told her I would go find her dog and come back. I asked for the dog's name which was something like "Betty" though through her tears was inaudible. I gave her my wallet with my ID and some \$5 in it. I ran off looking for the dog. It's hard to look for a dog you don't care about. The moment I was out of the inconsolable woman's view, I stopped jogging. I walked slowly, looking around hoping to just find the dog and continue on with my day. It was as hot as could be and I had just installed that AC. It dawned on me that even when this was all over, I wouldn't be going into my own private icebox. I now had to go buy a new AC, find someone stronger than me to carry it up my five flights, install it, and buy said stronger person a coffee, maybe dinner.

Sweat now dripping from my forehead, I wondered where a dog down here would instinctively end up. I remembered just then that there was a dog park not far, near to the East River. I crossed an overpass over the FDR only to find the entire park was gone in order to build the new sea wall. All that was left were some trees, tractors, and mounds of dirt and mulch. The jogging path was blocked off and rerouted. I noticed yuppie couples and lone joggers all enjoying themselves, breaking a sweat and likely anticipating a trip to the Hamptons that weekend. I walked down to the path and asked if anyone had seen a dog by itself, running around. Most people couldn't hear me because I speak at a terribly soft volume. Freud says it means I'm traumatized but I think it's just how my vocal cords were designed by God. One guy stopped and took out one of his headphones, panting with a patch of sweat in the shape of an upside-down mountain on his blue shirt, "You lookin' for that dog? Some family down there's got it, asking if it's anyone's. You should really run with a leash on that dog from now on." I couldn't wait to get this dog so I could prove to the lady I wasn't a useless lazy idiot like she seemed to think I was, which I guess to some degree, I am. The reason the AC fell was because I didn't feel like screwing it in. I thought duct tape and gravity would suffice.

Jogging down the opposite direction of the path, there was a family hailing a cab near to the highway ramp. The little black dog, seemingly as inconsolable as its owner, was trying to escape the grip of a woman while her husband and kid waved a taxi down. I wanted to yell but I couldn't. The cab pulled up, the door opened, and the family got in. I tried in that moment to scream like a normal person but my vocal cords wouldn't let me. The few times in which I've had to yell, I had to ask a stranger to do it for me. I would love to be someone who could yell and enunciate but I can't. My disdain for loud people has only grown from this. I've never liked loud people, not because of my inability to project but because I find it rude to take up sonic space. A lot of people aren't biologically equipped to raise their voices yet everyone is equipped to shut up.

The cab pulled out heading north on the FDR. They looked like an Upper East Side family. I ran back to the scene of the crime and from a block away I could hear the woman still wailing. There was a police man with a small notepad, looking bored.

"I think your dog is on the Upper East Side," I said.

"How do you know this?" she said, tears still streaming.

"I saw your dog get in a cab with a rich-looking family and they headed north on the FDR."

"Well how the hell am I supposed to find them! You idiot, you should have shouted the second you saw my Betty!"

The cop gave me a fine to give to the landlord, which I was most likely going to have to pay. I went upstairs, feeling slightly guilty for my soft voice. I thought maybe somehow the dog would be listed on a missing dog website, if that even existed. I searched "Lost dog, found downtown/upper east side black small dog Betty." I came across a shelter located right off the FDR on East 110th Street. I ran to my window to see if I could muster up one last scream to the sobbing woman, but my voice was too soft and she was much too far.





THE VANITY’S CREED  
By Claire Banse

When I read it, I hear it coming out of my grandmother’s mouth, a pink lipstick-coated mouth, puckering into *un petit bisou* (as she would say). “S-ew-ah-ft,” crinkling her whole face as if she were trying to roll her weathered cheeks into whatever she is describing and dragging the “o” sound in an inhalation of air identical to the one intended for the Marlboro Gold in her right hand.

My grandmother, Kay Martin, was born Kathleen but dropped the “thleen” alongside her married last name when she divorced my mother’s father.

The moniker began in a tailor shop somewhere in suburban Connecticut, when she was asked what letters she wanted to be monogrammed into the lapel of the last beaver coat her first husband would ever buy her. That’s where

she commissioned twirling script in lipstick-red thread against the coat’s white satin lining, spelling out “Kay,” stating her new name in the same manner as she states all things, unapologetically and with a wink.

She loves to tell the story of me as a wailing infant, mercilessly torturing my mother, unsoothed by the traditional methods of burping and bouncing. In a state of sleep-deprived desperation, my mother had no choice but to hand me to her own mother, who, with expert precision, identified the source of my tantrum immediately, scoffing as she checked the inseam of my onesie,

“Jesus Fucking Christ, you’ve got the kid in a polyester blend, obviously, she’s crying. The girl’s just like me, she doesn’t do cheap.”

And with that she marched up the stairs and christened me into her world of all things soft and beautiful, swaddling me in an ex-boyfriend’s cashmere sweater and claiming me, her protégé in the artful practice of all feminine guiles.

Nanny, as I call her, was a dancer.

I have a photo of her on stage in black and white, a pillbox hat positioned in a perfect tilt upon pin curls, an arm up with her hand stretched out into a stop-sign position and

the other extended impossibly gracefully to the side, long delicate fingers looking more beautiful than I thought fingers could ever look, shining against a dark

background of men seated in suits behind the stage, their eyes fixated on her. When she moved into the house she lives in now, she had her third husband build her a dancer’s vanity. Bare bulbs line the rectangular

mirror hung against a brick wall in her bedroom, emitting the same yellow glow as a stage light. There, I, her only granddaughter, would sit for what felt like hours, asking questions about the black compacts and lipstick

tubes, smelling the sweet pea and tuberose of the discontinued perfume she hoards in bulk, and closing my eyes upon my grandmother’s request, allowing her

to paint my face with her blush brushes.

“Isn’t that the softest thing you ever felt in your life?”

I’d stare at my face in that mirror, growing older each time, and let her yank my long brown hair into submission, nodding dutifully when she showed me the exact length I could let it grow out to without looking like a whore. It was there that she bestowed exclusive wisdom unto me,

lecturing on subjects such as how to bat my eyelashes (one long blink, then several short), the best colors to paint my nails (“Bubble Bath” for fingers, and “My Chihuahua Bites” on the toes), how to use toilet paper to make

any shoe fit (if it’s cute enough, you won’t see the blisters) and how to always look slim (if you gain a pound, add extra butter to every meal so your boyfriend gains five).

There are times when the voice in my head will come out as hers and she’ll play the role of both angel and devil on my shoulder, encouraging daring eye contact across the bar or sneering at cheap fabric in a dressing room.

It’s then that I realize those lessons given before the vanity have built themselves into a specific feminine creed, a femme-fatale dogma and sharp-witted philosophy,

built upon speaking in red thread against white satin, rooted firmly in standing tall in who you are but never apologizing for letting that person remain

soft to the touch.





I am a feather in love.



# Mulberry

Welcome to Mulberry,  
100 Wooster Street

Born in the heart of Somerset, England, Mulberry is a British luxury lifestyle brand that has been championing quality and craftsmanship for over 50 years. We are passionate advocates of sustainability, and our most celebrated bags - the Bayswater, the Alexa and the Lily - have become iconic examples of British design, made to be passed down from one generation to the next.

Combining the craft of the countryside with the cool of the city, over the years we've brought our artisanal heritage to bear through partnerships with Priya Ahluwalia, Luella Bartley, Alexa Chung and Acne Studios, all of whom have taken the brand in unique and innovative directions.

In this same spirit of community and creative collaboration, the 100 Wooster Street flagship represents the next chapter in the Mulberry story. When we opened our first store in New York in 2006, we saw it as an opportunity to forge a connection with our US counterparts and grow a local network.

As we emerge from the pandemic, it feels like the right moment to be celebrating these in-person connections anew, and as such we are delighted to introduce 'Softie': a zine that blurs the line between the real and virtual and showcases the work of some of the NYC artistic community. (Speaking of in-person, the new store also provides an opportunity for our US-based customers to experience our latest bag, the Softie, for the first time.)

Further helping us bring 100 Wooster Street to life is the model, knitwear designer and resident New Yorker Ella Emhoff, who, as a new voice on the fashion scene embarking on her own creative endeavour, perfectly embodies the mood of the 100 Wooster Street campaign. You can hear her interview from the shoot, in which she shares her thoughts on style and the pleasures of craft, in a bonus episode of our Made to Last podcast, available via your preferred audio app.

We look forward to welcoming  
you to our new store.



To get even more out of your zine, scan the QR code to access the digital version, where you'll find exclusive content from the 100 Wooster Street campaign.







# Mulberry

100 WOOSTER STREET

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