

**the  
witch  
doesn't  
burn  
in  
this  
one**

**amanda lovelace**

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**Andrews McMeel**  
PUBLISHING®

the  
women are some kind of magic  
series:  
*the princess saves herself in this one (#1)*  
*the witch doesn't burn in this one (#2)*

for the girl on fire.  
thank you for inspiring me to  
gently set the world alight.  
you may have  
a gown of flames,  
but those same flames  
run through my  
veins.



&

to all the  
princesses,

to all the  
damsels,

to all the  
queens.  
you have  
rescued yourselves

so many  
times now

& i am  
in awe of

you.

# trigger warning

this book  
contains  
sensitive material  
relating to:

child abuse,  
intimate partner abuse,  
sexual assault,  
eating disorders,  
trauma,  
death,  
murder,  
violence,  
fire,  
menstruation,  
transphobia,  
& more.

remember  
to practice self-care  
before, during, & after  
reading.

## contents

I. the trial

II. the burning

III. the firestorm

IV. the ashes

warning I:

this is not  
a ~~fairy~~ witch tale.

there are no  
witches.

there is no  
witch hunt.

there are no  
match-boys.

there are no  
burnings.

there is no  
fiery revolution.

this is simply  
a story

where women  
fight against

the manmade  
structure

that has long  
overstayed

its welcome.



warning II:

no mercy  
ahead.

“write your fears.”

that’s what they  
told me.

so i picked that  
pen up again

& i traced my way  
over these

openclosedopen  
wounds

until the inky map  
led me right to

the very ones who  
started it.

then i took  
a deep breath

& conjured up  
a storm

all my own.

tell me  
something,  
would you?

haven't you  
ever wished

you could  
dance

in the ashes  
of everyone who

ever doubted  
your worth

& scoffed at  
your words?

(shhh,  
it's okay.  
i won't tell.)

## prophecy I

i will not survive this winter. the boys  
with fistfuls of matchsticks are

poundpoundpounding at my  
cottage door. while witches

may be flammable, the match-boys  
cannot take the heart shape my

lover's lips take when she whispers my  
name through the dark. the match-boys

cannot take the mother-to-daughter  
tales that will slide off the angry

tongues of my descendants for  
centuries to come. the match-boys

cannot take the wronged woman's  
wrath of artemis, goddess of

hunt(ing the ones who come for women  
like me with hate-filled eyes). i may

not survive the match-boys, but my  
bitch-fire will survive them all.

## prophecy II

what happens  
when you  
throw  
your match,

but the  
pastor-preyed witch  
simply refuses to  
catch?

what happens  
when you  
throw  
your stone,

but the  
adultery-accused wife  
simply refuses to  
bleed?

what happens  
when you  
throw  
your fist (again),

but your  
truth-talking girlfriend  
simply refuses to  
bruise?

over the span  
of centuries  
animals evolve to  
survive their surroundings,

so

what happens  
when women  
finally

learn  
to  
throw  
back?

(this.)  
(this.)  
(this.)  
(this.)

**& so the tale goes . . .**

## I. the trial



the boys who spend all their days finger-fiddling with matchsticks line us up & proceed to stick tiny yellow & black truth-telling flowers between our teeth. one by one, they ask us if we know what crime we're guilty of. after a brief pause to gather our thoughts, we say, "the only thing we're guilty of is being women." this is simultaneously the right & wrong answer. to the match-boys, our existence is the darkest form of magic, usually punishable by death.

they don't even know what's coming. how cute.

we shouldn't be afraid of them.

no no no.

they should be afraid of *us*.

- *the first lesson in fire.*

we give power  
to anything we  
fancy,

but we may also  
take it away  
again.

*just.*  
*like.*  
*that.*

the choice  
is entirely  
ours

& they  
just want to  
end us

before we have  
the chance to  
end them.

- *the best kept secret.*

i'm afraid  
i must confess

i inherited  
my mother's rage

& the  
mother-rage

that came  
before her

& all the  
mother-rage

that raced down  
every branch

of our tangled up  
family tree.

- *nothing can extinguish me.*

to  
everyone  
who said  
my  
great-grandmother  
had a  
*wee bit of witch*  
in her:

she's  
got nothing  
on me.

- & *i've only just begun.*

the ground—  
it ignites  
wherever  
a woman's  
foot  
comes down

& if  
you're not  
careful,

the  
very same  
thing  
could  
happen  
to you.

- *some destruction is beautiful.*

this is  
an overdue  
love letter  
to each  
& every  
woman  
who walked  
these fields  
before me  
&  
made  
the path  
soft enough  
for me to  
walk through  
to get to  
the side  
they could  
never reach.

for that,  
i owe you  
so much.

*- but i owe some things to myself, too.*

there exists  
a fine line

between  
being

selfish

&  
being

selfless

&  
most days

i can't tell  
which side

it is that  
i'm on.

&  
most days?

i don't  
care.

- *there are some things i just have to do for me.*

why yes,

i am  
the girl  
with the  
arsonist heart  
all your fathers  
warned you  
about

&

once  
one tree  
catches,  
it's not long  
before  
the whole  
forest

lights up.

- *yet i never seem to care who gets hurt.*



gods, i hope i terrify you.

keep  
an eye out

for  
all those

quietly  
reckless,

knotty-haired  
girls.

you know  
you can't

hold back  
a wildfire,

don't you?

- *trouble trouble.*

women:  
we can  
spin  
gold  
out of  
dirt.  
  
- *bewitching.*

women:  
we can  
magic

fire  
out of  
air.

- *bewitching II.*

sometimes  
women bleed;

sometimes  
we do not.

we  
cannot be

so easily  
divided up

into boxes  
wrapped in

pre-packaged  
pink lace & ribbons.

- *every woman is authentic.*

women are  
considered to be

possessions  
before we are ever

considered to be  
human beings,

& if our doors  
& our windows

are ever smashed in  
by wicked men,

then we are deemed  
worthless—

foreclosed.  
never sold.

so we move out of  
our neighborhoods

& we make sister-homes  
out of each other.

- *we lock those doors & eat those keys.*

women  
learn  
to sense  
what who  
danger  
looks like  
just  
by catching  
another  
woman's eye  
from across  
a crowded  
room.

- *survival.*

women  
pass down  
how-to guides  
on the ways  
to tell if  
our drinks  
are spiked  
& offer  
to guard  
the flimsy doors  
of bathroom stalls  
for  
each other.

- *survival II.*



the  
only time  
i know  
what  
being safe  
feels like

is  
when  
i'm in  
a room  
overflowing  
with light

& the laughter  
of women  
that fills  
the space  
floor-to-ceiling  
with lavender

&  
a door  
with a lock  
no man  
can  
ever break.

- *safety has never been our privilege.*

we know how to  
keep the girls safe

from the  
sharp talons of

old, sleepy,  
bedroom-eyed dragons,

& when we aren't  
quick enough to act,

we know just what  
we have to do:

walk through  
the roaring blaze

& swim across  
miles of moats

& climb the  
glittering tower

& make the beasts  
beg us for our mercy.

- *predators.*

we  
finally refused  
to be seen as only

bodies crafted  
for the men's  
use&consumption,

so we set the  
clouds ablaze  
to sway them,

to show them  
how wonderfully  
we could coexist,

but  
they chose to  
take it as a threat

& they  
have never  
fully forgiven us

for claiming  
the portion of the sky  
that was always rightfully ours.

- *when the glass sky is the limit.*

when our abilities  
became too much,

they tried to  
shut us away

in the dark  
without even

a candle  
to guide us out.

little  
did they know,

our  
woman-rage-fire

would light  
our path home

just fine.

- *you are your own lighthouse.*

the man with the witch-killing look in his eyes drinks deeply from the chipped lilac teacup, his trembling hands making it clink against the saucer as he places them back together. my stomach churns in circles as the dark liquid dribbles down his chin in lines. he eagerly slides the cup & dish to me across the old, rickety table & i waste no time turning the cup over onto the dish to get rid of the excess. when i turn the cup right-side up, i spot the clusters of soggy brown & black leaves that litter the bottom in various shapes & sizes. i study it for a moment & immediately look away, nervously wringing my hands in my skirts. there's no question what that means.

“well? what does it say?” he asks.

i keep my eyes down. “the leaves say you’re going to . . . pay.”

“p-pardon?” he sputters, his eyes filling to the brim with terror.

“they say . . . you’re all going to pay,” i whisper.

- *the leaves never lie.*

to be a  
woman  
is to be  
warbound,  
k n o w i n g  
all the odds  
are stacked  
against you.

- & *never giving up in spite of it.*

red lipstick:  
an external sign  
of internal  
fire.

- *we tried to warn you.*

red lipstick:

battle cry.

battle cry.

battle cry.

- *we tried to warn you II.*



they scratched it  
out of the history books,

but on all the  
great innovations

you will find  
scorch marks

in the shape of  
a woman's

magnificent  
handprint.

do not forget:  
we need to be  
the history books  
now.

- *women are libraries about to burst.*

women  
don't endure  
simply because  
we can;

no,

women endure  
because we aren't  
given any other  
choice.

*- they wanted us weak but forced us to be strong.*

they would  
watch us burn

before  
letting us think

we can be  
our own people,

before  
letting us think

we're capable  
of anything

more  
than they are.

- *the sad, sad truth.*

they  
will try  
to steal  
your light

& use it as  
a weapon  
against  
you.

but there's  
a piece  
of good  
news:

they  
don't have  
the patience to  
control it

like you do.

"you have no reason  
to be afraid,"

the match-boys  
tell us right before  
they throw

fistfuls  
& fistfuls  
of matches.

"don't be so  
fucking dramatic,"

the match-boys  
tell us as our skin  
drips into the dirt.

“you’re always  
overreacting,”

the match-boys  
tell the reflections  
in the puddles they made.

- *they only wish this is how it happened.*

*always put yourself first.  
sacrifice at your own  
discretion.*

- coven rule #1.

## II. the burning

“the only thing we’re guilty of is being women,”  
we tell them,

& that’s all they hear.

that’s all they need to hear before they rush in on us. that’s all  
they need to hear before they  
gather us together like cattle, adults & children alike. that’s all  
they need to hear before they  
reveal the ropes they kept hidden behind their backs. that’s all  
they need to hear before they tie us around the same old oak tree,  
forcing us to hold hands with each other for comfort. (“ring  
around—r-r-ring around—ring around...”)

that’s all they need to hear before they pick up their feet & drag  
the matches across the bottoms of their boots.

- *the second lesson in fire.*



to  
the men,

women are  
born as

delicate  
rosebuds.

even  
the way

they  
crush us

beneath their  
angry steps

leaves them  
breathless.

- *wilted before the bloom.*

they  
tell us  
over & over  
& over  
again  
that women  
need  
to stay

small/  
thin/  
skinny/  
petite.

that way,  
we are  
effortlessly  
pocketed  
to be used  
& thrown out  
at a later  
time.

curves  
& fat  
& rolls  
are a  
colossal  
“fuck you”  
to the  
patriarchy—

our accidental  
rebellion.

- *my body rejects your desires.*

she's  
so scared  
to  
take up space  
that even  
the weight  
of her  
bones  
sometimes  
feels like  
too much.

- *the hollow-girl.*

&  
she  
begins to  
wonder  
if kisses  
have  
calories  
& how  
long they  
would take  
to burn.

- *the hollow-girl II.*

I. water.

II. coffee&tea.

III. zero-calorie sweetener.

IV. one-hundred-calorie snacks.

V. a body so weightless no one else can own it.

- *a hollow-girl's grocery list.*

to  
describe myself  
as

*fat*  
is not

to  
describe myself  
as

*ugly, lazy, worthless,  
or undesirable.*

- *it's my self-acceptance movement.*

in our bellies:  
*fire fire fire*  
& sometimes  
not much  
else.

- *these are the real hunger games.*

in our hands:  
*embers embers embers*  
just waiting for  
the opportunity  
to ignite.

- *catching fire is so, so easy.*



the  
men  
make us  
dance  
for

them  
until our  
toes are  
bloody  
&  
then  
they just  
tell us to  
change out  
our pink  
slippers  
for

*r  
e  
d.*

*- their darling dancing dolls.*

when his girlfriend  
exits stage left  
all the vicious villagers  
gather 'round & 'round,

the *hushhushhushing*  
of the dead man sea  
as he takes his long-awaited leave  
from the shadows

& reaches a hand out  
for my blackwater hair,  
rope-twisting it around  
his unforgiving fist,

my neck bending back  
as a white lily stem does  
just before the  
breath-taking & breaking.

he leans down  
to kiss me with his  
beautiful, blood-rusted  
chainsaw mouth,

& the next morning,  
all the ladies of the village  
have their favorite shade of  
blood splatter lip stain

named after me.

- *abuse is nothing to romanticize.*

telling me  
*not all men*  
have  
bad intentions

doesn't do  
anything to  
reassure  
me.

after i  
walk away from you,  
nothing will have  
changed.

i will still  
be scared to  
leave my house  
after sundown,

i will still  
find comfort  
in keys resting  
between fingers,

i will still  
question  
the intentions of  
every man i know,

i will still  
wonder  
when i am  
to become

a story  
meant to warn  
other people's

daughters,

& i will still  
cry when i turn on  
the television  
to find

yet  
another man  
getting away  
with

well—  
what they  
always seem to  
get away with.

i am not  
the one who  
has to change  
the way i think  
or the way i act.  
they are.

- *expectations vs. reality.*

i hold  
my tongue  
out of fear  
so often  
that  
blood  
has  
made  
a permanent  
home  
in  
the spaces  
between  
my  
teeth.

- *this is what womanhood tastes like.*

we're  
forced to  
tread over  
the still-flickering  
matches  
they used  
to eliminate our  
ancestors

&  
we  
still  
*w h i s p e r*  
the expected  
apologies  
when  
our toes

get singed.

- *a born regret.*

a girl's first words:

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

a girl's last words:

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."

"i'm sorry."



they try to  
convince us  
that our rapists  
will only ever be

strangers  
lurking in bushes  
in the dark,  
dark night,

that we  
should keep  
floral pepper spray  
& pocketknives

tucked  
neatly into  
our purses  
at all times

(because  
apparently  
even the act  
of trying not

to be raped  
should look  
lovely  
& feminine),

so  
that when  
our rapists  
end up being

our grandfathers/fathers/  
brothers/uncles/cousins/  
best friends/boyfriends/

husbands,

we have no words  
to describe it  
& no one willing to  
help light our torches.

- *everything is a distraction.*

what rape culture does:

fills me with  
fleeting relief  
when i find out that  
i escaped  
my ex-boyfriend  
before he became  
a rapist

& not after.

- *this poison has seeped into everything.*

we spend lifetimes  
combing our way  
through scarce  
clover fields,

hoping, praying,  
finger, eye,  
toe, & leg  
crossing

that we're not  
the 1 out of 6  
who come up  
empty-handed,

&  
we are never  
able to forgive  
ourselves for being

the ones to pluck  
that green amethyst hope  
right before her fingers  
*s w e e p* the thin air.

- *safety & luck hold hands with each other.*

i  
can't seem  
to recall  
agreeing  
to be a  
casualty  
of these  
manmade  
disasters.

- *cyclone.*

no one should  
have to carry  
the unbearably  
heavy weight of  
a m a t t r e s s  
on their back  
for a lifetime.

- *for emma sulkowicz.*

i'm having the nightmare again. the one where the crooked wood comes to life & the tree-man with the sharp, gnarled branches uproots himself from the soil & comes stumbling out after me. i would recognize his face anywhere. it's the face they sketched by the flow of my shaky 11-year-old words. after all these years, he finally gets to be rootless because wicked men are rarely punished for very long. his bark is dry & peeling & his exposed fruit rots from the inside out & i cannot peddle my little yellow bike away fast enough. the wheels get caught in the thick spring mud & suddenly i'm sinking & he reeks of revenge & i know nothing is stopping him this time because wicked men do not stop until they punish anyone who tries to tell them that the world isn't theirs for the taking while the wind whispers to them: "take her, take her, take her."

- *what women dream about.*

the men,  
they're  
*d r a g g i n g*  
me into  
the shadow forest  
where not even  
the wolves  
dare go.

they use  
my body  
like men  
use women's  
bodies  
& when they're  
finally done  
with me

they cut off  
my tongue  
my breasts  
my hands  
my feet

& leave  
no thread  
behind  
for me to  
stitch  
myself  
back  
together.

- *what women dream about II.*



- 
- I.
  - II.
  - III.
  - IV.
  - V.
  - VI.
  - VII.
  - VIII.
  - IX.
  - X.
  - XI.
  - XII.
  - XIII.
  - XIV.
  - XV.

- *how to prevent getting sexually assaulted.*

- I. don't rape.
- II. don't rape.
- III. don't rape.
- IV. don't rape.
- V. don't rape.
- VI. don't rape.
- VII. don't rape.
- VIII. don't rape.
- IX. don't rape.
- X. don't rape.
- XI. don't rape.
- XII. don't rape.
- XIII. don't rape.
- XIV. don't rape.
- XV. don't rape.

- *how to prevent sexually assaulting someone.*

but  
what if  
the devil  
is just  
a woman  
who was  
banished  
to hell  
to stoke  
the  
flames  
as  
punishment  
for  
standing up  
to  
him?

- *lilith*.

he  
told her  
not to  
play  
with his  
poor  
little  
heart  
so she  
spared it  
by walking

a w a y

&  
that's  
when he  
stole  
all her  
smiles  
& threw them  
into the  
dark&icy  
december  
waters.

*- rip to the women who lost these games.*

some  
fathers  
will

c r a c k

their  
daughter's  
teeth  
with skinned  
knuckles

&

when  
her lover's  
fist  
comes  
for her  
she will  
offer him  
an open-lipped  
smile.

"it's just like home,"  
she'll say.

- *she didn't even have to tap her feet together.*

our  
very being

is considered  
an inconvenience,

our bodies  
vacant homes

wrapped in layers  
of yellow tape,

our legs  
double doors

for one man  
(& one man only)

to pry open so  
he can invade us

& set down his  
furniture,

never once  
asking us

how we feel  
about the curtains.

- *they love us empty, empty, empty.*

sometimes your demons  
will be men

who show dimples  
when they say “thank you”

& open doors for every  
approaching stranger

& send you  
good morning/good night texts

& remember  
your mother’s maiden name

& surprise you with good coffee  
on all your bad days

& with the same voice  
he uses to tell you

he loves you,  
he will tell you

how he dreamed  
of killing you

a dozen different ways  
last night

& woke up  
aching.

- *what men dream about.*

&  
the men  
will always sit  
(too) close  
to you

&  
claim they  
just want to  
be warmed  
by your  
flames

&  
they will  
smile as  
they bottle  
up your  
sparks

&  
later they'll  
tell everyone  
they know how to  
build such a great

& terrible fire

all by  
themselves.

- *women are always born on an eclipse.*



they  
think they  
can write  
our stories

because

their mothers  
let them  
fingertip-trace  
their palms

but

their words  
will always have  
a distinct lack of  
smoke.

- *did you really think you'd get to mourn the house you set aflame?*

i don't need you  
to write my story.

i write it  
e v e r y d a y

& you couldn't  
even translate

the fucking  
punctuation.

- *she.*

ready for a  
harsh truth?

women  
don't need  
your validation.

we  
already have  
our own.

- *my self-worth shouldn't feel like an act of bravery.*

men  
so often claim  
we're

mystery novels  
with  
collective symbolism

simultaneously  
too shallow  
& too difficult

for them  
to ever dream of  
understanding,

so instead of  
taking the time to unravel  
our complex plots,

they take  
the easy way out—  
pouring gasoline over us,

flicking  
matches over  
their shoulders,

&  
laughing as they  
walk away.

- *call us alexandria.*

following  
in the  
footsteps  
of that  
fool  
icarus,

the men  
were  
tempted  
to fingertip-graze  
our impressive  
flames

& had  
the nerve  
to be surprised  
when their  
manmade  
wax wings

m

e

l

t

e

d.

- *but try not to overreact, darling.*

don't you know  
a woman's anguish  
could cause

*e x p l o s i o n s*

in other  
dimensions?

*- if you don't, you're going to find out.*

*burn whoever tries to burn you.*

- coven rule #2.

### III. the firestorm



the lit matchsticks tumbletumbletumble their way towards us & stop dead just before the flames would lick hungrily at our toes. we squeeze our eyes shut, bracing ourselves for our violent end. the thick air reverberates with “i love you”s & “we will meet again”s, but the only thing that follows is silence. we reluctantly pry our eyes open when we hear the match-boys’ infuriated shouting in the background.

“we would never dream of letting the match-boys use us to hurt you,” the smoke murmurs soothingly to us. “shhh, don’t worry. we will make them pay for this,” it whispers again, wrapping its way up & around our bodies until we’re consumed by a protective grey barrier.

we use our combined powers to turn the matches around.

the match-boys aren’t fast enough for us.

- *the third lesson in fire.*

they can  
hand us  
folded dresses.

they can  
gift us  
virgin wings.

they can  
force on us  
their names.

they can  
lock us in  
small rooms.

they can  
thieve  
our words.

they can  
attempt to take  
our choices, too,

but the one thing  
they can never  
steal?

this  
fierce  
determination.

- *what june taught me.*

(homage to *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood)

society  
wrapped  
a corset  
around us,

fisted  
the strings  
& pulled  
tight

as if  
tuning  
a new  
violin,

&  
until we  
cut them  
away

&  
pull out  
the  
bones

we will  
never discover  
who we  
truly are.

- *unlearn this normalized self-hatred.*

we can  
be skinny  
& we can  
be content,

but

being skinny  
is not the  
same thing  
as being content.

*- we must come home from this everlasting battle.*

i appreciate:

- I. every roll.
- II. every scar.
- III. every acne mark.
- IV. every ~~extra~~ pound.
- V. every stretch mark.
- VI. every misplaced hair.
- VII. every bit of cellulite.
- VIII. the only body i have.

- *things i still struggle to say & that's okay.*

if  
you can't  
root for  
yourself,

you don't  
just  
cut down  
your tree

in order  
to spite  
the  
ground.

no—  
you breathe,  
step back,  
& give yourself

the  
necessary  
room  
to flourish.

*- from the grimoire of the green witch.*

it's  
more than  
okay

to  
wake up  
with the  
overwhelming urge  
to cover up  
all the mirrors.

self-love  
is not  
an instant  
nor an  
overnight  
evolution,

but  
at least try  
to open up  
the windows  
to let the breeze in  
every once in awhile.

*- a witch knows mirrors do sometimes lie.*

sip  
the silky  
elixir  
from my  
cupped  
palms.

go on,  
take as  
much  
or as little  
as you  
need.

let it  
guide you  
into a  
grand  
love affair  
with yourself

until  
the love  
becomes so  
second nature  
you need it  
no more.

here,  
we'll drink together.  
bottoms up.

- *self-love potion.*



[illegible]

[illegible]

(homage to *Wintergirls* by Laurie Halse Anderson)

eat.  
fill yourself  
with energy,  
with sunlight.  
treat your body  
to tenderness &  
lavender.

- *we need you here & whole.*

i  
will be  
that voice  
that tells you  
to cover your arms  
with flower petals  
instead.

- *your winter will come to an end.*

*dish:*

woman

*ingredients:*

- I. sugar
- II. spite
- III. everything not-so-nice

*directions:*

- I. preheat cauldron to 375 degrees.
- II. mix together ingredients in a medium to large bowl.
- III. add more spite if necessary. (& oh, will it be necessary.)
- IV. boil 10 to 12 minutes.
- V. eat. have the seconds&thirds&fourths you were always denied. lick fingers when done.

*- from the kitchen witch's cookbook.*

“i don’t  
wear makeup for others  
the same way  
i don’t

decorate  
my house for others.  
this is my  
home

&  
everything i do  
is for  
me.”

- *tweet from september 28th, 2016.*

what  
i mean  
by that  
is

i lost  
so  
many  
years

of  
my life  
by being  
too

exhausted/hunger-tired/  
depressed/winter-sick  
to get out  
of bed—

having  
no choice  
but to stare endlessly  
at the walls

where i ripped  
the rusty  
rosebud wallpaper  
off

in  
thin strips  
with fragmented  
fingernails—

to  
let you believe  
i only pushed myself

through the

obsessions/blood-crust/  
numbers/ink-bruises  
so i could  
paint a

pretty little garden mural  
on the door  
for you & for you  
alone.

- *i'm not ashamed to say i'm my first priority.*



quenching  
his  
thirst  
is  
not  
the  
point  
of  
this  
life.

- *there is so much waiting for us.*

no  
matter  
what they  
tell you,  
it is  
not  
your job  
to be  
polite  
to anyone  
who  
is not  
polite  
to you  
first.

*- get up, you are nobody's doormat.*

you are

the lucky ace  
of the deck,

a burning  
arrow

piercing through  
their so-called

hollow tree  
hatred.

you. are.  
- *embr(ace)*.

paint  
your nails  
black,

rub glitter  
on your  
face,

take  
so many  
selfies,

compliment  
all your  
sisters

(no,  
not just  
your cis-ters),

& hex  
any  
man

who  
catcalls  
you.

*- a note from me scrawled on your mirror.*

“my body  
is a historic city  
& i’m the only one  
allowed to set  
the buildings  
ablaze.”

- *reclaim yourself.*

“bitch,” he spits.

“witch,” he sneers.

& i say,  
“actually, i’m both.”

- *reclaim everything.*

no,  
women  
are not  
vessels  
to f i l l  
w i t h  
y o u r  
desires.

women:  
unique,  
original,  
creative,  
amazing,  
human.

no copying  
or pasting  
can be  
done  
here.

- *the anti-manic pixie dream girl.*

i am not  
a keepsake  
you can tuck on your  
bookshelf  
between  
your bukowski  
& thoreau.

i am not  
a dried daisy  
you can close  
in a shadowbox  
& hang just  
above your  
sleeping head.

i am not  
your kindness  
participation  
trophy  
or anything  
for you to  
proudly own.

sometimes  
friendship is the  
motherfucking  
prize,  
so be grateful  
i let you in  
at all.

- *THE FRIENDZONE DOESN'T EXIST.*



script  
for when  
he  
tells you  
you're  
beautiful:

“i know.”

- *confidence isn't egotism.*

script  
for when  
he  
tells you  
to  
smile:

“drop dead.”

- *confidence is healthy.*

when he tells you  
you would be nothing  
without him,

i'll hand you  
all the necessary  
tools.

*first,  
pour the coals  
down your throat.*

*second,  
chase them down with  
your ready match.*

then you can  
feel assured when  
you tell him

he's been cleansed  
from you, body  
& soul,

& would you  
just look at  
that?

you're just fine  
without  
him.

*- the body regenerates whenever the hell you want.*

they don't want us  
to be

mary sue's,  
but

they don't want us  
to be

unlikable,  
either.

that begs  
the question:

do they even want us  
to exist

outside of their  
late-night fantasies?

*- i am neither your paper doll, nor your blow-up doll.*

be the  
unlikable  
woman  
protagonist

(*synonyms:*  
bitch,  
realistic,  
manhero)

all the  
men  
just love to  
complain about.

- *it's so much more fun that way, isn't it?*

in this novel  
the woman protagonist

claims she's not like  
those other girls,

not because she finds  
their femininity

to be an insult or  
a weakness, no—

it's  
because

she knows  
all women have

their own unique  
magic

that cannot be  
replicated by her

or any other  
woman.

- *the plot twist we've all been waiting for.*

there  
is not  
only  
one  
woman  
body.

we are  
simply  
women  
who happen  
to have  
bodies—

shelters  
built to  
protect our  
woman-rage-fire  
from  
hurricanes.

- *every woman is authentic II.*

womanhood  
doesn't  
have to be  
this twisted  
competition.

let us  
cultivate  
womanhood  
until it grows  
into sisterhood.

we'll sprinkle  
lavender seeds  
into our  
old wounds  
until we're finally

*h e a l e d.*

*- your sisters are not your enemies.*



we must help lift  
each other above  
the flames.

- *women supporting women.*

by all means,  
let your judgments  
die in the blaze.

- *women supporting women II.*

say it  
with me  
now:

“i am a woman.  
i am a human.  
& i matter with  
no conditions  
attached.

you may not  
see my worth,  
but i do.  
i do.”

- *dear women.*

say it  
with me  
now:

“women  
owe  
me  
nothing.

not anything.

not  
one  
thing.”

- *dear men.*

“boys will be boys”

until the day  
we raise our sons

to practice  
the exact same  
responsibility,  
accountability,  
&  
maturity  
we assign to our  
daughters  
before choosing  
their names.  
- *you don't teach, they don't learn.*

i'm (not) sorry  
to disappoint  
you,  
but your  
charming smirk  
will no longer  
excuse  
the hurt you  
inflict.

try  
not to  
flatter  
yourself  
by thinking  
you can  
ever  
b r e a k  
me  
when  
i'm the  
heroine  
who had to  
save  
all your  
favorite  
childhood  
superheroes.

- *diana & i are on a first name basis.*

call me  
bitch.  
call me  
villain.  
call me  
she-wolf.  
call me  
bad omen.  
call me  
your worst nightmare  
wearing a  
red-lipped smile.  
*- even better, call me by my name.*



i didn't come here  
to be civil.  
i didn't come here  
to sit you down  
with a mug of tea  
& a blueberry muffin  
to coddle you as  
i try to convince you  
that respecting  
my existence is essential.  
you've had plenty  
of chances  
& you took a  
hard pass every time,  
so i came here  
to watch your anger overtake  
until you finally  
**c o m b u s t.**  
*- i'll use your light to read.*

forget  
being ladylike  
(whatever  
the hell  
that means)  
& allow  
yourself to  
show  
the world  
just how  
unapologetically  
angry  
this  
inequality  
makes you.  
let it all  
g o.  
*- throw flames like a girl.*

women,  
i implore you:  
build your fire.  
just pretend  
you're helping  
the men  
survive till spring  
like we were  
raised to.  
let them get  
nice & relaxed  
until  
their lungs  
have more  
smoke  
than they do  
air  
&  
no way  
to call out  
for  
help.

dear match-boys,  
you know  
all those she-devils  
you executed during  
1692 & 1693?  
well, they made sure  
we inherited their power  
by injecting sparks  
directly into  
our veins  
& planting flames  
at the ends of  
our fingertips  
& imbedding  
one word at the tips of  
our tongues:  
“erupt.”  
- *katniss only wishes.*

you  
gentle  
(comma)  
strong  
(comma)  
resilient  
(comma)  
d e a d l y  
creature  
(comma)

you  
(period)

- *you are an unstoppable force.*

i'm  
pretty sure  
you have  
w i t c h c r a f t  
running  
through  
those  
v e i n s.

- *women are some kind of magic II.*

every time  
you “joke” to your other  
red-handed  
rapist friends  
that it’s  
not rape if  
you warn them  
first—  
every time  
you press  
your callous-hard  
hand  
over her  
pink lemonade lipstick,  
“no please no”  
mouth—  
every time  
you think of slipping  
something smooth & sleepy  
into her drink—  
catch us  
in the skies,  
flying by night,  
landing soundlessly behind you.  
we’ll  
be waiting  
(im)patiently with swords  
pushed up our dress sleeves

&  
blood-rusted spikes  
sticking out of  
our boots.  
(oh, yes  
heads will be  
thump. thump. thumping.  
& *r o l l i n g.*)  
the knights  
of the round table  
kneel to  
us.  
arthur,  
rip your  
ribs wide open  
& eat your heart out.  
brienne,  
here's our card.  
we'll be waiting  
for your call.  
- *witch girl gang.*



misogyny  
/m 'sāj ne/  
*noun*

1: the power-driven hatred of women.

2: just the way things are.

misandry

/mi ' sandre/

*noun*

1: the reactionary, self-preserving hatred of men.

2: somehow this is going too far.

in my  
fairy tale  
version  
of the story,  
every  
mattress  
spontaneously  
bursts into flames  
any time  
our “no”s,  
any time  
our silences  
are met  
with the  
father-taught  
resistance  
of  
hands  
over mouths  
& around necks  
&  
arms  
that form  
cages of steel.  
the  
same fire  
that feeds us,  
that nurtures us

never makes  
bargains  
with the  
guilty  
& we  
always  
walk away  
uncharred.  
*- this is the reckoning.*

according  
to the news,  
the woman found  
her husband  
touching  
their daughter  
with his  
ice-hands,  
so  
as he slept  
as safely  
& as soundly  
as  
their daughter  
never would  
again,  
the woman  
considered the gun  
tucked underneath  
their bed,  
but she decided  
that bullets were  
far, far too  
tame  
a  
punishment  
for what he  
had done.

instead,  
she got out her torch  
& gave him a big  
goodnight kiss.  
“it’s the  
perfect night  
for a fire,”  
she remarked  
to herself  
as she sat back  
& sipped her  
wine.  
*- these are the new burnings.*

*first,*

i dismembered you  
like a five-year-old girl left alone  
with her first plastic doll,  
fascinated by the way in which  
we are all so easily  
taken apart  
but not so easily  
pieced back together.

*second,*

i laid your limbs out  
all over my kitchen table,  
ever so careful so as not to  
stain the perfectly polished oak.  
in the back of my mind,  
i knew it would be okay even if it did;  
i bleed twelve weeks a year,  
so i know a thing or two about bloodstains.  
(your messed up, mangled limbs  
felt colder to the touch than the icicle words  
you dropped down on my head  
that last night.)

*finally,*  
i buried some of your parts  
in the garden where only green things grow;  
i buried some of your parts  
in the spider-webbed walls  
of the abandoned attic;  
i burned some of your parts—  
your smoke cursing  
the silver lightning sky—  
before sprinkling your ashes  
over the sickening sea.  
(i don't consider myself  
a spidery, spiteful, spitfire woman,  
but if i'm never going to be whole again,  
then neither are you.)  
- *how i got over you.*



she  
wished for  
him to burn  
& oh, how that  
motherfucker  
burned  
&  
oh, how  
exquisite the  
new life was that  
she built from his  
blackened  
bones.

- *no longer helpless.*

(homage to the musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda)

gather 'round, gather 'round.

are you comfortable?

very good. because this poem goes out to all the match-boys who mistakenly considered me to be a silly little girl unworthy of their truth, unworthy of their love, & unworthy of their respect. know that every time you jerk awake mid-freefall, it was me who pushed you out of your 3 A.M. dreams. & know that whenever you feel that chill creeping up & down your spine on a warm summer's day, i'm the one who's been dancing all over your grave. & know that whenever you think you spot a shadow in your peripheral, it's just me, making sure you never hurt another woman again.

it's such a shame that you will finally have to learn that there are consequences to treating women like they're *n o t h i n g*.

you may have gotten to walk away, but a piece of me will follow you forever.

now, isn't that romantic?

- *vengeance is the new moving on.*

maybe  
i'm not the  
"crazy ex-girlfriend."  
maybe  
i'm just a person  
reacting rationally  
to the abuse  
& disregard  
for women  
that  
society has  
somehow  
convinced us  
is completely  
normal.  
- *i refuse to pretend anymore.*

[illegible]

if  
the very  
idea  
of  
standing up  
for myself  
frightens you  
so  
damn much  
then  
i guess  
the power  
you thought  
you held  
over me  
wasn't that  
impressive  
in the  
first place.  
- *fragile masculinity.*

but  
i digress.  
what i've been  
trying to say  
this whole time  
is that  
when you  
wrong me  
you'll be  
expecting me to  
forgive you  
like a  
good, well-mannered  
woman,  
when in actuality  
you'll finally  
get to know  
what fire tastes like.  
- & no, it won't be like whiskey.

*make no apologies; accept no apologies.*  
- coven rule #3.

## IV. the ashes



there's the whole story as it was told to me. the witches took the flames meant to eradicate them & turned them back on their killers instead. can you believe they ever thought they would get away with it? i know, i know. now i pass a handful of the sparks to you, daring one. show them the same mercy they showed our ancestors all those years ago. (none, none, none.) let us write their story in the ashes of their enemies, & then we can finally finish what they started.

if nothing else, we will make certain they'll never be granted the opportunity to silence us again.

don't be scared. even if you don't believe in yourself, i believe. i've always believed in you.

you know just what to do.

- *the last lesson in fire.*

they  
said  
poetry  
was dead,  
so  
the tired  
but  
ever-determined  
women  
took that  
as a  
challenge  
&  
came together  
to cast  
their  
resurrection  
spell.  
- *necromancers.*

i'm a poet  
& i do  
fucking  
know it.  
sit up  
&  
pay  
attention  
as  
i take  
your  
name  
& drag it  
through  
the very  
flames  
you  
built with  
my ruination  
in mind.  
*- i won't repeat myself.*

i have to warn you, my love. the men will try to convince you that we stole the poetry from them. they will light those stubby matches & try to throw them at us once more, but they will miss & they will not be happy. oh no, not. one. bit. “give it back!” they’ll shout at us until their throats start to bleed. they mean give it back to the dead men who thought they were taking the poetry with them to the grave, the same dead men who were so naïve as to think that the words wouldn’t slip from their grip after their skin decomposed & their marrow began to show. the irony? it was our men who demanded we go outside to tend to their sunflowers, never once dreaming of the possibility that we would wander away into their cemeteries.

- *finders keepers.*

unzip  
the skin  
around all  
my edges  
&  
you will find  
the grave-robbled  
bones  
of all  
the women poets  
wronged by  
men  
they  
would  
never dare  
satisfy by dying.  
they  
continue to write  
through my  
hand  
& a woman's  
wrath  
is nothing  
if not immortal.  
- *writing with no light.*

i know  
about  
that voice  
inside  
you.  
yes,  
i know  
all about  
the  
woman  
who's  
been  
screaming  
her whole  
life  
for  
the chance  
to be  
heard  
by someone.  
take  
this pen  
from me  
& uncage  
her.

- *you owe this to yourself.*

you  
think  
your body  
is made up  
of mostly  
water,  
but  
really  
your body  
is made up  
of mostly  
poetry.  
wherever you go,  
you leave behind  
puddles of  
words  
in your  
wake.  
collect the  
integral pieces  
of yourself  
&  
call the  
words back.  
you deserve  
to be whole again.  
*- the sign you've been waiting for II.*

we need  
your words.  
we need  
your experiences,  
we need  
your traumas,  
we need  
your anger,  
we need  
your guilt,  
we need  
your passions,  
we need  
the story  
you think no one  
cares to hear.  
we need that  
woman-rage-fire  
only you  
can provide, so  
write.  
write.  
write.  
- *the sign you've been waiting for III.*



write the poem.  
(write the pain)  
burn the poem.  
(burn the pain)  
- *blow the ashes in their eyes.*

poetry  
will be  
the thing  
that  
leads us  
into this  
revolution  
&

poetry  
will be  
the thing  
that  
leads us  
carefully  
back out.

- *resistance is fine art.*

**silence j ilence j iolence j  
violence**

protest j potest j poetst j  
poett j poetr j  
poetry

two hands  
cupped around  
the earth,  
cracked open  
the middle,  
& poured its  
contents  
into a  
black hole.  
no light—  
only the  
soundless,  
suffocating  
dark  
with no  
escape.  
that  
is the  
only way  
i know how to  
describe  
*the agony.*  
- 1/20/17

when you  
take it upon  
yourself  
to politicize  
human bodies  
&  
the  
right to  
keep breathing  
without paying  
a steep price  
for it,  
don't  
pretend  
to be shocked  
when we start  
to take politics  
personally.  
- as you tell us, *"deal with it."*

january 21st, 2017.  
remember the date.  
it was the day when more  
than 3.3 million women  
took the flames  
that have licked at  
their hard&soft skin  
for centuries  
& threw barrels of it  
at the old house  
constructed with packs of  
white matchsticks.  
- *the women's marches.*

in response,  
the match-boys  
locked all the windows  
& all the doors  
to silence us, which only meant  
we had to scream louder.  
oh, how the sky fell&fell  
for days afterward—  
some believe they were  
the tears of the ancestors  
who had to watch but couldn't  
stop this from happening.  
- *the women's marches II.*



&  
when it  
was all over,  
we gathered  
together  
& raised  
our faces—  
eyes closed—  
towards  
the sky.  
a cry/a plead/  
a thanks  
to the woman  
who fought to  
keep our fire  
alive  
but got  
pushed into  
the pit  
instead.  
thank you  
for believing  
we could be  
more than  
fading embers.  
- *for hillary.*

fight tirelessly  
for your sisters  
& don't forget  
to lend a hand to  
those pushed so far  
into the margin  
of the paper  
they're d

a

n

g

l

i

n

g

off the

edge.

- *there's plenty of room for all of us.*

fire  
was  
made  
to  
bring  
down  
walls.

- *he will try to divide us.*

walls  
should  
only  
be built  
to keep out  
flammable  
tyrants.

- & *we will ensure that he fails.*

a  
heavy crown  
spray-painted gold  
will still crack  
when it takes  
the long  
tumble

d  
o  
w  
n,  
d  
o  
w  
n,  
d  
o  
w  
n.

- *the crooked king.*

there will be nothing  
for them to rule  
if we

- *demolition.*

turn this kingdom  
upside  
down.

fuck  
the idea of  
staying calm.  
there's no  
such thing as a  
kind uprising.  
there are  
no "please"s,  
no "thank you"s,  
&  
no justice  
without yelling.  
*- patience is a virtue we can't afford.*



fat  
women,  
old women,  
poor women,  
trans women,  
queer women,  
jewish women,  
women of color,  
muslim women,  
disabled women,  
indigenous women,  
mentally ill women,  
chronically ill women,  
neurodivergent women,  
& all the people in  
all the margins  
of this page.  
together & only together  
shall we finally  
RISE. RISE.  
RISE. RISE.  
RISE. RISE.  
RISE. RISE.  
RISE. RISE.  
RISE. RISE.  
RISE. RISE.  
RISE. RISE.  
RISE.

*- no one will be left in dark, dusty corners.*

point your  
red gold palms  
towards the  
kingdom.  
melt it.  
melt it.  
melt it.  
resurrect  
a queendom  
in its  
place—  
a protected  
sanctuary where  
we can finally  
be equal.  
don't  
you dare  
wait for  
permission.  
that's never  
gotten us  
anywhere,  
has it?  
- *they had their turn.*

here's  
the tricky thing  
about fire:  
it stays soft  
even while it  
destroys  
everything  
in its  
path,  
but  
it's up  
to you  
to  
make sure  
that  
it doesn't  
burn the  
good  
with  
the rot.  
*- we can't lose our empathy.*

in the  
dark den of the  
witch-queens'  
castle  
we celebrate  
a war won.  
blood orange juices  
dribble down  
our  
chins&necks,  
caught by  
tasting tongues.  
strawberries  
stain  
our fingers  
down to the knuckle,  
cleaned by  
moaning mouths.  
raspberries  
get tangled up  
in our  
braided hair,  
picked out with  
teasing teeth.

&  
half-nibbled pluots  
*plop* into  
our laps,  
retrieved by  
first-time fingers.  
- *she loved the feast.*

(homage to the poem “Goblin Market” by Christina Rossetti)

don't let anyone  
make you believe  
it's not okay  
for you to be angry  
when you're mistreated  
time & time again,  
but what happens  
the next morning  
when you go to  
the window  
to let the sun  
warm your face  
& you catch a glimpse  
of the way the rays  
reflect off the world  
you intended to fix  
but made  
wreckage of  
instead?  
- *we must be better than them.*

when  
this war ends  
at last,  
follow me  
back out  
into  
the  
quiet of the  
day,  
&  
with your  
tired palms  
scoop up  
a pile of the  
rubble,  
mourn it as it  
falls through  
your fingers,  
& then  
keep going.  
there's much work to do.  
- *reconstruction.*

queens  
do not need  
to curtsy before  
anyone.

queens  
do not need  
delicate kisses on  
the back of their hands.

queens  
do not need  
to apologize before  
making demands.

queens  
do not need  
to ask for anyone's  
approval.

&  
in this castle  
made of  
witch-fire  
we are all  
motherfucking  
queens.

- & *they drank wine & laughed forever & ever.*



as  
a queen,  
you have  
two choices:  
you can  
be malevolent  
& ensure  
our end,  
or  
you can be  
benevolent  
& love  
this world  
back  
to life.  
*- a new chapter awaits, witch-queens.*

didn't  
you know  
there  
could be  
shelves  
upon  
shelves  
upon  
shelves  
of books  
written  
about  
your  
strength?

- *as always, the women save themselves in this one.*

*know that anger has its limits  
& act accordingly.*  
- coven rule #4

**& silence.**

today  
you are  
the fire  
& tomorrow  
you will be  
the sea  
& they'll  
have no choice  
but to hear your siren song.  
- *amanda lovelace*

until  
next time:  
shine so brightly  
the men think you're  
guiding them into  
the afterlife.  
- *you are invincible.*



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write yourself in:

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## about the author

growing up a word-devourer & avid fairy tale lover, it was only natural that amanda lovelace began writing books of her own, & so she did. when she isn't reading or writing, she can be found waiting for pumpkin spice coffee to come back into season & binge-watching *gilmore girls*. (before you ask: team jess all the way.) the lifelong poetess & storyteller currently lives in new jersey with her fiancé, their moody cat, & a combined book collection so large it will soon need its own home. she has her B.A. in english literature with a minor in sociology. her first collection, *the princess saves herself in this one*, won the goodreads choice award for best poetry of 2016. this is her second poetry collection.

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