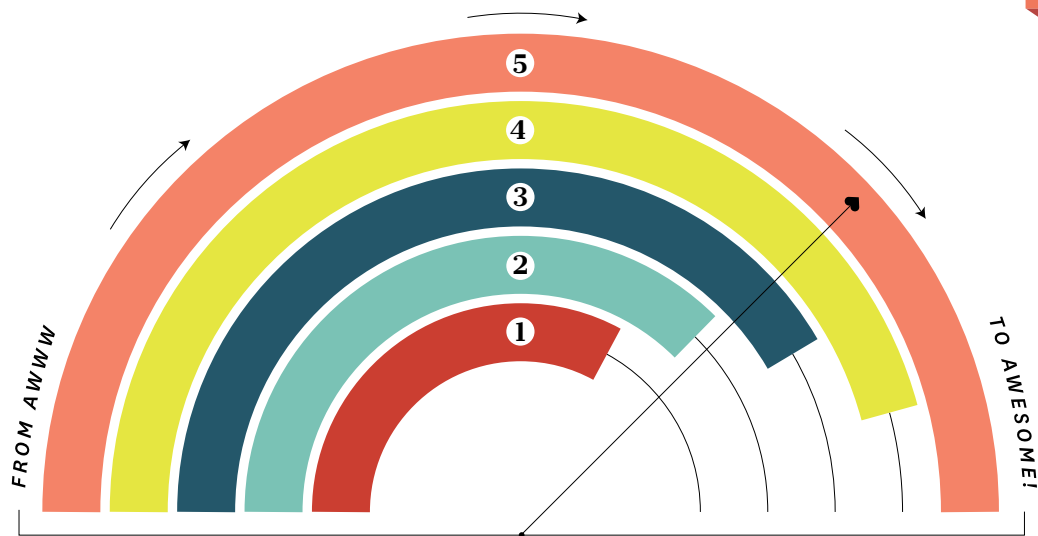


The Gratitude Meter

Five things we can't stop smiling about this month.



WORDS I LIVE BY



Jill Soloway

The creator of *Transparent*, which returns for its second season on December 4, on storytelling and turning 50.

AT THE DENTIST, NITROUS IS MY BEST FRIEND.

Whether it's a root canal or a standard cleaning, I always ask for laughing gas. I wear cozy clothes, kick off my shoes, and listen to my "dentist" playlist, which includes some Bob Dylan and Van Morrison. It's better than a spa.

WE'RE MORE THAN "GOOD GIRLS" AND "BAD GIRLS."

Women are always divided into categories: wife versus mistress, angel versus whore, Betty versus Veronica. But men created these tropes. I think it's time for women to start writing their own stories.

TRANS STORIES HAVE BEEN AROUND FOREVER.

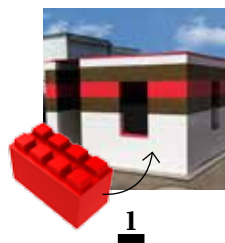
Our next season has some scenes set in Berlin in the early 1930s, where there was a lot of celebration about different identities. I was surprised to discover that the moment we're in right now with gay marriage and trans visibility isn't new. We've been here before!

KEEPING A FRIEND'S SECRET FROM A SPOUSE IS NEVER A GOOD IDEA.

If you share a secret with someone and ask them to keep it from their partner, you're asking them to drive a wedge into their marriage. I haven't always abided by this rule, and it's gotten me into trouble.

FIFTY IS JUST THE START.

Five years ago, I couldn't have imagined that I'd have a trans parent and so much clarity about my life. Instead of heading downhill, I feel like I'm just now reaching a pinnacle. —As told to Z.D.



1

BRICK HOUSE

Leave your hammer behind. EverBlock Systems is a clever company that produces larger-than-life plastic blocks (available in three sizes and 14 colors) resembling Legos that easily click into place to construct quirky coffee tables, couches, room dividers, even bar carts—and potentially turn every room into a playroom. (everblock systems.com)



2

HO, HO, HUH?

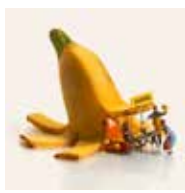
Enjoy curious wish lists with *Dear Santa*, a charming and sometimes hilarious collection of real letters to Saint Nick written by children around the world between 1870 and 1920. The notes ask for candy, kittens, nuts, picture books, rubber balls, milk wagons, a French harp, a game of parlor croquet, a billy goat, and, from one modest tyke, the whole earth.



3

AND THE ENVELOPE, PLEASE

Up your postal prowess with LetterBox, a new subscription service from Sky of Blue Cards. Each box comes with five stamped cards and related items—pens, decorative tape—that will speak to any snail mail savant. Sign up for a full year and receive a wood-block stamp customized with your name and address. (skyofblue cards.com)



4

IT'S A SMALL WORLD

For four years, Tatsuya Tanaka has posted a daily photo from his project Miniature Calendar, in which he uses ordinary objects and his collection of diorama dolls to create magically tiny scenes of everyday life. Visit miniature-calendar.com to see rock-climbers scaling sprinkled doughnuts and banana sellers (above) working under the shade of peels.



5

WOOLLY MAMMOTH

Chris, a rescued Merino sheep, recently received a desperately needed haircut. Authorities believe he'd been wandering the wilds of Australia for at least five years before a hiker spotted him, and just in time: Chris's hooves were damaged from all the extra bulk. Shearing left him nearly 90 pounds lighter—and a lot happier. —ZOE DONALDSON

BRICK HOUSE: COURTESY OF EVERBLOCK SYSTEMS, LLC. HO, HO, HUH?: CHRONICLE BOOKS. LETTERBOX: COURTESY OF COMPANY. MINIATURE CALENDAR: COURTESY OF TATSUYA TANAKA. WOOLLY MAMMOTH: RSPCA/ACT VIA AP. SOLOWAY: MAARTEN DE BOER/CONTOUR BY GETTY IMAGES.