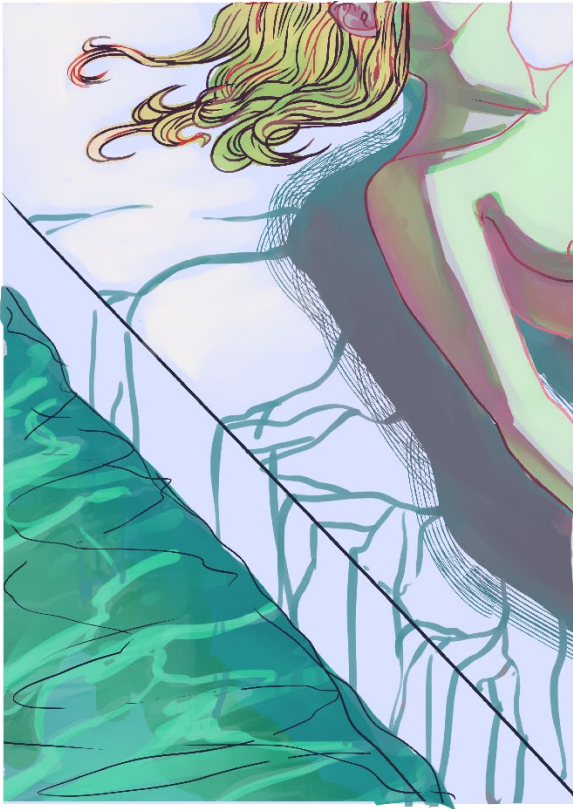


If my body could speak



Author: Alicia Pavlis

Illustrator: affogatoss

This piece of prose was created to raise awareness about self-worth challenges that neurodiverse women face in their world. Negative self-talk is common, as is self-harm. Let us work together to reduce painful perspectives of self and reach out to better support this population.

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Neurodiversity Hub is an international community of practice comprising tertiary institutions, employers, associations, and individuals who are passionately striving to make the world a more equitable place for neurodiverse populations everywhere.

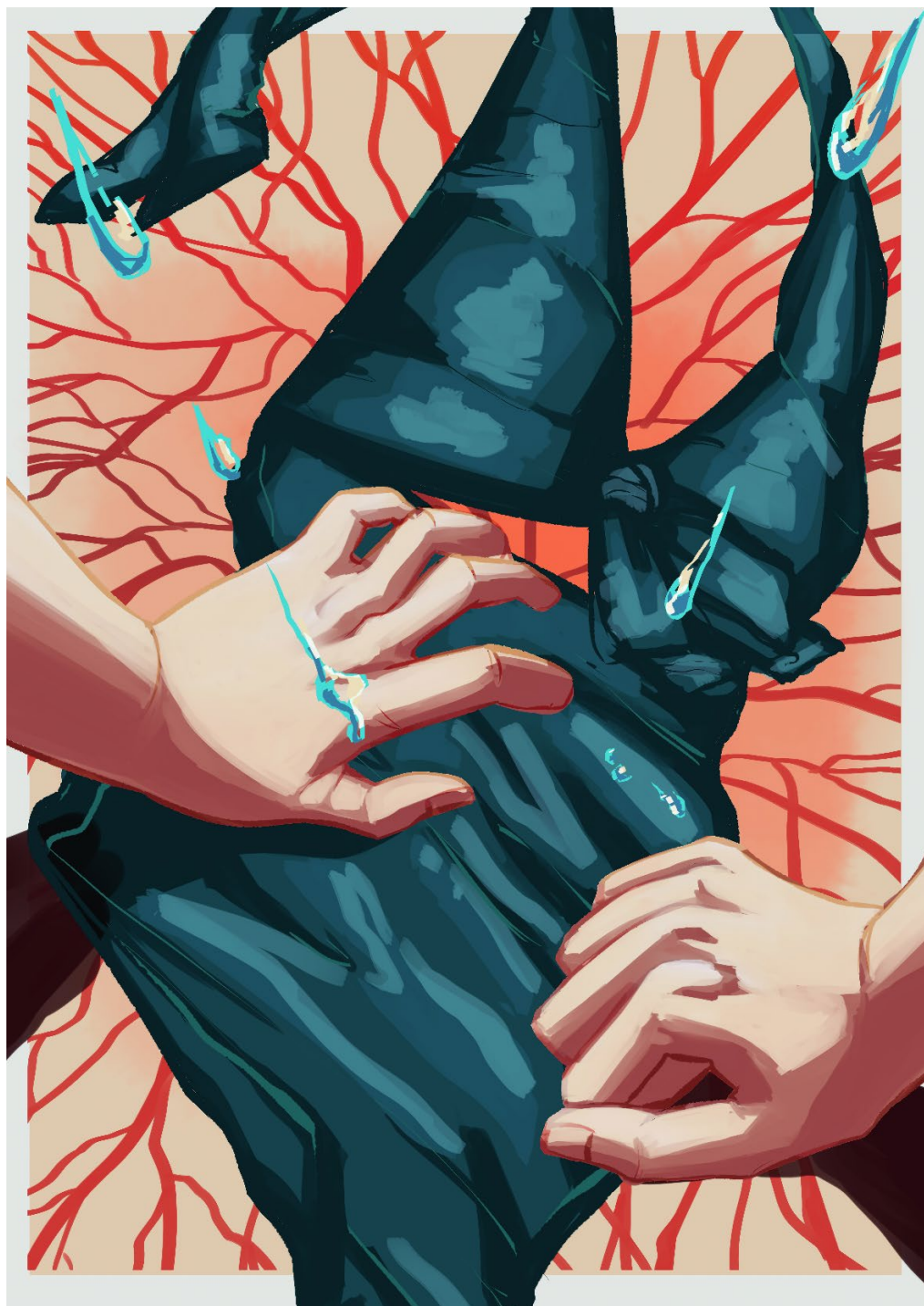
You're Disgusting!

I spat the words in a guttural tone, then continued speaking through gritted teeth, so as not to be heard by other shoppers...

"What makes you think you can wear that? You're a fat ugly cow. Nobody wants to see you dressed like this. You don't even deserve the air you breathe!"

My face twisted in revulsion. My entire being livid with pure hatred. My burning eyes locked on the ill-fitting bathing suit stretched across my own hips in the reflection of the dressing room mirror. That reflection. That look.

I wanted to hurt her. I hated her for what she was --- showing ME.



Tears swam down my cheeks

As I peeled the apparently-too-small bathing suit from the body I loathed; my body --- and clipped it back on the hanger. I dressed myself and grunted at the mirror.

The swimsuit didn't look that bad, but as far as I was concerned it was hideous, because I didn't look the way I thought I was supposed to look.

I was on a self-loathing rampage. It was something I had always done, something that felt familiar. It was the only way I knew how to vent my frustration and externalise my anxiety and pain. I didn't know how to make myself feel better, so I took it out on the easiest target. My poor defenceless body.

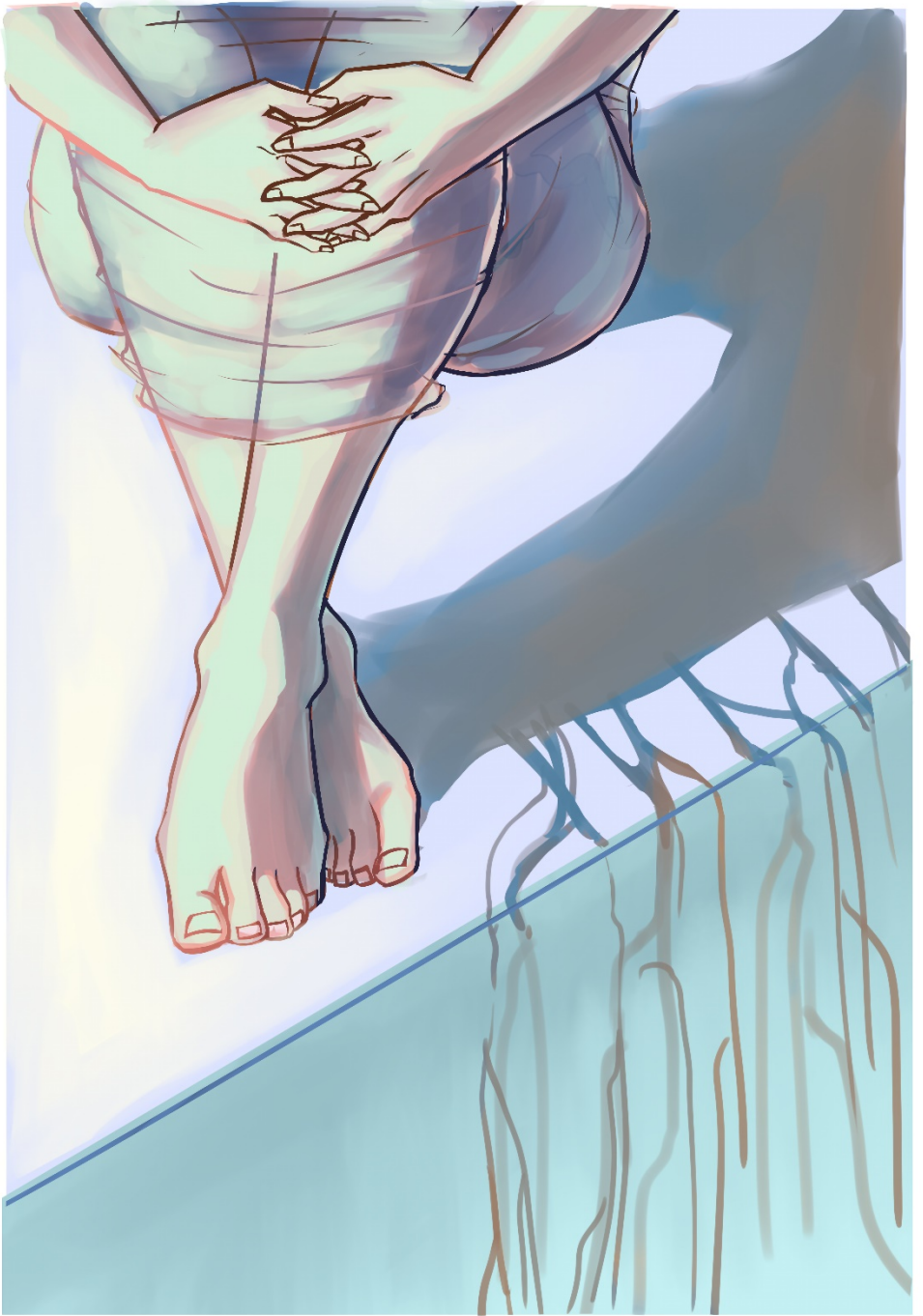


For as long as I can remember,

I hated my body. I was nasty to myself, abusive even. It never occurred to me that my self-loathing was uncalled for. Or that it might be the direct product of a then-undiagnosed anxiety disorder.

If my body could speak about the way I've treated her, she would tell a harrowing tale about a life of abuse, punishment, and unfathomable cruelty. All delivered by me, the nastiest person I know. Though, let it be said: I would never treat anyone else like this, and I'd be horrified if I ever heard anyone else talking about themselves in this way.

Yet so many of us do.



I began practicing mindfulness

And started to see very clearly how toxic my self-talk really was. I desperately wanted to change this. I felt so broken hearted by the way I had treated myself all of these years. I deeply desired to reclaim the home in which I occupied: my body.

When I first started making a conscious effort to be kinder to my body, I would interrupt myself whenever the negative self-talk began. I'd find myself awkwardly looking in the mirror, saying nice-ish things like:

“You look happy today. That’s a good
colour on you.”



THAT COLOUR
LOOKS
GOOD ON
YOU

I did this until self- loving words

And thoughts became second nature and felt REAL.

It got easier and easier, and I can now say that I've finally reached a place where my self-confidence comes from the deep respect and nurtured care that I now feel towards my body and my being.

I've come to understand that my body is precious, one of a kind. She has done so much for me. The least I could do for her, is love her.

Isn't that what every body deserves?



Authored by Alicia Pavlis

Alicia Pavlis is an actor, writer and content producer with anxiety. Her goal is to help normalize talking about conditions such as anxiety and depression within the creative industries through storytelling, by sharing her personal experiences and encouraging those who are neurodiverse, a journey of personal growth.

Learn more about Alicia here: www.aliciapavlis.com.

Illustrated by 'affogatoss'

affogatoss is an autistic Australian artist who is influenced by Eastern art, particularly anime. Her work often includes the human form and she seeks to explore emotions through that subject.

Learn more about affogatoss here:

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Edited by Autumn O'Connor

Autumn O'Connor is a psychotherapist and editor, who also so happens to be neurodiverse! No stranger to her own experience of therapy and trauma, she believes everyone has the possibility to shine. Supporting works like these through publishing, is part of this mission.