

**No One Can Hear Our Flag Waving so We Slash It Through the Air Again Again Again
Again Again**

Zoe Wallace, Stanford '23

Content warning: This poem does reference sexual violence. Readers are advised to take these into account before proceeding.

Dad said not to call again
out loud,
so I use the inside voice
ringing through my brain.

911 how can I hel p?
She is staying silent.
Her sobs have been quaking
in our chests for weeks now
please HEL P
every morning they shred my sleep
like a tattered wife beater.

Hello? Miss-- what's your emergency?
Every warning mother gave us fires
deep into my throat.
When uneven steps kneeling on ground
carry her to the roof of my house,
I can see her through my window,
faceless

the reflection
of my eyebrow just slightly overplucked, a missing hair
in my arch picking and picking and picking and picking
at my nerves because it leaves the tail too bare--
a line ready to snap--
my moistened waterline
my reddened cheeks
the easy slope of my nose sinking into the depth of my cupid's bow lipstick smudged at the
corners
of my mouth that opens into a hole just dark enough to hide anything perfect for swallowing
salty secrets my lips screwed tight
all serving as hers.

I'm sorry, Miss-- can you speak up?

Tonight is the night

i tell her i was there.

i apologize.

for being paralyzed for so long

still, i heard at two a.m.

when he sneered no one could.

i heard his laughter

at her sobs, voice cracking

HEL P

HEL P

HEL P

P LEASE

a mantra to forget

or maybe a prayer, but

please forgive me if I can't understand the god of predators

if i can't hear him in her muffled cries

see him through our blurred vision smell him through the gunpowder feel him as bloody

entitlement stains my fingerprints *Miss--*

Slow down. Describe the situation clearly.

i am.

telling you the sin

of believing in Fear

that he was watching two

stories above like the hawk he is

ready to make my face hers

i confess i'm urged to close my eyes

still.

call it a nightmare

so vultures can play pretend

as i continue to wake to the tears of my God,

Her, thundering sobs

day after day after day after--

Just tell me where you are.

i'm sorry I don't know street names

i wonder if i'm even of any
HEL P

but i beg you i need
HEL P
HEL P
HEL-

i would finish but operator the letter "p" died that night
"please" gets us nowhere
only plays us into a predator's fetish for submission
so i guess all we have left is
HEL

*Miss-- the police are on their way. Go back to bed. *click** HEL P
will they be of any HEL P

i think i called too late
i called too late waited
for someone else to
call too late
i really did because
she is still sobbing
on the roof mascara is dripping
dried red down her neck or maybe
it's just black or maybe it's just
tears or maybe i can't see because sirens
are too loud annoyed-no-interrupted yells are too loud hurried steps are too loud all i see is
red
and blue splatter white walls
a moment
and the walls are yellowed by street lights
a moment of silence.
and she is still faceless.

i must call again
i must find
the missing pieces
of her face
or maybe i should break the window

she could be in the shards maybe
i should walk down the alley
two stories down
find letters of her name in the garbage maybe
Sam Eve
or Eva Ems
i wonder if the “m” i’ll find
points up like “w”
or down because i was
minutes too late

still
i will call again
dad said not to but
i will call again
“there’s no point” but
i will call again
i swear i will call again
so please help
i will call again i will call again i will call again again again again and again and again
please did you find her i will call again i will call again help i will call again and again and again
faster i will call again sooner i will call again and again and again and i want to know again i will
call again i need to know again again again is she OK again i will call please i need to know
again again again i will call again again is she alive i will call again and again and again and
again i will call again so did i kill her i will call again faster this time i will call again again and
again and i’m sorry i will call again. Again.

Meet the piece: This poem relates to feminism, gender, and sexuality because it not only tackles the constant fear of sexual assault and rape that many women face on a daily basis, but how we owe it to one another to stand by each other in the case it does happen. One night in high school, I was up late and distinctly remember hearing a woman’s cries for help right outside my window. The entire neighborhood was silent except for her pleas and the maniacal laughter of her assailant. Having no one to turn to, I remember not knowing what to do and being afraid that if I called the police, somehow the aggressor would know it was me and seek my family out. I regret debating for so long, but I did end up calling for help. Still, I never found out what happened to her. I wanted so badly to make sure she was okay, but I heard nothing of it in the news and was told the cops wouldn’t release that kind of information. So, there was no point in calling again. This poem is my confrontation with the emotions I felt during and after that night, which I had never truly been able to face before. I was expected to simply accept what happened, all the possible outcomes, and keep it moving. I wasn’t the one

harmed, so what was there to be hung up about? This. This piece stands to show what there is to be hung up about. We see the patriarchy manifest in women in many ways, and one of which is through fear. The majority of us have been guilty of being bystanders to someone else's pain out of fear that if we speak up, we'll end up facing that same misery. I hope that this poem helps anyone who reads it come face-to-face with their inner bystander, overcome it, and offer a hand to those begging for help just outside their door. Or else, those harmed (especially women, and especially women of color) will be swept under the rug, faceless. And while such anonymity can make it easy to distance oneself, I can no longer help but see my own face in their place.