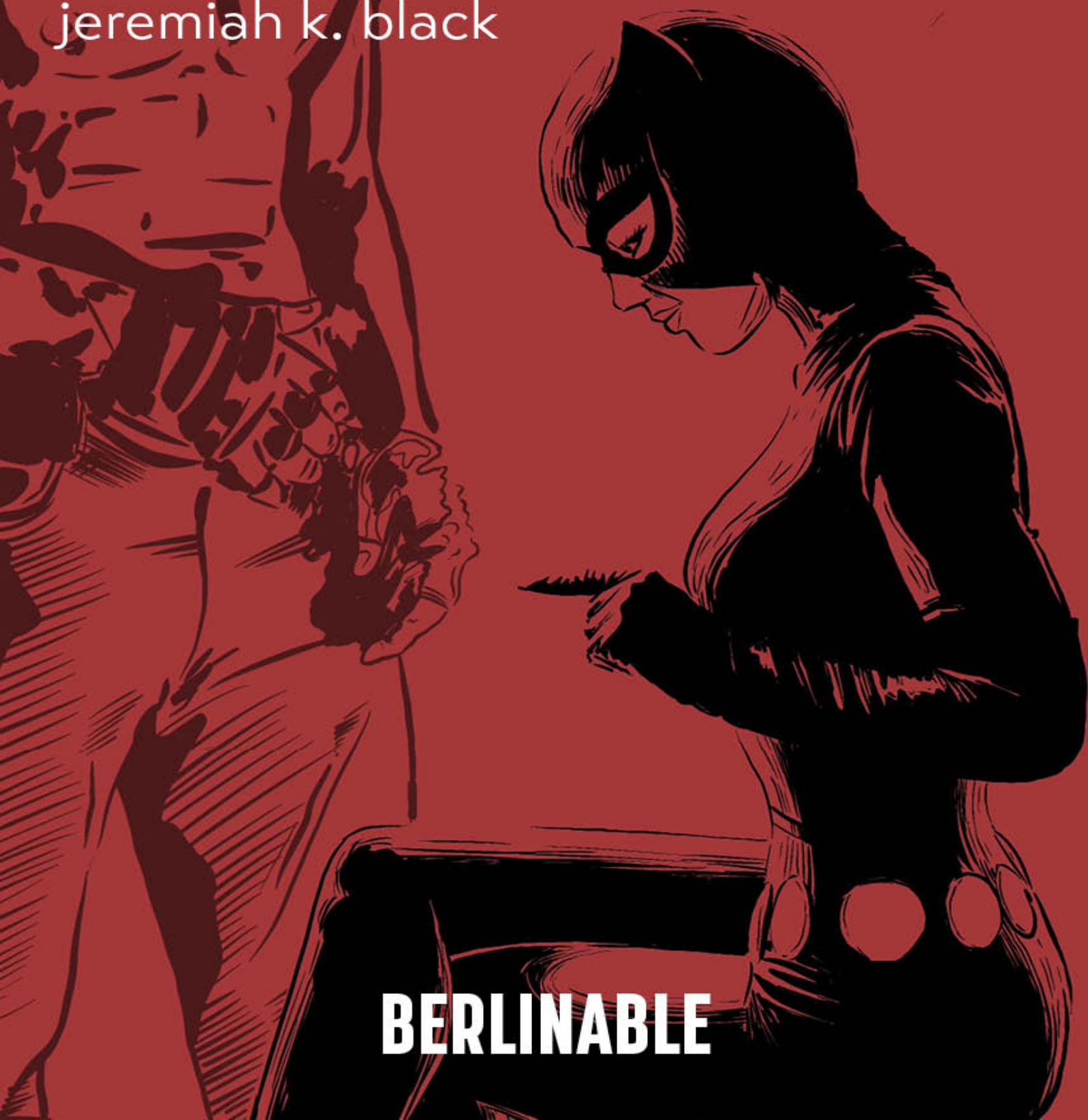


artcover jeremiah k. black

# OUT OF COSTUME

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**BERLINABLE**

BOOKS OF FREEDOM

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Jeremiah K. Black

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Berlinable invites you to leave all your fears behind and dive into a world where sex is a tool for self-empowerment.

Our mission is to change the world - one soul at a time.

When people accept their own sexuality, they build a more tolerant society.

Words to inspire, to encourage, to transform.

Open your mind and free your deepest desires.

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Lulu was a witch. The look complete with a long black dress, black boots, her hair loose. She had spent an hour in the bathroom gluing on eyelashes and painting her eyelids black. Following her sister, Emmie was a witch too. Always a half-step behind, her outfit was already tangled, creased, bent. Emmie couldn't keep things pristine for very long.

Jake followed his daughters out the door and through the neighborhood, watching the sisters' bright orange plastic jack-o-lanterns bounce and fill up with 'Fun-Sized' candy bars, licorice, gummies, and all kinds of brightly colored sugary treats. Jake had dressed as Frankenstein's Monster. Thick heeled workboots, ripped jeans, a skin tight green cable-knit sweater, gelled black hair, a fake scar crossing his forehead, and two bolts that he had made out of papier-mâché. In his get-up he towered over every parent on the street.

The sun just about to set, the temperature hovered around 40F. Chilly.

They walked north down 58th street, along all the 1920s brick two story homes with the big lawns, leaded windows, and neatly trimmed shrubs. The kind of homes where university professors live. All decorated to the nines: little white shining skull lights strung up on the porches, fake foam gravestones with cheesy sayings propped up in the lawn, silhouettes of ghosts in all the windows, black cats, cauldrons. But this neighborhood went even further. They roped off the streets, closed to traffic, and went a little Halloween crazy... each consecutive year topping the previous.

Creepy, yet funny music blared from huge speakers audible for 10 blocks in every direction. A car was parked off-kilter up next to a tree like it had hopped the curb and crashed in a mess by the plastic skeleton behind the wheel. Chalk art riddled the sidewalks. An inflatable haunted bounce house had been plopped in the middle of the street, and every house looked like it was in the running for *The Gaudiest Halloween Decoration Award*.

He checked his phone. Nothing. Where the hell was Christine? Jake thought as Lulu and Emmie ran up another sidewalk, their hair bouncing behind them. She was supposed to have met them there for the exchange, but she was already 15 minutes late.