

## ***“I’m told that scared meat tastes better.”***

Dear Reader,

I am tired of reading about men.

Sick of the classics, the greats, those deemed the arbiters of the human experience neglecting to mention half the population. I am tired of being a love interest, a sidekick, an afterthought. We are Ophelia, never Hamlet. Our tragedy makes us soft, simple, *feminine*. Where are the women who suffer at the hands of men and make it everyone else’s problem? Where are the women who externalize their pain, who name it? Who refuse to let themselves be made small to exonerate those who hurt them?

So I wrote *Veal*. A story about male violence told by lesbian characters. The idea for this novel came to me following the Depp v. Heard trial. A public spectacle in which I watched those I believed to be smart, empathetic, kind people gleefully attacking a victim of abuse. I realized it was easier for people to hate an imperfect victim than to look around and recognize the system of violence against women. That to empathize with the victim is to recognize the likelihood of becoming the victim, and most women cannot bear that agony. They do not want to see this system, this monster that hates them. I empathize with self-preservation, but felt alone and crazy in my inability to ignore it.

So I wrote Franky. Franky, who spends her time chasing a monster she believes is hurting women. She is called crazy for daring to point out this trend and demanding validation in her quest. She is isolated and cantankerous and desperate. She wants, more than anything, for someone to look at her and say, “You’re right. This is not a one-off event. Catching the one violent man has not stopped all violent men. Women are still in danger, and they will always be in danger as long as this monster can roam free.”

So this book is for Franky. For Amber Heard. For the version of myself that was so desperate and alone, grappling with this monster. For the women who cannot name this creature that haunts them, hurts them, but they feel its hatred every second they’re alive.

For all women who are made to answer for the violence of men.

I will always be in your corner.

Give them hell.

*Mackenzie Nolan*

**Mackenzie Nolan**

