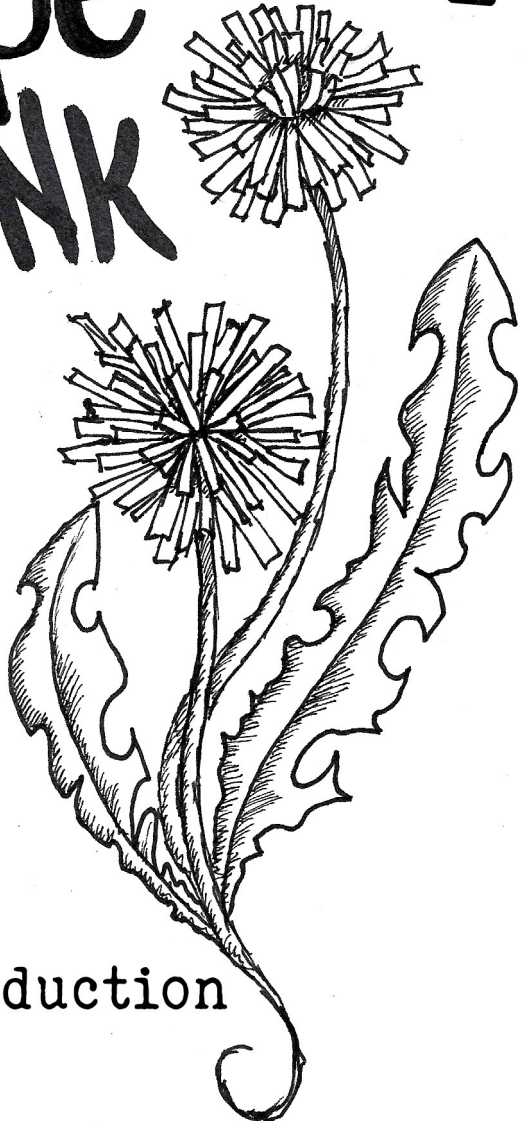
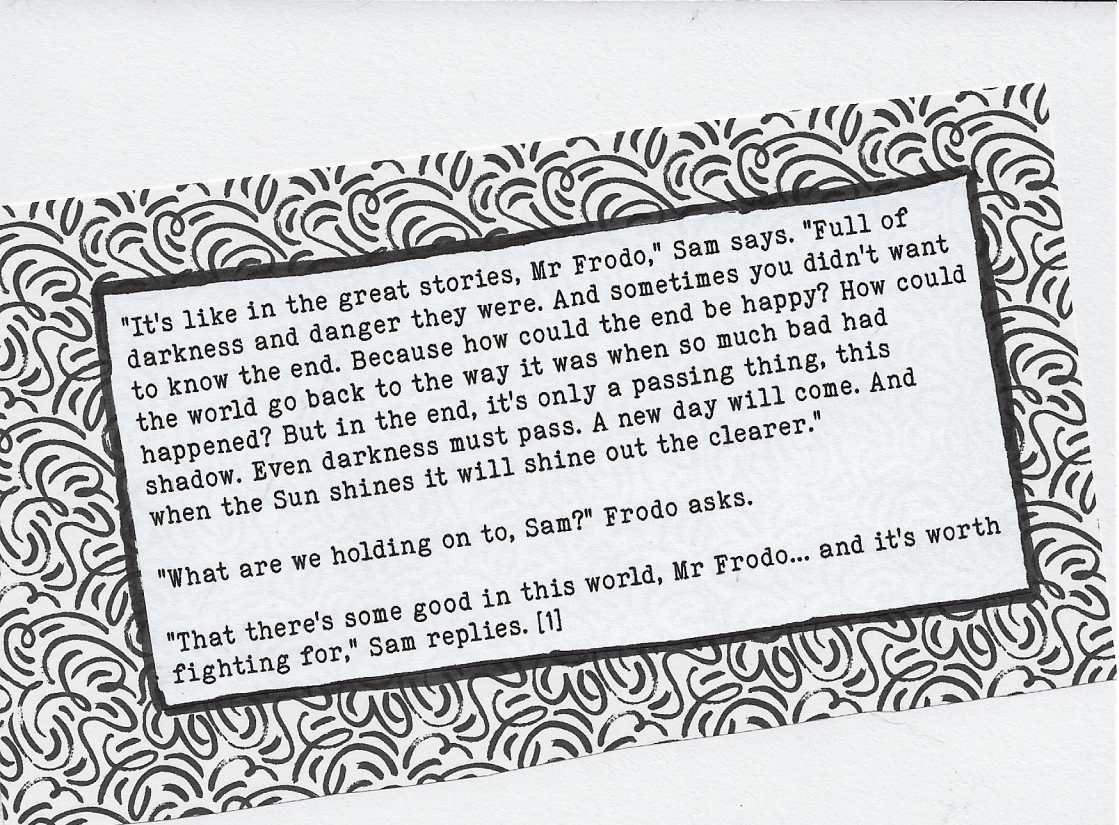


hope PUNK

#1



Introduction



"It's like in the great stories, Mr Frodo," Sam says. "Full of darkness and danger they were. And sometimes you didn't want to know the end. Because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad had happened? But in the end, it's only a passing thing, this shadow. Even darkness must pass. A new day will come. And when the Sun shines it will shine out the clearer."

"What are we holding on to, Sam?" Frodo asks.

"That there's some good in this world, Mr Frodo... and it's worth fighting for," Sam replies. [1]



ORIGINS OF HOPEPUNK

In 2017 author Alexandra Rowland made a post on Tumblr saying: "The opposite of grimdark is hopepunk. Pass it on." [2] From Wikipedia: "Grimdark is a subgenre of speculative fiction with a tone, style, or setting that is particularly dystopian, amoral, and violent. The term is inspired by the tagline of the tabletop strategy game Warhammer 40,000: "In the grim darkness of the far future there is only war."" Other examples of grimdark are A Song of Ice and Fire, Breaking Bad, the darker Batman worlds, and the Walking Dead. [3]

2016 was a rough year, with an even bleaker outlook (although now writing this in 2024 we knew *nothing*, lol). People were growing weary of the grimdark worlds in media when the world around us was already so dark and left us feeling hopeless. It was time for a change, which Alexandra Rowland brought with her one, according to her own words, off the cuff post on Tumblr.

A few hours later, people were reblogging it and hopepunk found it's way to the people. Now, it's a literary genre, an aesthetic, and a philosophy that inspires people all over the globe.

PHILOSOPHY OF HOPEPUNK

I cannot express this better than other people have done before me. So I'll start with an interview Kayti Burt had with several hopepunk authors in 2019.

"What *is* hopepunk? It depends on who you ask...

Rowland, quoting her essay "One Atom of Justice, One Molecule of Mercy, and the Empire of Unsheathed Knives," says: "Hopepunk is a subgenre and a philosophy that 'says kindness and softness don't equal weakness, and that, in this world of brutal cynicism and nihilism, being kind is a political act. An act of rebellion.'"

To understand hopepunk as a concept it helps to understand what it stands in contrast to. Grimdark is a fantasy subgenre characterized by bleak settings in which humanity is fundamentally cutthroat, and where no individual or community can stop the world's inevitable decline. Hopepunk, in contrast, believes that the very act of trying has meaning, that fighting for positive change in and of itself has worth—especially if we do it together." [4]

When Alexandra Rowland was asked on Tumblr to expand on the initial statement she made she elaborated:

"Hopepunk says that *genuinely and sincerely* caring about something, anything, requires bravery and strength. Hopepunk isn't ever about submission or acceptance: It's about standing up and fighting for what you believe in. It's about standing up for other people. It's about DEMANDING a better, kinder world, and truly believing that we can get there if we care about each other as hard as we possibly can, with every drop of power in our little hearts." [5]

I also love the definition of the Tumblr blog Hopepunk-
humanity:

"What is Hopepunk?"

- Wild laughter from ragged throats
- Flowers growing choked from crumbling asphalt
- A warm bed after a long, hard journey
- Your partner's hand cupped in your own
- Bright graffiti on cracked tunnel walls
- The chains falling loose to the stone floor
- A glint of silver beneath a century of tarnish
- A long rain after a blistering wildfire
- Just one more step, and then another
- A single candle flame joining the stars against the night
- A loved ones voice calling your name after hours lost in an unfamiliar place
- A hand taking yours, just when you'd given up on reaching out
- Smiling, *laughing* again, when you thought you'd forgotten how
- Knowing, despite everything, that humans are inherently good

It's not simply blind optimism, or naivety. It's *choice*. It's taking the human race by the hand and saying, "I will love you, because I am you". It's facing a world dripping with cynicism and fashionable hopelessness and saying, "no, I will not give in". It's putting kindness out into the world, knowing you might not get it back, knowing you may be scorned for it, knowing it might not change anything, but with a certainty that kindness is what the world needs the most.

It is choosing hope" [6]

Hopepunk is choosing hope in a world where they want us to have none. It's choosing humanity when they want us to forget we are human. It's choosing community when they would

benefit of us staying individuals. It's choosing action and hope when they want us struck down and paralyzed.

Alexandra Rowland emphasizes to not forget the second part of the word: Punk. In another interview with Kayti Burt for Den of Geek she says:

"it's important to remember that punk is the operative half of the word - punk in the sense of anti-authoritarianism and punching back against oppression." and "The instinct is to make it only about softness and kindness, because those are what we're most hungry for. We all want to be treated gently. But sometimes the kindest thing you can do for someone is to stand up to a bully on their behalf, and that takes guts and rage." [7]

KEEP IT PUNK



WHAT IS HOPEPUNK TO ME?

That spark that is both love and spite that keeps me going. It's seeing the good in humanity, while also acknowledging the harm. It's refusing to lay down and die, refusing to accept the status quo, refusing to believe that this is it.

It's believing in a better world. In kindness. In the inherent sense of community in humanity. It's believing in the power of stories.

It's seeing kindness and hope as an act of Sacred Rebellion. And spreading that kindness and hope is a Vow that I have taken.

It's taken the anger I have against corporations, injustice, bigotry, capitalism, oppression, and letting it fuel the fire within me in a constructive way. It's working to dismantle systems that are oppressive to work towards a more inclusive world. It's pruning the garden of dead weight so new things can grow.

Late stage capitalism wants us all to be docile, to work, not to *live*. So I will shout my small joys from the rooftops. I will create for the sake of creating. I

will practice radical acceptance so that I stand strong above the masses of ads that wants me to hate myself. I will choose to see the good so that I can believe change is possible.

Hopepunk a fire that says "Rage. Rage against those who deserve it. Stand up for those who do not and show them a better world is possible."

hope

poem

*"Hope is a weapon,
Hope is a skill,
Hope is a plant you can care for or kill.
Hope is a discipline,
something you choose,
Hard to stop looking for,
easy to lose.*

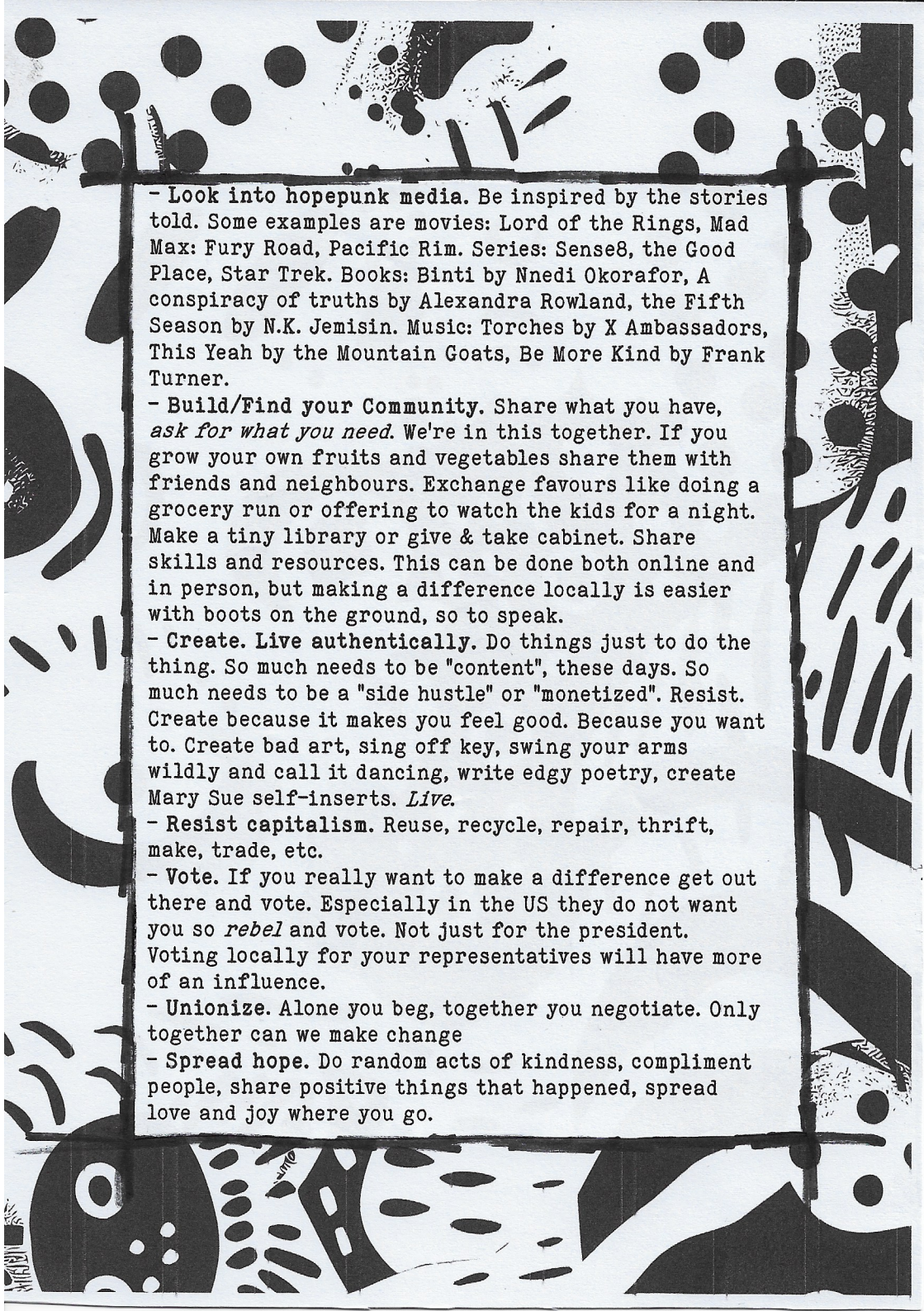
*Hope isn't something to have or to take,
If you can't find it, it's something you make.
Make it from willpower, make it from spite,
Learn how to weaponize love in a fight.
Hope is a shield, and a thing to defend,
End in itself, and a means to an end."*

by Tumblr [8]



How to practice Hopepunk

- Find joy in the small things. The flowers growing through concrete, the way the sunlight hits the grass. There is beauty and joy in the small things, but it takes a bit of training to find them. Mindfulness or a gratitude journal (or even a Tumblr sideblog) helps with this training. Hope can be learned, I promise.
- Be a pebble. [8] Imagine a tall glass that is half-full with water. Imagine you are a crow. You try to drink the water but you can't reach, the glass is too deep. So you take a pebble and throw it in. The water level rises slightly. Other crows come in with pebbles, and with each pebble the water level rises until finally you all can drink from the glass. There is a lot of focus nowadays in activism circles to be aware of every horrible thing that is going on in the world and to work on each and every one of them. The tough reality is: we can't. We're only human and right now we are all very prone to burn-out. We can't bring change if we are burnt out or have compassion fatigue. So be a pebble. Stay small, perhaps even stay local. If everyone focuses on one thing and focuses their efforts and energy there, we will make it. We'll make the water rise so everyone can drink. Be a pebble.
- Stop doom scrolling. It's ineffective and only serves to make us feel more hopeless and demoralized.
- Be responsible for your own internet experience. This is related to doom scrolling. Unfollow people who make you feel hopeless and like the fight is useless. Block trolls and don't engage them. Find people who make you feel inspired, invigorated, hopeful. Blacklist tags, block, delete.



- Look into hopepunk media. Be inspired by the stories told. Some examples are movies: Lord of the Rings, Mad Max: Fury Road, Pacific Rim. Series: Sense8, the Good Place, Star Trek. Books: Binti by Nnedi Okorafor, A conspiracy of truths by Alexandra Rowland, the Fifth Season by N.K. Jemisin. Music: Torches by X Ambassadors, This Yeah by the Mountain Goats, Be More Kind by Frank Turner.

- Build/Find your Community. Share what you have, *ask for what you need*. We're in this together. If you grow your own fruits and vegetables share them with friends and neighbours. Exchange favours like doing a grocery run or offering to watch the kids for a night. Make a tiny library or give & take cabinet. Share skills and resources. This can be done both online and in person, but making a difference locally is easier with boots on the ground, so to speak.

- Create. Live authentically. Do things just to do the thing. So much needs to be "content", these days. So much needs to be a "side hustle" or "monetized". Resist. Create because it makes you feel good. Because you want to. Create bad art, sing off key, swing your arms wildly and call it dancing, write edgy poetry, create Mary Sue self-inserts. *Live*.

- Resist capitalism. Reuse, recycle, repair, thrift, make, trade, etc.

- Vote. If you really want to make a difference get out there and vote. Especially in the US they do not want you so *rebel* and vote. Not just for the president. Voting locally for your representatives will have more of an influence.

- Unionize. Alone you beg, together you negotiate. Only together can we make change

- Spread hope. Do random acts of kindness, compliment people, share positive things that happened, spread love and joy where you go.

SOME FAVOURITE HOPE, PINK,
AND HOPEPINK SONGS

HANXX - TRUST YOUR RAGE

YWS GWINEDD - SEBONA FI

X AMBASSADORS - TORCHES

DROPKICK MURPHYS - WHO STANDS WITH US?

DROPKICK MURPHYS - WORKER SONG

VICTORY BOYD - WHO I AM

HALESTORM - HERE'S TO US

HALESTORM - I AM THE FIRE

HALESTORM - BLACK VULTURES

PATER MOESKROEN - DANSEN

LEWIS CAPALDI - SURVIVE

DOUVE BOB - THIS WORLD IS OUR HOME

MICHAEL FRANTI - THE WORLD IS SO FUCKED UP
(BUT I AMN'T EVER GIVING UP ON IT)

ANDRA DAY - RISE UP



☆

YOU MUSTN'T
LET THE
DYSTOPIAN
NIGHTMARE
BULLSHIT
DIM YOUR
FUCKING SPARKLE

Further reading:

Alexandra Rowland's Hopepunk Manifesto

<https://festive.ninja/one-atom-of-justice-one-molecule-of-mercy-and-the-empire-of-unsheathed-knives-alexandra-rowland/>

What is Hopepunk by Vox.com

<https://www.vox.com/2018/12/27/18137571/what-is-hopepunk-noblebright-grimdark>

Hopepunk-Humanity blog on Tumblr <https://hopepunk-humanity.tumblr.com/>

Hopepunk: A Genre, Philosophy and Movement by Lexi Drumonde (Video) <https://youtu.be/L2zJ1SVia1Y>

Intro to Hopepunk by Morgan Hazelwood (Video) <https://youtu.be/djNm95msS9I>

Sources:

[1] The Two Towers movie, based on the LOTR by J.R.R. Tolkien

[2] <https://ariaste.tumblr.com/post/163500138919/ariaste-the-opposite-of-grimdark-is-hopepunk>

[3] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grimdark>

[4] <https://www.denofgeek.com/culture/are-you-afraid-of-the-darkness-a-hopepunk-explainer/>

[5] <https://ariaste.tumblr.com/post/163500138919/ariaste-the-opposite-of-grimdark-is-hopepunk>

[6]

<https://www.tumblr.com/hopepunk-humanity/631827116923797504/what-is-hopepunk>

[7] <https://www.denofgeek.com/culture/a-hopepunk-guide-interview-with-alexandra-rowland/>

[8]

<https://www.tumblr.com/wonderwyrms/723946755520102400/hope-is-a-skill-hope-is-a-weapon-you-are-trained>



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