The Name Game

X

Sally Pirie

I CHANGED MY NAME!

It was a huge emotional thing and I am still worried people will think it is weird but really it was so much work and I had to be really really BRAVE.



But, let's start
at the very
beginning

Names are a lot.



And they are sometimes
marked with the wickedness
of history and its long phalanges,
reaching into the present.

For example:
Naming conventions around
women in some western
contexts are just gross.

So, for lots of Western women naming conventions are like this:

Women can't be "junior" or "II" or "III" even if they are named after a parent.

A woman usually gets her father's last name.

When this woman gets married she gives up her father's name and adopts her new husband's name.

All the children of that marriage that the woman makes WITH HER BODY will also have her husband's name.

Sure, times have changed since the dark ages but not so much, really.



It's all because of the utterly fucked up concept of

COVERTURE

"Yeah, but coverture was only a thing in MEDIEVAL times," I can hear people bleating, "Things are all better now!"



While coverture has
been amended in lots of ways
since medieval times, it
has still not been abolished.

So while it can be so very
romantic and meaningful
to take your husband's
name, remember that
this tradition is
connected to the
system that
made marital
rape legal
until the 1990s.



When I got married I took my husband's name because I loved him—

And I loved the newness of it all and the romance and it was tradition.

It was a kind of gift to my new husband, a big symbol of my commitment and our unity.

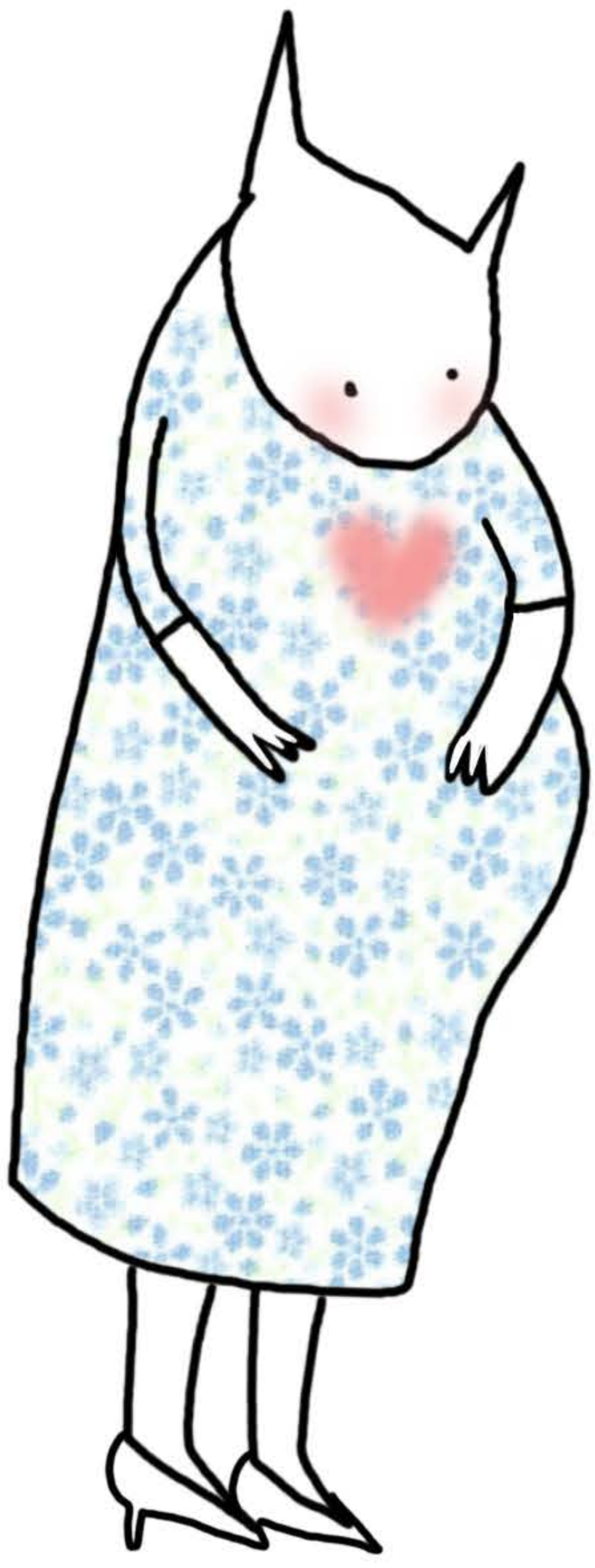
(Except it was really just shoring him up as the head of the household)



I wanted my children to be mine — but also ours. But ours would have to be his. Maybe if I really pushed they could have been mine. But we were all his. All of us.

And it was supposed to be romantic and safe but I started to feel funny about all of it.

Then I felt a kind of sick.



When you get divorced you stand in court in front of the judge in the ashes of your little dreams and you have to decide right then who you are going to be now.



And you stand there and it all flies by—

my kids have his name...

what happens to my career, my publications, name recognition?

think fast!

my maiden name is just my dad's name— again? am I a child

my heart is still broken.

The courts will let you go back to your maiden name.

I never liked my maiden name



it never felt like mine -just borrowed and "Campbell-like-the-soup."

Or you can keep your married name.

And I **hated** my married name.

It was **leaden**

and I wondered if I would meet and marry a man with a better name or finally give up and go back to my father's name and it was odious that this was even this way at all.

ew.



I looked at the choices
that lay before me and
thought quietly to myself



FUCK

THAT

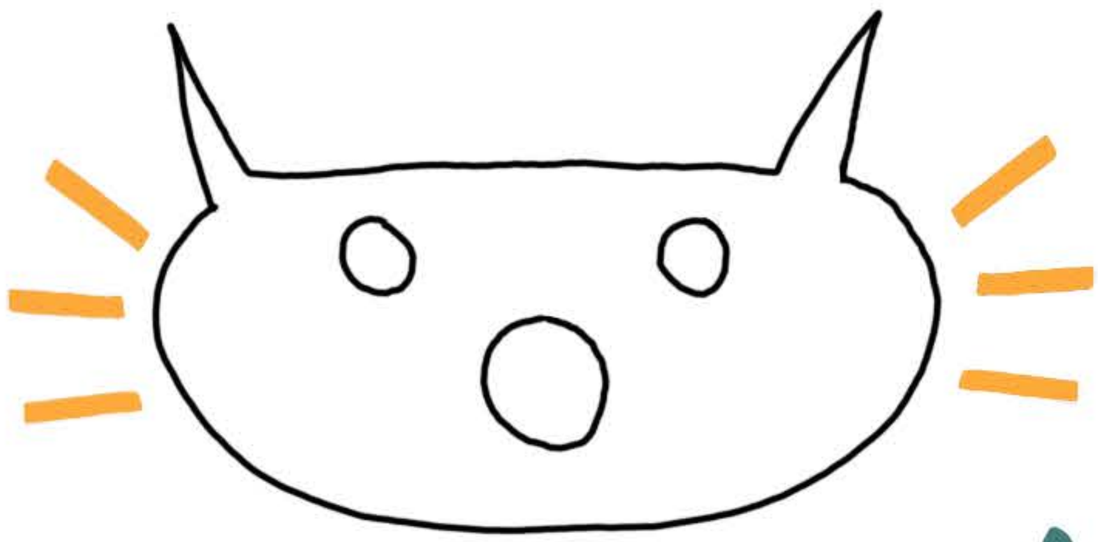


Then one night I watched the movie *Ladybird* with my daughters and in it there is scene where the main character (who has changed her name) is asked,

"*Ladybird*"—
is that your
given name?

YES
I GAVE IT
TO MYSELF.
IT IS GIVEN
TO ME
BY ME.

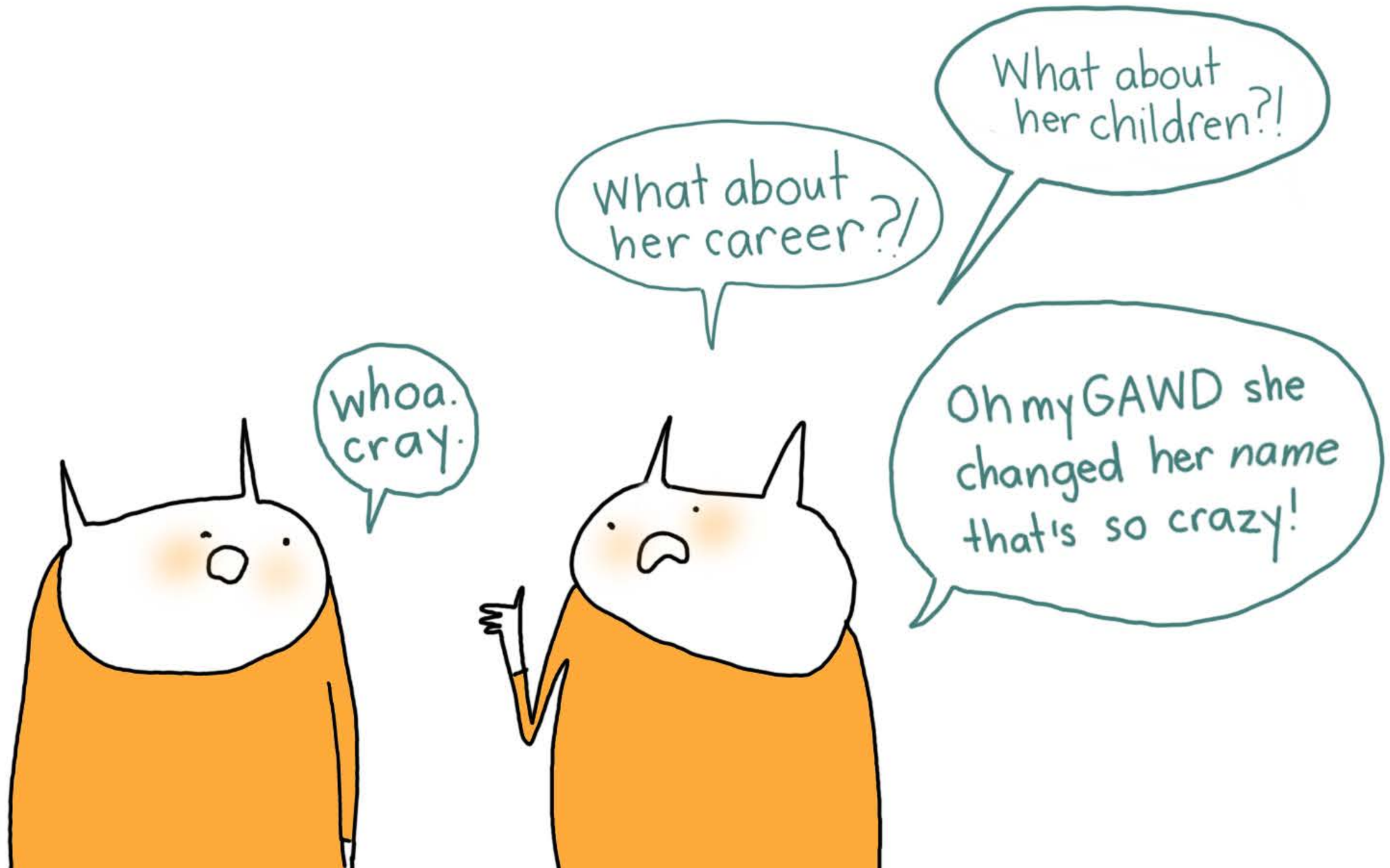
And I was like



WHOA

YES

But what if people think it's WEIRD or CRAZY?



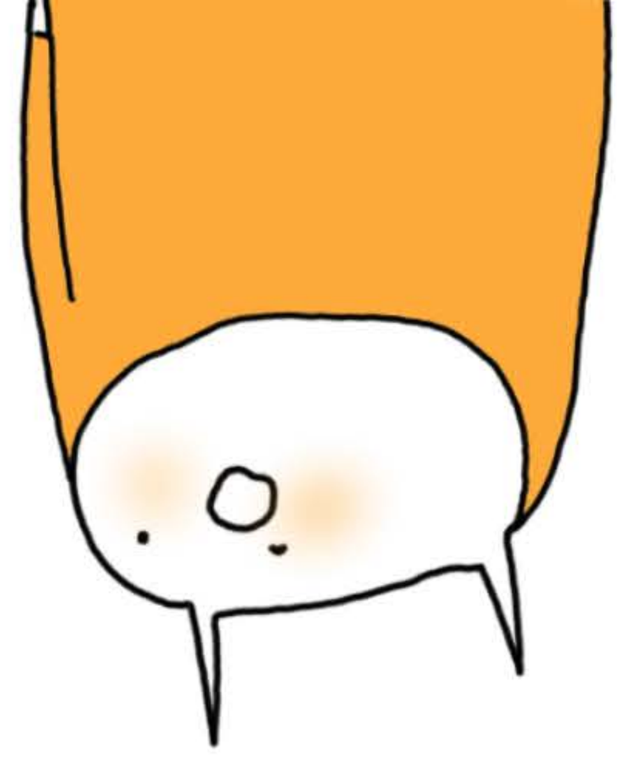
I dragged my feet in telling people because I was a little scared of what they would think or say to me...

This is so crazy and so weird who does this OMG people are never going to take you seriously and you are just being crazy crazy crazy.

crazy.

Just, like, changing her name?

she's CRAZY!



But remember anytime they call a woman "crazy" it's because SHE'S ONTO SOMETHING or SHE IS NO LONGER PLAYING BY THE RULES OF PATRIARCHY.



"The 'crazy woman' has become a knee-jerk way to put women in their place." - Arwa Madhawi

"Stop the rhetoric... if a man says a woman is crazy or difficult, ask him: what bad thing did you do to her?" -natalie portman

"'Crazy' is one of the five deadly words guys use to shame women into compliance... it's a way of delegitimizing a woman's authority over her own life."

-Harris O'Malley

Then there's the part where this is all even hairier because I am a

PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC



That means I think for a living,
but it also means that I have
to see my last name freaking

EVERYWHERE.

It is a very public existence that relies
heavily on name recognition

EDUC 351 Educational Foundations
Professor Sally Galman

Description:

PROFESSOR
S. GALMAN



Sally Campbell Galman
Professor, College of Education
UMass-Amherst

Title and Abstract:

"The Artist and Peter Both-in-One: Doing art and arts-based ethnographic research with and about very young children."

Childhood
1–14
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Article

Brave is a dress: Understanding "good" adults and "bad" children through adult horror and children's play

Sally Campbell Galman
University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA

WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

WHITE WOMEN AT WORK IN THE FEMINIZED WORLD OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHING

SALLY CAMPBELL GALMAN

Light Struck: On Stor
the Broken Pieces

by Sally Campbell Galman

This article is part of the series The Shatter
echo-chamber-experiences-of-amanth2016-ir

I was weary when I set out for
excited to give what would
(http://gendermoxie.blogs
planned af

s the nation offer professional
ly relevant teaching techniques.

ning cultural competency, Sally Campbell Galman,
Massachusetts, Amherst's College of Education, says
many teacher trainers are older

Christine A. Kray

mily Narrative and Baby on Elec
Hinda Mandell

Left Behind
Rachel Parsons

nna: Parents of Transgender Childre
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Sally Campbell Galman

umph of the Constitution: American N
and Religious Liberty
Asma Uddin

Part 5

Ethnography and Education
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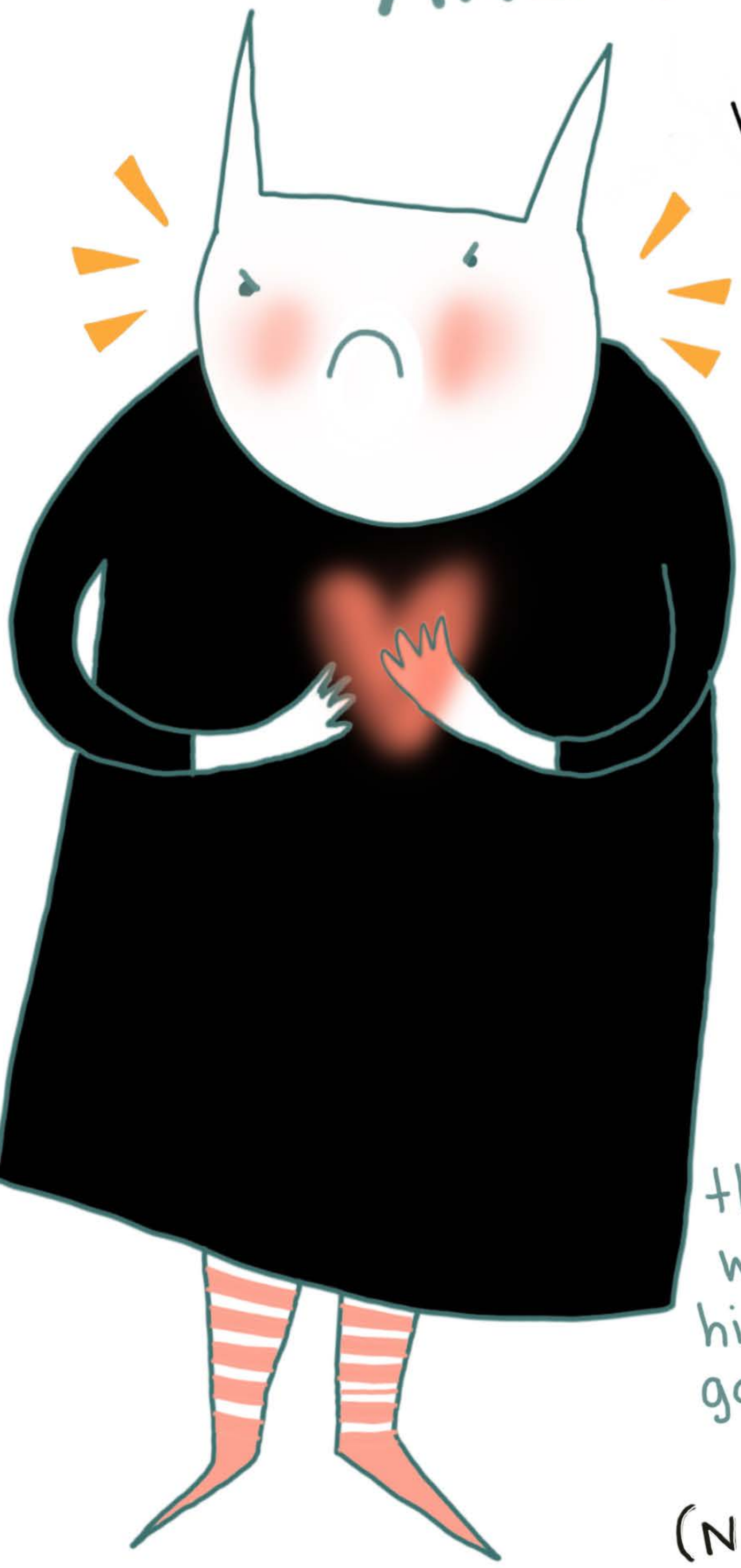
Articles

Nicole's mother is dead: death games, unruly stories, and what matters in preschool

Sally Campbell Galman
Pages 294-310 | Published online: 24 Dec 2020

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AND ACADEMIC WOMEN ARE FUCKED.



While academic women are discriminated against for every reason under the sun (motherhood, existing, etc.), the name game is a classic example of how they CANNOT WIN.

Academic women who kept their names were seen as less likeable, but those who took their partner's name were less likely to be hired and even if they got the job had much lower salaries.

(Noordewier, 2010)
(Stefanova, Latu, & Taylor 2023)

THAT'S RIGHT.



and it gets worse.

Name changes are uniquely visible in an academic career because of the centrality of the publication record.

People thought that women academics who changed their names at marriage exhibited higher levels of competence and commitment, as "behaviors that are consistent with gendered expectations are evaluated more favorably."

"Female academics who change their surname are rewarded for complying with prescriptive gender stereotypes and for fitting into the expected caregiver role." (Stefanova, Latu & Taylor, 2023)



it is almost like the name game is proxy for something else... What could it BE???

BUT perceptions are not citations

... if I change my name I am potentially lost to science, to the citations my career depends on. While taking my husband's name makes academic colleagues value me for meeting creepy gender expectations that will probably hurt my career in the long run, any change in my name damages my academic record. **But...**



I DID IT ANYWAY

OK!
I've decided I want a name that is all my own. Where do I even start?

First you need to pick out your new name.

Then you need to do all the legal stuff.





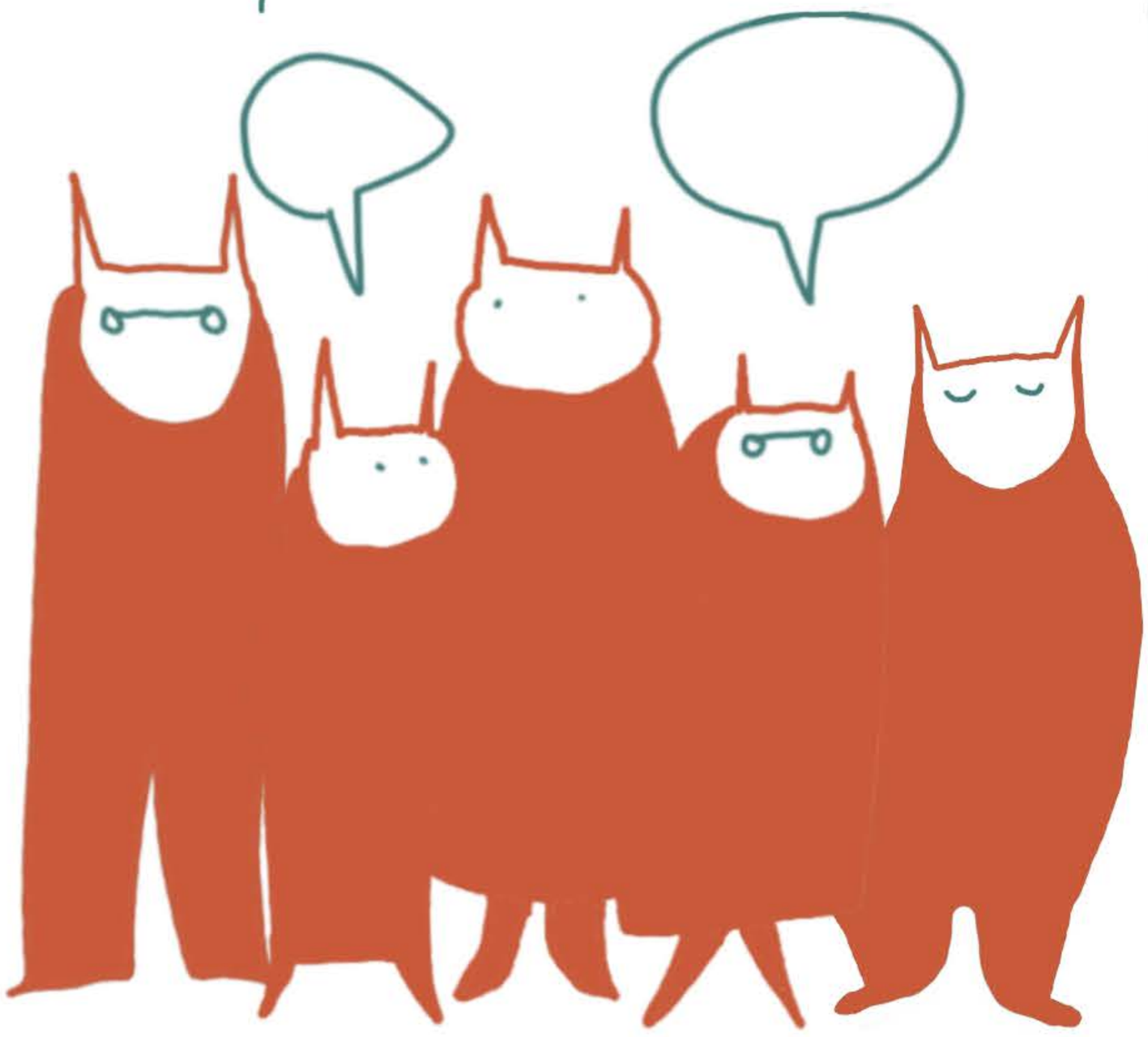
You can start by thinking about people in your life, favorite writers or artists or characters in books or ideas from your cultural background or even your favorite color or animal or flower or, well, anything.

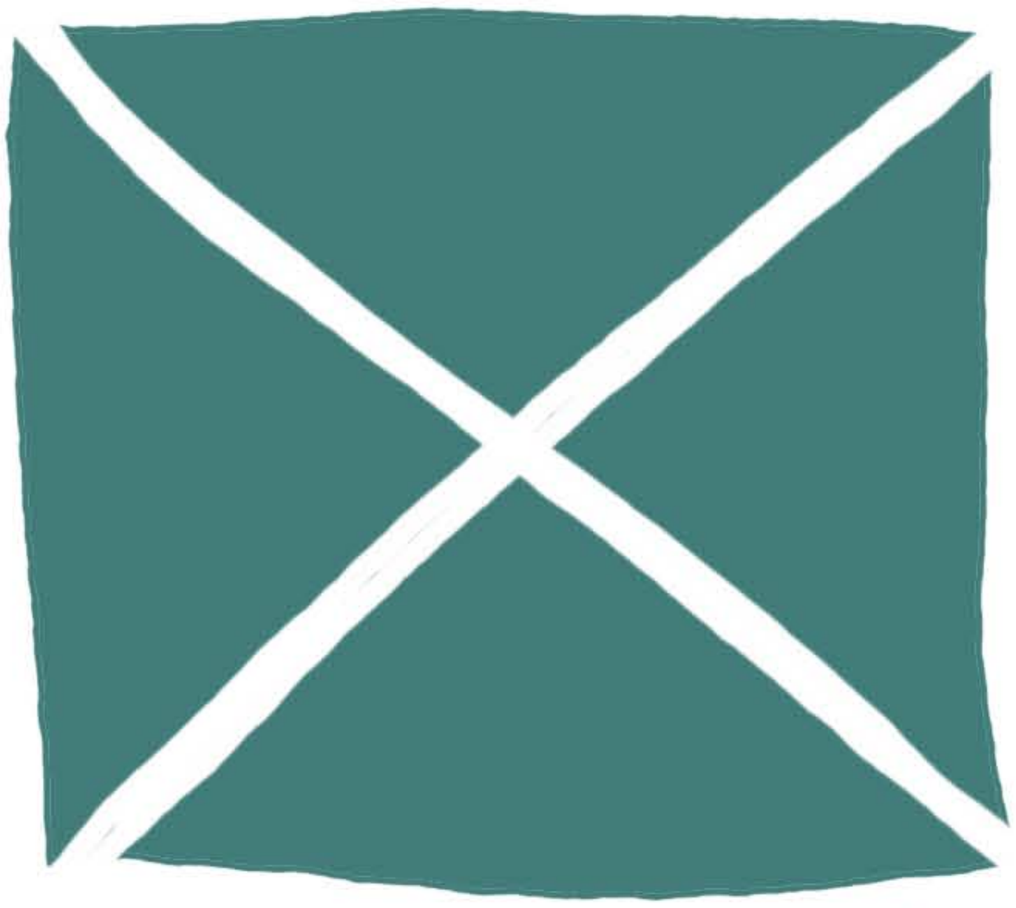
choosing
a
name

I kind of had
my eyes peeled
for a while to
see what pricked
up my ears.



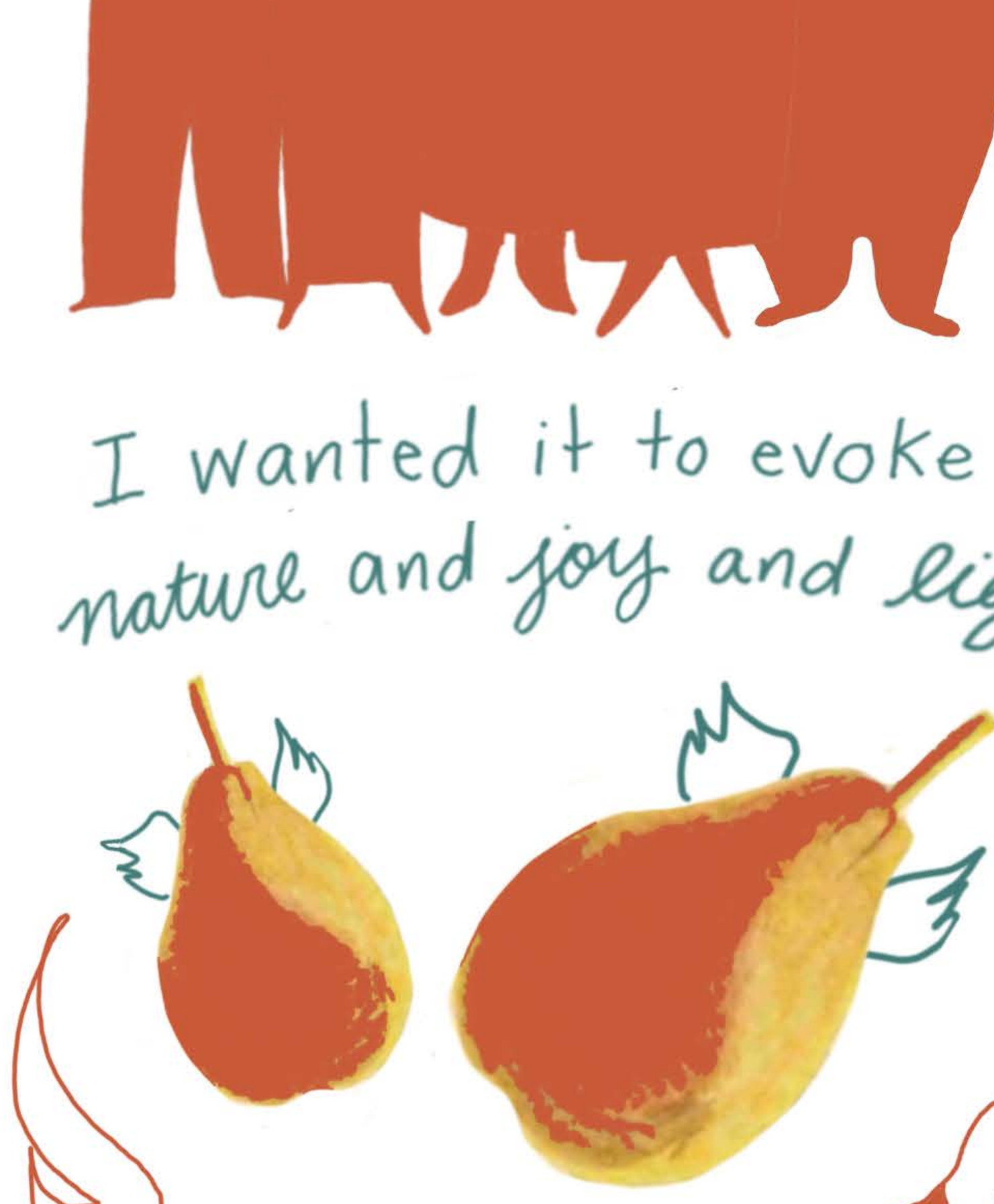
I wanted an historical family name.





And I wanted a little connection to my own heritage and culture.

I wanted it to evoke nature and joy and light



I looked and looked and nothing popped up. Until one day I came across the right name. It met all of my requirements and it was just right.

BINGO!

But my new name was BUOYANT and LIGHT and AIRY



and it has WINGS

and I loved it from the jump.

WHEN I SEE IT IN PRINT IT MAKES ME SO HAPPY



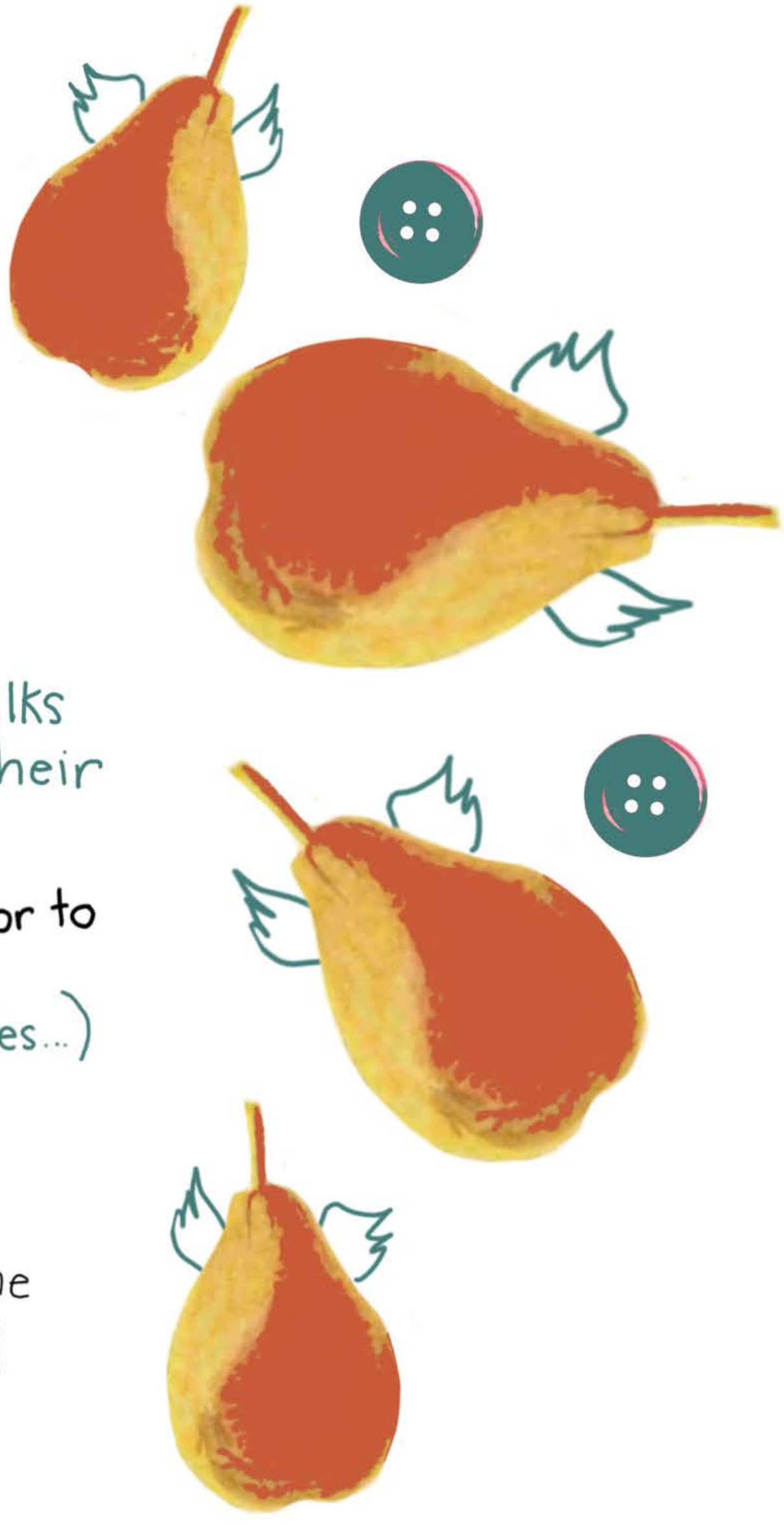
I went with

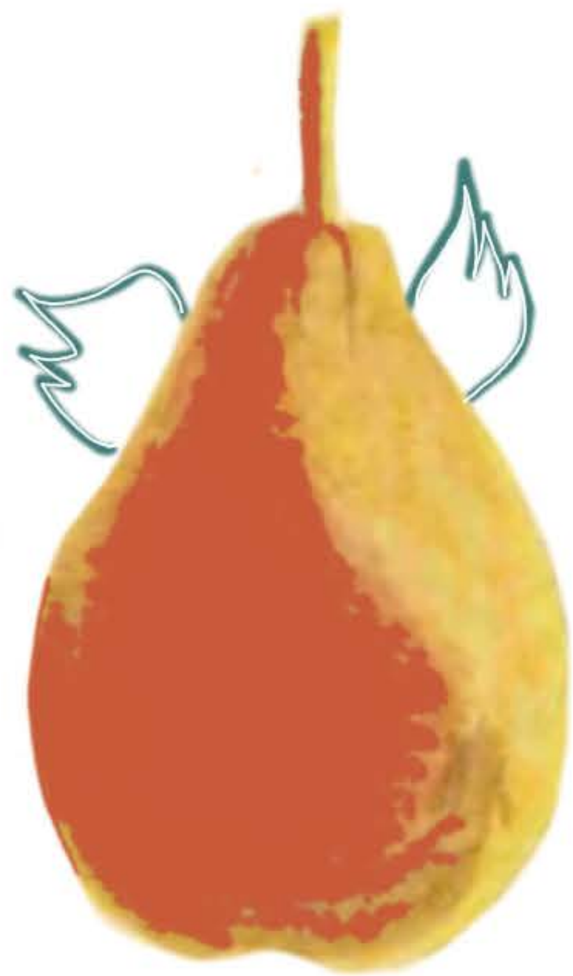
Pirie

I mean it's cute as a button and it is a very common name, actually.

It means person who lives by the little pear tree. It also sometimes means a person who walks with a little spring in their step. It also means small, as in a tiny creature or to indicate a little thing (the 'peerie folk' are the fairies...)

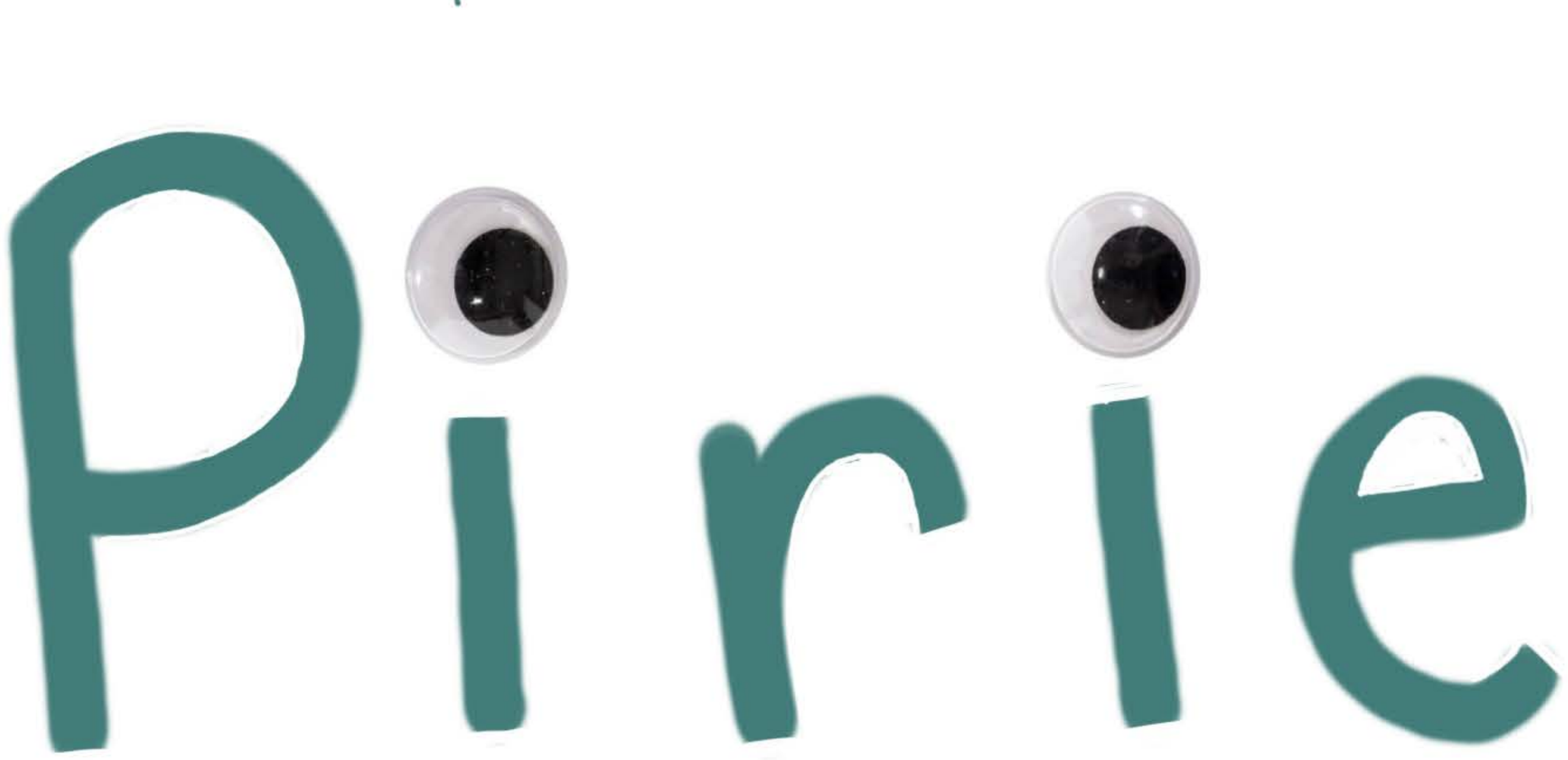
I told a friend about it and she said, "Oh Sally it is perfect and 100% the girl you used to be! And are again!" And she was RIGHT.





AND I AM JUST
SUCH A PERSON

And I especially
like that it has
two letter i's.
This is full of glorious
possibility.



Legal Stuff

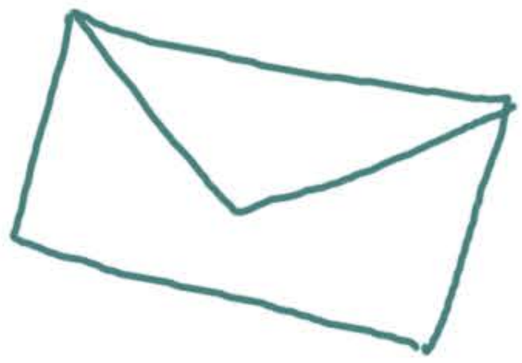
When you are getting married or divorced you can change your name pretty easily — but upon divorce you can ONLY go back to your previous name (under coverture a woman then reverts to her father's name and ownership) and it's kind of gross if you really think about it.

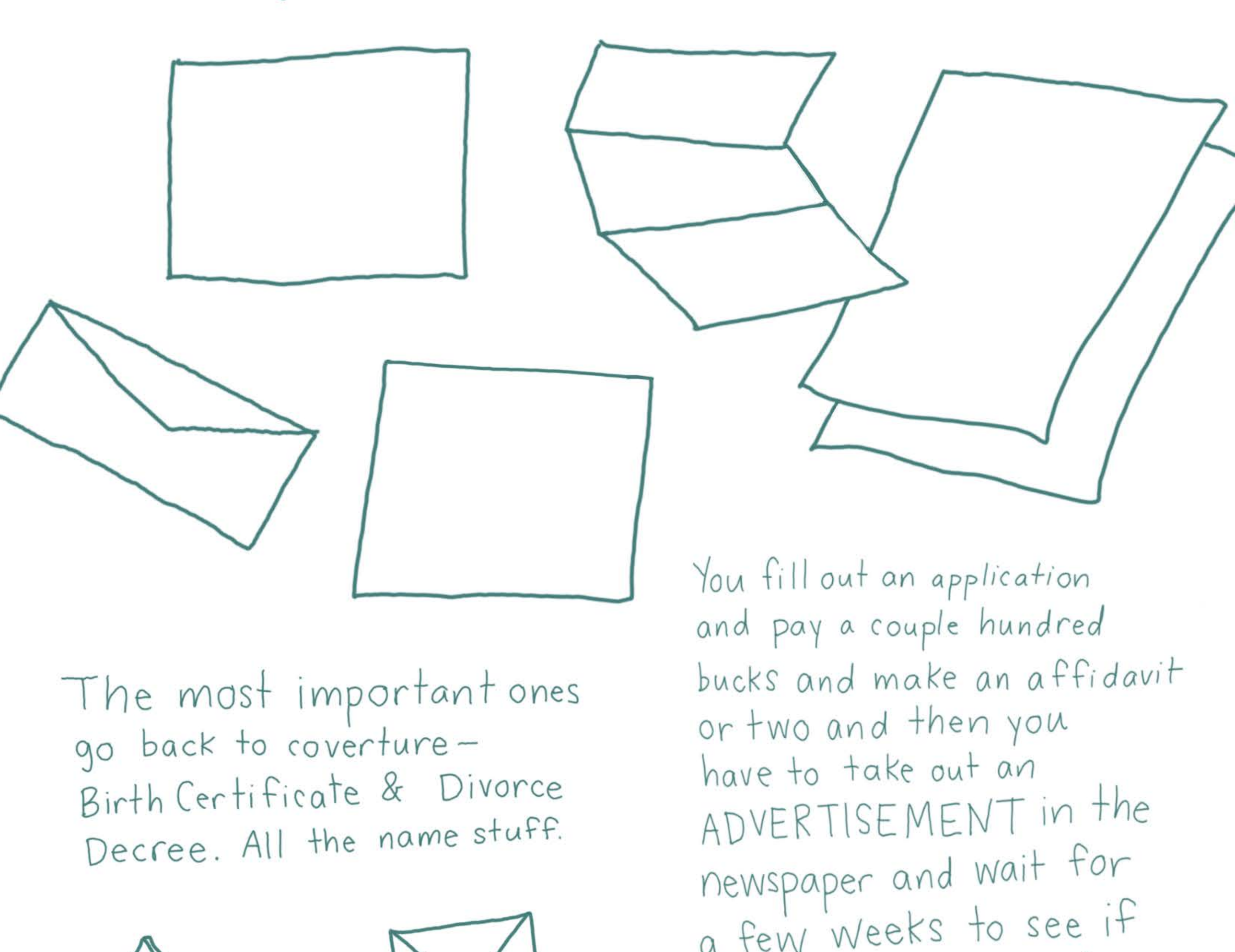
IF you choose to change your name at any other time in any other way it is a massive pain in the ASS.

shocker.



First you will need to assemble every single identity document you have ever had issued in the history of ever.





The most important ones go back to coverture – Birth Certificate & Divorce Decree. All the name stuff.

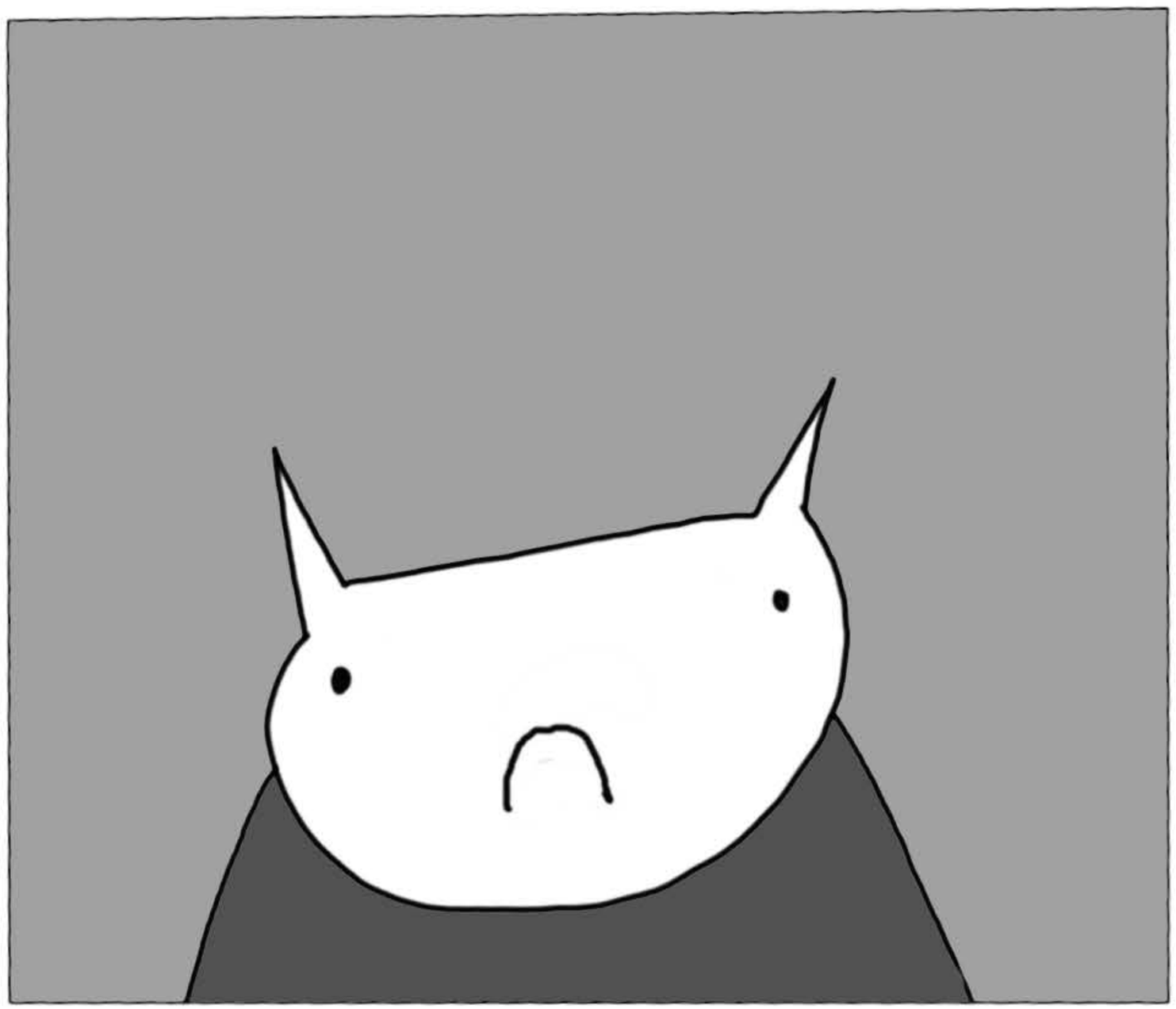
You fill out an application and pay a couple hundred bucks and make an affidavit or two and then you have to take out an ADVERTISEMENT in the newspaper and wait for a few weeks to see if anyone out there wants to object. This also costs money and it can be sort of weird and not feel great.



The Herald-Tribune Of My Personal Information

NOBODY NEEDS TO KNOW THIS

AREA WOMAN CHANGES NAME



Amherst. What the actual FUCK, people. Why is this in the newspaper because this is actually not totally necessary from a fraud or identity theft perspective.

But it is complete and utter bullshit to be honest, and it may function as a deterrent, just like the massive piles of money that one must pay to change your name.

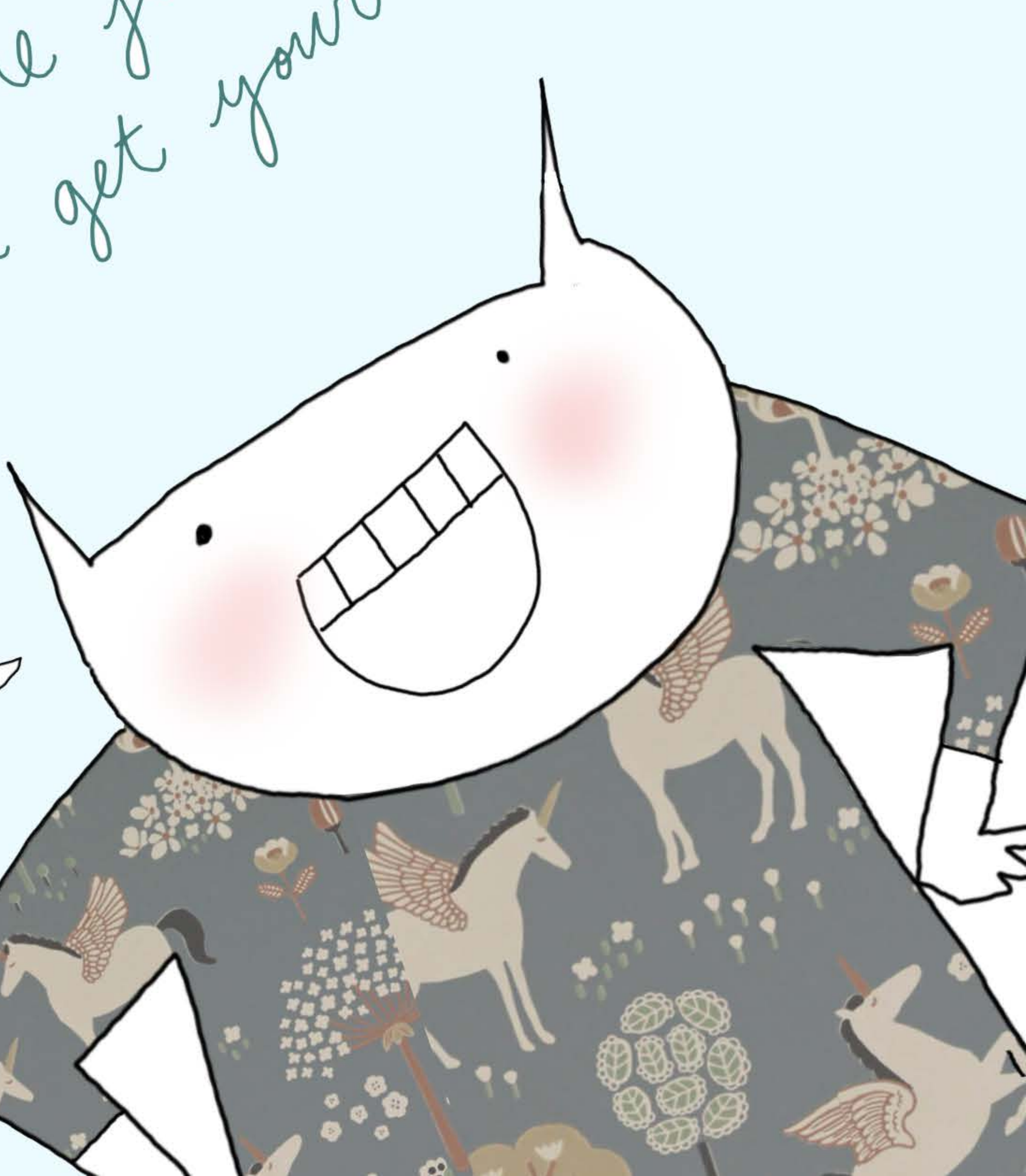
It's like they want to make sure we are serious about it, like we are impulsive children. And you know which people are the most likely to change their names? Women and transgender people by a landslide.

If it was something mostly done by cis-gender men it would be available at a drive-through convenience window and it would come with fries and a coke.



Then the judge rules and you get your new name!







That was a LOT of hard work and while it turned out okay for me, we are still playing the name game in so many ways, mostly because coverture is still very much alive and well and hiding in our traditions and habitus. But if we look outside of the current and historical cisheteronormative there are liberatory alternatives.

Lots of LGBTQ+ people participated in the hard work of uncoupling names and identities and even marriage from coverture.

This is part of what freaked Some people out about gay marriage.

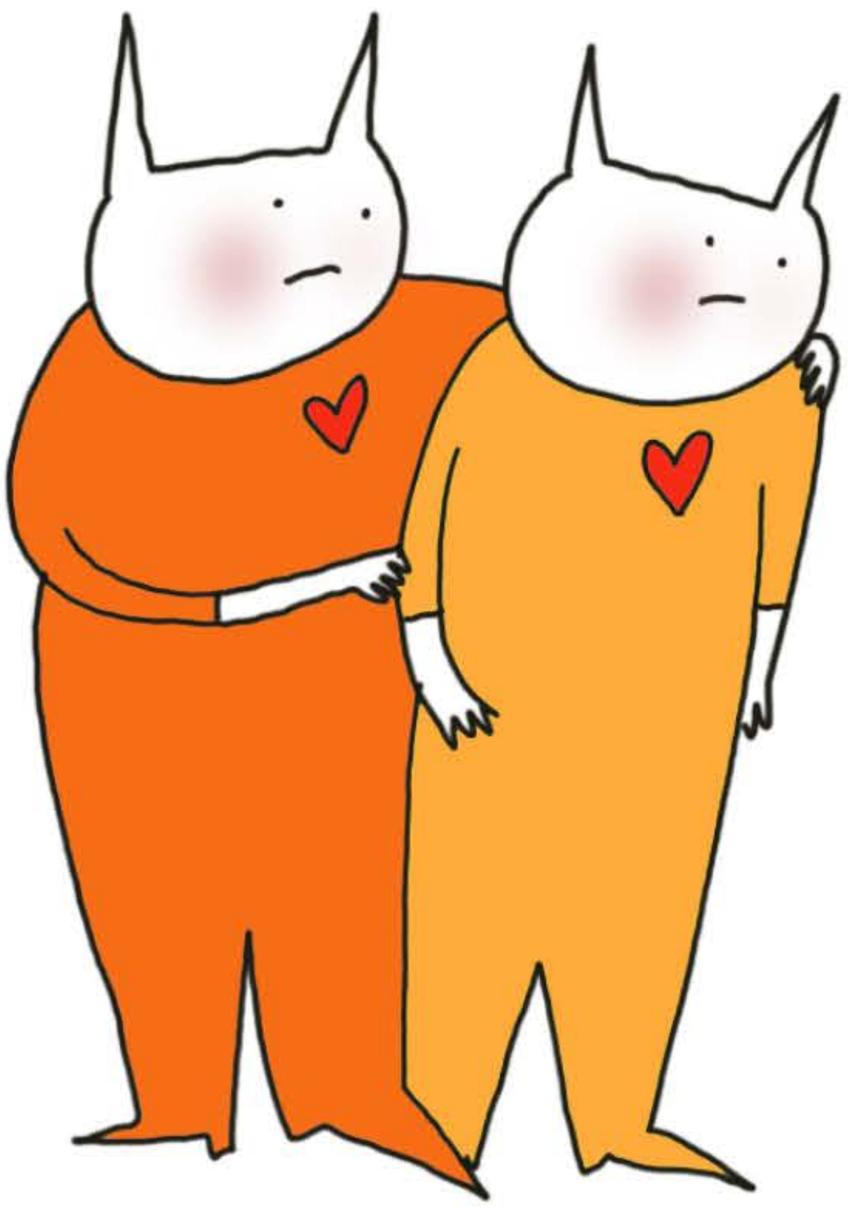




Queering and otherwise complicating a heteronormative institution took creativity and **guts**

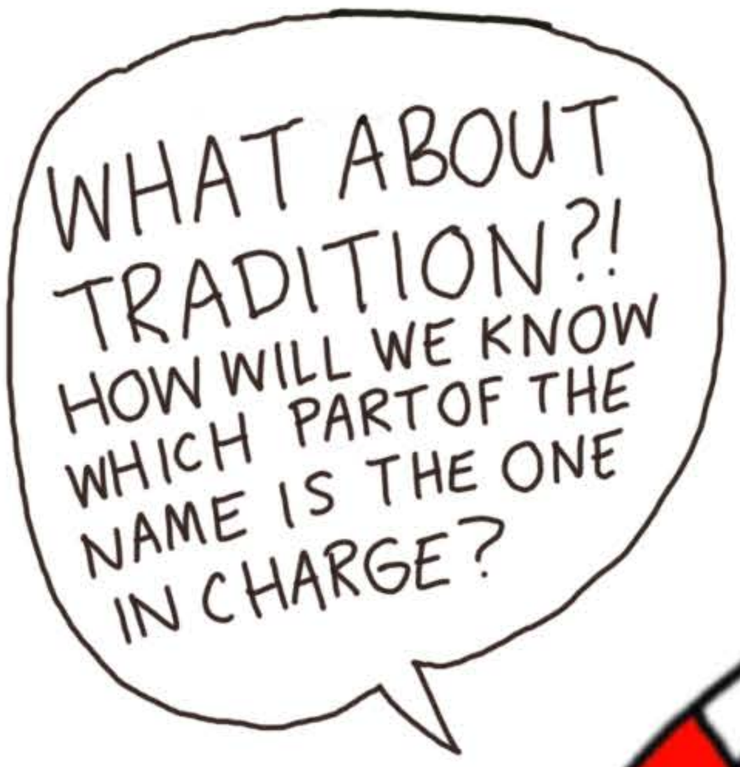
Some people keep their names.

Sometimes a husband takes his wife's surname.*





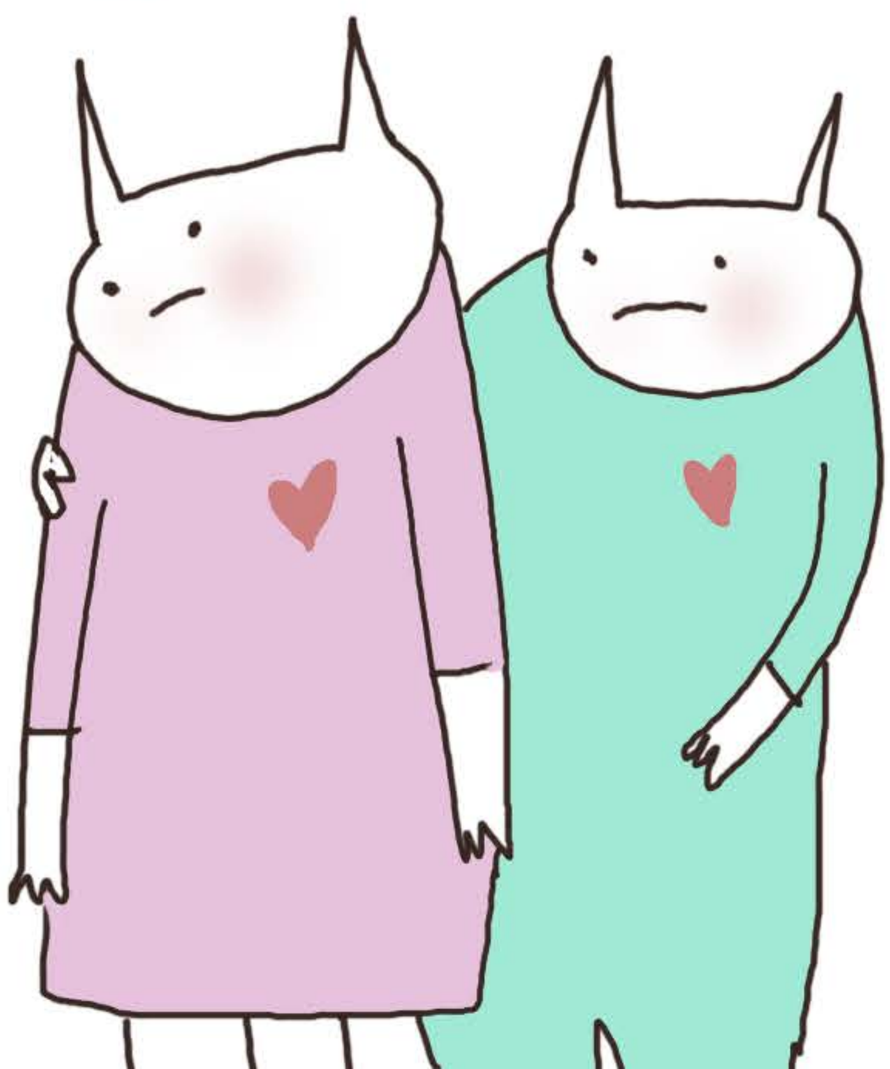
* only six US states allow this.





Sometimes both partners hyphenate.

Sometimes a couple makes up a whole new name together, or they combine their names to make a *new* surname all their own!

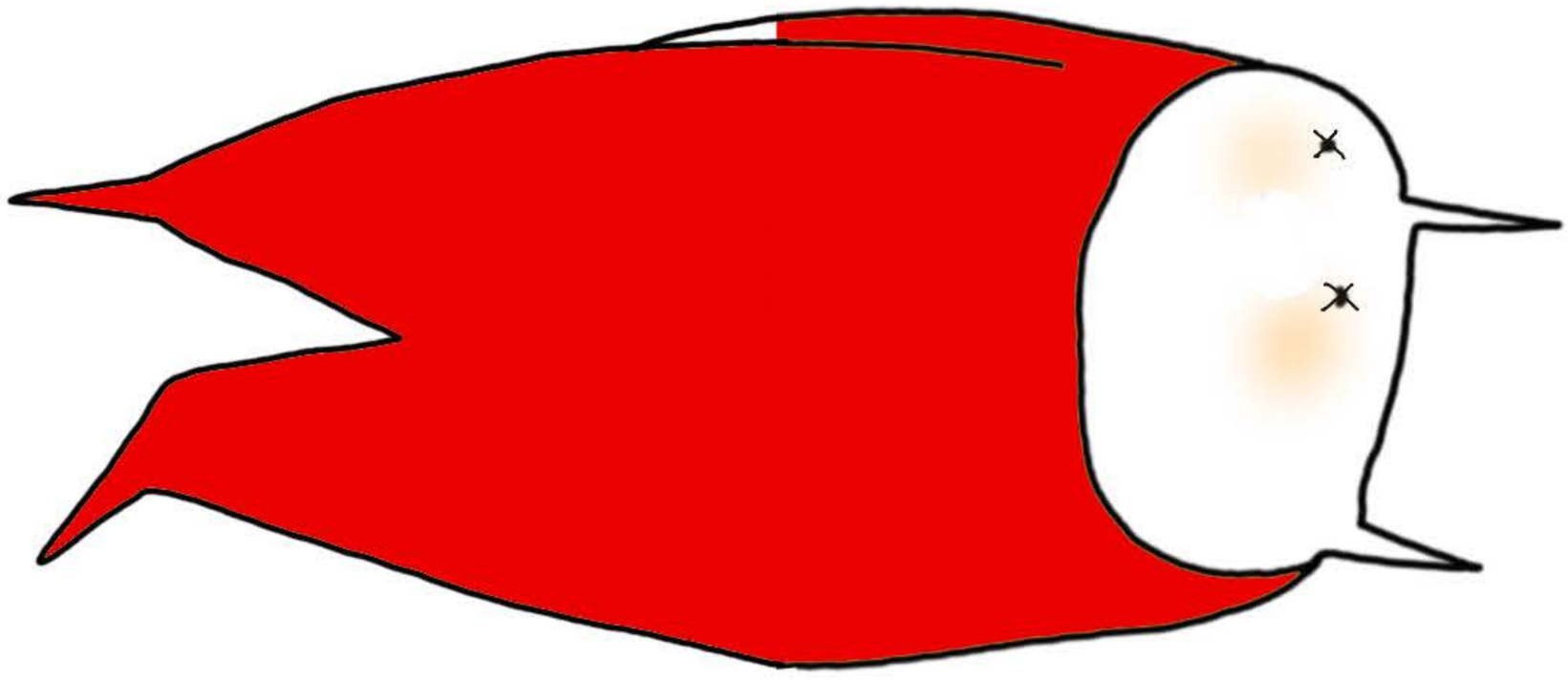


And lots of transgender people rename themselves outside of the whole cishetero name giving and marriage-changing universe and challenging patriarchal systems in ways that open up possibilities for us all.

?

And inevitably if you do any of these things people will bleat about how crazy and weird you are but they can all fuck right off.

all the way off.



And while my experience was NOT SO AWESOME because of patriarchy and my not quite being in a place to think about myself outside of that system, lots of women choose to take a male partner's name and we are NOT going to stomp on them.

Immigration stuff.

She might just want to do it.

she might want to change her name and doing it at marriage is easy (and there is no public court record!

Her father's name feels worse for lots of possible reasons

she really likes her husband's name.

She feels close to her husband's family.

and there are many more ♥.

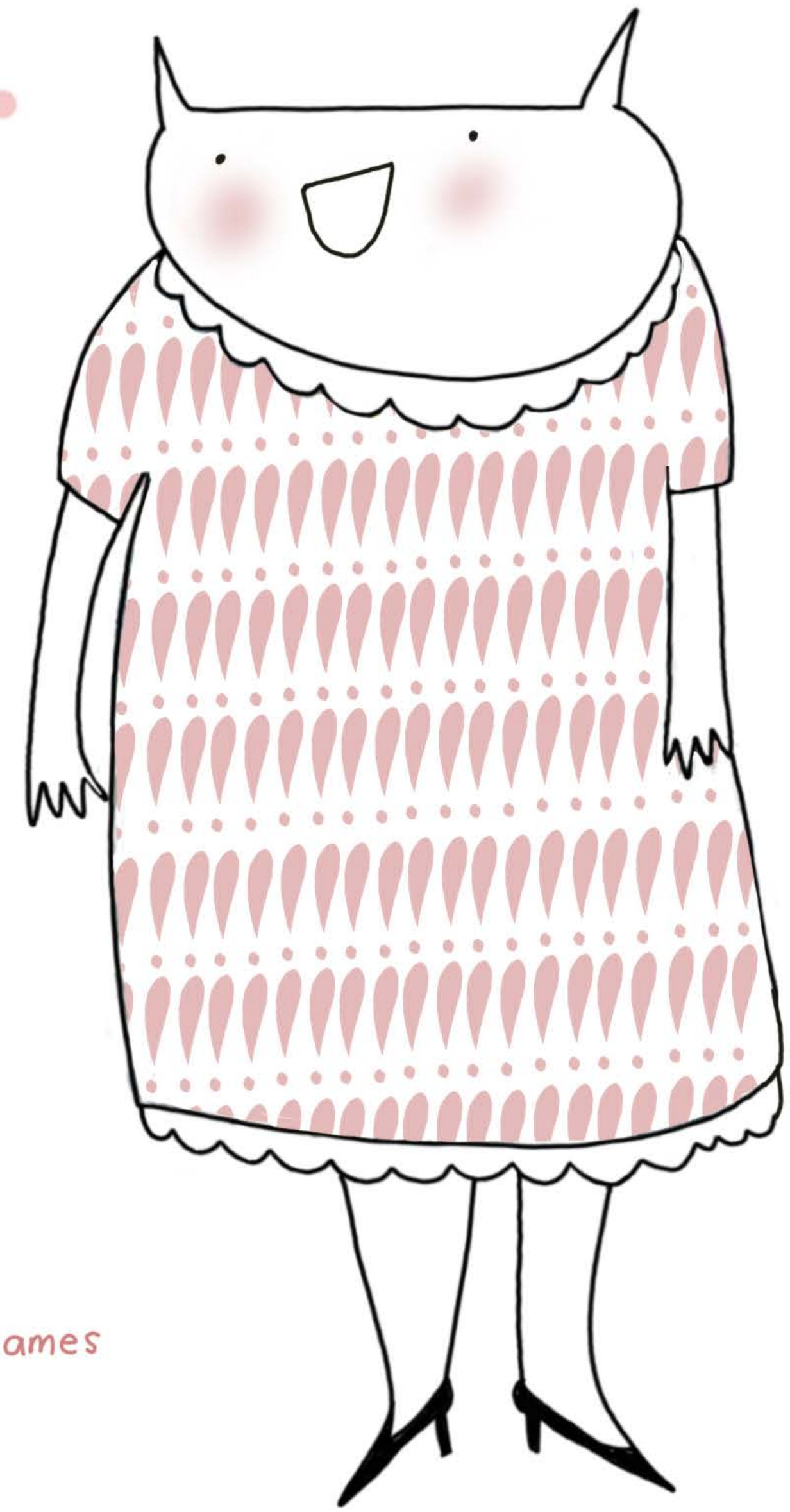
Here are some more ideas.

- Encourage academic publishers to enable retroactive name change, not just a mention as an "erratum". Lots of journals are doing this already (thanks trans people!)

- Get an ORCID id and use it on all your publications, your CV, etc.

- Lobby state officials to allow divorcing women to choose a new name AND create an option for new surnames for minor children.

- PASS THE ERA.



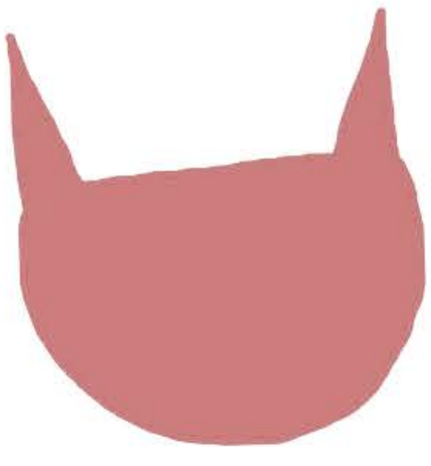


Sally Campbell Pirie is Professor of Child and Family Studies at the University of Massachusetts @ Amherst. She is a visual artist and arts-based researcher and the author/illustrator behind the *Shane the Lone Ethnographer* comic research methods texts and lots of other fun stuff under a previous surname. Keep up with her projects at

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