



GAYHIVE

MAGAZINE

May
Issue
2026



MODERN FAMILY BUILDING & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

gayhivemagazine.ca



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**“Be Bold, Be
uniuqe, Be You”**

Pg 4




GAY HIVE

— MAGAZINE —

**Welcome
To Gay
Hive
Magazine**

**— a space made to
share real stories,
support the community,
and shine a light on
every form of queer
expression.**



**Gay Hive Magazine: Here for a lifetime!
A space dedicated to sharing real
stories, supporting the community, and
illuminating every form of queer
expression.**



MODERN FAMILY BUILDING & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

MAY ISSUE
2026





Be Bold, Be unique, Be
You

Pg 6



Building a Modern Family

Written by: Stalin Fernandez Gil,
Just another lonely guy in this
world

As a gay person, I've always believed that family is something we build.

For many of us, it has never been limited to blood or traditional structures. We grow up learning that family can be chosen as friends who become siblings, mentors who become guides, communities that hold us when the world doesn't.

But building that kind of family takes

effort.

And lately, I've been thinking about how hard it can be to even start.

I'm single, and sometimes I wonder how people manage to build something lasting in a world where connection often feels temporary. Most of our interactions begin on apps now. We match, we exchange a few messages, maybe we meet once and then it fades.

It's not that people don't want connection. It's that many of us seem unsure how to invest in it.



BUILDING A

Continued

Modern Family

Building a family whether it's with a partner, friends, or a chosen community requires something deeper than chemistry or convenience. It requires consistency. It requires showing up for people again and again.

And that's not always easy when everyone seems to be moving so quickly.

Sometimes I worry that I'm still at the starting line while others have already built their homes, their partnerships, their lives together. But I also remind myself that queer families have never followed a single timeline.

We've always had to create our own paths.

Maybe building a modern family doesn't begin with having everything figured out. Maybe it starts with something simpler: finding people who are willing to stay, to grow, and to build something meaningful together.

I'm still looking for that.

And maybe that search is part of building the family I hope to have one day.

Maybe building a family doesn't start with finding the right people, maybe it starts with refusing to give up on the idea that real connection is still possible.



Building a family, especially a chosen one, is not about finding perfect people. It's about finding people who are willing to keep showing up.

And in a world where connections can be temporary and attention easily scattered, that kind of presence might be the most radical foundation a family can have.

In the end, we're all just trying to build a life where someone stays.

Written by Stalin Fernandez Gil Just another lonely guy in this world



About the author

Michael is a straight male originally from Cincinnati, Ohio now residing in Bethlehem, PA.

As a father of three, he has experienced the ups and downs of parenting.

Michael hosts the Othering

Podcast with his wife, Dory. The podcast aims to advocate for the marginalized focusing on the

LGBTQ+ and disabled communities. We provide a platform for our guests to share their stories and

to speak up. In this political climate, it is more important than ever to have community and to show

the humanity in all of us. The podcast launched in May of 2025 and is aired on 3 internet radio

stations, including a South Africa station. It is also available on all major podcast platforms like

Spotify, Apple Music, and IHeart.



YOUR CHILD DID NOT ASK TO BE HERE,

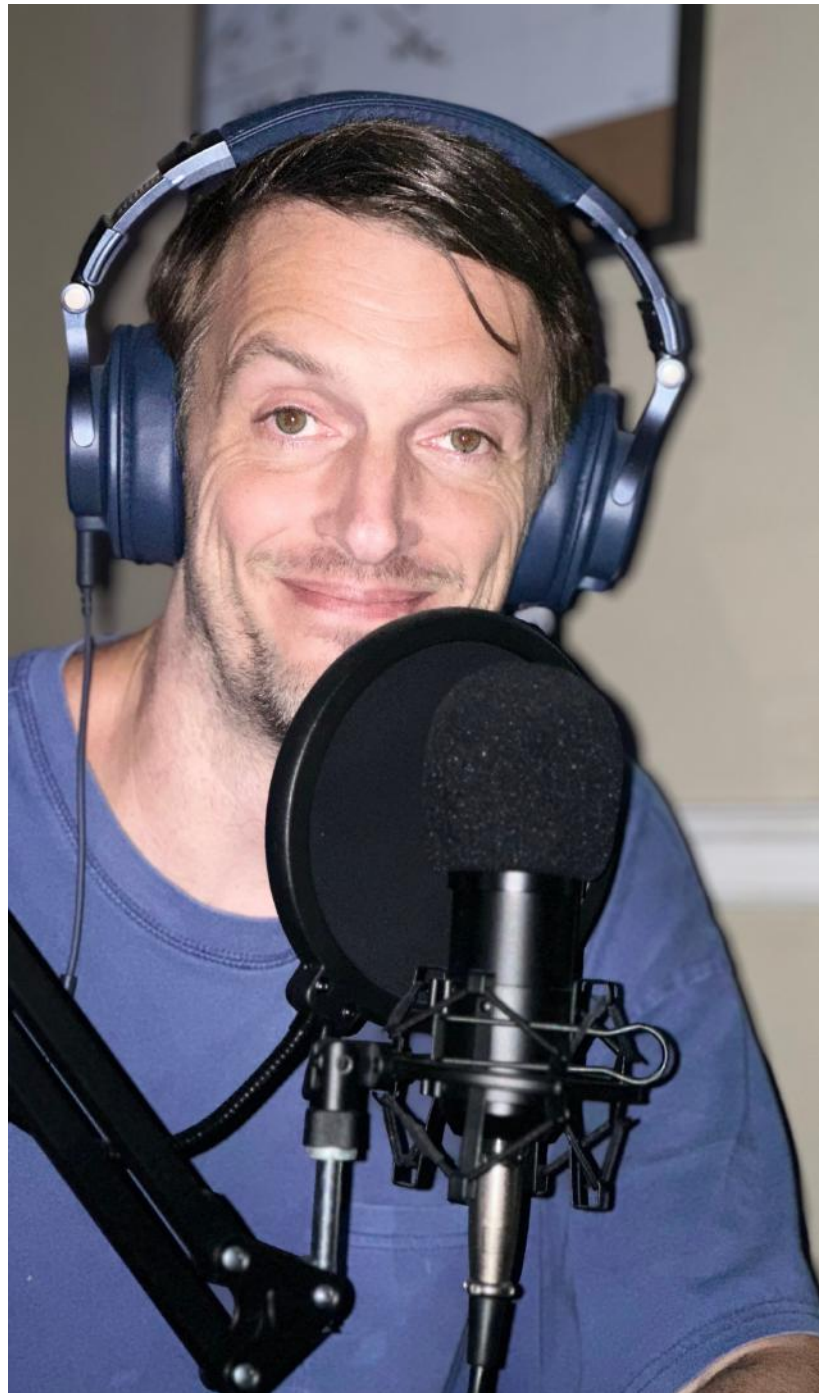
You Asked For Them

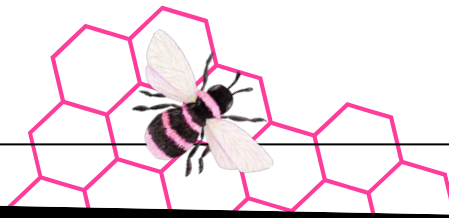
By Michael Morris | The Othering Podcast

Having a child is a choice that you, as a grown adult (hopefully), should make because you want another tiny human of your creation. Because you know that no matter what, that small human being will be the most beautiful creation on Earth – to the day it dies. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. That child will be your most cherished creation and the one and only unconditionally loved creature in your life.

I remember when we had a child. They were the most beautiful creation we had ever seen. They laughed, played, screamed, and cried just like every other child. They were perfect to us – a mix of each of our perfect and imperfect traits. As every parent should feel, they were perfect and always would be no matter what.

I am a straight male married to a mixed-race, bi female who discovered their bisexuality very late in life. I went to an all-boys high school where being called “gay” was an insult; where being hit on by the “gay boy” was the most embarrassing thing that could happen to you. Touching another boy in any way that wasn’t fighting or by accident was gay. In the 90s, this was, unfortunately, the norm. So, when my child came out as gay and confused, it was a hard pill to swallow.





YOUR CHILD DID NOT ASK TO BE HERE

You Asked For Them

Continued

By Michael Morris | The Othering Podcast

My unconditional love never changed for them. They would always be welcomed home. They always had our safety and protection, but we both knew they did not have the protection outside of home. Today's world is a scary place for a person in such a marginalized community, but being in multiple – not white, not straight – makes things very difficult for them and very scary for us.

As her father, I struggled coming to terms with everything – understanding everything. I loved them all the same, of course, but this was unfamiliar territory for me. Gay was “bad” when I was growing up. As they began to understand their sexuality, they came out as non-binary, trans – two words unheard of in the 90s. Admittedly, I did not process things well. When they asked to change their name, I sternly said, “Not until you’re 18!” When they requested the pronouns they/them, I struggled to remember and reverted to the incorrect ones. I was not the support they needed. I am guilty of that. But I was always there to protect them from others and always provided the roof over their head, food, safety, and, most importantly, love.

My reason for saying this is that having a child is up to you, the parents. The child did not ask for it. If you do not wish to have an LGBTIA+ child, or disabled child then do not continue down the path to parenthood. It is not meant for you if you cannot love the child for who they are regardless of their sexual preference or their imperfections. Your responsibility as a parent is to raise the child into a kind, successful adult. It is not to tell that child how to be or what to love.





THE BIG QUEER WEDDING

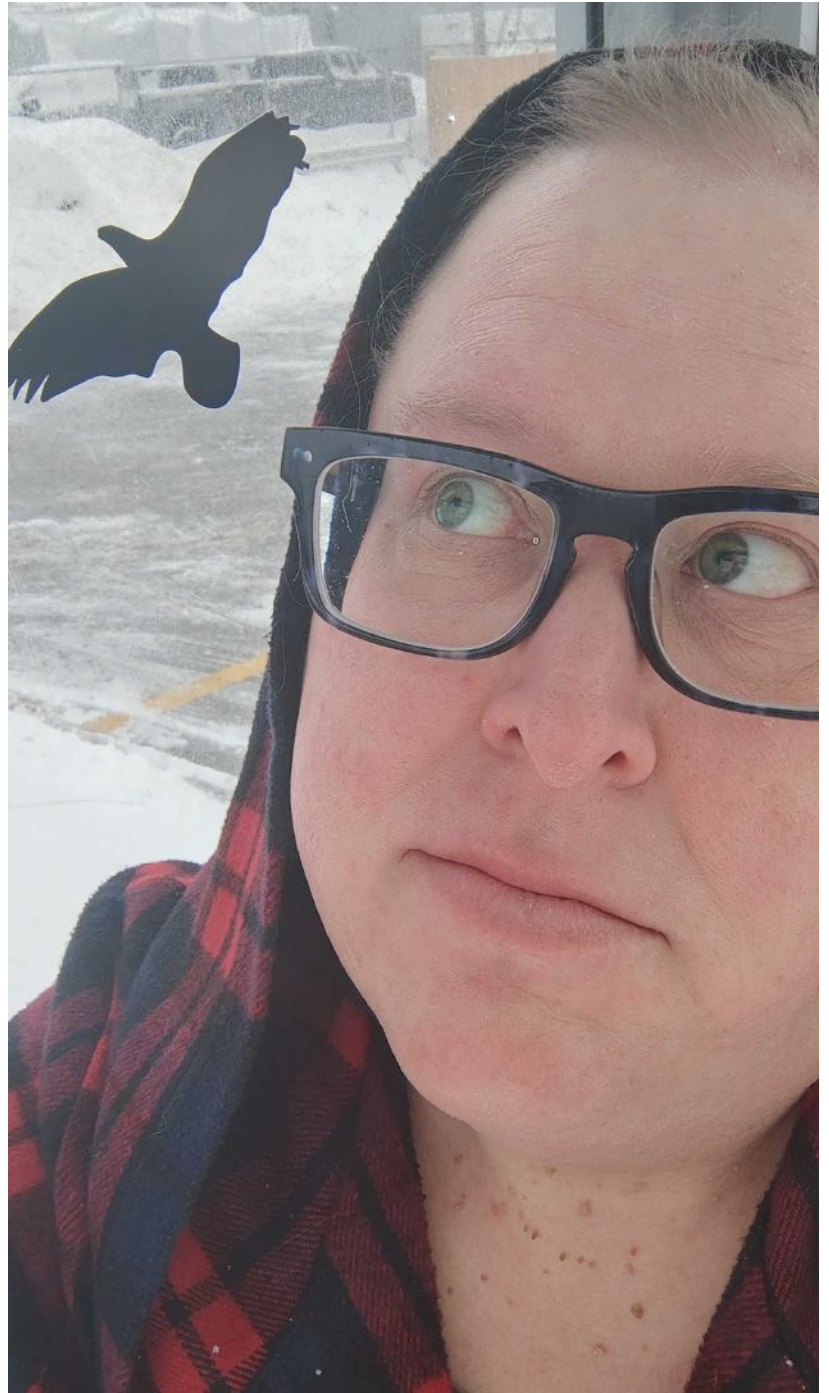
Show – Live on the Scene

By Izzy Tansley

When I first snagged the assignment to go cover The Big Queer Wedding Show on April 26th, I thought it would be a cute little day with niche vendors I could meet and chit chat with. And it was that, but it was also a hell of a lot more.

If you've read my other articles, you know what I'm trying to do here: I'm redoing things that happened in my past, specifically pre-transition. Getting to go out and work as a reporter, on location covering an event, is something I got to rewrite from a time when I was just out of high school.

Around the year 2000 (cue the oohs and aahs) I went to Durham College for Photojournalism. I dropped out because I was insanely depressed and having a really bad time. Anyway, my reminiscing isn't important here. Writing for Gay Hive gives me some incredible opportunities and this was the first of many.





THE BIG QUEER WEDDING

Show – Live on the Scene

By Izzy Tansley

Continued

With that pre-ambles out of the way (and likely an article for another time), I am reminded of a saying we have in my house. It is something recent and absurdly wonderful that Sam Reich said on Game Changer:

*"The only way to learn is by playing,
the only way to win is by learning,
and the only way to begin is by beginning."*

It's a piece of absurdity in my life that has helped form the core of who I now am. I'm no longer waiting for people to tell me when I can start, well, anything. So, when the alarm went off at 5:30, I was ready to go.

So off I went. With my borrowed camera, a couple of croissants, and no actual clue what I was doing. You know, like a grown ass woman. I did allow myself one thing to fall back on if I felt uncomfortable. My cookies. I have a home bakery and tiny bags to package individual cookies, and in the grand tradition of Hot Ones or Last Meals, I'm giving people cookies.

Cookies for the folks I'm about to interview and watch through a camera lens. That, two years ago, would have been a truly absurd statement to make about my life but here we fucking are.

The first leg of my journey was spent in an uber I couldn't afford with a man who seemed to think you got a higher score but cutting off every other car on the road. The personal vendetta this man had for traffic was... I'm going to say intense. The man himself was exceedingly polite though, so I didn't say anything directly.

With that phase out of the way, I got to my friend's house. Dumping myself and my bags out of the car was a relief but I felt it was a bit rude to kiss the ground. I didn't, of course, but the drama queen in me wanted to do it. And then I wanted to lock eyes with the man so he would go the rest of his day knowing what he did.

The next leg was my friend's house long enough for her to get ready for dance class and bundle us into the car. We spent the



THE BIG QUEER WEDDING

Show – Live on the Scene

By Izzy Tansley

Continued

next hour of traffic talking basically non-stop about a hundred different things. I pumped her up to crush her routines; she pumped me up to get out there and get the story.

We talked about choreography, something I know zero about, but I can picture things and I can use my words. I choose to believe I helped and I'm certain she is polite enough to never say otherwise.

After the car ride, it was navigating the TTC. Both over and under the streets of Toronto, just me and the occasionally empty liminal spaces beneath the concrete. I survived the rattling train ride to Queen's Park station and hopped up onto the street and made my way toward McCaul Street and the pinkly painted Two of Hearts Chapel.

Turning the corner to see the chapel is a moment I'm going to cherish. I stopped in my tracks, camera in hand, and just took it in. Surrounded by the typically drab buildings, the chapel itself is a vibrant pink. A genuine spot of joy amongst the cityscape around it. If I was a halfway decent photographer, I'd have remembered to get a picture from that spot.

Even the laneway beside the joyously bright building felt somehow more alive than the surrounding streets. The concrete itself had a sort of, I don't even know, a hum? I'm not sure if people who live in Toronto notice it anymore, but I noticed that hum had changed as I turned that corner. I guess I have to say it felt gayer? I'm giggling as I write that because, I mean, yeah. It genuinely did feel a little more gay.

As I walked up, everything was already in full swing. I was an hour or so into the morning show, so I missed that quiet buildup that happens before an event. It's hard to describe those pre-event moments; it is a mixture of anxiety and anticipation coupled with a sense of possibility. I'd be willing to bet it felt a little manic.

Regardless, the vibe was immediately immaculate. Christella saw me off to the side of the building and immediately waved me inside. Hugs and introductions followed, along with an invitation to a table loaded with bagels, donuts, water, and coffee. It took me less than a minute to pass out my first cookie and even less time for me to start asking questions.



THE BIG QUEER WEDDING

Show – Live on the Scene

By Izzy Tansley

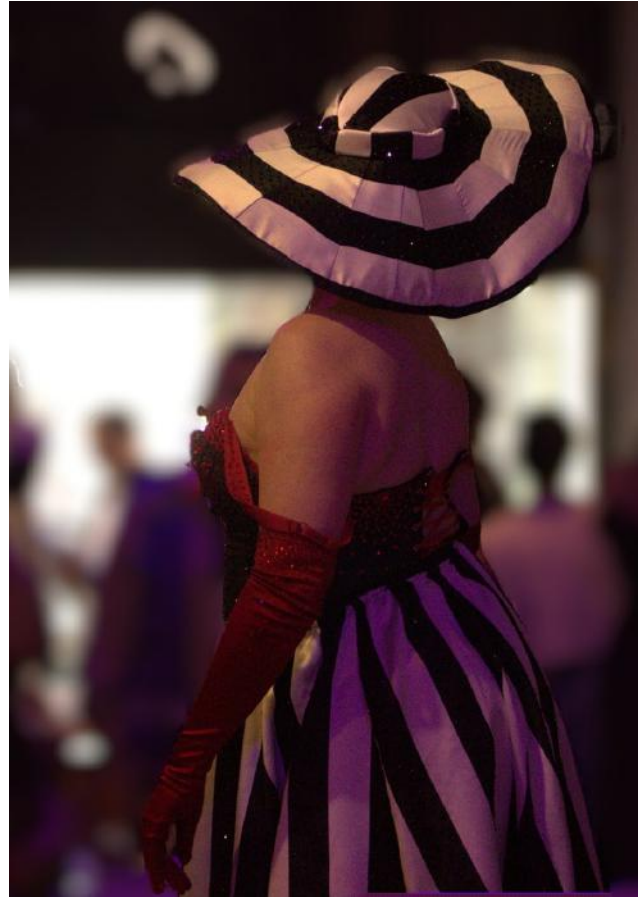
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That was how it began; softball questions about the logistics of the event and confirmation that I was to come and go from the green room as I saw fit. From that point I began meeting people and letting them take me along on whatever conversation they wanted to have. I wasn't truly there to talk about me in any way, but I did that too.

See, reporters are supposed to maintain an emotional distance from their subjects. Working distance, to borrow a photography term. It helps define the subject matter and makes it clearer for the audience.

Honestly? I didn't do very well at maintaining that distance. Not mad about it, nor am I feeling like I did anything wrong. I just have no idea how you enter a situation like that and not get swept up.

I had conversations with a true queen of burlesque, transatlantic tomfoolery and all, about all things stage. Knox Harter was a loud and proud part of my day and I'm still laughing at some of the things she said, dear lord she must think I'm some little baby queer. And I guess in some ways I am, so that's fine.



But behind the glitz and glam of burlesque was a mind that knows her business. Sex may sell, but how and where do you sell it? What's the market rate for a sly wink and a skirt twirled just so? Talent and class will only take you so far, you simply must know the business itself. Knox is someone I hope to hang out with in the future, I wanna see what she does. I bet it's fascinating.



THE BIG QUEER WEDDING

Show – Live on the Scene

By Izzy Tansley

Continued

I talked next with a group of vendors about neurodivergence and being queer and the tremendous overlap found in both of those communities. The consensus we arrived at was that us queer folk tend to go through the introspection needed to identify both who we are and what hurdles we face.



This is both a big part of our struggle in queer communities and the source of our immeasurable strength. The picture here was taken around noon in a moment where I again forgot to white balance my damn camera. But Dani, the rightmost human, was looking up something about our conversation. Lia, the leftmost human, was being supportive and helpful, obviously.

Being able to name those moments of divergence is a privilege some of us don't yet have or even know exists. And being queer itself, more than one person that day agreed, is its own form of divergence. Cultural in the most direct sense, but only culturally divergent because of the society we exist in right now. The Big Queer Wedding Show specifically was built on that exact mindset.

Christella and Christen, the hearts and minds behind Lavender Menace Photography, wanted the event to reflect that divergence from the wider culture. Specifically in the wedding industry itself. It's very easy to find portfolios online of pictures and memories from straight weddings. And cis-gendered couples are to whom most of the wedding industry caters.

Well, us in the community get married too and most of us have a story or two about a moment of discrimination. Sometimes direct, other times just a hand wave and a



THE BIG QUEER WEDDING

Show – Live on the Scene

By Izzy Tansley

Continued

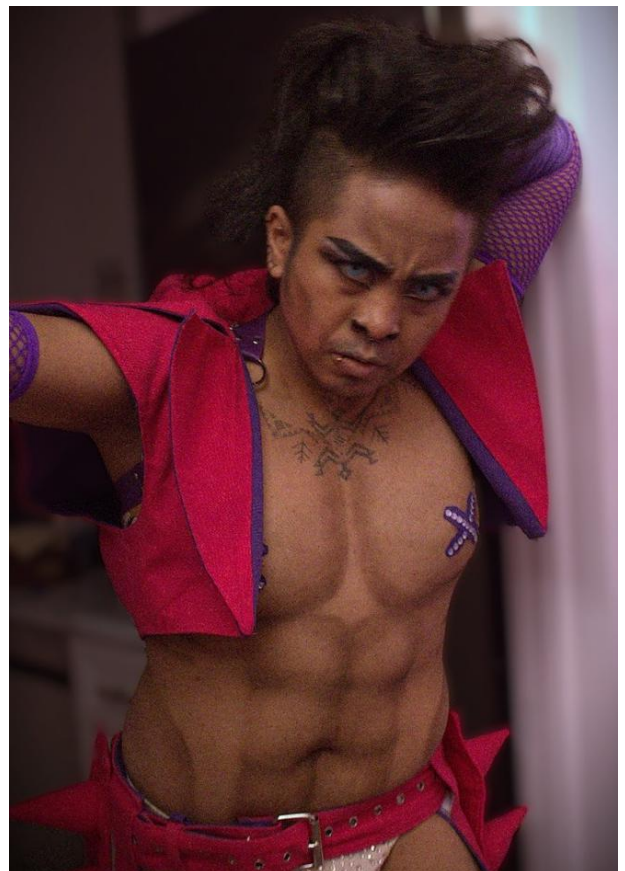
dismissal, but nonetheless disrespect shown because of who we are and who we love. Kind of asshole behavior in all honesty. And these moments happen quite often when queer folks are planning their weddings.

A cancelled DJ or a baker who included only one bride figure for the cake. Officiants unwilling to change pronouns or even show up. There are a shocking number of stories out there about things like this. I heard some of them from a few guests as well.

This was precisely why Lavender Menace, along with dozens of Queer-owned vendors and the Two of Hearts Chapel, came together to put on a wedding show specifically for queer couples. There were performances from some talented stage acts that I'm going to be entirely honest, warranted a higher ticket price.

Trash Panda Brass, played a rendition of Pink Pony Club that had everyone in the chapel smiling, clapping, and singing along. The queer joy in that room was palpable. Knox Harter, who I mentioned earlier, gave us a twirl and a wink and left us all wanting more.

A personal highlight for me with my little camera lens was the picture here of Kreme Inakuchi. Probably the single most anime picture I've taken in my life. For the record, I asked for Book Tok. I think this qualifies as nailing it.



Drag performers are always fun for me now. Drag queens in the past before I came out were a bit of a struggle for me, we can get into that another time. But drag kings have an undeniable swagger



THE BIG QUEER WEDDING

Show – Live on the Scene

By Izzy Tansley

Continued

that I just love. And this human here is just straight out of a comic book. Love this so much.

Now I would love to go through every vendor and queer person I met, but there were so many. Florists, clothing designers, corsetry artists, and caterers. There was a baker with cake samples that put my baking to shame. Not that the bar for that is very high, I'm small time at best. Lez Eats is a food truck and caterer that made some truly delicious beef and chicken for samples.

Behind the scenes as I've been writing this, I am doing all my homework and getting permissions granted. But I am also thinking very deeply about what I go out to write about. And I am hatching some plans. Future articles may reveal what those plans are.

This brought us to the midpoint of the day. An hour or so where the vendors all seemed to scatter to the local lunch spots. The performers gathered in the green room to stuff calories inside themselves to fuel up for the next show. There was already a sense of success at this point. Everyone had settled into a routine and were checking the lists of what they needed to get done.

Hannah, the owner, operator, and dreamer behind the Two of Hearts Chapel is a bright spot in the heart of the city. A personality that matches the bright pink exterior of the chapel and a human with a light in their eyes that can chase shadows away with a glance. The funny part? I'm not entirely sure she knows any of that. Which, frankly, makes it even more special.



I had quite the time talking with Hannah, the details of which aren't all for this article. In fact, some of those discussions are not for any of you at all. But it was entertaining and wonderful to meet someone who simply is who they are. The vibes that come from Hannah are the same vibes I felt turning that corner in the morning when I arrived. Two of Hearts Chapel is an unapologetic reflection of Hannah herself.



THE BIG QUEER WEDDING

Show – Live on the Scene

By Izzy Tansley **Continued**

This is a person that I really would love to have more time with to poke at what goes on in that brain. To have, in this social climate, the brass fucking balls to paint your business bright fuck pink and throw your doors open widely, announcing that queer culture and life is right here: in this space, in this time, we are here and we aren't going anywhere.

I tend to read meaning into things that may not have been intended, but the Big Queer Wedding Show was something we as a community needed. We needed it, even if the people I met on that last Sunday in April didn't know or think what they were doing was particularly life changing. But I saw the faces on the attendees, the joy. The unfiltered queer joy at the thought of being able to have their big day in exactly the way they've always wanted to.

Which brings me full circle back to myself. As the representative on the scene for all of you Dear Readers out there, I cannot begin to tell you the difference it made for me. My trip home was way more emotional than I thought possible. And I feel tremendously vulnerable writing this at the end here, but I feel its valid. Whether the people I met will

cross paths with me in the future or not, there was one sentence said to me that stuck with me.

I'm not remembering it word for word now, I wish I could, but the sentiment was this: if I continue to simply be the me I was that day, the honest and heartfelt human that I have become, then there's not really any way for me to fail at what I'm trying to do. Be exactly who you are. Who you are is valid and genuine.

The person who said that probably knows who they are. I'm willing to be they are a master of their own words in ways a lot of folks wouldn't notice. But it was one of the things said to me there in that green room that mattered most and cemented why I felt so full of life and energy while I was there.

This was what joy felt like. This was what dropping your mask and allowing yourself to be who you are felt like. For a clocky trans woman like me, I'm always a little stressed out wherever I go, we don't have to unpack why, I'm sure most folks get it.



THE BIG QUEER WEDDING

Show – Live on the Scene Continued

By Izzy Tansley

And maybe I'm just late to the party in another way, but most queer folk get to microdose that level of queer joy. With friends going to Pride every June. At queer spaces across the city. They get to feel little moments of that joy over time; they build up a tolerance and get a little used to it. Even if they recognize it, there isn't really any time like your first time experiencing it.

And at this point in my life, halfway through my forties, sitting alone on the train heading home, it hit hard. I realized those moments in my life where I felt that in the past before I came out as trans were all moments of queer joy. Those moments back then I simply did not know what they were, I had nothing to gauge it by.

The thing I want all of you out there to take from my experience is this: queer spaces like this are important in far more ways than just the ones written on the tin. Yes, this was about queer weddings specifically, but it was also about raw and genuine queer joy.

Every vendor was focused on helping create that joy. Every person who came through the doors was looking for that joy. There were

even people walking by throughout the day who approached just to figure out what the heck was happening.

The best advertisement for future Big Queer Wedding Shows was the laughter and excitement coming from every person there. So, if you want to know what it felt like, if you want to know what Christella and Christen wanted to accomplish on April 26th; this is the entirety of it:

This was a day for queer joy.

They promised to do exactly that during my phone interview with Christella back in March. They kept telling us they were gonna bring that joy in the days leading up to the event. And they delivered on the day itself.

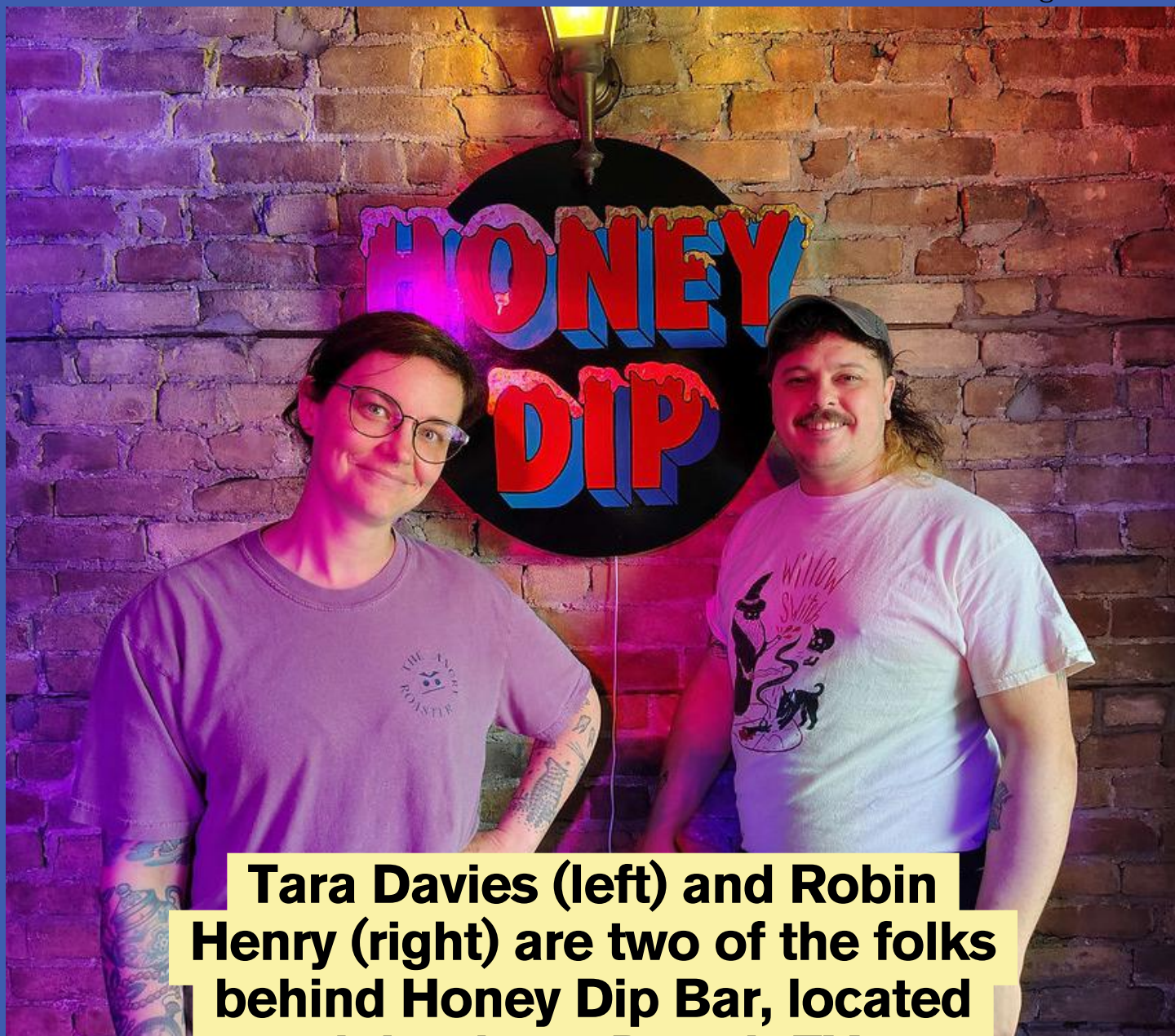
I know these two mavens of photography are going to do more. They better. And I hope they invite me again because if they call, I'll be there. I just wonder if they might need an extra day or two to fit all the people in.

Follow us here at Gay Hive Magazine to keep up with future events I find myself at. And I will be trying to do some write-ups on all the vendors I spoke to on the day; I just can't fit all of them into a single article.

Until next time folks.

HONEY DIP

623 DUNDAS ST. LONDON,
ONTARIO



Tara Davies (left) and Robin Henry (right) are two of the folks behind Honey Dip Bar, located right above Dough EV.

Gay Hive Magazine is incredibly grateful to Robin, Tara, and the entire team at Honey Dip and DoughEV for generously allowing us to use their space from Monday to Friday, 9 AM to 4 PM! We are thrilled to collaborate with such an amazing group of people who share our passion for creativity and community. Their welcoming environment has become a hub for inspiration and innovation, where ideas can flourish and connections can be made. Each day spent in their vibrant space is a testament to the power of collaboration and the magic that happens when like-minded individuals come together to create something extraordinary. Thank you once again, Robin, Tara, and the entire crew, for your kindness and support. We look forward to many more exciting projects and memories ahead!



Honey Dip Bar Event website

Book your event today!

www.honeydipbar.com



SAVE THE DATE

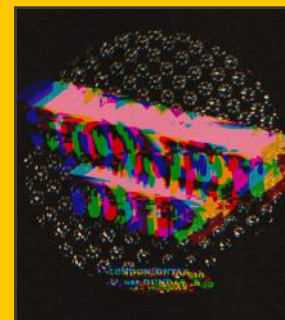
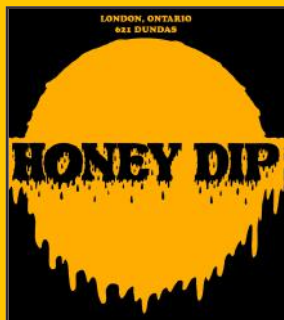
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HONEY

DIP

ONE YEAR
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Live Music Venue
DIY art bar & venue
623 Dundas St. London, ON



Live Music Venue
DIY art bar & venue
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Izalea Does Everything —

Vol 2

Written by: Izzy

dysphoria and dysmorphia

Pg 26

Before I start, let's get something out of the way: I WILL be talking about topics that can be upsetting or triggering to some folks. And I am absolutely going to make sure those potential triggers are flagged as best as I can.

But I cannot guarantee I'm going to be perfect, nor can I guarantee the folks I put this in front of before submitting will catch everything. So, I need all of you out there to do something for me, make sure you do your due diligence to stay safe. But do me a second favor and try to read on if you can.

Today is absolutely about dysphoria and dysmorphia.

That in mind, let's get started.

For most of my marriage I was obviously pretending to be something I wasn't. And for any of you who missed my first column: a man. It wasn't until I'd been married to my amazing partner for fourteen years that I accepted I was a trans woman.

This fact brings its own challenges. That drastic of a change in any relationship can completely shake its foundations. I was lucky though, my partner batted their eyelashes, looked me directly in the eyes, and said: it's about time.

Not a unique reaction, a lot of us trans women were broadcasting our egg status far and wide before we realized. But welcome in my case, transition is hard enough without losing one of the pillars of your life; something that unfortunately happens a lot. You can't expect someone to flip their sexuality on a dime unless they already had a touch of queerness to them to begin with.

D Y S P H O R I A :

Gender dysphoria can be described as the distress experienced by those whose gender identity feels at odds with aspects of their body and/or the social gender role assigned to them at birth.
-Gender Identity Clinic

D Y S M O R P H I A

Dysmorphia can be described as feeling pre-occupied by / dissatisfied by ones perception of ones body.

often linking to unrealistic beauty standards, social gender norms & the fat shaming culture we live in.

@Queerazf

As I began up there, for most of my marriage I was pretending to be a man. Not intentionally, of course, but pretending, nonetheless. Part of my current issue is having so many problems seeing myself in pictures, mirrors, literally anywhere. Obviously, I know why at this point in my life.

I had zero clue before and that meant there ended up being very few pictures of my partner and I together. Let alone nearly any with me on my own. Something I always had regrets about. They are so gorgeous and always have been and I love everything about them.



Izalea Does Everything —

Vol 2

Written by: Izzy

dysphoria and dysmorphia

Pg 27

Before I start, let's get something out of the way: I WILL be talking about topics that can be upsetting or triggering to some folks. And I am absolutely going to make sure those potential triggers are flagged as best as I can.

But I cannot guarantee I'm going to be perfect, nor can I guarantee the folks I put this in front of before submitting will catch everything. So, I need all of you out there to do something for me, make sure you do your due diligence to stay safe. But do me a second favor and try to read on if you can.

Today is absolutely about dysphoria and dysmorphia.

That in mind, let's get started.

For most of my marriage I was obviously pretending to be something I wasn't. And for any of you who missed my first column: a man. It wasn't until I'd been married to my amazing partner for fourteen years that I accepted I was a trans woman.

This fact brings its own challenges. That drastic of a change in any relationship can completely shake its foundations. I was lucky though, my partner batted their eyelashes, looked me directly in the eyes, and said: it's about time.

Not a unique reaction, a lot of us trans women were broadcasting our egg status far and wide before we realized. But welcome in my case, transition is hard enough without losing one of the pillars of your life; something that unfortunately happens a lot. You can't expect someone to flip their sexuality on a dime unless they already had a touch of queerness to them to begin with.

D Y S P H O R I A :

Gender dysphoria can be described as the distress experienced by those whose gender identity feels at odds with aspects of their body and/or the social gender role assigned to them at birth.
-Gender Identity Clinic

D Y S M O R P H I A

Dysmorphia can be described as feeling pre-occupied by / dissatisfied by ones perception of ones body.

often linking to unrealistic beauty standards, social gender norms & the fat shaming culture we live in.

@Queerazf

As I began up there, for most of my marriage I was pretending to be a man. Not intentionally, of course, but pretending, nonetheless. Part of my current issue is having so many problems seeing myself in pictures, mirrors, literally anywhere. Obviously, I know why at this point in my life.

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But any pictures that did manage to snag me in any way, were twisted and distorted in ways I didn't like. In ways I couldn't understand for so long. Dysphoria and dysmorphia before I even understood what those things were. Back then it was simply an intense revulsion of seeing myself at all.

Now I know what the problem was and that is simultaneously better and worse.

There are days when I still see myself 200 pounds heavier and sporting a full beard. It is extremely draining and compounded by trying to come to terms with likely never being a trans woman who 'passes.'

PAUSE Passing is not at all necessary nor is it necessarily my goal. But with the times being what they are right now, it sure would be safer. Just remember the point of transition is to make you happy with you. Passing is not actually the point. We can get into this in a future column though. UNPAUSE

The dysphoria and dysmorphia are bad but add onto that the attempted acceptance of likely never being anything but 'clocky' and its just, doubly difficult. Being a visible trans woman is not a bad thing; there are certainly enough trans women I've seen who don't pass that I bite my lip and declare some of the hottest women I've seen.

My worry is that I can't truly ever be that much of a badass. But right now, this is about me looking at pictures of my partner and I in the present. I've been trying to take as many as I can now. Both on my own, and with other people. Basically, I'm being incredibly, probably obnoxiously, into taking selfies and posting them on social media.

And you know what? I can see the joy in my eyes now. I hadn't tried to take many pictures of myself even in the first couple years of transition. It was too hard.

Oh sure, I tormented my partner with the best pictures of my new chest as often as I could. They are, in fact, glorious to behold. However, I didn't take many pictures of my face. And every time I brushed my teeth, or washed that face, or shaved... the mirror tormented me. If I was some rich person who could afford a new mirror daily, I'd have feared for my wallet.

Because the urge to smash the mirror for showing me such filth was, and still is, a deep and tormenting wish.

Luckily, I'm not remotely that out of control. Or wasteful. Dramatically smashing a mirror? In this economy? Can you imagine?



Izalea Does Everything — Vol 2

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But that joy I see? It's there, fighting the ick that crawls into my mind on the waves of dysphoria. Could I go on about every disgusting thing I see in every picture of myself? Oh hell yeah, the things my brain tells me are painful and self-destructive. But whereas before the stabbing internal commentaries were front and center, held close to my chest; now they are at arm's length, dangling over the garbage can, ready to be tossed and forgotten.

The fight now is finding, forging, and finally having the strength to let go of those criticisms. The self hatred and negativity I hold and direct inward for no benefit to myself. It serves me not at all, so why do I do it? Why do any of us, trans or not, do that? Could you imagine what could get done if our brains weren't forever focused on that?

Unfortunately, brains are often forged in trauma.

For me, the trauma of having lived a life that was never mine. One society said was the correct one even though inside it always felt wrong. Askew. Like I was me and not me at the same time. But the pressure to fall in line was pervasive, and damaging, and wholly unnecessary.

Internalized transphobia is a topic better spoken of by someone else. I can't even think of how to write about that in any way that could be more helpful than me screaming into the abyss ineffectually. So, let's bypass that for now. It isn't specific to my relationship with these pictures I keep posting.

And I will keep posting these pictures even if my stomach turns, even if my eyes well up, even if everything in my body and mind clenches at the thought of it.

Even as I feel the failure coming in my own mind, my brain wanting me to stop looking and stop posting. Because it would be easier to just let it go.

But I refuse to let myself not be the happy I see in those pictures today. Not happening.

Not on my fucking watch. My entire life has already been a struggle. The last thing I'm gonna do is make seeing myself a failure point.

This is an exercise I am going to keep pushing until I can't. And yes, there are days when I can't make myself take and post a picture. There are days that I fail. The day I originally posted this on my timeline was one of those days.

I took that day to rest and shake myself out. Then I took a deep breath and started my next streak of pictures, and this time I've posted one every day since. Seeing my own happiness has made me stronger.

I breathed through it. I settled, I rested, and now we go again. Until failure. Repeat.

Love you folks, see you next month.

QUEER

Marriage

- Marriage Advice
- Issues that particularly effect same-sex couples
- Funny material antidotes
- Issues on sex in same-sex couples & More





THE
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MEN



FIRST COMES LOVE

Written by: Michael and Jason (The Marry Men Wedding Officiants)

**“First comes love, then comes marriage.
Then comes baby in the baby carriage.”**

— schoolyard rhyme

When we ask couples why they’re making the choice to get married, the vast majority say they are motivated by “love.” And while love is a publicly acceptable reason to marry, it is far from the only one. Despite the many romantic notions about love and marriage, it’s important to remember that marriage is fundamentally a legal institution.

“Marriage is a way to confer valuable rights and benefits, and sometimes it is the only way to receive these rewards,” writes Marcia A. Zug in her book [You’ll Do: A History of Marrying for Reasons Other Than Love](#). “A



vast misconception about modern marriage is, as the nursery rhyme implies, love comes first. This isn’t always true. Sometimes love comes later. Sometimes it doesn’t come at all, and legally, love is irrelevant.”

We recently received an email from a bride-to-be inquiring about our services. “Hey Guys! We’re looking for an officiant to create a ceremony that is short and fun

so we can get this thing done.”



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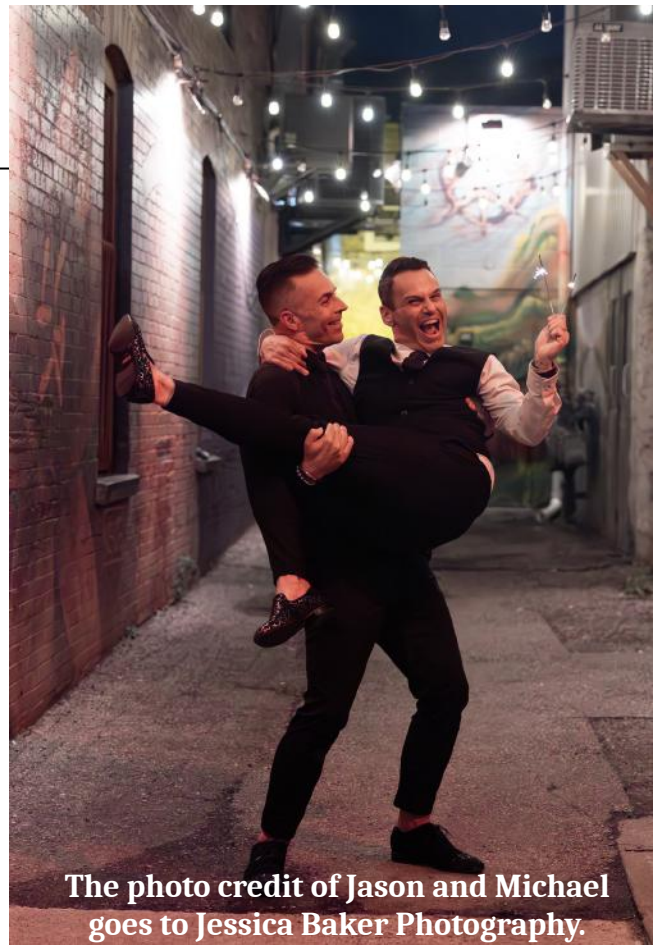
We recently received an email from a bride-to-be inquiring about our services.

“Hey Guys! We’re looking for an officiant to create a ceremony that is short and fun so we can get this thing done.”

Email etiquette aside, we couldn’t quite tell whether this potential bride was being serious or being funny.

Referring to one of the biggest and most meaningful days of your life as a “thing” that needs to “get done” raised some valid questions for us and even a few concerns.

While we believe marriage should not be treated as another item you check off on your bucket list, there are individuals who treat it as such.



The photo credit of Jason and Michael goes to Jessica Baker Photography.

In the past, marrying for love was considered a gamble; it was risky, and for centuries, many people believed marrying for the legal, social, and economic benefits attached to marriage was a safer bet.

“Some generations of men and women have used marriage as a loophole to circumvent unfair or discriminatory laws, but the rights and benefits that attach to marriage can also perpetuate harms,” writes Zug.



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It's true! Historically people have married to acquire citizenship, immigration benefits, and parental rights, to secure tax breaks and lower tuition, and achieve a higher social status.

Marriage has primarily been a mechanism for distributing rights. This remains the principal purpose of marriage, but that doesn't mean it should be.

Our dear friends and chosen family, Ron and Lloyd, have been in a committed relationship for 58 years. For them, the matter of getting married was purely practical.

"We had been through situations at the hospital when Ron was unwell and they wouldn't let me in to see him because I wasn't related to him," Lloyd confided. "We wanted to be next of kin."

The photo credits of Vincent and Hubert goes to Diego Moura Photography.



"A simple 'We are married' takes care of the confusion," writes Gene Robinson, retired bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire. "That's why marriage equality matters, and why the word marriage matters. When we say we are married, people know that we have made commitments to each other, and we take them seriously, and that we have taken on all the responsibilities of marriage and expect all the rights recorded to married couples."

On February 27, 2026, Lindsey and Nancy took the next step on the journey they had chosen to take together. They were not .



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FIRST COMES LOVE

Written by: Michael and Jason (The Marry Men Wedding Officiants)

On February 27, 2026, Lindsey and Nancy took the next step on the journey they had chosen to take together. They were not beginning something; they were continuing the adventure that brought them to the day they decided to be married. On February 27, 2026, Lindsey and Nancy took the next step on the journey they had chosen to take together. They were not beginning something; they were continuing the adventure that brought them to the day they decided to be married.

“There was a moment when I said to her, ‘Babe, if we’re going to do this, we have to make it a celebration,’” Lindsey shared. “Because we aren’t just celebrating our love and commitment to one another, we’re celebrating our freedoms, our rights, and our identity.”



The photo credits of Vincent and Hubert goes to Diego Moura Photography.

The legendary John Lennon famously observed that, “It matters not who you love, where you love, why you love, when you love, or how you love. It only matters that you love.”

And that love was never more evident than the time Hubert and Vincent confronted Hubert’s unexpected diagnosis of Stage 2 kidney cancer and the subsequent months of treatment.

“He was very strong for us while I tried to remain calm for him,” Hubert shared. “In hind-sight, this jolted our connection with a fear that made our relationship stronger as a result.”



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FIRST COMES LOVE

Written by: Michael and Jason (The Marry Men Wedding Officiants)

Canada's own singer/songwriter Jann Arden often says, "If I have learned anything it is, 'Good things come out of bad things.'"

Anytime Hubert would suggest that marriage would be a natural next step for the two of them; Vincent would change the subject. Until one evening, as Hubert was laying on the couch during post-surgical recovery, it was Vincent who brought up the subject of marriage.

"Following Hubert's illness and during his recovery, my thoughts and priorities changed," Vincent confided. "I'd rather marry you than bury you," he told Hubert.



Ceremony with Hubert and Vincent
(photo credit Diego Moura Photography)

"You cant wait until life isn't hard anymore... before you decide to be happy."

— Nightbirde

Hubert and Vincent both realized that, although they were happy with their situation after 21 years together, every event in life should be a celebration. And if there was something missing, it was a formal celebration of their love and union. So on February 14, 2023, in lieu of a traditional proposal, Hubert and Vincent made a mutual agreement. They formalized their engagement at a tattoo studio in Port Credit with matching ring-tattoos to symbolize



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their permanent connection. They shared the news with their families and friends and on social media with an updated profile. Funnily enough, people still acted surprised as most of them thought Hubert and Vincent were already married. It was an incredible honor to tell their story and officiate their marriage on July 6, 2024.

First came love, then came marriage, and it is love that sustains them in their union now.

For others, love may have come first, but marriage has become a second or even third chance to get it right. After all, life is all about second chances. Not in every single aspect, of course, but we're often granted a "re-do" without even realizing it.



Admitting their youthful inexperience and acknowledging their lack of emotional maturity, eventually led Elisa and Phil on a journey of self-discovery that culminated with a reaffirmation of their commitment to one another almost 20 years after they first met. Love came first and was made even stronger by their shared struggles and successes; the tears and triumphs; the milestones and the memories.

"Getting married didn't have a real feeling of urgency because we just automatically felt like we were already married in so many ways," Phil shared. "We felt it was time to formally celebrate our time together and the many adventures we've had, and there's no better way than to get married."



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FIRST COMES LOVE

Written by: Michael and Jason (The Marry Men Wedding Officiants)

Elisa and Phil told us they see their marriage as “a celebration of continuance;” a way of keeping the fires burning and continuing to walk the road together.

“Wise men say, only fools rush in...”

— **Elvis Presley**

...but Jennifer and Ian couldn't help falling in love when they first met in 1999. “Love at first sight,” however, isn't always a guarantee of longevity.

“We were young, and stubborn, and poor, and didn't really know what we wanted,” Jennifer confessed to us when we first connected with her and Ian back in 2022. And sometimes, the best love stories are actually “love at seventeenth sight” – the kind that grows once you truly start to see the other person clearly.



It took them twenty years to reconnect, and over those two decades, a lot had changed. And so did Jennifer and Ian. While the world saw the evolution of the first iPod, the first iPhone, the first iPad, the Nintendo Wii, and Facebook, Jennifer and Ian experienced the evolution of themselves. And if, indeed, “absence makes the heart grow fonder,” the opportunity for self-reflection and personal growth brought them both to realization that rather than being apart, they wanted to be a part of each other's lives. It took time and distance for them to each realize that there were a limited number of people in this world that will be in-tune with their individual personalities and with whom they could maintain a symbiotic and coherent existence.

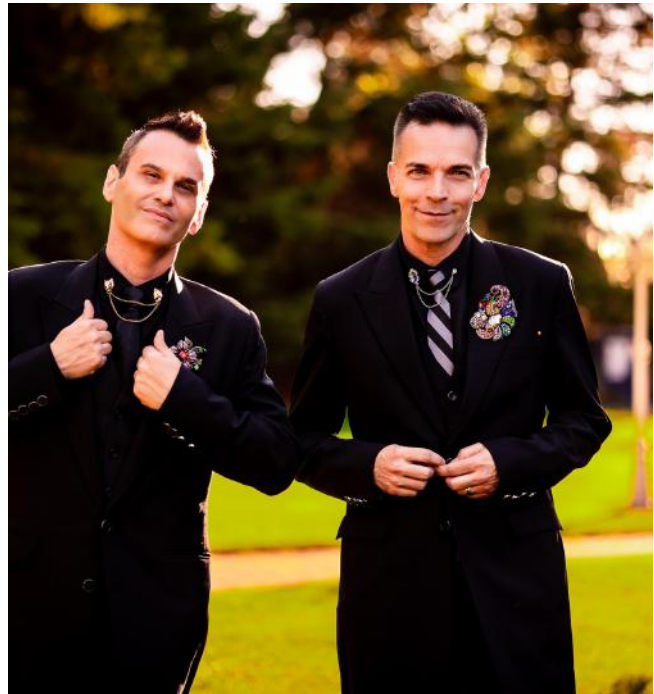


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“We have both done a lot of growing and maturing since then,” Jennifer told us. “We are the same people now but we are refined, more polished, wiser with our experiences, and less stubborn – sometimes. We are so lucky to have this chance again to make things right. We both very much want to make up for lost time.”

Revs. Jason and Michael _ The Marry Men Wedding Officiants

www.themarrymen.ca @themarrymen

On August 5, 2023, Jennifer and Ian did not spend too much time looking back at what was, they made a public choice to look forward at what could be with a mutual intention, love, and promise as they finally said to one other: “I do, I do, I do.”

First comes love. Then comes marriage.
The journey to forever should last...forever!



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THE ROAD TO HAPPILY EVER AFTER

By
Benjamin Alan Lopez-White

At the end of the article I wrote in the March edition of Gay Hive Magazine entitled ‘Once Upon A Time,’ my husband Darren, who was at the time just my my boyfriend, had left the airport gate five minutes before boarding his flight in order to stay with me. It is the most romantic situation I have ever been in. This is the continuation of our story.

After we got out of the airport, Darren and I booked an SUV from a car rental company and headed to Northern California

from Chicago. We brought Fiona Bean Spears with us. She is my 15 year old toothless Morkie. She came along to see how her and Darren’s family dog, Pookie, would get along.

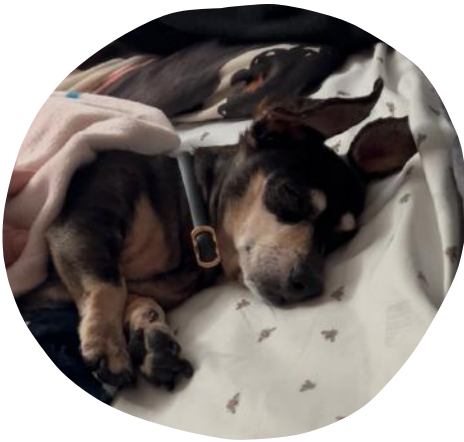
Pookie is a 16 year old blind dachshund that Darren had been taking care of for a long time. We were hoping to bring her back so that we could be a happy little family with our old lady canines. We kept talking about how they might love each other right away and we could head back to Chicago sooner.

We picked up the rental car and headed out on our journey. The drive was 2,000 miles and would take 28 hours. This timing did not include the many regular stops we would have to make for Fiona, gas, and food. This huge adventure was so spontaneous and exhilarating for us!

I was to be the sole driver because Darren doesn’t drive. He hadn’t been out of California before, except for our meeting in Vegas and the visit to my place in Chicago. I was ecstatic to be able to share in

the experience of him seeing so many new landscapes and states. We would be driving through Iowa, Nebraska, Utah, Nevada and some of Wyoming and Colorado.

I remembered that Darren had told me that he needed a big change and he wanted it before his next birthday. We both deal



with social and anxiety, so I was very proud of him and myself for taking this big step. Being able to push through both of our anxiety to go on this road trip was huge deal!

We wanted to get to California as quickly as possible because we need to make sure we were back with Pookie before Darren's sister had to return to her home in Canada.

We laughed a lot along the way and blared the carefully curated playlist we had made

together. I kept downing Java Monster drinks. Energy drinks mixed with coffee? Bad idea! I am a huge coffee fan, but I never drink energy drinks. I was vibrating along the drive as we went through beautiful scenery and got stressed out with the hectic city driving. Especially through Salt Lake City.

Going through Wyoming at night, Darren fell asleep. Torrential rain began in a construction zone on the

highway. The construction had turned the highway into one lane with cones separating oncoming traffic. Semi trucks were everywhere. I could barely see through the rain and the darkness and I was very tired, but I gripped the wheel and kept centering myself. I sang Britney Spears, Nine Inch Nails, and the "Ecstasy (Remix)" by Ciara featuring Normani and Teyana Taylor at the top of my lungs to keep me awake and to distract me from the situation.

I drove 14 hours without stopping to sleep or even rest. I pushed on and drove until I

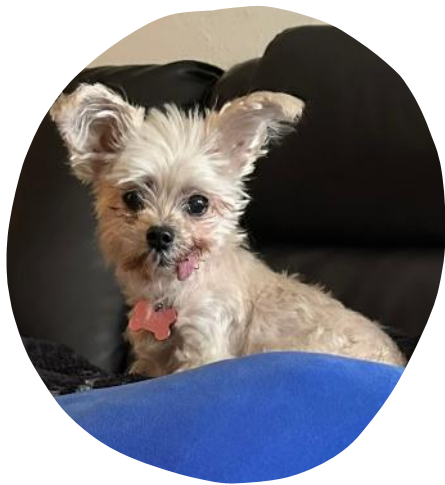
THE ROAD TO HAPPILY EVER AFTER

By

Benjamin Alan Lopez-White

was so exhausted that I had to park the car behind a closed gas station. Darren, Fiona and I cuddled up in the back seat to try to get some sleep.

Traveling halfway across the United States as a queer couple is nerve-racking in itself. Adding the fact that at this time the United States was quickly slipping into a fascist government that was causing a huge increase in the hate being directed toward the queer community had put me very on edge.



Traveling halfway across the United States as a queer couple is nerve-racking in itself. Adding the fact that at this time the United States was quickly slipping into a fascist government that was causing a huge increase in the hate being directed toward the queer community had put me very on edge.

A few hours before, we had passed Laramie, Wyoming. This city is where 21 year old Matthew Shephard had been mercilessly beaten by two men and left for dead in 1998. He was discovered strung up on a fence like an animal that had been hunted before he passed away in a hospital. We had given him a moment of silence as we passed this area. It was the second time I had been to Laramie, but the weight of this hate crime still hung heavy in my heart.

All of these factors meant I didn't sleep well in the back seat of the SUV. I kept seeing headlights. All of a sudden the lights shone directly on us. My instincts told me that we weren't safe, so I jumped into the front seat and sped away. Unfortunately, this feeling of not being safe as an openly pansexual man married to an openly gay man has only continued increasing in the United States as time has gone on, but this is a discussion for another article at another time.



I kept driving for what seemed like forever. When we arrived at the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah, I could go no longer go further. I slept in the backseat with Fiona while Darren checked out the Salt Flats.

I had been drinking too much coffee and energy drinks, not having enough food and had forgotten to take my anxiety

THE ROAD TO HAPPILY EVER AFTER

By Benjamin Alan Lopez-White

medication that morning. I got so sick to my stomach. It had become a difficult road trip. We had been traveling for such a long time, but once we reached Utah, it began to feel like we would never reach our destination.

After what seemed to be an eternity we made it through the state of Utah and the Nevada desert. Driving through Reno, Nevada and then Lake Tahoe, California was very intense because of steep cliffs right beside the highway. The roads also contained tight curves, declining elevation and



speeding drivers. My lower back and the middle of my back were already very sore from driving for so long and because of all of the twisting I was doing to check my blind spot. The stress tensed me up more and made it all feel a lot worse.

Finally, we made it to Darren's Dad's house in Northern California. The trip had been beautiful, stressful, freeing, and terrifying. We were very pleased with ourselves that we didn't get frustrated or argue at all even when we faced pressure from issues that had happened on the road trip.

Once we were there, I was very nervous for Fiona to meet Pookie. I also had anxiety about me meeting her, Darren's dad, and eventually his mom. Pookie has a unique personality, but our dogs got along fine. They kind of coexisted and ignored

each other. I, on the other hand, didn't seem to be Pookie's favorite person at first. After all, I was taking up her dad's time and sleeping in her bed. Who could blame her? I made it my mission to make her like me and it eventually worked and I got super attached to her.

I had no need to be nervous about meeting Darren's parents. His dad, Juan, is one of the most generous and



hospitable people I have ever met! He was so welcoming and open to Darren and my relationship. He only wanted his mijo to be happy. Juan gave me a few practical gifts for my stay and he kept buying food that I liked. He also made sure to cook for us. I was and am excited to have a father-in-law who makes authentic Mexican food. Delicious!

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By Benjamin Alan Lopez-White

Later on, we went to meet Darren's mom, Elena, and she was very kind. I was touched to see she had a picture of us framed on her mantle. She showed me photo albums of when Darren and his siblings were young. She was also very accepting. She just wanted Darren to be happy and she saw that I was. I love different cultures and I have found it very interesting to learn more about her Portuguese heritage from Darren.

As was mentioned earlier, our plan had been to bring Pookie back to Chicago, but as John



Lennon sang, “Life is what happens when you’re busy making other plans.” Unfortunately, we weren’t able to bring Pookie back with us because of her age, health, and our living situation.

Darren was stuck in an impossible position. Either he would have to stay in California and we would have to be in a purely long distance relationship for a lot longer than expected, or he could come back to Chicago with me and have his dad take care of Pookie until he could come back.

With little time to spare, Darren decided to pack up his stuff and move in with me. It was heart wrenching because Pookie means everything to him and is his favorite living thing, other than me. It was also very upsetting for Darren

and I to realize we would have to be in a long distance relationship for part of the year so that he could see and take care of her, but I understood and would never want to be with someone who could fully abandon their pet. I have had a lot of guilt because of feeling responsible for separating the two of them.

Soon it was time for us to depart. Juan got us a cooler and



stocked it and helped me load Darren’s things into the SUV and we set out for the 2,000 mile trip home. We got back on the road to what we hoped was our happily ever after...

Check out the June edition of Gay Hive Magazine for the conclusion of Darren and my love story.

THE ROAD TO HAPPILY EVER AFTER

By Benjamin Alan Lopez-White



Be Bold, Be unique, Be
You



P.R.O.U.D. INC

MODERN FAMILY BUILDING & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Written by: Award-winning
author & Founder of P.R.O.U.D.
INC., Tyson Pete

**How LGBTQ+ Families Are
Being Formed in 2026 and
What It Takes to Protect the
Right to Build, Birth, and
Belong**

Family has never been a one-size-fits-all institution. It never truly was. But in 2026, that truth is no longer living in the margins. It is standing in the light.

Across the United States, LGBTQ+ people are building families through donor conception, IVF, reciprocal IVF, gestational surrogacy, foster care, adoption,

co-parenting agreements, and low-cost assisted reproduction outside traditional fertility settings. What has changed is not the desire for family, but the visibility of the pathways. The old script assumed one man, one woman, and one uncomplicated line from marriage to parenthood. Real life has always been more textured than that. In 2026, the law, medicine, and culture are still struggling to catch up.

That is why reproductive justice matters so deeply to this conversation. SisterSong's widely used definition remains one of the clearest: reproductive justice is the human right to maintain

MODERN FAMILY BUILDING & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Continued

How LGBTQ+ Families Are Being Formed in 2026 AND WHAT IT TAKES TO PROTECT THE RIGHT TO BUILD, BIRTH, AND BELONG

bodily autonomy, to have children, to not have children, and to parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities. For LGBTQ+ families, that framework is not abstract theory.

It is the difference between being welcomed into care or screened out by bias, between being recognized on a birth certificate or pushed into court to prove parenthood, between building a family with dignity or building one while navigating a maze.



The New Face of Family Building

In 2026, LGBTQ+ family building is both more visible and more medically sophisticated than it was even a decade ago. Fertility care for queer and trans people now includes more deliberate use of inclusive intake forms, gender-expansive clinical language, reciprocal IVF for lesbian couples, fertility preservation for transgender and nonbinary patients, and care models that are increasingly designed around intended parenthood rather than old heterosexual assumptions.

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine has been explicit that access to fertility treatment should not depend on marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity, and its recent guidance continues to press clinics toward more inclusive language and practice standards.

That shift matters because LGBTQ+ patients have long been forced to contort themselves to fit systems never designed with them in mind. A form that asks only for “mother” and “father” is not a small oversight. It is operational bias. A clinic that defines infertility only through months of heterosexual intercourse is not simply outdated; it is building exclusion into access. Many insurers and providers still function through those legacy definitions, even as medical bodies and advocates push for a broader, more reality-based understanding of infertility and family formation.

MODERN FAMILY BUILDING & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Continued

How LGBTQ+ Families Are Being Formed in 2026 AND WHAT IT TAKES TO PROTECT THE RIGHT TO BUILD, BIRTH, AND BELONG



At the same time, assisted reproduction is playing a larger role in American family formation overall. According to ASRM, IVF use rose in 2023, leading to 95,860 babies born from IVF and accounting for 2.6% of U.S. births that year. CDC's ART data also shows that fertility treatment is now a significant, normalized part of how Americans build families. For LGBTQ+ intended parents, that growth has opened more doors—but it has also exposed an old truth: access is not the same thing as equity.

Inclusive Fertility Care: Progress With a Price Tag

Inclusive fertility care in 2026 is improving, but it is still profoundly shaped by economics. Clinics may be more affirming on paper, yet many LGBTQ+ families remain locked out by cost, geography, insurance exclusions, or rules that still privilege a narrow definition of infertility. ASRM's recent equity guidance emphasizes that marginalized patients continue to face disparities in access and treatment, and advocates have been blunt that universal inclusive coverage remains unfinished business.

Insurance is one of the biggest fault lines. State coverage mandates vary dramatically, and even where mandates exist, what is covered can differ: diagnostics, medications, IVF cycles, fertility preservation, donor materials, embryo storage, and surrogacy-related expenses are often treated as separate questions. KFF notes that infertility coverage laws vary widely across states, and recent national debate over IVF has not yet translated into a uniform federal guarantee of comprehensive coverage.



MODERN FAMILY BUILDING & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Continued

How LGBTQ+ Families Are Being Formed in

2026 AND WHAT IT TAKES TO PROTECT THE RIGHT TO BUILD, BIRTH, AND BELONG

California offers one of the clearest examples of both progress and limits. The state's SB 729 took effect in 2026 and expands coverage for infertility diagnosis and treatment, including IVF, for certain fully insured large-group plans. Advocates and coverage summaries emphasize that the law is especially meaningful for LGBTQ+ people and single intended parents because it moves away from narrow, heterosexual assumptions about who qualifies for fertility care. But even this advance is not universal: it does not sweep in every plan type, every employer arrangement, or every family-building cost. Progress, in other words, is real but still segmented.

And then there is the human cost of fragmentation. A family may be able to afford sperm but not IVF. They may cover embryo creation but not embryo storage. They may have a plan that pays for diagnostics but not the donor eggs or gestational carrier process necessary to actually bring a child home. Transgender and nonbinary patients often face another layer of

complexity around fertility preservation, timing, hormone care, and culturally competent counseling. A health system can call itself inclusive and still leave patients holding a five-figure bill. That is not inclusion. That is branding.



Adoption Still Matters, But So Does Honesty About the System

Adoption remains a meaningful and beautiful path to parenthood for many LGBTQ+ families in 2026. So does foster care. But sentimentality does not serve families well here. Adoption is not a backup plan for infertility, and foster care is not a shortcut to parenthood. Both systems are built around the needs and rights of children first, and both are deeply shaped by state law, agency

MODERN FAMILY BUILDING & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

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practice, religious exemptions, training standards, and the lived realities of trauma and permanency. Legal protections for LGBTQ+ foster and adoptive parents remain uneven. MAP notes that some states have nondiscrimination protections in foster care and adoption, while others explicitly restrict same-sex parents or create barriers through laws affecting unmarried couples or religious exemptions. In practical terms, this means an LGBTQ+ family's experience can change dramatically depending on ZIP code, agency structure, and whether a public or private faith-based provider is involved.

That patchwork is not theoretical. It shapes who gets welcomed, who gets scrutinized, and who gets turned away. In recent years, courts and legislatures have continued to grapple with conflicts between anti-discrimination principles and religious-liberty claims in child-welfare settings. At the same time, federal policy around LGBTQ-related foster care protections has shifted again in 2026, underscoring how unstable the environment can be for queer families and for LGBTQ youth in care. When the policy floor is unstable, families carry the risk in their bodies and in their paperwork.

Still, many LGBTQ+ families continue to adopt and foster successfully, and many agencies are doing this work with integrity. The strongest programs tend to have what good systems always have: trauma-informed training, explicit non-discrimination rules, competency around queer and trans family life, and policies that understand children do not need parents who fit an old mold. They need parents who are safe, stable, and prepared to love with consistency. That is the real KPI.



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Parentage: The Piece Too Many Families Learn About Too Late

One of the most important legal truths in modern LGBTQ+ family building is also one of the least romantic: biology does not automatically equal legal security, and intention does not always equal recognition. Parentage law, not just custody law, not just marriage law, is what determines who can make medical decisions, enroll a child in school, assert inheritance rights, or keep a family intact when conflict or crisis arrives.

This is where many families get blindsided. A non-gestational parent may assume marriage is enough. A known-donor arrangement may begin with trust and end with litigation. A family who used assisted reproduction in one state may move to another and discover that the local rules or procedures for recognition differ. LGBTQ+ families have pushed major progress here, but the country still does not offer one clean, uniform route to parentage security.

There has been movement. GLAD Law reports that, as of December 2025, 15 states had expanded access to voluntary acknowledgment of parentage processes to include more kinds

of families, including LGBTQ+ parents. These acknowledgments can function as the equivalent of a court decree of parentage, though advocates note that their treatment across jurisdictions has not been fully tested in every context for LGBTQ+ families. That is progress with an asterisk and families should hear both parts of that sentence.

Some states have moved more deliberately. California, for example, expanded use of gender-neutral parentage tools under its Uniform Parentage Act framework, including recognition pathways for same-sex parents who conceive through assisted reproduction.

National legal groups such as NCLR have emphasized that these reforms are especially important for low-income families, unmarried parents, families using low-cost assisted reproduction, and families whose structure does not resemble the old nuclear template.

The takeaway is as practical as it is urgent: if a child is being conceived through assisted reproduction, donor conception, surrogacy, or a co-parenting arrangement, the legal

MODERN FAMILY BUILDING & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Continued

How LGBTQ+ Families Are Being Formed in 2026 AND WHAT IT TAKES TO PROTECT THE RIGHT TO BUILD, BIRTH, AND BELONG

strategy should begin before pregnancy whenever possible. Not after birth. Not after a breakup. Not when a school, hospital, or hostile relative raises questions. Before. That usually means attorney-drafted agreements, clear consent records, and a parentage plan designed for the specific state or states involved. This is not fearmongering. This is family infrastructure.

Surrogacy: Hope, Complexity, and a Fifty-State Patchwork

Surrogacy remains one of the most powerful and most legally complex family-building paths for LGBTQ+ intended parents, especially for many gay men, some trans women, some people with infertility, and families where pregnancy is medically inadvisable or impossible. But the surrogacy conversation in 2026 is not simply about access. It is about ethics, compensation, labor, contract enforceability, parentage, and the rights of the person carrying the pregnancy.

The legal landscape is wildly uneven. NCLR's U.S. surrogacy law map and recent reporting both underline that states differ sharply in whether surrogacy contracts are expressly permitted, restricted, or left largely

unregulated. In some states, intended parents can obtain clearer pre-birth orders and more predictable parentage outcomes. In others, families are forced to rely on incomplete statutes, judge-by-judge practice, or post-birth legal steps. Recent reporting from April 2026 described this reality plainly: cross a state line, and the rules can change in ways that materially affect enforceability and parent recognition.

This is one reason reproductive justice cannot stop at the clinic door. A just family-building system must protect intended parents from discrimination and uncertainty, while also protecting surrogates and donors from exploitation, coercion, and inadequate medical or legal support. Those two commitments are not opposites. They are the same moral project. A system worthy of families must be ethical all the way through.

The Legal Barriers Are Not Random. They Are Structural.

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When LGBTQ+ people talk about barriers to family building, outsiders sometimes hear isolated inconvenience: a rude intake coordinator, a slow insurance appeal, an agency that “wasn’t a fit.” That framing is too small. The obstacles are structural.

Some states still have explicit or functional barriers in adoption and foster care. Some medical-provider exemption laws permit refusals of service tied to religious beliefs. Some states offer robust parentage recognition tools, while others lag behind. Federal nondiscrimination protections exist in certain healthcare contexts under Section 1557, but how those protections are interpreted, enforced, and experienced in practice can still vary—and they do not erase every state-level barrier or every privately structured exclusion.

That is why reproductive justice is the right framework and “choice” alone is too weak a word. A family may technically have the right to pursue IVF, adoption, or parentage recognition and still have no meaningful access to it. Rights without affordable care, travel capacity, paid leave, legal literacy, and community safety are rights on paper. For queer families, especially Black families, trans families, disabled families, immigrant families, rural families, and low-income families, the burden compounds. The issue is not merely whether parenthood is allowed. It is whether parenthood is actually reachable.

What Real Reproductive Justice for LGBTQ+ Families Would Look Like

If 2026 has made one thing clear, it is this: the future of family building will not be secured by symbolism alone. Rainbow branding in June will not do it. Neither will one progressive clinic in a hostile legal environment.

Real reproductive justice for LGBTQ+ families would mean fertility coverage that does not depend on heterosexual definitions of infertility. It would mean parentage laws that recognize intention, consent, and assisted reproduction without forcing families into expensive court processes. It would mean adoption and foster systems with explicit nondiscrimination protections and child-centered standards that cannot be casually overridden. It would mean ethical surrogacy frameworks that protect all parties. And it would mean building systems around a simple truth many families already live every day: love may make a family, but policy determines whether that family can move through the world intact.

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There is real reason for hope. Medical guidance is becoming more inclusive. Some states are modernizing parentage rules. Insurance reform, while uneven, is expanding in places. Advocates have built stronger legal maps, better toolkits, and clearer language for families than existed a generation ago. The system is still fragmented, but the blueprint is no longer hidden.

And perhaps that is the clearest truth of all: LGBTQ+ families are not asking for special treatment. They are asking for stable ground beneath ordinary human dreams, the right to become parents, the right to be recognized as parents, and the right to raise children in communities that do not question whether their family counts. That is not fringe policy. That is civilization doing its job.

Be Great, Be Amazing, Be Proudful

A horny dance party? In THIS economy? This one is cheap & easy cuz so are we.

Dress code: FERAL! Jockstraps, lingerie, leather—whatever takes you there, babe. All bodies + all genders welcome. Just bring a dirty mind, a pure heart, and a bad attitude.

Nasty tunes by Handsome Johnnie & Zavala. Classic skinema projections.

Let's go WILD...

FERAL
MAY 9
10 PM

Three Dollar Bill Toronto, ON Saturday, May 9- Sunday, May 10 • 10 PM-2:30 AM
Overview
QUEERS GONE WILD! Go feral at Three Dollar Bill with a horny dance party from Handsome Johnnie & Zavala.



Three Dollar Bill

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When the Tree Hides the Forest

Written by: Val J Prime

Parenthood.

A conscious extension of the species' survival instinct—something every living being carries within them, to varying degrees.

An imperfect humanity, capable of bringing children into a world marked by violence, rejection, or abandonment.

Unwanted lives. Bruised childhoods. Adults who grow up cracked beneath the surface.

And yet, on the other side of that brutality, there are those who feel—deep within—that offering unconditional love to a vulnerable being may be the very purpose of their existence.

So yes, injustice is everywhere.

And more often than not, it is the youngest who pay the price.

Because some adults remain blind, or trapped in rigid models, convinced that a “real” parent can only exist within a heterosexual, married couple.



*love does not choose the chest
It beats*

WHEN THE TREE HIDES THE FOREST

Continued Written by: Val J Prime

On the Surface

The obvious paths unfold before us.

Sometimes straight, often twisted. Worn down.

Slippery.

Assisted reproduction, surrogacy, adoption.

Real options.

Often long, demanding, exhausting journeys... and too often drenched in prejudice at every step.

But do not give up if these mapped-out roads lead you nowhere.

There are other passages. Less visible. Less named.

Platform 9¾ paths—ones only the magic within you can perceive... and dare to cross.

When Parenthood Becomes a Refuge

Dare to look beneath the surface.

That is often where the true gems lie.

How many queer parents become the only anchor for young people rejected by their own families?

The only place where they can exist without justification—where being human is enough to be loved.

In these realities, adoption is no longer a formality.

It becomes a rescue. An anchor.

A caricature.

A simplification that flattens realities far richer and more complex.

Parenthood is human.

It is not bound to gender, nor to a norm, nor to a prescribed structure.

But there is still a long way to go.

Because if we truly aim to offer a better future to the generation ahead, it is time to genuinely consider their well-being.

And to remember one simple truth:

love does not choose the chest in which it beats.





When the Tree Hides the Forest

Continued

Written by: Val J Prime



And what about those teenagers growing up in foster care,

moved more than supported,
who sometimes come to believe they will never be
“good enough” to be chosen?

A teen is still a child.

A child who had to grow up too fast. A near-adult in
turmoil, still searching for grounding, for a place, for a
gaze that does not look away.

So why not consider them too?

Yes, it may spare you the sleepless nights, the spilled
bottles, the diaper years...

But it asks for something else entirely:
a steady presence, deep patience, the ability to
welcome wounds that already exist—and a heart
willing to love a chaos full of potential.

It may even be the work of a lifetime.

To understand a wounded soul.

And make their life feel a little less like a purgatory.
Becoming a foster home for children in danger is a
profoundly meaningful act.

It is no longer just about support.

It is about changing the course of a life, at the right
moment.

And Deeper Still

Reaching out to prevent an LGBTQ+ youth—cast out from their
home—from falling...

or disappearing altogether.

That is the purpose behind programs like Host Homes, still too
little known, offering shelter, relief, and a chance.

And sometimes, nothing is official.

Nothing is structured.

And yet...

You become that open door.

For a young person in your neighborhood.



A neighbor.

Someone who, quietly, receives more love in your
home than in their own.

No status. No recognition.

Just a space to exist.

And for them, it changes everything.

A turning point.

But for you as well.

Because you become a chosen family.

One of laughter and heart.

One where tears no longer need to be held back.

One where, finally, breathing becomes possible
again.



When the Tree Hides the Forest

Continued

Written by: Val J Prime



My Vision

Building a family is a noble act—one that carries deep responsibility.

This desire to connect, to make a difference in a new life, to add a stone to the foundation of tomorrow's humanity...

all of it is profoundly good.

But becoming a home goes beyond giving life.

Sometimes, it simply means offering a place where life can continue.

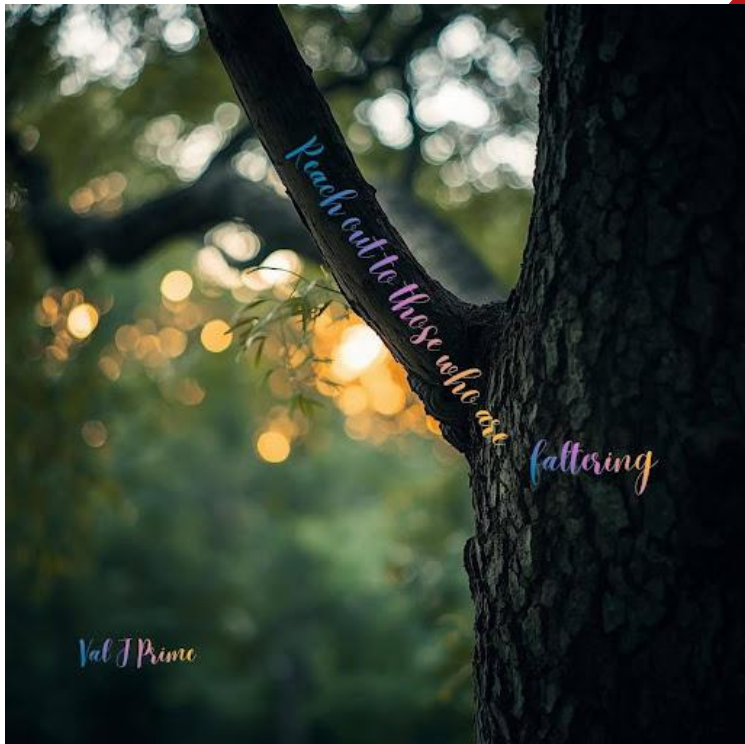
Queer parenthood carries that strength too.

The strength to reach out to those who are faltering.

To hold, to support... and sometimes, to restore meaning.

With Love and Care

Val J Prime



2SLGBTQIA+ MENTAL HEALTH



Key Mental Health Factors & Statistics

High Prevalence: 2SLGBTQIA+ people are over twice as likely to experience a mental health condition, with transgender individuals nearly four times as likely.

Youth Vulnerability: 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are at elevated risk for self-harm and suicidal ideation, with trans/nonbinary youth 2-2.5 times more likely to consider suicide than cisgender LGBQ peers.

Minority Stress: Chronic stress from stigma, discrimination, bullying, and fear of violence contributes heavily to these disparities.

Intersectionality: LGBTQ+ youth of color, particularly Indigenous and Black youth, report higher rates of suicide attempts compared to their white LGBTQ+ peers.

Access Barriers: Fear of discrimination or receiving inappropriate care can prevent individuals from seeking help.



Support and Resources

Chosen Family/Support Systems: Strong social support networks act as a critical buffer against mental health issues.

Inclusive Care: Seeking affirming, knowledgeable therapists who understand 2SLGBTQIA+ needs is crucial.



**MENTAL
HEALTH &
IDENTITY**

*How Embracing Everyday TransJoy
Can Transform Your Mental
Health*

We Were Human Before We Were Labels, and the Infighting Is Killing Us

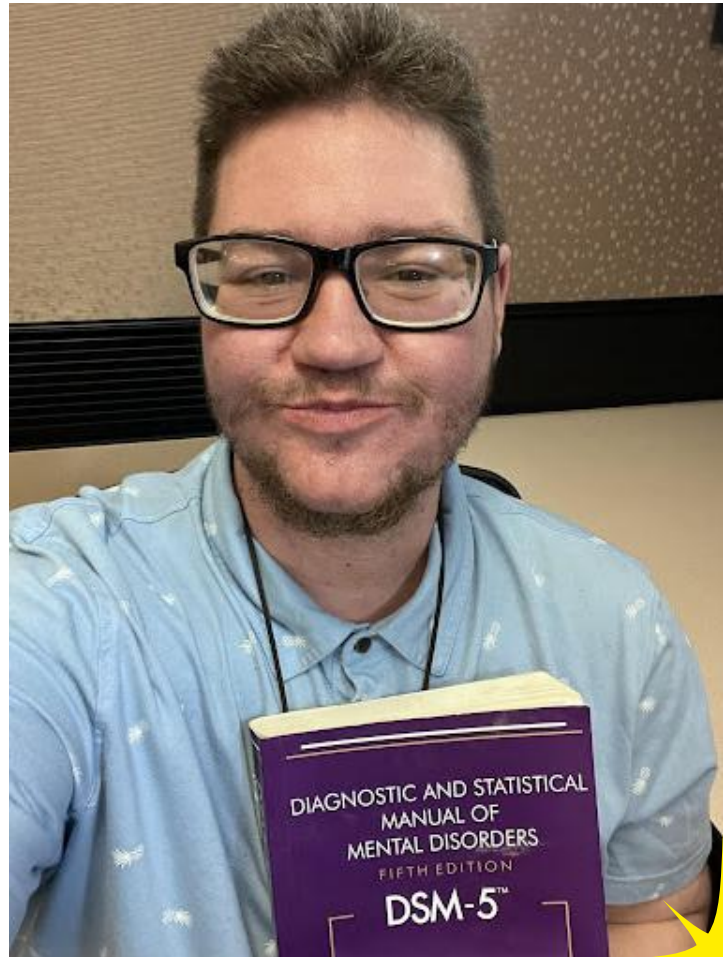
BY NOAH "THE STIGMA FIGHTER" · LGBTQ+ WELLNESS

TransJoy isn't a luxury. It is not something to be earned after enough suffering. It is your birthright: radical, ordinary, and waiting for you in the middle of a Tuesday.



I'm going to say something that might make some of you uncomfortable: the LGBTQ+ community has a gatekeeping problem, and it is hurting us far more than any outside enemy ever could. I say this not from the outside looking in, I say this as a trans man, as an intersex person, as a clinician who has sat across from clients who came to therapy not because of what the world did to them, but because our own community told them they weren't enough. Weren't gay, trans, or queer enough. Came out too late. Transitioned the wrong way. Used the wrong label. Didn't perform their identity correctly for an audience that decided it had the authority to grade them.

When did we become the people we were running from?



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& IDENTITY

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The Label Machine

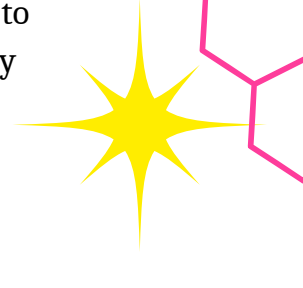
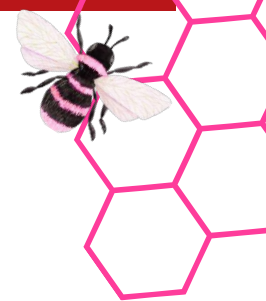
Labels were never the point. They were a tool, a way to find each other in the dark, to name ourselves when the world refused to, to build a coalition out of shared experience. That was the function. That was the gift. Somewhere along the way, we turned the tool into a weapon.

Now we fight about whether bisexual people are really queer. We debate whether nonbinary identities are valid. We dismiss asexual people as not belonging in the acronym at all. We interrogate trans people about their surgeries, their hormones, their timelines, their authenticity, as if authenticity were something you earn through suffering enough to satisfy a stranger on the internet.

We have built a hierarchy of legitimacy inside a community that was founded on the radical idea that you get to be who you are. I work with clients who have spent years unraveling the shame that straight, cisgender society poured into them. And then I watch them log online and get a fresh dose of the same poison from people waving a Pride flag while they serve it. That's not a community. That's just a different flavor of cruelty.

Divided We Fall, Literally

Here's what I know as a clinician and as someone who has studied liberation psychology: systems of oppression do not need to do all the work themselves when they



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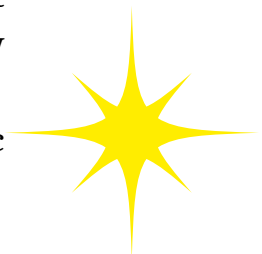
can get the oppressed to do it for each other. Division is a feature, not a bug, of any structure that wants to maintain power over a marginalized group. When we are busy fighting about who belongs under our umbrella, we are not organizing. We are not voting. We are not showing up for the trans kid whose school just banned them from the bathroom. We are not fighting the legislation that is currently right now, today stripping rights from our community. Every hour we spend policing someone's label is an hour we are not spending dismantling the systems that want all of us gone, regardless of what we call ourselves. This is not abstract. This is strategy and we are losing it.



Sylvia Rivera Already Told Us This

We are not having a new conversation. We are having the same one Sylvia Rivera was trying to have in 1973 and getting booted for it. Rivera was one of the founding mothers of the movement we now call Pride. A trans Latina woman who was at Stonewall, who co-founded STAR to house and feed queer and trans youth that no one else would touch, who spent years marching and organizing and bleeding for a community that, the moment it got a little mainstream legitimacy, decided she was too much. Too visible, loud, trans, poor, and real.

At the 1973 Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally, what we now call Pride, Rivera had to climb onto the stage and take the mic by force.



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The crowd hissed and booed. And she stood there anyway, and she said what needed to be said: I have been beaten. I have had my nose broken. I have been thrown in jail. I have lost my job. I have lost my apartment for gay liberation and you all treat me this way?

She wasn't asking for applause. She was asking to be recognized as a person, as someone whose sacrifice counted, existence mattered, humanity was not conditional on how comfortable she made everyone else feel. When the mainstream gay rights movement in New York was negotiating the Gay Rights Bill, they cut a backroom deal with politicians to remove trans people from the bill entirely. Rivera's response was unambiguous: They sell a community that liberated them down the river.

Founding Rainbow Health Ontario

Rainbow Health Ontario (RHO) launched in April 2007 as a Ministry-funded program dedicated to addressing health disparities faced by 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Our creation was made possible through the support of Sherbourne Health and over 40 health and AIDS service organizations across Canada.

Today, we remain one of the few government-funded programs in Canada dedicated to improving 2SLGBTQ+ health outcomes.

Key milestones include:

- Launching Canada's largest 2SLGBTQ+ health conference (2010).
- Successfully advocating for Bill C-16 (2016-2017), which added gender identity and gender expression protections to the Criminal Code and Canadian Human Rights Act
- Publishing the fourth edition of Gender-Affirming Primary Care Guidelines (2019), authored by Dr. Amy Bourns, establishing national standards for transgender health care
- Receiving, in 2024, both the Alliance for Healthier Communities' Community Health Champion Award and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)'s Harry Benjamin Distinguished Education Award, highlighting our national and international impact on 2SLGBTQ+ health equity

[**rainbowhealthontario.ca**](http://rainbowhealthontario.ca)



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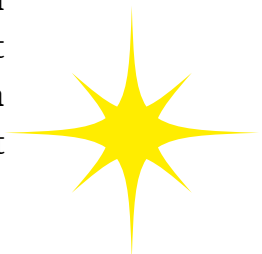
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That is gatekeeping. That is the community deciding who counts and choosing, deliberately, to leave the most vulnerable behind in exchange for respectability. Rivera later said, This movement has become so capitalist... This is no longer my pride. I gave them their pride but they have not given me mine. She gave us everything. We gave her a boozing crowd. More than fifty years later, we are still doing versions of the same thing just with different targets, different platforms, and the same fundamental refusal to see the person standing in front of us as fully human. Rivera understood that you cannot build liberation on a hierarchy of worthiness. She fought for all of us, including the ones nobody wanted to fight for. That was the point. That was always the point.

If we claim her legacy, we have to actually inherit it, not just put her name on a mural and keep gatekeeping each other.

The Grief Underneath

I'm not going to pretend gatekeeping comes from nowhere. I think it's worth being honest about what's actually driving it, because if we can't name it, we can't move through it. A lot of this is grief. Unprocessed, unwitnessed, nowhere-to-put-it grief. When you have had to fight just to be believed, by doctors who questioned your diagnosis, by family members who called it a phase, by a legal system that made you prove your own identity on paper, by a world that looked at you and decided you were a problem to be managed, there is a cost to that. It lives in your body. It



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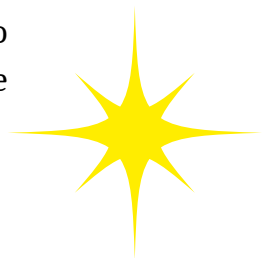
changes how you move through spaces. And sometimes, when you watch someone else step into an identity that costs you everything and seem to do it easily, without the blood and the paperwork and the years of convincing people you were real, something in you tightens.

I know that feeling. I have been that person. But here is where I have to be straight with you: that tightening is not wisdom. It is a wound talking. And wounds, when we don't tend to them, start making decisions for us that sound like discernment but are actually just pain looking for somewhere to land. We learned from the same world that hurt us that some people have to earn

the right to exist and others don't. We internalized that hierarchy so completely that we started administering it ourselves. We took the logic of our own oppression and aimed it sideways.

But here is where I have to be straight with you: that tightening is not wisdom. It is a wound talking. And wounds, when we don't tend to them, start making decisions for us, decisions that sound like discernment but are actually just pain looking for somewhere to land.

And here is the thing that makes the gatekeeping even more absurd when you look at it clearly: there is no standard journey to measure anyone against. No two transitions are the



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same. No two coming-out stories follow the same arc. No two people carry the same body, the same family history, the same access to resources, the same internal timeline. We are each of us entirely singular and yet we have somehow convinced ourselves that there is a correct way to be queer, a right sequence of suffering that grants admission, a template that someone either fits or doesn't.

There is no template. There never was. We made it up and then we started enforcing it.

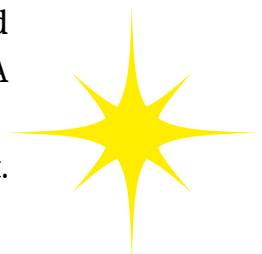
We learned from the same world that hurt us that some people have to earn the right to exist and others don't. We internalized that hierarchy so completely that we started

administering it ourselves. We took the logic of our own oppression and aimed it sideways.

That is not a community. That is not protection. That is trauma in charge and it will hollow us out if we let it. The grief is real. It deserves to be held, not weaponized. There is a difference between saying this hurt me and saying therefore it should hurt you too. One is healing. The other is just the cycle continuing, with a different face on it.

We Are Human Beings First

At the bottom of all of this underneath every label, every acronym, every flag, every discourse thread that turned into a screaming match is a person. A human being trying to live, to love, to belong, to not be in pain. That's it. That's all any of us are.



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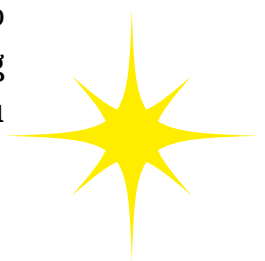
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And every single one of us is different. Not different in a way that needs to be ranked or validated or explained, different in the way that every human being who has ever lived has been different from every other. Different nervous systems, different histories, different relationships to their own bodies and desires and grief. No two people in this community arrived here the same way or carry the same story. That's not a problem. That is the most human thing about us.

The demand for sameness for everyone to fit a mold, to have transitioned in the right order, to have known since childhood, to use the approved language, to perform their identity in a way that satisfies an audience is itself borrowed from the

same systems that tried to erase us. Conformity was never liberation. It was just a different cage dressed up in the right colors.

I am Noah before I am trans. Before I am intersex, queer, and any word that gets used to sort me into a category. I am a person who woke up this morning and wanted connection and meaning and safety, the same things every human being on the planet wants. The labels help me find my people. They do not replace my humanity. And they do not give me or anyone else authority over someone else's. There is something liberation psychology has taught me that I keep coming back to: collective healing requires collective belonging. You cannot build liberation for some while



We Were Human Before We Were Labels, and the Infighting Is Killing Us

BY NOAH "THE STIGMA FIGHTER" · LGBTQ+ WELLNESS

TransJoy isn't a luxury. It is not something to be earned after enough suffering. It is your birthright: radical, ordinary, and waiting for you in the middle of a Tuesday.

policing the rest. You cannot free yourself by caging someone else. The boundary of our community cannot be drawn by whoever shouts the loudest about who qualifies.

What We Could Be Instead

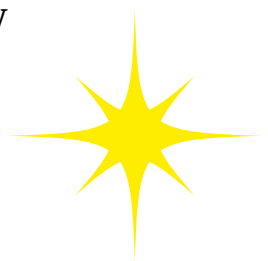
Imagine what we could do with the energy we spend on this.

Imagine a community that said: You showed up. That's enough. Let's figure out the rest together. Imagine the organizing. Mutual aid. The art. The political power. The sheer, staggering force of a community that stopped eating itself long enough to turn outward toward the structures that are actually trying to destroy us.

We don't have to agree on everything. We don't have to like each other's choices or understand each other's identities or share each other's frameworks. The community has never required uniformity. It does require a basic commitment to the humanity of the person next to you even when their label is confusing to you, even when their timeline doesn't match yours, even when you think they're doing it wrong.

Because here is the truth: **there is no wrong way to be human.** And until we can really hold it, not just post it we will keep handing our enemies exactly what they need: a community too fractured to fight back.

We can do better. We have to.



2SLGBTQIA+ MENTAL HEALTH

2026



The Importance of LGBTQIA2S+ Mental Health

Raven is a Certified Recovery Mentor and Death Doula/Death Worker based in Oregon, USA. Identifying as non-binary and queer, they are passionate about supporting the mental health of LGBTQIA2S+ communities. When not engaging in activism or writing, Raven enjoys reading, listening to music, baking, photographing nature's wonders, and interacting with local wildlife, always encouraging it to flourish. Their commitment to mental health advocacy is vital in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for all.



Key Mental Health Factors & Statistics

High Prevalence: 2SLGBTQIA+ people are over twice as likely to experience a mental health condition, with transgender individuals nearly four times as likely.

Youth Vulnerability: 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are at elevated risk for self-harm and suicidal ideation, with trans/nonbinary youth 2-2.5 times more likely to consider suicide than cisgender LGBQ peers.

Minority Stress: Chronic stress from stigma, discrimination, bullying, and fear of violence contributes heavily to these disparities.

Intersectionality: LGBTQ+ youth of color, particularly Indigenous and Black youth, report higher rates of suicide attempts compared to their white LGBTQ+ peers.

Access Barriers: Fear of discrimination or receiving inappropriate care can prevent individuals from seeking help.



M, E, N, T, A, L,
H, E, A, L, T, H,
M, A, T, T, E, R, S.



**Registered Psychotherapist
(Qualifying)**





STARTING OVER (AT On sex, desire, and coming out later in life EXACTLY THE RIGHT TIME)

By: Kai De Maeyer

Nobody tells you that coming out later in life comes with homework.

There is the internal work: the slow, disorienting process of figuring out who you actually are after years of performing someone else. There is the relational work: what happens to the people already in your life, the ones who built their understanding of you around an identity that turned out to be incomplete. And then there is the sexual work, which is the part that tends to get the least attention and cause the most confusion.

This piece is for the people in the middle of that process. It is also for the partners trying to understand what is happening, and why the person they love seems to be meeting themselves for the first time.

You Did Not Miss the Window

One of the most common feelings people describe after coming out later in life is the sense of being behind. Everyone else figured this out at nineteen. You are thirty-

STARTING OVER (AT EXACTLY THE On sex, desire, and coming out later in life RIGHT TIME)

By: Kai De Maeyer

four, or forty-seven, or sixty-one, and you are having what feels embarrassingly like your first queer crush, your first real conversation about what you want in bed, your first experience of desire that does not require you to mentally edit yourself into it.

Here is what the research actually says: there is no universal timeline. Queer people who came out in earlier generations did so significantly later than those coming out today -- not because they were slower, but because the world gave them almost nowhere to land. Compulsory heterosexuality does not just shape behavior. It shapes what people allow themselves to notice. When desire has been quietly redirected for decades, it does not arrive on schedule.

You did not miss the window. The window was not open for you yet.

THE SECOND ADOLESCENCE NOBODY WARNED YOU ABOUT

There is a concept in queer psychology called second adolescence. It describes the developmental stage that many queer adults move through after coming out: a process of gaining experiences that were inaccessible the first time around, and reckoning with what it meant to have missed them. First kisses with people you wanted to kiss. The disorienting, specific work of figuring out what you like sexually when you have spent years either going through motions or not going near the question at all.

An important and often overlooked part of this process is grief. Not just the forward-looking excitement of finally living authentically, but the grief for the years that went

STARTING OVER (AT EXACTLY THE On sex, desire, and coming out later in life RIGHT TIME)

By: Kai De Maeyer

differently than they might have. The relationships that were built on an incomplete picture. The sex that felt like something was missing but you could not name what. The version of yourself that you kept explaining away.

Both things can be true at once. The excitement is real. So is the loss.

WHAT HAPPENS TO SEX

Coming out does not automatically fix your sex life. For a lot of people, it complicates it first.

If you spent years having sex that was performed rather than felt, your body learned something from that. It learned to disconnect.

It learned to get through rather than to feel anything on the way. That which was suppressed does not always spring back the moment you give it permission. It often needs time, and patience, and a completely different kind of attention than you have been giving it.

For some people, coming out later in life

means encountering their own desire almost for the first time. They do not know what they want because they were never in a situation where wanting was safe. Many queer people spent years navigating the sexual scripts of people unlike them, learning to function within frameworks that were never designed with their actual desires in mind. Unlearning those scripts takes longer than coming out did.

This is not dysfunction. It is orientation, in the most literal sense. You are finding out where you are.

IF YOU ARE THE PARTNER

If your person has come out to you recently, you are probably holding a complicated mix of things right now. Love for them. Grief for the relationship you thought you understood.

STARTING OVER (AT EXACTLY THE On sex, desire, and coming out later in life RIGHT TIME)

By: Kai De Maeyer

Uncertainty about what this means for your future. Possibly some confusion about what you are even grieving, because they are still here, and they are telling you they love you, and somehow everything still feels different. What is happening is real, and it deserves space. Coming out can place strain on relationships built under heteronormative assumptions, and there is no single right way to navigate what comes next. Some couples renegotiate and find something stronger on the other side. Some do not stay together. Both outcomes can be the right one, depending on the people involved.

What tends not to help is rushing either of those conclusions. The person who just came out is disoriented too. They are not asking you to disappear, or to pretend nothing changed, or to perform a reaction they can live with. They are asking,

usually, to stay in it with you while things become clearer. Whether that is possible is a question worth taking seriously, and it is one that therapy can help with; not to push toward a particular outcome, but to help both of you figure out what is actually true.

WHAT STARTING OVER ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

Starting over sexually does not mean starting from zero. It means starting from yourself.

It means getting curious about desire rather than managing it. It means noticing what really feels good rather than what is supposed to. It means having conversations you probably did not have the first time around, about what you want, what you are afraid of, what you need from a partner to feel safe enough to be present.

STARTING OVER (AT EXACTLY THE RIGHT TIME)

On sex, desire, and coming out later in life

By: Kai De Maeyer

The two core tasks of second adolescence are gaining the experiences that were missed the first time, and reckoning honestly with what it meant to have missed them. Neither task has a deadline, and neither asks you to have it figured out before you begin. What they both require is that you actually be there for it, which is harder than it sounds when you have spent years being a very convincing understudy for someone else.

There is no behind. There is only where you are, and where you want to go from here.

By the time most people get to therapy for this, the identity question has been answered. What has not been answered is whether they are allowed to act on it. Allowed to want. Allowed to grieve. Allowed to start.

That is the work. And it is some of the most important work a person can do. If you are somewhere in this story, queer-affirming sex therapy can help you move through it with more clarity, less shame, and someone genuinely in your corner. You have already waited long enough.

WRITTEN BY: KAI DEMAeyer, REGISTERED PSYCHOTHERAPIST (QUALIFYING)

CONTACT: [KAI@TALKWITHKAI.CA](mailto:kai@talkwithkai.ca)

Read More / Resources

Sex Therapy and Queer-Affirming Support

talkwithkai.ca/sex-therapy-ontario

Come As You Are

Emily Nagoski

Research-based exploration of how desire works, including why it looks different across different bodies and histories.

STARTING OVER (AT EXACTLY THE On sex, desire, and coming out later in life RIGHT TIME)

By: Kai De Maeyer

Pleasure Activism

adrienne maree brown A collection of essays on the radical act of claiming pleasure as a right, especially for those who have been taught their desire does not matter.

Second Adolescence Podcast

Adam James Cohen, LMFT A therapist-hosted podcast specifically about the queer developmental experience of coming out and building identity in adulthood.



Come mingle with your queer community in the trees!
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THE VELVET ROPE OF TRAVEL: WHY TAG APPROVED® RESORTS ARE YOUR NEW OBSESSION

By:

Tasha Morrison

Owner, Travel Consultant

Hello, Hive! I am absolutely buzzing to be joining the **Gay Hive Hush Magazine** family. Writing this first article feels like finding the perfect lighting at a sunset happy hour while double-fisting pina coladas—pure magic. My name is Tasha, and if we haven't met yet, you should know that I live, breathe, and occasionally dream about boarding passes.

As the Travel Advisor and Chief Getaway Officer of **Global Queen Getaways**, my love for travel is not a hobby; it's a full-blown romance. I've spent over twenty years in leadership and HR, Learning Talent Development, which basically means I'm an expert at reading people—but my true calling is being the undisputed **Pool Queen** of travel. If there's a luxury cabana with my name on it and a staff that treats hospitality like a fine art, I am there. I believe travel is a gift we give ourselves—a burst of joy that expands our horizons and fills our souls. But let's be real: that joy only happens when you feel safe, seen, and celebrated.



New Article

The Vibe Check: Safe Travel & My Beliefs

I'm a people-first strategist. I believe your vacation shouldn't be a social experiment where you have to test the waters to see if it's safe to be yourself. You work hard, you navigate a world that isn't always kind, and you deserve a getaway where the only drama is deciding which cocktail to order next. Planning a vacation is usually 10% picking a destination and 90% conducting a forensic investigation to see if a hotel is actually "friendly" or just "we'll take your money but please don't be too loud about it" friendly. This is why the **TAG Approved®** seal is the only travel hack you need to care about.

The Gold Standard Since '98

Think of TAG as the ultimate background check for the hospitality industry. Originally created in 1998 by Community Marketing Insights (the wizards who've been training the industry since '92), this program has recently evolved into a new chapter within the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA).

A resort doesn't just get this title by slapping a rainbow filter on their Instagram for thirty days in June. To get the stamp, they have to pass a series of tests that would make a corporate auditor sweat. They must prove their commitment through inclusive employment policies and tangible support for our community. It's a guarantee that when you ask for a romantic sunset dinner, the concierge won't short-circuit.



TRAVEL ADVOCACY GROUP

LGBTQ+ Welcoming Accommodations through
Research, Education and Best Practices

The Vibe Check: Safe Travel & My Beliefs

Looking for a sanctuary where the only thing closeted is your designer luggage? Here are the spots mastering the art of the inclusive escape:

☒ **Secrets Royal Beach Punta Cana, Dominican Republic:** This is for my Namasté all day crowd. You can find your zen with yoga on 700 yards of white sand, or you can find my version of zen: Unlimited-Luxury® tropical drinks delivered by people who anticipate your needs before you even know you're thirsty.



☒ **Blue Chairs Resort by the Sea, Puerto Vallarta:** PV was the first city in Mexico to get the Gay Travel Approved® badge, and Blue Chairs is the crown jewel. Their rooftop club overlooks Banderas Bay, featuring international drag shows and a Sunday drag brunch that is basically a religious experience.

☒ **Zoëtry® Curaçao Resort & Spa:** An intimate boutique situation for when you want to feel inspired and connected but also very, very pampered. It's all lush foliage and restorative spa treatments. If you want every need thoughtfully anticipated, this is the one.



☒ **Secrets Papagayo Costa Rica:** Explicitly TAG Approved®, this resort is set on a secluded peninsula in Guanacaste. It is known for its commitment to inclusion in a country that led Central America in legalizing same-sex marriage.

☒ **Fairmont Empress, British Columbia:** Overlooking Victoria's sparkling Inner Harbor and just steps away from downtown, Canada's Castle on the Coast sits proudly at the center of culture and history. If you want luxury on a Canadian budget – go here!



The Cortisol Drop You Deserve

The true luxury of a TAG property isn't just the thread count—it's the immediate drop in your cortisol levels. From the moment you pull up, that internal radar finally gets to be switched off. You can just exist. If you want to spend the entire afternoon being a total Pool Queen like me, draped in a sheer caftan with a frozen margarita in each hand, the only judgment you'll receive is from people who are jealous they didn't think of your outfit first.

Coming Up in the Hive

Buckle up, because this is just the beginning. In future issues, I'll be taking you behind the gates of ultra-exclusive private villas and diving deep into my obsession with Japan. I'll also give you the scoop on my upcoming trip to Barbados, my infamous Oktoberfest journey in Munich, and that time I got kidnapped by hippies in Sloquet Hot Springs. – Long story! And for those who want to swap the caftan for some chaps? We're going to explore the unexpectedly wonderful world of the dude ranch.

Ready to stop scrolling and start soaring? If you're looking to plan your next escape without the guesswork, contact me at Global Queen Getaways. Let's make sure your next getaway is as legendary as you are!

*La-Tasha Daisy Morrison is the TICO-registered and ACTA-certified founder of **Global Queen Getaways**, specializing in luxury, high-impact travel for the LGBTQIA2S+ community. A self-proclaimed Pool Queen with over 20 years of leadership experience, she blends emotional intelligence with world-class hospitality to ensure you are celebrated, not just tolerated. Ready to turn your travel dreams into a legendary reality? Follow her journeys on the gram the book: @globalqueengetaways and email tasha@globalqueengetaways.ca for expert travel advice to help you find that sweet spot vacation.

Meet the "Pool Queen" in person! Global Queen Getaways will be at Booth #417 during the Fierce Fabulous Expo on Saturday, June 6, at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (10 AM–6 PM). Stop by to talk all things travel and enter to win some incredible prizes—grab your tickets at www.fierceandfabulousexpo.com/tickets.



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THE RECKONING ROOM

Real talk on love, loss, and becoming again with Amanda Audrey

Welcome to The Reckoning Room.

If you're navigating love, loss, betrayal, or the complicated process of starting over —
you're not
alone.

If you have a question, a situation, or a story you'd like to see explored in a future column,
you
can write in anonymously.

This space is for honesty. For healing. For the things we don't always say out loud.
Submissions can be sent to: AskAmandaAudrey@outlook.com

AFTER THE FIRE:

LEARNING TO TRUST YOURSELF AGAIN

By: Amanda Audrey



Healing doesn't always begin with clarity.

Sometimes, it begins quietly — in the space where something has ended, and you're left learning how to exist in what comes next.

There's a certain kind of loss that changes you. Not just in how you move through the world, but in how you see yourself within it. And with that change comes an invitation — to rebuild, to grow, and to become someone new.

The months that followed were not for the weak at heart.

I cycled through the stages of grief on repeat — denial, anger, bargaining, depression — like my mind was trying to make sense of something my body already knew.

My kids — thank goodness they are teenagers — were witness to this layered, tangled mess of emotions. I saw how my sadness impacted them, and I saw their own grief being expressed in intricate and heartbreaking ways.

Although our experiences were very different, we were all moving through the same motions.

One person's choices can ripple through an entire family, but what stayed with me most was how we found our way back — slowly, imperfectly, but together.

AFTER THE FIRE:

LEARNING TO TRUST YOURSELF AGAIN

By: **Amanda Audrey**

Together, we moved toward healing. Not all at once, but in small, palpable moments.

I moved from panic attacks and extreme hypervigilance to noticing small moments of laughter and joy again. They went from anger and confusion to expressing gratitude for the opportunity to start a new life together — and feeling hope for what the future holds.

You see, grief is not just an emotional state. The physical side effects can be equally debilitating. The tightening of the chest, the racing thoughts, the sleepless nights, the nausea — these are all very real symptoms of a broken heart.

But more importantly, they are physical reminders that we are still living. Still breathing. Still taking up space in a world that has more to offer us than this small chapter of sorrow and despair.

And so, it's important to notice these feelings. To acknowledge their presence. To understand that this is what makes us human. And then, to take a deep breath... and let them go.

Because your peace is not in anyone else's hands but your own.

I continuously told myself, "I can do hard things."

And the truth is — so can you.

Healing didn't mean becoming who I was before. It meant becoming someone new — someone who listens to her intuition, who honors her boundaries, and who no longer abandons herself for the sake of love.

For a long time, I thought healing would feel like certainty. But it didn't. It felt like quiet. Like my body slowly learning that it was safe again — not because nothing bad could happen, but because I finally knew I could trust myself if it did.

I don't trust as easily as I once did. But I trust myself more.

And in the end, that's what brought me back to life

LGBTQIA+

CHALLENGES OF

Page 85

DATING, HIV POSITIVE AND POLYGAMOUS

By: Skyler Fury

#LOVEWINS

Stay
Queer



A POZ Experience

By: Skyler Fury

Your stomach Drops. The mind and the heart race. The images of the only representation in the media you have ever seen run through your mind. Angel from the musical Rent. Justin from the show 13 Reasons Why. Vic, Ben, and Hunter from Queer as Folk were those characters for me.

The Diagnosis: HIV.

The Fear: a painful and agonizing death.

I always told myself it would never happen to me. I always tried to be careful, but I made my choices that led to this. Do I wish I didn't have it? Yes. Do I regret how I got it? No. I fell in love with one of the best people in the entire world. I knew he was Positive, since he told me everything. But I didn't let the stigma or fear prevent me from loving someone who deserves love and so much more.

I knew there was a possibility I could end up with it. Because, back then, he wasn't on any medication. As a prevention, he tried walking away from me. Yet, I just couldn't let him go.

When you are younger, you develop preconceived notions, but you really have no idea how bad something is until you experience it for yourself. The day I found out is the day I will never forget. My partner was in the hospital after having an appendectomy. They had tested his blood and urged him to get help with his HIV. Then they told me to get tested, so I did.

When the results came back I was sitting next to him in his hospital bed. I tried to hold back the tears because my hubby had just been through something traumatic. I knew what the results would be, but hearing it made it real. I shook it off. I was afraid, but unlike so many others, I had someone who had gone through this and would be there for me through it all.

A POZ Experience

By: Skyler Fury



We agreed not to tell our families, since his side can be very close-minded. At least, not until we were ready to speak our truth. I told him I wouldn't because the one thing I didn't want was for people to blame him. He already felt bad enough. Living with HIV and keeping it a secret proved very difficult. Rumors amongst my friends swirled around. My friends told me to leave him or to be careful, because they weren't sure.

Nurses showed up at my house begging me to get help. The pressure was on.

On top of the pressures of work and hiding, we were on the lookout for a third for a throuple. Something we were searching for, prior to the diagnoses. Dating was a whole different ballgame. Not only did we have to find someone who was open to a throuple, but they also had to be okay with our status, which we always disclosed upfront.

We experienced ghosting, even after many messages telling us they wanted to meet up. People wishing us dead. People confused about how a throuple works.

One person even asked, "If I and one of you needed a kidney, who would you choose?"

Meaning, which one in the throuple is more important? That is a really fucked up question. How do you choose one person's life over another.

It was very difficult and hurtful. It felt like I wasn't a person but the HIV itself. People couldn't just be kind and honest. Even people who said they didn't have a problem with our status would ghost us. It takes nothing to just say, "Hey you two are really nice, but I don't think this is going to work out."

Everything took its toll. After several years of not dealing with our status, my husband got very sick. It started off so slowly and then rapidly progressed out of nowhere. He started getting severe headaches. I had never seen him in so much pain. I rushed him to the emergency room. When we got in, they had to keep him overnight, since they weren't sure what was going on. They had to run many tests.

By the end of the night, they finally gave him a room. When we were getting him settled in, we were in the middle of having a conversation, then he started becoming incoherent. His speech became sparse, and what he said didn't match what he was trying to say. I had never been so scared.

The doctors decided to do a spinal tap to get a better understanding of what was going on. They found meningitis and shingles. The

A POZ Experience

By: Skyler Fury



meningitis had caused speech and motor function issues, and the shingles attacked his nerves in his back causing issues with his legs.

They quickly moved him to isolation and started treatment. Because of how contagious meningitis is I couldn't stay with him. It was killing him, and I couldn't even be there with him. They expected me to go home, knowing he was fighting for his life.

All the while, I was shaking uncontrollably. He is my entire world. I couldn't just leave him there. I had no choice. I went home and couldn't sleep. And still, I had to go to work, since we needed to pay our bills. My hubby was the apartment manager of the complex we lived in, and part of his job was maintaining the complex and picking up and dropping off actors for the company.

I had to help his boss do those things while working full time and visiting him in the hospital every day. I was exhausted, both physically and emotionally. I didn't care. All I wanted was for my hubby to be okay.

I also made sure to call his family, because I didn't know if he was going to survive. He spent over a month and a half in that hospital. The doctors did everything they could and began treating his HIV. I also finally began medication for my HIV.

He survived, but the doctors told him he may never walk again. After being checked out of the hospital, they sent him to a physical therapy facility for another couple of weeks. I continued to work at his job and mine while visiting him.

He pushed himself very hard. He continued to tell himself and the doctors he was going to walk again. He never gave up, and neither did I. When he left physical therapy, he left in a wheelchair, but he still had feelings in his legs and could walk very slightly.

His mother came to stay with us, so she could help him with his recovery. I am so grateful for her. By the time she left, he was walking with a cane. Something the doctors told him probably would never happen. He now runs, stretches, and exercises, with full mobility.

A POZ Experience

By: Skyler Fury



After everything we had been through and finally getting the help we needed, I finally decided to tell my family and friends. My hubby's family knew, and I was tired of hiding. I got the reactions I expected

My family was always so supportive of me. My mom took it the hardest, I think. She was just so worried for me. She asked me if I ever thought about not being with my husband. I told her no. I wasn't upset at her question. I knew it wasn't coming out of anger or hate. She asked me what I needed, and if I was going to be okay..

I explained to her what I think everyone should know. If you are on a medication, it is truly lifesaving. Not only does it help you recover, but it is also preventative. Once you become what is considered undetectable, meaning, there are no copies of the virus detected in your blood, you can no longer infect anyone else.

Or as it is promoted, Undetectable = Untransmittable.

It has been 10 years since my diagnosis, and 7 years of being undetectable. I am so thankful to all

the doctors, who not only saved my husband's life, but saved mine as well. I beg anyone who is reading this... If you or someone you know is HIV positive, get help!

I also ask those who aren't poz to open their hearts and be kind. You never know what someone has gone through. If there is anything I've learned through my experience, it's to take chances and chase your dreams, because you never know when or how you will go.

Also to seek help. It may be difficult and you may struggle, but things are easier when you have people you can rely on.



Queer Interviews





RACHELLE HILL ONE- ON-ONE WITH BEE BERTRAND.

By Rachelle Hill

“THRIVING, LAUGHING, AND REWRITING THE RULES OF QUEER COMEDY”

There’s something electric about catching a comic right as they hit their stride—and right now, Bee Bertrand is exactly there. With a fresh wave of shows, a debut comedy album on the horizon, and a voice that blends vulnerability with absurd brilliance, Bee is carving out space in Canada’s queer comedy scene.

Rachelle Hill: Let’s start at the beginning—how did comedy find you?

Bee Bertrand: I was always obsessed with storytelling and making my friends laugh. I started going to queer open mics just to watch, and eventually people told me to try it. I did—and it was amazing... then I bombed hard the next time. That contrast hooked me.

Bee: I always write everything by hand. If it doesn’t make me laugh, it’s not ready. What makes a joke land is vulnerability. Not everyone understands being trans—but



everyone understands feeling awkward or out of place.

Bee: There are so many more trans comics now, which is incredible. Audiences are



RACHELLE HILL ONE-ON-ONE WITH BEE BERTRAND.

By Rachele Hill

changing too. Sometimes people hesitate—like, “Am I allowed to laugh?” But it’s comedy. Please laugh.

Bee: People forget trans men exist. But we’re here, and we’re taking up space.

Bee: I’ve learned to adapt to any room. I’ve got universal material too—like everyone’s had a mean dentist, right?

Bee: I’m in my disruptive era. I want to write more political material and challenge people while still making them laugh.

Upcoming:

May 2 — Queer Trash Trivia Night

May 20 — New monthly show at Wenona (Toronto)

Bee: My debut comedy album is called “And Bee Is Thriving.” I want to tour it and connect with people through it.

Bee: I love big personalities like Maria Bamford and Biff Naked. I just want to be interesting.



Bee: Keep consuming queer art. Every creative thing someone puts out is them taking a chance on themselves. I want people to do their weird ideas.



Bee Takes His Shot

Bee Bertrand hosts a wholesome and hilarious show, where he has feel-good chats with queer celebs and community members.

Every Tuesday at 7pm at prideradiocanada.com



RACHELLE
HILL ONE-
ON-ONE
WITH BEE
BERTRAND.

By Rachele Hill

The New Noise with Rachele Hill is your weekly

deep dive into the future of alternative music. Hosted by award-winning producer and broadcaster Rachele Hill (she/they), the show spotlights emerging 2SLGBTQIAA+ artists and allies from across Canada and beyond. Expect fresh releases, hidden gems, artist features, and bold new sounds shaping the alt-rock, indie, and genre-blending underground. If it's innovative, unapologetic, and pushing culture forward — you'll hear it here first.

Show Times

Sun:
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm





BEHIND THE PLASTIC WRAP: WHEN THE PROTECTORS ARE THE GREATEST THREAT

By: Arden Tomas



Yesterday morning, when I read the news, I just stared at first. The Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that Hungary's often-called "homophobic law" regulating LGBTQI+ content, including the mandatory plastic wrapping of books, violates EU law. The court stated it violates the right to human dignity, private life, and freedom of expression. In a word: illegal. For a moment, there was silence in my head. Then came the tears. Not tears of joy. Tears of liberation. But after the tears came rage. A deep, hot rage. Because this law was never just about books. It was a message to me and to all of us that who we are is dangerous, sick, and must be hidden from children. Meanwhile, they—the lawmakers, the protectors—were building a completely different reality.

**THE TEXT OF THE LAW AND THE ROOT
OF THE LIE**

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In 2021, the law was passed under the banner of "child protection." It prohibited sharing content that "differs from the traditional model of heterosexual relationships" to those under 18. In practice, this meant slapping a plastic wrapper on the cover of a book like Heartstopper or Billy and His Friends, as if it were infectious or pornographic material. Lira Könyv Zrt. refused to do this and was fined millions. But as Tineke Strik, the European Parliament's rapporteur, said, the law's real goal was "the intimidation and marginalization of LGBTQI+ persons." Behind the text lay a worldview: the LGBTQ+ community equals pedophiles preying on children. This was the backbone of the propaganda. The message was sophisticated and cruel: we are the threat. But where were the real threats in reality?

THE PEAKS OF HYPOCRISY: WHEN THE PROTECTORS ARE EXPOSED

Because at the same time the law was being voted on in parliament, the government propaganda machine was running at full throttle. Meanwhile, events within their own ranks shattered this moral posturing.

The MEP Fleeing Down a Drainpipe: In November 2020, József Szájer, a founding member of Fidesz, one of the main authors of the constitution, a loud proclaimer of "values," was caught at a gay orgy in Brussels that violated coronavirus lockdown rules. When police arrived, he tried to escape by climbing down a drainpipe. Here is the equation: the politician who walks around in moral armor, writing laws that portray me as contagious, is himself running out of a sex party via a sewer. This isn't irony. This is cynicism.

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The Horror of the Szőlő Street Children's Home: Meanwhile, in Hungary, allegations emerged of systematic physical and sexual abuse at the state-run Szőlő Street children's home. Victims' accounts described years of terror, with superiors and management remaining silent. Here, in state care, crimes were committed against the most vulnerable children. Where were the lawmakers, so worried about Heartstopper, when this was happening in their own institutions? The real danger wasn't on the library shelf, but within the four walls of state-supervised homes.

The Pardon Scandal: The State Prosecutor, the Children, and the President: The latest and most brutal chapter of this hypocrisy unfolded in early 2024. It was revealed that President Katalin Novák had granted a pardon to a man who, as the director of a state children's home, had helped cover up child abuse. The president, a former Fidesz family minister and also a vocal advocate of "child protection," rewarded with clemency those involved in covering up real child abuse. The scandal so outraged the country that Novák was forced to resign. This link perfectly shows: the system does not protect children. The system protects itself. The real criminals and their accomplices.

THE TRUE MEANING OF THE PLASTIC WRAP

These scandals—Szájér, Szőlő Street, Novák's pardon—are not isolated cases. They are the reality of the 16-year Fidesz governance. The law now condemned by the EU court was the curtain for this reality. A plastic wrap glued to our faces so we wouldn't see what was happening in the background. While they displayed us, gay and

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trans people, as pedophiles, real child abuse and its cover-up could rage within their own system. The law was never about children. It was about power and the management of hatred. About being able to portray an entire community as collective criminals, while the real criminals were granted clemency.

HOPE IN A NEW CHAPTER

After 16 years, after an era of governance many experienced as a veiled dictatorship, a potential turning point is now before us. The EU court's ruling is a legal spark. But real change must also happen politically. On April 12th, it did. The Hungarian people went to the polls and voted out the Orbán-Fidesz government. The Tisza party won the election. The dictatorship has been removed by the will of the people.

This is the monumental shift. Now, the hope is that the new Tisza-led government will truly repair the damage. Not just repeal the law. It must address the deep wounds of the lies and hypocrisy of the past 16 years. Real child protection must be directed against real dangers, not against loving couples or young people searching for their identity.

The court's ruling is a step. But the next step is ours to take: to keep telling our stories. Loudly. Without wrapping ourselves in plastic. And to remember. Always remember who the real protectors were, and who the real threat was.

Best regards,



Perry Resnick

perrythebartender



Review details

Review details



Review received on 9/17/2024

Amazing Bartender

Perry is a must at my functions! Not only does he make incredible cocktails - but he remembers what everybody at the party is drinking! He is always 1 step ahead and always our next drink ready. He is professional, friendly and always has a great smile! 10/10!!

Rating: ★★★★★



Review received on 8/10/2025

Amazing bartender!!

I booked Perry for a backyard birthday party and couldn't have been happier! He had a great setup, was so friendly and makes the best drinks!! Everyone loved him and he truly made our party a memorable one! Highly recommend for any event

Rating: ★★★★★

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#LOVEWINS



Kinsmen Club Of Listowel
Listowel,
ON
Saturday, May 30 • 7:30 PM - 10:30
PM

Event Details

📅 Saturday, May 30

🚪 Doors open at 7:30 PM

🎭 Show starts at 8:30 PM

🎫 Ticket Options

- Early Bird – \$35 (limited quantity)
- General Admission – \$45
- Pride Supporter – \$55



*Promoting age-positive narratives
If, we as older gay/bi men, want more promoting of age-positive narratives in LGBTQ+ culture, then it is up to us to start changing that narrative.*



Gay Hive Magazine welcomes our older gay men here! Email us today!
hushmagazine001@gmail.com



Gay Men 50+

“Older gay men, knowledgeable, handsome and a lifetime of understanding”



RICK CLEMONS

Contributing Writer: Rick Clemons Careers · Relationships · Sex · Aging · Finances · Family · Loneliness

Let's be real. Nobody handed us a manual for gay life after 50. No roadmap for what sex looks like when your body's changed, what to do when the relationship you built doesn't fit anymore, or how to stop pretending that "fine" is good enough. Rick Clemons isn't here to hold your hand. He's here to name the bullshit and help you stop negotiating your way through a life that should actually be yours.

Rick is a coach, speaker, and author of *Frankly My Dear, I'm Gay* and his forthcoming book *Perfect Detour: A Gay Man's Guide to Handling Life's Plot Twists...and His Own Bullshit* is already turning heads before it hits shelves. He's also the host of the highly acclaimed podcast *40 Plus: Gay Men, Gay Talk* (www.40plusgaymengaytalk.com), a no-holds-barred conversation series that has built a devoted following of gay men who are done playing small and ready to talk about what actually matters.

He writes for gay men over 50 on the stuff that actually keeps you up at night: careers that stopped making sense, relationships you've outgrown (or can't find), sex after the body you used to have, money you've avoided dealing with, kids who don't get it, parents who never did, and the kind of loneliness nobody in your circle admits to feeling.

He doesn't therapize. He doesn't inspire. He tells the truth, with a bear hug behind it and zero patience for "someday." His work is direct, unapologetically adult, and built for the gay man who's done tolerating his life and ready to decide like he means it.

No fears. No excuses. No apologies.

Website: rickclemons.com Podcast: 40plusgaymengaytalk.com

Rick Clemons

Host of 40 Plus: Real Men. Real Talk Podcast.

Author of *Frankly My Dear I'm Gay*

www.rickclemons.com

Listen to 40 Plus: Gay Men. Gay Talk

Connect with me on Instagram

Nobody's Coming to Save You From Your Own Couch

By: Rick Clemons

The loneliness epidemic hitting gay men over 50 is real. Some of it isn't your fault. A lot of it is. All of it can change.



Let's start with the part nobody wants to say out loud.

Gay men are lonely. Not just "haven't found the right guy" lonely. Not "wish I had more friends" lonely. We're talking about a specific, bone-deep, 2am-staring-at-the-ceiling kind of lonely that a lot of guys over 50 know intimately but rarely admit to anyone, including themselves.

And the cruel irony? We're lonely in a community that's supposedly all about chosen family, pride parades, and brotherhood.

So what the hell happened?

The Setup Nobody Warned Us About

Gay men were raised in a straight world with straight blueprints for how human connection works. School. Church. Family dinners. Sports teams. Dating rituals. All of it designed by and for heterosexual people building heterosexual lives.

We watched. We mimicked. We survived by being chameleons.

But those blueprints never fit us. The friendship model built around sports bars and talking about nothing emotional for decades, that was never ours. The romantic roadmap of dating, commitment, marriage, kids, that was either unavailable for most of our lives or handed to us so late we didn't know what to do with it.

So we improvised. We built community in bars because that was often the only safe space. We built identity around sex and nightlife because those were the arenas where we could finally just be and feel something to someone, no matter the size of his dick. And then we turned 50, the bars got less interesting - or non-existent, the apps got exhausting, and suddenly the scaffolding we'd been standing on wasn't holding anymore.

Nobody's Coming to Save You From Your Own Couch

Continued

By: Rick Clemons

The loneliness epidemic hitting gay men over 50 is real. Some of it isn't your fault. A lot of it is. All of it can change.

Nobody gave us a new gay man's blueprint.

The Community That Eats Its Own

You'd think the gay community, having survived what it's survived, would be the warmest place on earth for a man to land as he gets older.

Sometimes it is. Sometimes it's extraordinary.

But ageism inside the gay community is vicious, petty, and real. The apps have filters. The parties have unofficial age caps. The Instagram aesthetic of gay culture skews relentlessly young, built and beautiful. Men over 50 feel invisible in spaces that were once theirs, sidelined by a community that absorbed mainstream culture's obsession with youth and made it its own.

You come out of a world that judged you for being gay, and walk into a community that judges you for being old. The rejection just changes its address.

So men retreat. They shrink. They stop showing up. And slowly, quietly, isolation moves in like a roommate nobody invited.

Lonely vs. Alone. Know the Difference.

These two words are not the same thing and confusing them is costing you.

Loneliness is a signal. Your nervous system screams at you that you're disconnected from people or purpose in a way that hurts. It's not a personality flaw. It's not a life sentence. It's information.

Being alone is a condition. A Tuesday night with no plans and nobody texting back. It can be peaceful, productive, even restorative, if you've learned to be comfortable in your own company.

The problem is most gay men over 50 haven't. We spent decades performing for rooms full of people, hiding ourselves in plain sight, being whoever we needed to be to stay safe or accepted or loved. When the room empties out, we don't know what to do with ourselves.

The silence feels like judgment. The stillness feels like failure. So we fill it with scrolling, streaming, and app notifications rather than sitting with the one person we've never quite learned to be comfortable with.

Ourselves.

Loneliness isn't fixed by more people. It's fixed by more honesty. Starting with the conversation you have with yourself when nobody's watching.

Nobody's Coming to Save You From Your Own Couch

Continued

By: Rick Clemons

The loneliness epidemic hitting gay men over 50 is real. Some of it isn't your fault. A lot of it is. All of it can change.

Three Ways to Actually Do Something About It

Enough diagnosis. Here's the prescription. None of it requires a therapist's couch, a twelve-step meeting, or downloading another app.

1. Get off your couch and get into the world. You don't even have to talk to anyone.

Most guys skip this because they think getting out means performing. Socializing. Being "on." They imagine showing up somewhere alone and having to work a room like it's the first day of school.

It's not that.

Getting out means going to the coffee shop and sitting there. Walking in a park where other humans exist. Sitting at the bar of a restaurant and eating a meal by yourself like a person who owns his life. You don't have to talk to anyone. You just have to be in proximity to the world instead of hiding from it.

Isolation feeds on itself. The longer you stay on the couch, the heavier the couch gets. Your nervous system doesn't need you to make a new best friend. It just needs to remember that other humans exist and aren't a threat.

Get up. Go somewhere. Bring a book if you need armor. Just go.

2. Learn to actually be with yourself. And no, that's not a masturbation joke.

If you can't spend a quiet evening alone without spiraling, without grabbing your phone every four minutes, without a low-grade anxiety humming underneath everything, pay attention to that.

Being with yourself is a skill. For gay men who spent decades hiding or performing or both, it genuinely isn't automatic. We were never taught our own company was enough. Most of us were taught, explicitly or not, that who we were at our core was something to be managed rather than enjoyed.

Start small. One hour with no screens. A walk without headphones. A meal cooked slowly without a show running in the background. The goal isn't enlightenment. The goal is to stop being a stranger to yourself. Because you cannot genuinely connect with other people until you can sit comfortably with who you actually are.

3. Change the garbage running on a loop in your head.

You know the voice. Too old. Too much. Not enough. Too late. Too broken.

That voice is not truth. It's a habit built slowly over years, starting with things other people said before you were old

Nobody's Coming to Save You From Your Own Couch

By: Rick Clemons **Continued**

The loneliness epidemic hitting gay men over 50 is real. Some of it isn't your fault. A lot of it is. All of it can change.

enough to argue back. You're not going to silence it with affirmations and a gratitude journal. What you can do is notice when it shows up and ask one question.

Is this actually true, or is this just the old story running again?

Because what keeps gay men over 50 isolated is mostly not reality. It's a story. That nobody wants to hear from us. That our best years are behind us. That we're too set in our ways to connect with anyone new.

None of that is real. All of it is costing you.

The loneliness epidemic among gay men over 50 is real, documented, and quietly devastating lives that look perfectly fine from the outside. But it is not inevitable. It is not permanent. And it is not who you are.

It's where you are right now.

And where you are right now can change. Starting with getting off the couch and going somewhere. Anywhere.

The world is still out there. So are you.

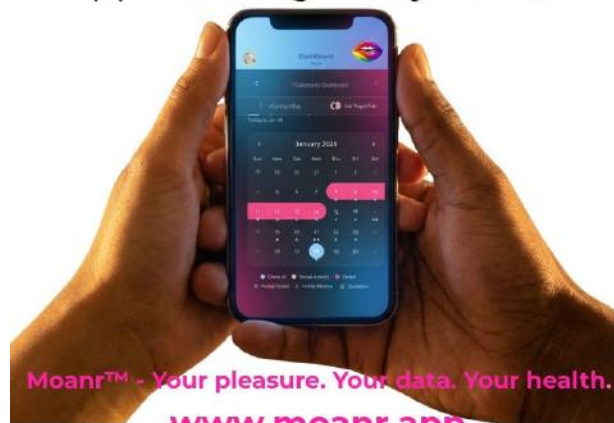
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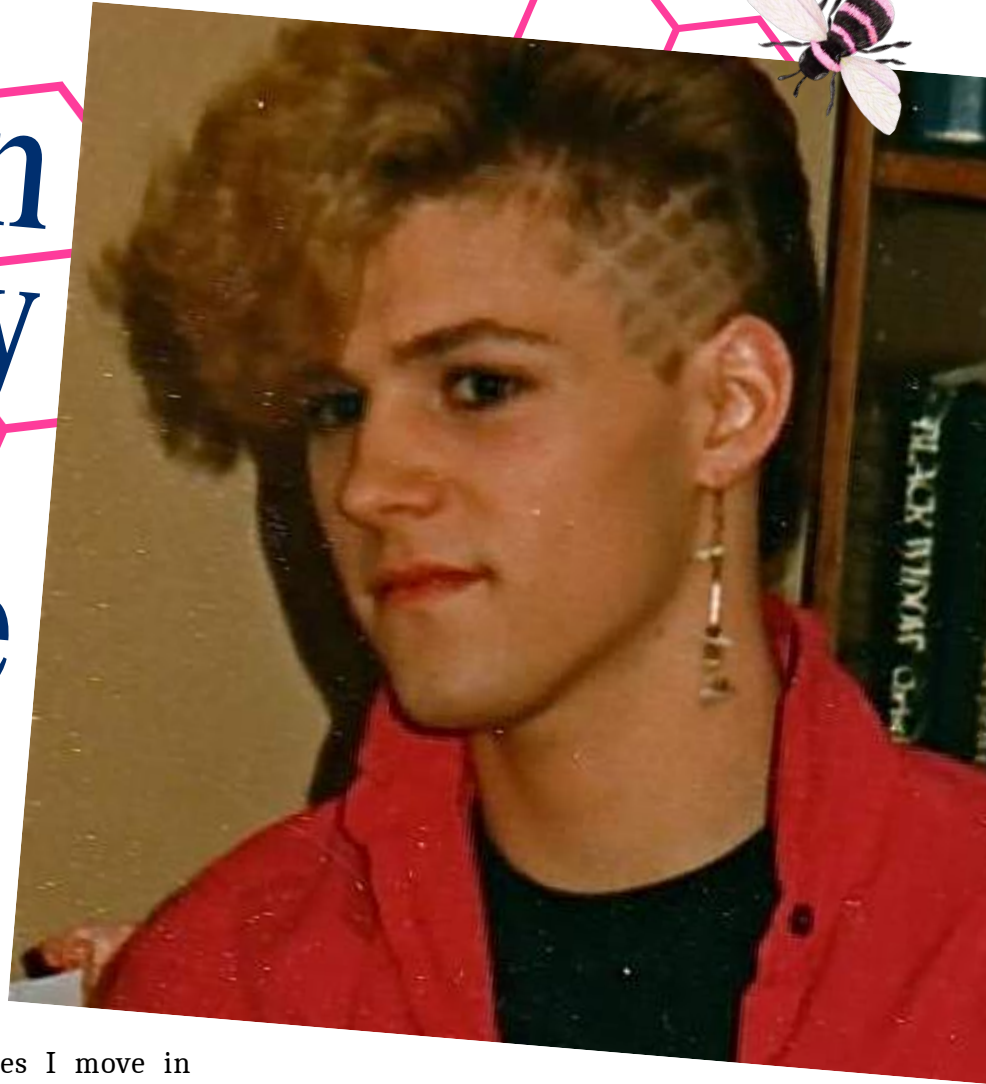
When thinking about this month's theme "Modern Family," I was struggling a bit to connect with an angle. Most times these days, at 60 years old, I am not always feeling so modern. But there was a time when I was - We were the most modern. And in those days, we didn't just inherit family; we invented it. In sociology and anthropology, Fictive Kin refers to individuals who are un related by birth or marriage, but who share a relationship that has the emotional and social

today's trans community- a leather daddy, and a prostitute. They were the veterans of a war the rest of the world didn't know was being fought, and they became my teachers. They taught that family isn't something you're given; it's something you protect with everything you've got. We were living in a world of survival and glamour. The stakes were high, the hair was big, and the love was fierce. Did we know what we were at the time, or what we were actually building? Absolutely not! To us, we were just living- loudly, messily, and with a

Modern Family

"Fictive Kin"

By: Michael Shawn Sanders



weight of a family. In the circles I move in today, we simply call it 'Chosen Family.' My journey into this intentional way of living didn't begin in a quiet corner; it exploded in 1986. As an openly gay teen, I found myself cast out of my biological bloodline and into a world that was loud, defiant, and brilliantly 'other.' I didn't just find a new home; I found a front-row seat to a masterclass in authenticity. I was the youngest of a nucleus that looked nothing like the families on television. My 'kin' consisted of two drag queens-the bold forerunners of

desperate kind of joy. We fought like siblings, we loved with the intensity of people who knew the clock was ticking, and we plotted our next moves in the back of dressing rooms and leather bars. We were young, vibrant, and convinced of our own neon-lit immortality. But the "modernity" we claimed was quickly met by a brutal, ancient reality.

The AIDS crisis wasn't just a headline for us; it was a war declared on our very existence. We watched, paralyzed and galvanized, as the

people who taught us how to walk, how to paint our faces, and how to stand tall began to fall. The nucleus of our family started to lose its electrons. While the world outside turned a cold shoulder, doing nothing as a generation of brilliance was extinguished, we became each other's medics. We didn't have a choice. We learned how to navigate hospital bureaucracies before we learned how to navigate 401(k). We held hands at bedsides, we organized vigils that felt like battle plans, and we grew up. We survived. Not

being can do. Today, the "Modern Family" I helped forge in the neon shadows of 1986 has expanded into a vast, vibrant map of the American landscape. We are no longer huddled in a single dressing room or a singular "nucleus" of survival; we are spread across the country, from the grit of the East Coast to the golden light of the West. We are the ones who made it. We are the living proof that a "Chosen Family" isn't just a placeholder for the real thing- it is a foundation strong enough to build a lifetime upon.



Modern Family

"Fictive Kin"

By: Michael Shawn Sanders



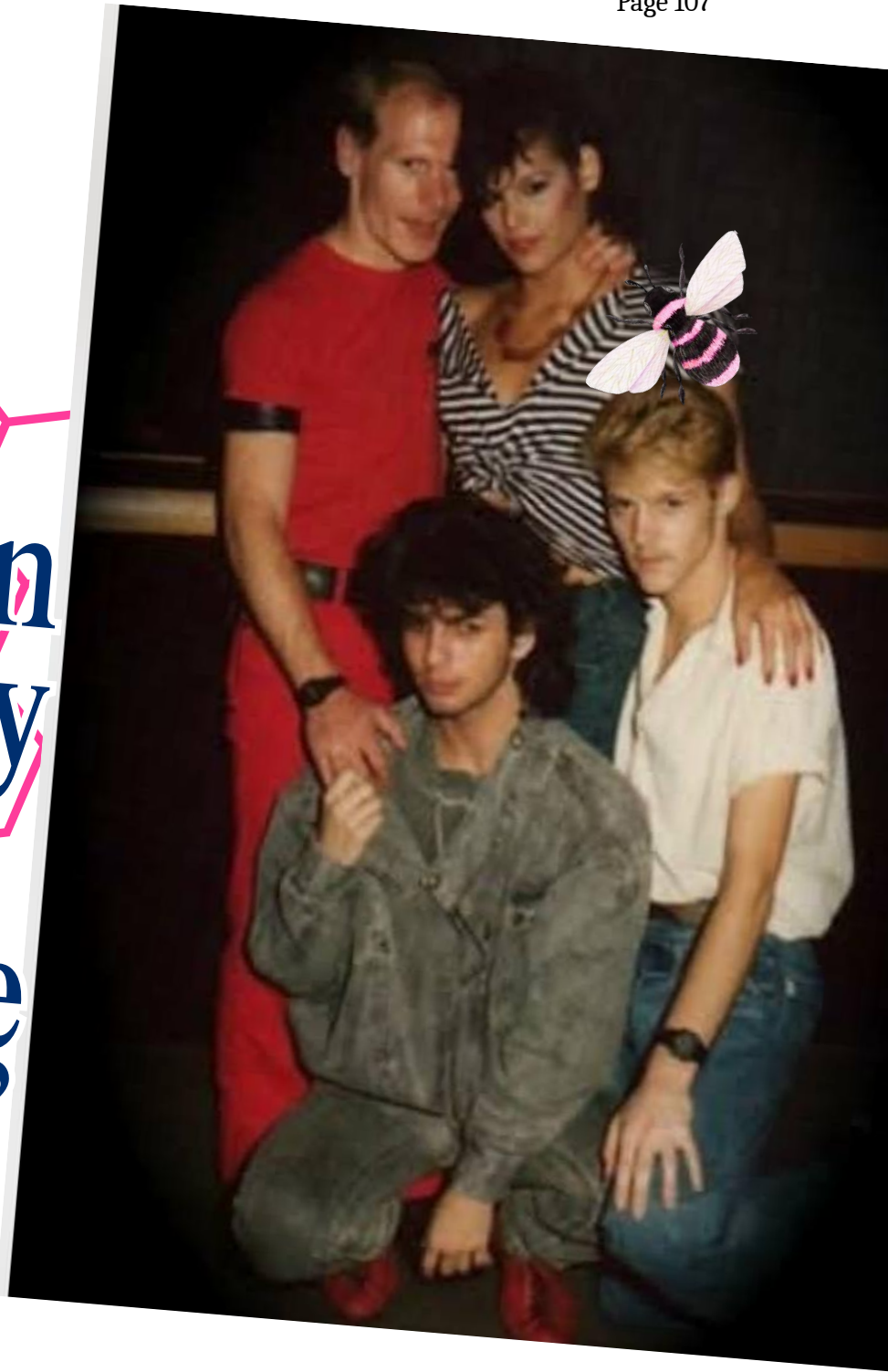
because the world became kinder, but because our "Fictive Kin" was stronger than a plague. Through the grief we didn't just endure; we evolved. We moved from the wings to center stage, building careers, finding success, and - against every odd the 1980s & 90s stacked against us- we grew old. We took the "bones" of that first chosen family and used them to frame new ones, becoming the elders we once looked up to. We realized that while the technology and the terminology change, the act of forging family remains the most modern thing a human

In 2026, my family has blossomed into a beautiful, complicated tapestry of sub-nuclei. I look across my "Fictive Kin" and I see a world of lovers and lifelong partners, wife and wife, husband and husband. We have become the mothers and fathers we once lacked. We have become the mentor we once relied on. But the definition doesn't stop at the doorstep of our homes. My family now ripples out through my sober community, where we share the bread of a hard-won

Modern Family

“Fictive Kin”

By: Michael Shawn Sanders



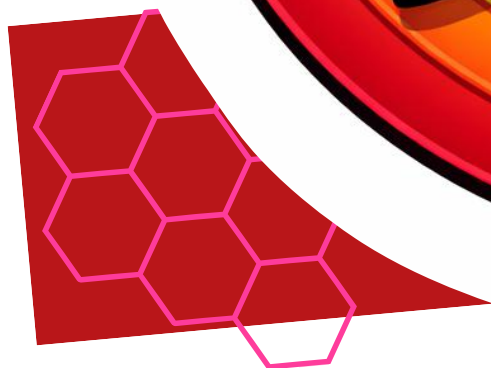
peace, and through my nonprofit and church families, where the bonds of shared purpose are as thick as blood. In this space, age is a bridge, not a barrier. My family consists of the elders who remember the war, and the younger generation who are just beginning to write their own scripts. Whether we use the clinical shorthand of “Fictive Kin” or the soulful warmth of “Chosen Family,” we are describing the same miraculous phenomenon: the human capacity to look at a stranger and say, “You belong to me.” So, I’ve realized that at 60, I am more “modern” than I have been. Not because of the technology in my hand, but because of the intentionality in my heart. We have stripped away the rigid, ornate expectations of what a home should be to reveal the clean, functional lines of what a home actually is. Looking at the faces that make up my world today- the reclaimed, the redeemed, and the resilient- it’s clear that we didn’t invent anything. We just remembered how to love. Maybe the “Modern Family” isn’t a new invention at all. It’s just Family.

It's official, I'm back as an Agony Uncle and the new column lands on 1st March with @gayhivemagazine We're tackling the big stuff: being dumped and surviving it with dignity intact, feeling utterly adrift in the dating jungle, wedding drama that would make a vicar blush, and how to politely (or not so politely) inform relatives with feral offspring that your home is not a soft-play centre.

Sharp advice. Warm heart. Minimal nonsense....

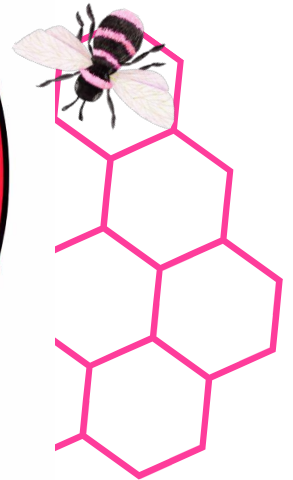
Email Agony Uncle today! He is waiting to give you advice!

agonyunclegayhivemagazine@gmail.com





By: Jonathan
Welford



DEAR JONATHAN

"I'm in my early 50s and have always been the reliable one in the family. I didn't mind helping my younger brother when it was small amounts, but it's started to build up over time.

The last time I gave him money, it was for what he said was an essential car repair. A few days later, he was posting about a lads' week away in the sun.

Now he's asked again. I've just moved house, spent a fortune on a new kitchen, and the spare money I do have is set aside for a summer trip Overseas.

He says it's another big car repair and he needs it to get to work. But at the same time, he's going away with his girlfriend for two weeks next month.

I'm honestly tempted to say, cancel your holiday.

Am I being unreasonable for drawing a line now?"

DEAR DILEMMAS

The Open Wallet When generosity starts to feel like being taken for granted

You're not being unreasonable. You're being late to your own boundary.

Let's call this what it is. This isn't a one-off helping hand anymore, it's a pattern. And worse, it's a pattern where your brother is quite happy to spend on fun while quietly relying on you to cover the boring, grown-up bits. That's not a crisis. That's convenience.

Here's the bit you need to hold onto:

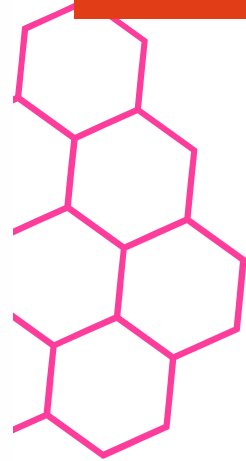
Helping someone who is trying is generosity.

Funding someone who isn't prioritising properly is enabling.

And right now, you're being cast as the safety net while he books the sun lounger.



By:Jonathan Welford



Your instinct to say "cancel the holiday" isn't cruel, it's reality. Adults make trade-offs. If his car is genuinely essential for work, then that should come before two weeks away. If it doesn't... then the car isn't as urgent as he's making out.

What matters now is how you say no.

Not defensive. Not apologetic. Just clean and calm:

"I'm not able to lend you money anymore. I've got my own plans and expenses to focus on."

No justifying the kitchen. No explaining your holiday. No getting dragged into a debate about his car versus his tan.

He may push. He may guilt-trip. He may suddenly find a dozen reasons why this time is different. That's the moment you hold steady, because if you fold now, you're signing up for this exact conversation again in three months.

If you want a middle ground, offer something that doesn't involve cash. Help him look at repayment plans, point him towards a garage that does staged payments, or simply say you'll support him in figuring it out. But keep your wallet out of it.

You're not abandoning him. You're just stepping out of the role he's quietly assigned you.

And frankly, it's about time.

DEAR JONATHAN

"I live next door to a lovely woman in her 80s. She's always been very independent and very polite, but recently I've noticed things slipping. Post piling up, lights on at odd hours, and she seems a bit confused when we chat.

She insists she's absolutely fine and doesn't want any help, but I'm starting to worry she's not coping and could be vulnerable. I don't know if she has family nearby, and I don't want to overstep or upset her.

What's the right thing to do in a situation like this?"

The Quiet Neighbour

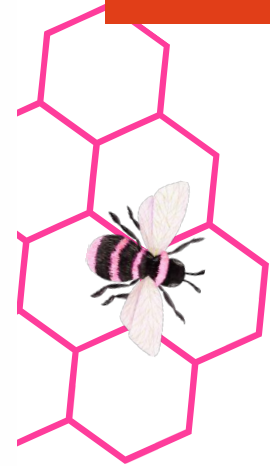
When concern meets boundaries

DEAR THE QUIET NEIGHBOUR

When concern meets boundaries



By:Jonathan Welford



This is one of those situations where your instinct matters more than perfect etiquette. And your instinct is already pointing you in the right direction.

You're not being nosy. You're being kind.

The tricky bit is that independence is often the last thing people want to give up, especially someone who's spent a lifetime standing on their own two feet. So if you go in too heavy, she'll likely dig her heels in. But if you do nothing, you'll keep worrying... and she may quietly struggle.

So think gentle, not grand.

Start small and ordinary. A knock on the door with a light reason

"I was popping to the shops, can I grab you anything?"

"I've made too much soup, would you like some?"

It keeps her dignity intact while opening the door to a bit more contact. You're not "helping" her, you're just being neighbourly.

At the same time, trust what you're seeing. Post piling up and confusion aren't nothing. If things continue or worsen, it's reasonable to take a slightly firmer step, just quietly and respectfully. You could ask if she has a relative or someone she'd like you to contact "just in case," or gently suggest having a number on hand.

If you're still concerned and there's no obvious support network, it's okay to go one level up. A discreet call to the local council's adult social care team can be framed as concern, not complaint. They're used to exactly this kind of situation and can do a soft check-in without making it feel like a big intervention.

The balance you're aiming for is this

Stay close enough to notice

Not so forceful that she shuts the door

And just to say it plainly... she's very lucky to have you next door. Even if she never quite admits she needs it, that quiet presence might matter more than you realise.



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Toronto! Come out for a hilarious night of queer comedy raising money for a great cause! This show features Toronto's top 2SLGBTQIA+ comics taking the stage to raise funds for

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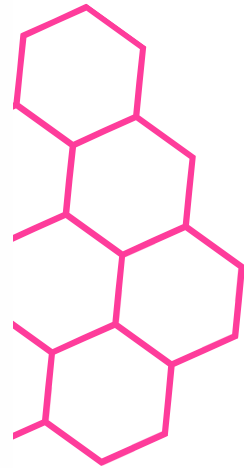
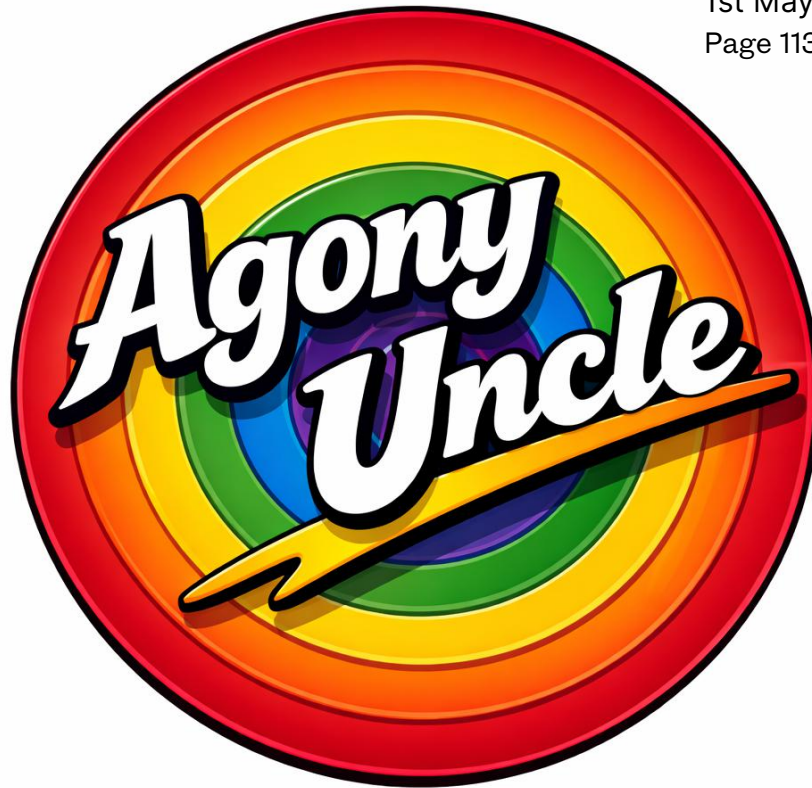
Doors at 8 pm, show from 8:30 - 10 pm.

Right in the heart of the Village at Pegasus on Church!

All welcome, including allies!



By:Jonathan Welford



DEAR JONATHAN

"I have a friend who always says yes to plans, then cancels last minute because something better has come up. After a while, I stopped inviting her.

Now she's annoyed and says I've excluded her. I feel like I've just responded to her behavior, but she's acting like I'm the problem.

Do I give her another chance, or leave it where it is?"

The Flaky Friend When yes doesn't mean yes

DEAR FLAKY FRIEND

Ah, the classic "yes to you, but only if nothing better turns up" friend. You've become a social placeholder.

You haven't excluded her. You've edited her out after repeated rewrites of the same flaky storyline. That's not petty, that's pattern recognition.

Let's be honest about what's happened. She hasn't just cancelled once or twice, she's trained you not to rely on her. And now she's surprised that the invite well has... dried up. Actions have consequences, even when delivered with a breezy "soz babe, something's come up x".

Now, do you give her another chance? Maybe. But not the old version.

If you let her back in, it needs a quiet reset with a bit of spine:

"Happy to invite you again, but I need to know you'll actually show up. Last-minute dropouts don't work for me."

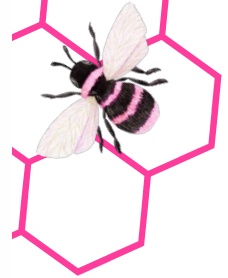
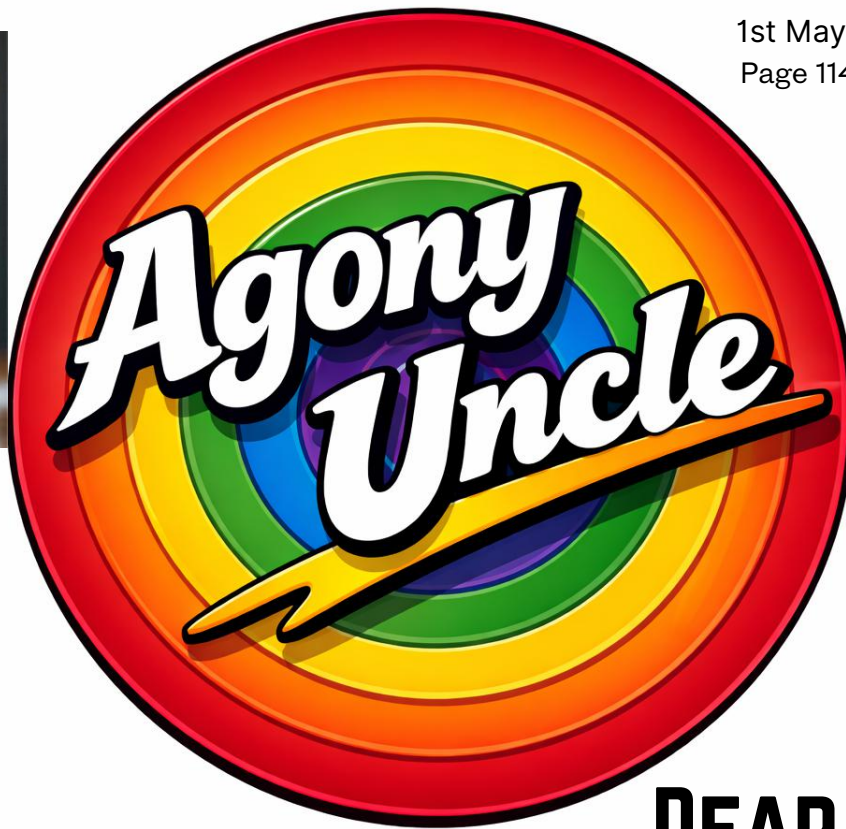
No drama. No lecture. Just a polite boundary.

And then watch what she does, not what she says. If she steps up, great. If she flakes again, you've got your answer and you can bow out without guilt.

Also, small tactical tweak for your own sanity: stop building plans around her. Invite her to



By:Jonathan Welford



DEAR THE EXTENDED CAST

Dating one person, not the whole family

Ah, you signed up for an episode and got the full box set that you're not ready to binge.

You're not wrong here. You're dating a person, not auditioning for a role in The Family WhatsApp Cinematic Universe. It's completely reasonable to want to build something one-on-one before you're added to three group chats and expected at Sunday lunch with a seating plan.

The key is tone. This isn't a rejection.

Try something along the lines of:

"I really like you, and I'm enjoying getting to know you. I'd just prefer we build things between us first before I dive into the full family tour."

Warm. Clear. No apology required.

Because here's the truth... if you go along with it too quickly, you won't come across keen, you'll be overwhelmed and slightly trapped behind a buffet table making polite chat with Auntie Carol.

A healthy partner will get this. In fact, they should respect it. It shows you're intentional, not avoidant.

things that will go ahead brilliantly whether she appears or not. That way, if she turns up, it's a bonus. If she doesn't, it's not a loss.

Bottom line? Friendship isn't a waiting room for better offers. You're allowed to expect a bit of basic respect for your time.

And if she can't manage that, she doesn't need another chance. She needs a diary... and possibly a mirror.

DEAR JONATHAN

"I've recently started dating again in my late 40s and I've met someone I really like. The issue is, they come with a very involved family. Group chats, constant plans, and expectations that I'll be part of everything quite quickly.

I'm not against family, but I want to build a relationship with them first, not the whole extended cast.

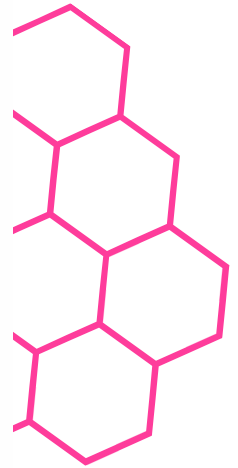
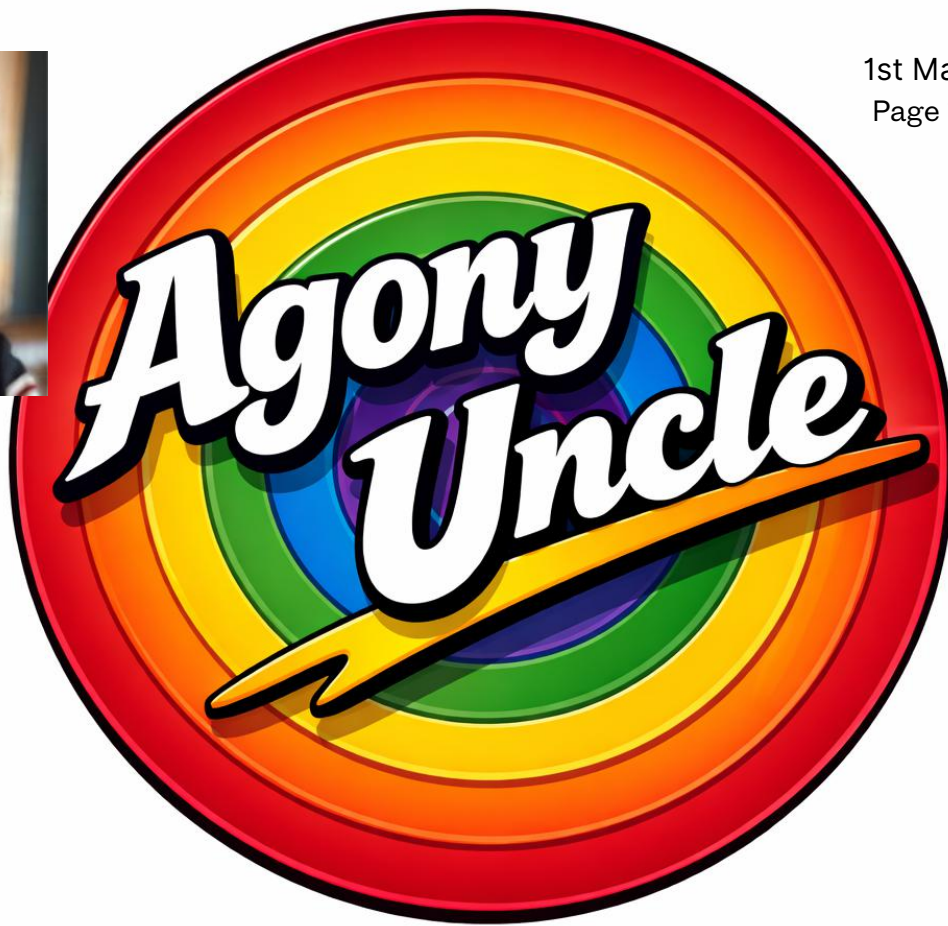
How do I set that boundary without sounding like I'm not interested?"

The Extended Cast

Dating one person, not the whole family



By:Jonathan Welford



If they push back with “but my family is really important to me,” the answer is simple: “Great, and I’m looking forward to meeting them. Just not all at once and not straight away.”

You’re not saying no. You’re saying not yet.

And frankly, any relationship that can’t survive a gentle delay in meeting the extended cast probably wasn’t ready for opening night anyway

The logo for Toronto Dark Arts Market, featuring the text "Toronto Dark Arts Market" in a white, gothic-style font with small bat silhouettes around it.

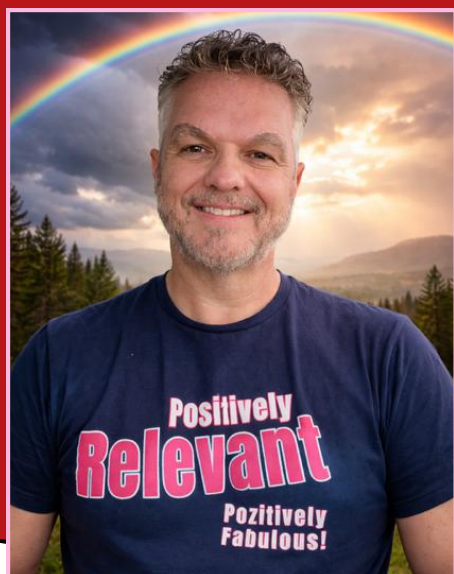
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A stylized, colorful eye logo with a rainbow gradient, positioned to the left of the text.



RAW & UNASHAMED

By: Skip Sams

If you picked up a column called Raw & Unashamed, you might be expecting something sexy. Sometimes it will be. But sometimes it will be something even more exposed than sex. It will be truth.

This column exists because even as the world has opened its mind and its doors to us, shame still lives inside us. And lately, it feels like there is pressure trying to push it back in again. Not just new shame, but old shame—the kind many of us worked hard to release years ago—resurfacing in a cultural moment that is giving people permission to be openly hateful again.

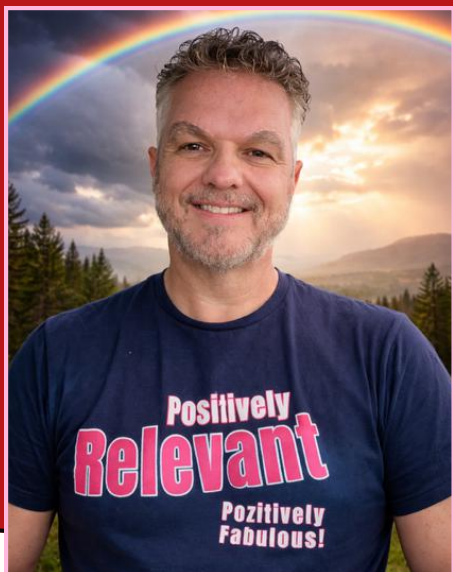
I went through puberty at the start of the AIDS crisis. Fear was not theoretical. It shaped how we saw ourselves, how we met, and how we survived. We went from hidden to seen on the road to full acceptance. Or so it seemed.

There was a time when connection happened in the shadows—bars with no windows, parks at night, bathhouses. (I'll admit, I still enjoy a trip to the spa now and then.) Today, we meet everywhere: coffee shops, gyms, creative spaces, recovery rooms, community events, even churches. And of course there are the apps — my boyfriend and I enjoy the convenience of a quick hookup as much as anyone. Street cruising was our app. There was something undeniably sexy about that moment. It was spontaneous, risky, and arousing—the kind of connection you felt in your body before you ever said a word.

I spent much of my life believing it was my job not to shame others by being myself. I held things back, not because they were wrong, but because I did not want to embarrass or disrupt the people around me. I always fantasized about doing porn—ever since I saw my first John Holmes film—but I didn't, because I thought it would bring shame to others.

And yet, even as I held some things back, I was living openly in other ways — advocating for our community and speaking publicly about my HIV status to help normalize what still carries stigma. That tension never fully resolved itself. What did become clear was that the shame attached to a diagnosis was never something I created. It was handed to me and I am not a diagnosis. It was their shame, not mine. I am not their shame.

At 59, I am still learning what it means to be fully myself without editing for someone else's comfort. There are stories I have not told, desires I have kept at a distance.



RAW & UNASHAMED

By: Skip Sams

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There is a difference between caution and fear. Caution is awareness. Fear is contraction. One keeps you wise. The other keeps you small. And right now, with everything happening around us, it is easy to confuse the two.

I find myself looking in the mirror and asking where I am still holding back because of someone else's shame. And then I get to make a decision that moves me forward—more visible, more expressed, more myself. This is how we hold on to what we have gained and continue moving forward.

Maybe it's time to make that porn — with my boyfriend, and of course, a few others... Raw and Unashamed.

Skip Sams is a creative self-development coach who helps gay men get clear on who they are and step into a life that feels aligned, authentic, and fully their own. You can reach him at skip@skipsams.com.



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LANTS CROSS

By:
Nooadtty



Hi my name is Adam Grace. I have AIDS. It's the month of May 1997 and I just survived the first tidalwave of those infected with HIV living in the state of Colorado from 1985 on. Passionately, desperately seeking the help from the powers that be, the massive "Right to Live!" campaigns went up enforcing Gay Lives Matter. Doctors and researchers alike found If you have AIDS that manmade powerful pharmaceutical pills can help you live a somewhat normal life. That is if you like pill popping everyday, fuck that noise! When they told me I had AIDS at 23 years young, I hit all cylinders full blast then partied like it was 1999 the end of the

bloody fuckin' world. That was in 1992. 199fuckin'2! Yeah I quit alcohol and heavy drugs, changed my lifestyle not because I wanted to but because the virus had kicked my ass to grave and back. Like a Phoenix out of the ashes, I studied.

I began to workout regularly. Pot helped with the stomach ulcers and daily nausea from horse sized capsules. The lifesaving pills we swallow daily are like micro nukebombs in the bloodstream knocking the virus away stopping it from replicating. You survive more than just the virus. I came out to my family on my death bed at age 25. In 1995. 199fuckin'5! Bent but not broken I awoken to something much bigger than I. And that was the people I meet and lived with throughout my HIV career.

I left moms and dads house with my local resources helping me to become more independent. The case manager I had at the time pointed me towards an apartment building for people like me. The tainted blood committee. For me it was the best way out of the folks home. I've always been independent. And no way was I gonna live with homohaters. They accepted I was dying from AIDS but hated I was gay. Hey I got sober!...what about them apples?!?! By a miracle and muscle Gods I got out alive with my Dad saying , "Go son go on kick their asses!!!"



LANTS CROSS

By:
Noadtty



So I get to move into my own apartment, first sober living, can I do it!? Well for what my party days were like I partied enough for three lifetimes. I am completely over it. No white or alcohol ever again. The place was off the main road near Broadway in the city of Destiny , Colorado. A three story 60's style square box with 12 apartments in the corner slot. I got whatever was available, apt. 301. It's actually the biggest apartment I've ever had. Back on my feet somewhat. I have complications from AIDS but this building should add some relief. Verses so much grief today.

So now what does a gay man do in the late 90's when my own gay community calls me dirty? I'm truthful to the men I met about my status and each one that wasn't HIV ran the other way the minute I said I was HIV positive. Not too far from home was a gay gym called Broadway Bodyworks. The gym has a trainer and discount on membership for those living with HIV. I joined the month I moved in. One of the gym owners was poz and invited over for a joint and rubdown. He wanted something special after moving here from California. I had never had a sober relationship and I turned him down. It was fast. Why is everything so fast in gay- play and stay- vibe?

That was the closest chance to a boyfriend since 1994. Three years single and no sex. And no way was I going to date or fall in love with someone who lived in my own apartment building. Sex and neighbors to me don't mix. Some can be stalkerish or overbearing. My neighbors are my neighbors only. Wanna fuck? Move then we'll talk horse radish on your horsecock I will ride in on.

AIDS



LANTS CROSS

By:
Nooadtty

Then one day : it was in mid May of 1999. A new guy moved in the building. Some moved away. Some died. He took whatever was available. The apartment across from me, apt 304.

In the hallway you couldn't miss him, he was very tall like a lighthouse beacon pointing right me.. "Oh hey you, Hi I'm Adam pleasure to meet you, welcome to the building of walking zombies". 'Ha, Word. Hey man I'm Lants, Lants Cross and I'm here to be the King of this Palace'. Eye to way up high-eye level, I giggle, lick my lips subconsciously, I say with a deeper voice then before,

"Sweet!, pleasure to meet you Mr. Cross, I'm in apt. 301 here across from you. I've been here for three years, I've been here longer so we will see who is King here! (I wink) Let me know if you need any help". Lants stood silent almost in awe. 'You got it buddy.' Our eyes met, mine - brown ,his - green & blue. My eyes told him I got you, you're safe now. "We are all going thru the same here." He reached his massive hand out gave me an under scoop shake and pulled me close for a hug. All 6'6" tall grabbed me. I can feel his heartbeat under those huge clothes. 'Oh sorry man I didn't mean to overstep. The hug was

like reunion waiting to happen. its nice to meet a new neighbor.' My gaydar didn't go off like a lightbulb with Lants. I thought what a relief someone straight has AIDS and he's here right in front of me. Its just not gay men who get HIV. It's everyone. I knew that years ago and now to "experience " a new next-door neighbor is the change of pace I need. Or is it?.....

By this time neighbors have come and gone. Some gone by the vicious virus and the other half moved out, forced out because of heavy crystal meth use. I have seen it all and done it all.



LANTS CROSS

By:
Nooadtty



At least I thought. The new long haired blond giant across the hall made me think of a time in the mid to late 80's. When I was 15 year old, a longhaired faggot in the making. I used to sport a biker jacket even though I had no motorcycle. I was 15 with not even a bike. I was trying to simulate Freddie Mercury and George Michael both who were huge mega popstars, whom I didn't even recognized as being hot homosexuals high on the Crown. This was before the internet and shock value was the latest vibe thanks to MJ and Prince and of course MADONNA. I was buried in the closet and did my best to act

tough and talk with a low voice. It works up to a point until I started getting honked at while I was walking on the street. From behind I looked a girl. My long black wavy hair and 25" waist hips had them looking twice. I began to "walk the dog". Cruise. Strut. Carrying my teenage - manhood like it was a blind walking stick.

I was listening to the hard rock bands like Narrowsmith, Ted Zepplen, Scorpedos, Anas Priest, Ratteria and secretly behind closed doors dancing to MJ and the Wet Stop Boys in my bedroom. Out of all them Ratteria had that sexy swag and that bonified blonde

bombshell hot hunk rhythm lead guitarist, ThrobinRobyn *fuckin' dropdead gorgeous* Crosbi. Pon Povi or PoisonLips was close second rockstar crushes, I got to admit. Without a doubt my first Hollywood mancrush was super sexy tall blonde guitar player. Robyn taller than them all crazyhot Crosbi! "Want some for more?!" One of the band lyrics, yes please!! No way did I tell anyone at school or home about this massive mancrush that would set my man-taste vibe for decades ahead. At age 15 I



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LANTS CROSS

By:
Nooadtty

had my first truth or dare, oh forget the truth part, let's dare all night. Hmmmm. Was my first time with a man, the time I got infected w HIV?, while under the influence of living the sex, drugs, rock & roll lifestyle. It was the music that made me do it. Get high, rock out with your cock out and fuck Mr. Whoever. Lay it down. Hidden places called the Underground. Do it while you can , find a horny man. Oh to be young again...

A knock on my door. 'Adam dude, can you help with my cable tv that isn't fuckin' hooked up right!' " Hi Lants

sure let me put my shirt on ". 'No man its cool its just us guys plus I haven't seen any boobs in years it'd be great haha" . Lants was standing with a cane holding himself up. In sweats and a T-shirt with his hair greased back in a long blond ponytail. Face and body wasn't thin but he was bloated in the face and abdomen. I can see the discomfort in his face. I been there. "Of course man let me come help you out even though I don't know a thing about cable hookups. "

We walked in his apartment, his bed was in the living room, no couch and he had one small

kitchen table and one chair. The bedroom in the back was empty with four small cardboard boxes on the floor. There was the small TV that I recognized as the prior residents TV. But didnt mention it to him. Lants sat on his bed facing the TV with favorite showtime eyes. Something caught his eye and I smiled instantly. That glimmer of hope. I see you're like me I like my movies. And music. 'Oh Adam I have some DVDs you might like to watch with me sometime



LANTS CROSS

By:
Nooadtty

I stood up from the back of the TV. There you go the cable just needed tightening. The TV screen was in full capture. As it flicked on I winked at him and said, "I'd love to watch a movie with you".

I look over and he's dozing off. I walked over put his tv remote control next to him so when he wakes up its there. He only had the basics in his apartment no computer. He was a big guy all he needed was food and he was happy.

Two hours later, knock knock where'd you go, do you want a bite to eat? "Lants oh hi come in!" I showed him my apartment. It was the exact

same layout as his. Living room in the front with a kitchen in the middle, then one long hall to the end is a bathroom then the bedroom. "This is where the magic happens haha".

'Yeah right', Lants fake giggled then looked down and said I haven't had a women's touch in over eight years since I was diagnosed with HIV. I stood there in awe of how handsome he was and how no one would want him? 'My wife Tonya, left me because I was a heroin addict'. I had to sit on the bed, he joined. "Wow how sad she didn't stay with you because now they have meds that can help you live longer." Lants

replies, 'Yes I've heard that plenty of times. I'm not gonna take pills that make me feel crappy or are still experimental.' In shock I said, "Wait? You're not on meds!?"

'No but don't tell anyone. Without love I can't go on dude, I had a good life before this then I got sick. Got infected during my party days'. I jumped in, "Oh yeah? Same here I was an extreme alcoholic". Lants reflected back, 'While I stop drinking and smoked herion because I didn't have



LANTS CROSS

By:
Nooadtty

hangovers and all. I used to really party hard. I'm a California rocker kid from the mid 70s '. " Sweet me too but the 80s." He laughs for real, 'Good times!' His eyes beam up. ' Can I tell you a secret I don't care if your gay I think you're a cool guy Adam '. He looks at me in the eye and touches my thigh. Red light red light. In my head warning signs go off, this is your neighbor...no sex with neighbors!

I sit back and go on , " Well trust me (I touch his thigh back) you're secret is good with me! By the way I used to be an angry alcoholic. With four years sober and no going back because it almost killed me and made me want to kill myself.

I've had HIV probably since I was 16. I'm lucky to be alive."

Lants says, ' Right, I told myself this was something that this just a sign of the times. Otherwise I'd go crazy or so pissed off I'd shoot everyone. I had to find something else to blame for getting AIDS besides blaming myself for drug abuse '. I replied back, "Yeah I can do too I have my own brain power theory that I blame the devil or demon energy. So this is now hell on earth and I'm here like SPAWN the superhero. Brought back from the dead to life to save others with my tortured body against negative HIV image and stigma. "

' Word, That's beautiful dude.' " No you're beautiful! " oh shit did I just say that?! 'Haha you're cute'. He stood up and walked to the door. "Well now you know where I live", I joked.

' Dude if you're free, come over tomorrow when you want and we'll watch a movie. "

Sure ! (don't sound too excited Adam) OK yeah I'll check if I'm free tomorrow night " It sounded like Lants had nobody. He mentioned he was all alone with no support but from doctors and case mangers who have become like best friends.



LANTS CROSS

By:
Nooadtty

Its now close to 11pm and I hear this mysterious guitar riff echoing throughout the third floor that I've never heard before. I was walking to the kitchen and it hit me like lighting. What a controlled tune like a opera singers finale notes. It ventured on for two minutes then stopped like a call to march to take action. Strong and solid where did that come from?

Day two : I woke up happy. Did my duties for the day and made sure I got to Lants' by 6pm. Knock, knock... 'Oh come on in no need to knock. Micasa your casa amigo. Would you like sodapop, or milk '? "No thanks, I'll make some tea. You don't drink?" I asked. ' No dude I am

over drinking. I'm too big it takes me forever to get drunk. Takes me three days to get drunk'. "Haha that's funny. And I'm so small I got drunk off one pitch of beer." I added.

'Here I have to hit the lights off for every movie.'

"Oh yes yess I totally agree." 'Sit by me on my bed, I won't bite. Actually I forgot how to bite.' "Oh I can use the chair." ' No! That's uncomfortable. Please join me.' "Well since you insist OK. " Bonersmile from ear to ear. I did all I could but not jump over him and land smack dab next on top of his 6'6" body frame. 'What would you like to see"? "Oh I'm easy... put anything in. I just enjoy having

company to hangout with. I don't trust much people here in the city. Gotta watch your back". ' Or someone has got to watch your back for you, ' Lants remarked back like shooting me with an arrow in my heart. " I hear that now pass the popcorn, Beast." Hmmm, If I'm Beast?... then you're Beauty! " Anything you say.

The night went great with two movies later he didn't talk much during the movie but did move closer each time. The stars were out I could see them from this side of the building. It was almost a full moon. Once in awhile he got up and went to the bathroom then came back dozed off then woke to smile I was still there.



LANTS CROSS

By:
Nooadtty

Close to midnight. Lantz whispered to me as lay side by side in his king sized bed. 'I don't know you too well but I must admit if I was gay I'd be with you.' I say , "And I must admit from the minute I met you Lantz it feels like I've known you before. Or we've met before. You look very familiar but I can't put my tiny finger on it." He leans over and puts his head on my chest then wraps his legs around me.

' Please let me do this I need to be held so bad. Straight or gay. I'm human. I can't break free from this rage of AIDS. One moment of pleasure is all I ask. Let it all stop!' I had to speak up, " Let's make it stop this together Lantz, I got you. I feel you. I'm here for you Beast.".....'

Stay the night with me Beauty.'.... "Sure, let me go take my meds and I'll be right back." Wow almost midnight! I did forget I was sick when I was him. I almost forgot to take my evening meds. I rushed back but made sure to brush my teeth and changed into some gym shorts and tank.

I'm back. Lantz was on bed sitting like before but under the covers and topless. The TV was off, all the lights were off, a candle was lit in the corner. Classical music played from the CD player: ' I love the sound of a string symphony before bed. The harmonies and strong build ups are great during sex '. I got into bed didn't say a word. My heart was pounding. I'm 27 he's 37 we are consenting

adults. I gave in. Like a movie in my head I crawled on top of him. I barely could straddle his waist. Kissed his forehead third eye, he closed both eyes and grabbed my hips with massive hands. He whispered in his deep voice,.. ' Do whatever you want, I trust you '.

How was supposed to do whatever I want when I myself haven't had sex in over 4 years. "Oooh where do I start?" Like a virgin I said. Beast interjected, ' Start here, head to toe, top to bottom '.... Like a treeclimber I began my task at trimming the leaves and smelling the bark that protects this giant California redwood. He is life. Giving me life again. I purposely touch, thinking with full intent to heal him. His body was sensitive to my touch.



LANTS CROSS

By:
Nooadtty

No bumps or lesions or open sores. Sure a few scars like myself. Nothing like the horror stories you hear about AIDS patient looking frail and decimated, he was absolutely flawless to me. Me at 150. Lantz was definitely a beefy 265 pounds. The night was endless. Cuddling. Exploring each others body. He whispers, ' you're the guy I've ever been with and only will be with '. I understood this tone as code for, don't tell anyone our secret. Which made me feel very super special under terrible circumstances called, Living with AIDS.

Day three : I had an acupuncture appointment for my peripheral neuropathy . Before I left I stopped by Lants' apartment. There was no

answer. The day went on it was May 7th. The night came on fast with blistering heat on the third floor. A knock on the door its Lants. My A.C. isn't working? " Hmm let me look at it. Your apartment is the warmest up here you will need your air conditioner." 'Oh I'm not too worried about it. I might not be here for the summer. " What do you mean "? I turn a few knobs mainly to the ON switch and the A.C. is magically on. I sit on his bed next to him. " Beast are you moving away so soon? "

The moon is full shining through every window to the northern exposure. Lants takes my tiny brown hand. 'You're my blood brother. I have seen the light of love at

last. And its all about acceptance. I'm not afraid to die. But I don't want to die alone. Will you be there with me? I have a solution. And its right here, right now ready for me '.

Deep inside I knew how the Beast felt. What's he asking? Do I date debate the "Right to Live" is the same as the "Right to Die"? Why go on when you have to live ruled by pills daily. No one is perfect, pills that are highly toxic to the body. How long will my body last ingesting strong chemicals? This was deeper for him and who was I to ask questions. The right to live and the right to die is the person's choice. Not the labcoats. Doctors fix things. And if it can't be fixed





LANTS CROSS

By:
Noadtty

they make the patient as comfortable as possible. I know I've been there five years prior on my own death bed. The human body is tough to kill. All this all at once including a man crush.

9:33pm. I took a deep breath. "Yes how can I help?"

' Today I went and got a stash of heroin from a friend of mine. I haven't used in awhile so it will be fast. The portion I give myself will make me passout but then I need an extra dose to take home. Use these latex gloves and that's where you come in.....

On my way out I see a bag with my name on it. I grabbed it. In the corner of my

eye I see a red King Cobra electric guitar leaning against the wall. I hear a deep voice in head say, ' Take it! ' I grabbed it. Four steps across the hall. Back inside my apartment. I place the tote bag on my bed and look up. I open the tote bag. And inside are pictures from years gone by with his metal glam rock band Ratteria. Pictures of what must've been his ex-wife Tonya. There he was big and blonde. My first man crush. A leather chained wallet was inside... I quickly unsnapped the wallet to see an I.D. picture exposing the name Robbinsin Lants W. Crosbi. San Diego, California.

One year later its the anniversary : Did we make love? Did I pull/push the plug?

How did I get not blamed for murder? For one , they right away called it a suicide from his history of using heroin. They didn't want to touch any AIDS patients. Forensics shows I was in the apartment but so were health workers, maintance guys and the last residents DNA was all over the place. The HIV / AIDS apartment building was used to people coming and going, living and dying. There's a long waiting list. Not to be morbid. Just the way gay men are and how they survived here in the late 90's. I'm alive to talk about it because recent studies show if tested through through bloodwork. A new term was introduced, " Undetectable ". A very sick person can be undetectable by taking HIV meds daily and can not transmit the virus that killed millions and still do. I was protected also from what was coursing through his bloodstream. All I know is he deserved better from those he left behind like the early AIDS individuals and I hope I was there...for him...wait, I know I was there with him, body, mind and spirit. I will continue to talk to my blood brother and secret lover.

Sometimes I sit in wonder. Was all that real or some kind of fantasy?

+ O + aka Otoniel Trujillo II

Documentary Fiction

Before I start, let's get something out of the way: I WILL be talking about topics that can be upsetting or triggering to some folks. And I am absolutely going to make sure those potential triggers are flagged as best as I can.

But I cannot guarantee I'm going to be perfect, nor can I guarantee the folks I put this in front of before submitting will catch everything. So, I need all of you out there to do something for me, make sure you do your due diligence to stay safe. But do me a second favor and try to read on if you can.

Today is absolutely about dysphoria and dysmorphia.

That in mind, let's get started.



Izalea Does Everything - Vol.2

By:
Izzy Tansley

For most of my marriage I was obviously pretending to be something I wasn't. And for any of you who missed my first column: a man. It wasn't until I'd been married to my amazing partner for fourteen years that I accepted I was a trans woman.

This fact brings its own challenges. That drastic of a change in any relationship can completely shake its foundations. I was lucky though, my partner batted their eyelashes, looked me directly in the eyes, and said: it's about time.

Not a unique reaction, a lot of us trans women were broadcasting our egg status far and wide before we realized.

But welcome in my case, transition is hard enough without losing one of the pillars of your life; something that unfortunately happens a lot. You can't expect someone to flip their sexuality on a dime unless they already had a touch of queerness to them to begin with.

As I began up there, for most of my marriage I was pretending to be a man. Not intentionally, of course, but pretending, nonetheless. Part of my current issue is having so many problems seeing myself in pictures, mirrors, literally anywhere. Obviously, I know why at this point in my life.

I had zero clue before and that meant there ended up being very few pictures of my partner and I together. Let alone nearly any with me on my own. Something I always had regrets about. They are so gorgeous and always have been and I love everything about them.

But any pictures that did manage to snag me in any way, were twisted and distorted in ways I didn't like. In ways I couldn't understand for so long. Dysphoria and dysmorphia before I even understood what those things were. Back then it was simply an intense revulsion of seeing myself at all.

The dysphoria and dysmorphia are bad but add onto that the attempted acceptance of likely never being anything but 'clocky' and its just, doubly difficult. Being a visible trans woman is not a bad thing; there are certainly enough trans women I've seen who don't pass that I bite my lip and declare some of the hottest women I've seen.

My worry is that I can't truly ever be that much of a badass. But right now, this is about me looking at pictures of my partner and I in the present. I've been trying to take as many as I can now. Both on my own, and with other people.

Izalea Does Everything - Vol. 1

By:
Izzy Tansley

Now I know what the problem was and that is simultaneously better and worse.

There are days when I still see myself 200 pounds heavier and sporting a full beard. It is extremely draining and compounded by trying to come to terms with likely never being a trans woman who 'passes.'

PAUSE Passing is not at all necessary nor is it necessarily my goal. But with the times being what they are right now, it sure would be safer. Just remember the point of transition is to make you happy with you. Passing is not actually the point. We can get into this in a future column though. UNPAUSE

Basically, I'm being incredibly, probably obnoxiously, into taking selfies and posting them on social media.

And you know what? I can see the joy in my eyes now. I hadn't tried to take many pictures of myself even in the first couple years of transition. It was too hard.

Oh sure, I tormented my partner with the best pictures of my new chest as often as I could. They are, in fact, glorious to behold. However, I didn't take many pictures of my face. And every time I brushed my teeth, or washed that face, or shaved... the mirror tormented me. If I was some rich person who could afford a new mirror

daily, I'd have feared for my wallet. Because the urge to smash the mirror for showing me such filth was, and still is, a deep and tormenting wish.

Luckily, I'm not remotely that out of control. Or wasteful. Dramatically smashing a mirror? In this economy? Can you imagine?

But that joy I see? It's there, fighting the ick that crawls into my mind on the waves of dysphoria. Could I go on about every disgusting thing I see in every picture of myself? Oh hell yeah, the things my brain tells me are painful and self-destructive. But whereas before the stabbing internal

the correct one even though inside it always felt wrong. Askew. Like I was me and not me at the same time. But the pressure to fall in line was pervasive, and damaging, and wholly unnecessary.

Internalized transphobia is a topic better spoken of by someone else. I can't even think of how to write about that in any way that could be more helpful than me screaming into the abyss ineffectually. So, let's bypass that for now. It isn't specific to my relationship with these pictures I keep posting.

And I will keep posting these pictures even if my stomach turns, even if my eyes

Izalea Does Everything - Vol. 2

By:
Izzy Tansley

commentaries were front and center, held close to my chest; now they are at arm's length, dangling over the garbage can, ready to be tossed and forgotten.

The fight now is finding, forging, and finally having the strength to let go of those criticisms. The self hatred and negativity I hold and direct inward for no benefit to myself. It serves me not at all, so why do I do it? Why do any of us, trans or not, do that? Could you imagine what could get done if our brains weren't forever focused on that?

Unfortunately, brains are often forged in trauma.

For me, the trauma of having lived a life that was never mine. One society said was

well up, even if everything in my body and mind clenches at the thought of it. Even as I feel the failure coming in my own mind, my brain wanting me to stop looking and stop posting. Because it would be easier to just let it go.

But I refuse to let myself not be the happy I see in those pictures today. Not happening. Not on my fucking watch. My entire life has already been a struggle. The last thing I'm gonna do is make seeing myself a failure point.

This is an exercise I am going to keep pushing until I can't. And yes, there are days when I can't make myself take and post a picture. There are days that I fail. The day I originally posted this on my timeline was one of those days.

STAY QUIETER



QUEER LOVE IS BEAUTIFUL



Izalea Does Everything - Vol. 1

By: Izzy Tansley

Page 138

I took that day to rest and shake myself out. Then I took a deep breath and started my next streak of pictures, and this time I've posted one every day since. Seeing my own happiness has made me stronger.

I breathed through it. I settled, I rested, and now we go again.

Until failure. Repeat.

Love you folks, see you next month.



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The poster features a light beige background with colorful, segmented circular patterns in shades of yellow, green, blue, and purple. It also includes several yellow stars and illustrations of game pieces like dice and pawns.

Check out Huron County Pride through their website!
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The Quiet Power of Small Choices

Written by:
Jonathan Quinones

We often imagine that life changes in big, dramatic moments—the kind that make for great stories. A new job offer, a bold move to a different city, a breakthrough opportunity that shifts everything overnight. These moments feel significant, and they are. But what we tend to overlook is that most of our lives are not shaped in those rare, defining events. Instead, they are built quietly, day by day, through the small choices we make.

The truth is, real transformation rarely announces itself. It doesn't always come with excitement or recognition. More often, it shows up in subtle decisions—what you choose to do when you wake up, how you respond to challenges, and whether you follow through on the things you said you would do.

Consider how easy it is to dismiss small actions. Choosing to get out of bed when your alarm rings instead of

*"Every small choice we make shapes who we are becoming, even when no one is watching."
— Unknown*



CONTINUED



The Quiet Power of Small Choices

Written by:
Jonathan Quinones

hitting snooze. Choosing to spend 20 minutes working toward a goal instead of scrolling on your phone. Choosing to stay calm in a frustrating moment rather than reacting impulsively. None of these choices seem life-changing on their own. In fact, they often feel insignificant.

But that's exactly where their power lies.

Small choices are repeatable. And because they're repeatable, they compound. One good decision might not make a noticeable difference today, but repeated over weeks, months, and years, it begins to shape your habits. And habits, more than anything else, shape the direction of your life.

Think about it this way: success is rarely the result of one extraordinary effort. It's usually the outcome of consistent, ordinary actions performed over time. The person who improves their skills doesn't do it in a single burst of motivation—they do it by showing up regularly, even when they don't feel like it. The person who builds

confidence doesn't wake up one day completely transformed—they build it slowly, by choosing to step outside their comfort zone again and again.

There's a quiet discipline in this process. It's not flashy. It doesn't get immediate attention or applause. In fact, most people won't even notice it. But that doesn't make it any less powerful.

In a world that often celebrates quick wins and overnight success, it can be easy to feel like small steps aren't enough. You might

think that if you're not making massive progress, you're falling behind. But that mindset overlooks a simple truth: small progress is still progress.

Choosing to move forward—even in the smallest way—is what keeps momentum alive.

And momentum matters. Once you start building it, things begin to feel different. Tasks that once seemed difficult become more manageable. Effort starts to feel more natural. What once required discipline eventually becomes routine.



CONTINUED

The Quiet Power of Small Choices

Written by:
Jonathan Quinones

That's the shift most people don't see. They focus on the outcome without recognizing the quiet work that led to it.

Another important part of small choices is that they reflect your priorities. Every decision, no matter how minor it seems, is a vote for the kind of person you're becoming. When you choose to follow through, you're reinforcing reliability. When you choose effort, you're reinforcing growth. When you choose patience, you're reinforcing self-control.

Over time, these votes add up. They shape not only what you achieve, but also how you see yourself.

And that internal shift is just as

important as any external result. Of course, this doesn't mean you'll get it right every time. No one does. There will be days when you fall short, when you make choices that don't align with your goals, or when motivation is nowhere to be found. That's part of the process. What matters is not perfection, but

consistency.

It's the ability to come back the next day and choose again.

That's where real growth happens—not in never failing, but in refusing to stay stuck.

When you begin to embrace the power of small choices, something changes. You stop waiting for the "perfect moment" to take action. You stop relying on bursts of motivation to carry you forward. Instead, you focus on what you can do right now, with what you have.

And that's enough.

Because over time, those small, intentional actions create something bigger than any single moment ever could. They build confidence, resilience, and direction. They turn goals into habits, and habits into results.



CONTINUED

The Quiet Power of Small Choices

Written by:
Jonathan Quinones

So don't underestimate the decisions you make today. Even the smallest ones matter more than they seem. Choose to take one step forward, no matter how small. Then do it again tomorrow.

In the end, it's not the loud, dramatic moments that define your life—it's the quiet, consistent choices that shape who you become.



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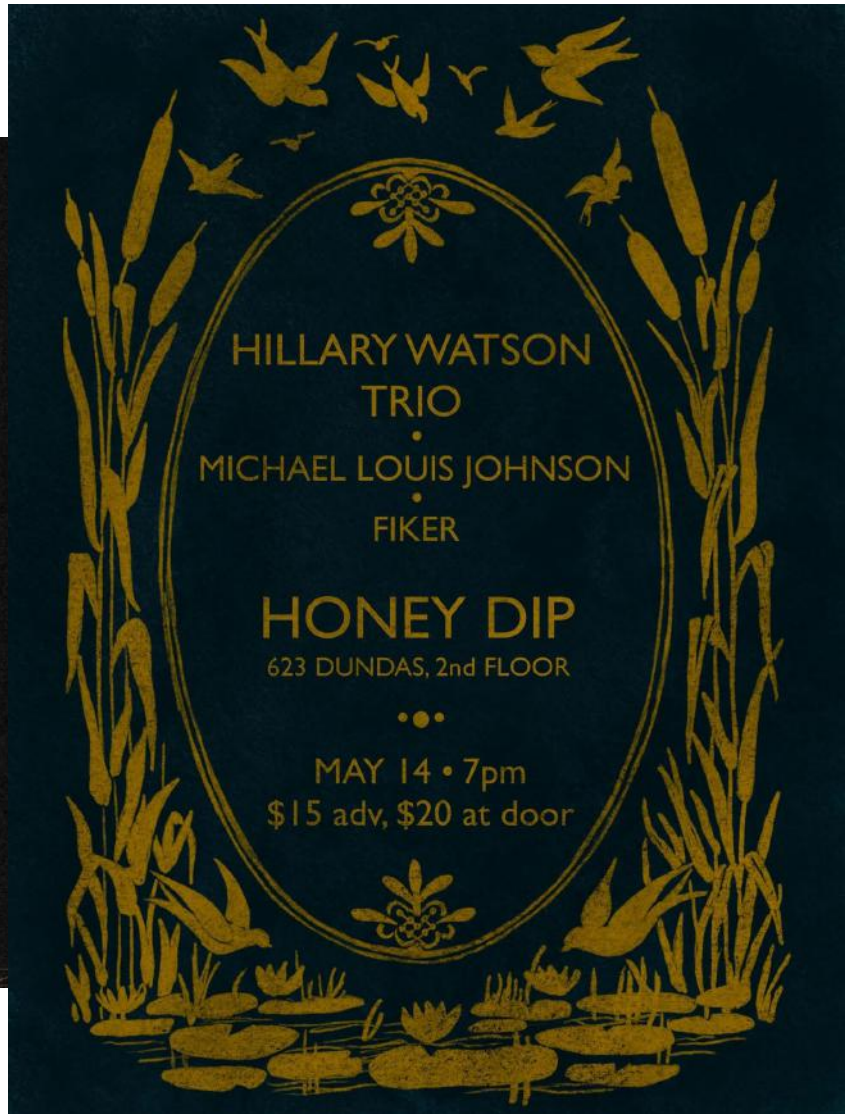
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BIO: -- WIL (HE/THEY)
WIL OSBOURNE-SORRELL

Wil lives, works, and plays in London, Ontario. His day job is as an Instructional Designer at Fanshawe College. When not working, you can find him reading, working on social-justice causes, or ranting about Queer Joy. He and his husband have been together over 20 years, and they have 2 fur-children: Lady Grey and The Kitty of Calamitous Intent. Wil hopes you find sunshine 🌞🏳️🌈🏳️





Modern Family

Written by:
Wil (he/they)

This article started out very differently. You see, I was thinking about the theme of modern families and tying that to joy, when a family emergency popped up, and I realized just how important a topic this is. My family has been ‘Modern’ since before that description existed and so I’ve always had the experience that family is chosen and loved regardless. Let’s do a bit of a dive. My grandmother was adopted. She, in turn, adopted 3 children (my grandparents have 8 children in total). My eldest sister and I share a dad, but have different biological fathers. My two younger sisters and I share a biological fathers but have separate biological mothers. My husband was adopted late in life. So I’ve always understood that family is chosen, not biological, just



Modern Family

Written by:
Wil (he/they)

through the makeup of my family. I also consider that I have 2 mothers, my biological mother and my second step-mother, who has always been more of a mum to me than just a 'step-mother', as she is a kind, compassionate person who I know loves me unconditionally.

Family emergencies have a way of bringing people together and realizing how lucky we are to have the people we have in our lives. Especially when we choose those members of our family and choose to love them as mothers, fathers, sisters, aunts, uncles, etc... even if we aren't completely biologically related.

In the queer community specifically, we understand the joy of chosen family and modern relationships. Some of us may have experienced rejection and found new homes and people to love us unconditionally for who we are. And this is something we relish in and can find joy in, because we understand that love is not always unconditionally given and yet we can find people who love us and bring us joy and tell us it is ok to be who we are.

In thinking about the family emergency I experienced I also reflected on a text a member of my family sent me about my husband. It reads:



Modern Family

Written by:
Wil (he/they)

“And in case nobody’s ever told you this which I find highly unlikely, your husband is such a wonderful human. He just is so so likeable and kind and thoughtful and engaging. You guys are very lucky but I’m sure I don’t have to tell you that” and it dawned on me that my husband has been chosen by my family. They adore him, and they love him. What a wonderful gift of a text to receive from a family member about someone I’ve chosen to spend my life with.

I feel like I’ve droned on a little bit, but I want to emphasize the importance of family and showing up for those we choose, and showing up for those who choose us. Always know that you are worthy of love and there ARE people who will choose you and love you. There is nothing modern about love because love is something we are all deserving of and family, no matter what form it takes, will have your back and give you the love you deserve.

And please always remember:

You deserve sunshine.

DANIEL CAYER

INTERIORS

"Be faithful to your own taste, because nothing you really like is ever out of style."
- **Billy Baldwin**

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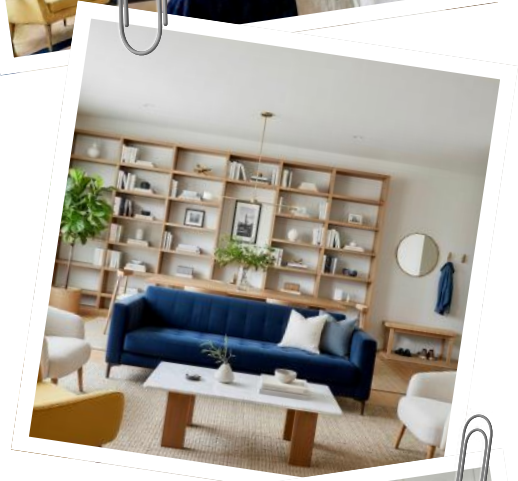
Home's Identity crisis

Written by:
Daniel Cayer

Look, we've all been there. You're sitting on your sofa, staring at your living room, and you feel that nagging itch. You think the solution to your home's "identity crisis" is a \$500 marble side table or a frantic trip to a big-box store to buy a literal cart-full of throw pillows.

But let's be real: your home doesn't need more stuff. It needs an intervention. Most home decor "tragedies" aren't caused by a lack of budget; they're caused by a lack of commitment. If you want your space to look like a million bucks without spending a dime, you need to stop shopping and start deciding.

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*Every great design begins with an even better story
Lorinda Mama."*

Home's Identity crisis

Written by:
Daniel Cayer

Here is how you turn your "meh" house into a "wow" home by simply rearranging the energy.

1. Rescue Your Dead Corners

We all have them: those awkward, dusty voids where a yoga mat has gone to die or a stray vacuum attachment lives in exile. These "dead spaces" make an entire room feel like an unfinished thought.

Corner Confessions!



2. No More Floating Rugs!



Shelf-Care Sunday!



4. Entryway Excellence!



The fix? Create a Micro-Zone. It's time to give that corner a job description. Grab a spare chair (yes, even the one from the dining room), a small stack of books, and a single branch in a vase. Suddenly, you haven't just filled a gap; you've created a "moment." It's a reading nook, a meditation spot, a vignette. When every corner has a purpose, the whole room feels more expensive because it looks deliberate.



2. Stop the "Floating Rug" Syndrome

Nothing says "I just moved in and I'm scared" like a rug sitting in the middle of a room like a lonely island in a sea of hardwood. If your furniture isn't touching your rug, your room is literally drifting apart..





"A CHAIR IS NOT JUST A SEAT IT IS THE KEY TO THE WHOLE INTERIOR."

Home's Identity crisis

Written by:
Daniel Cayer

Think of your rug as the anchor of a ship. At the very least, the front legs of your sofa and chairs need to be sitting on top of that rug. This "snaps" the room into a cohesive unit. It's the interior design equivalent of a well-tailored suit—everything is tucked in, supported, and exactly where it belongs. Suddenly, your "conversation area" actually looks like a place where people might, you know, converse.



3. Shelf-Care: The Art of the Edit

If your bookshelves look like a game of Tetris gone wrong, we need to talk. When every single candle, framed photo, and vacation souvenir is screaming for attention, nothing stands out. It's just visual noise.

The secret to those high-end, curated shelves isn't what you



put on them—it's what you take off. Embrace Negative Space. Your decor needs room to breathe. Use your books to create a heavy structural foundation, then pepper in a few meaningful objects. If you have three brass items, space them out to create a rhythm. But for the love of all things chic, leave some empty space. A half-empty shelf looks like a gallery; a packed shelf looks like a storage unit.





"A ROOM SHOULD NEVER ALLOW THE EYE TO SETTLE IN ONE PLACE."

Home's Identity crisis

Written by:
Daniel Cayer



4. The Entryway Intervention

Your entryway is the "handshake" of your home. If you walk through the front door and immediately trip over seventeen pairs of sneakers and a mountain of winter coats (in July), your brain registers "stress" before you've even put down your keys.

You have to curate the chaos. You do not need every coat you own on a hook. Pick one.



You don't need a shoe showroom by the door; pick the pair you actually wore today. By clearing that visual noise, you're telling yourself and your guests that this is a home of peace, not a dumping ground. It costs nothing to put the extra boots in the closet, but the mental payoff is massive.



The Final Verdict

The secret to a 10x better home isn't about what you add; it's about Intent. When a rug anchors a room, it's a decision. When a corner has a chair and a book, it's a decision. When a shelf has breathing room, it's a decision.

Stop waiting for a "finished" home to arrive in a delivery truck. Your home is already there; it's just waiting for you to tell it what to be.



Be Bold, Be unique, Be You

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Quick Fun Questions

- What book or album changed your life?
- What is your favorite queer-friendly spot to visit?
- What is the best road trip song?
- If your life was a TV show, what would the theme song be?
- What is your most "cringe" quality?

Submit your answers to:
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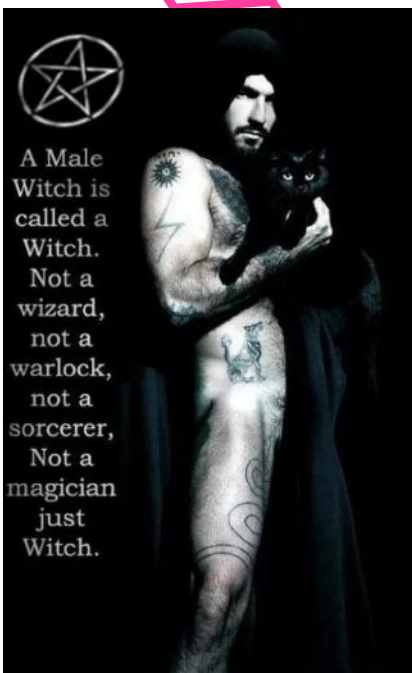


Gay Hive Magazine is introducing a new space for Gay Witch content, diving into the blend of queer identity and modern witchcraft. Here you'll find thoughtful features, personal journeys, and the powerful ways magic supports self-expression.

GAY WITCHES



Introducing Gay Hive Magazine's New Space for Gay Witch Content!



A Male Witch is called a Witch. Not a wizard, not a warlock, not a sorcerer, Not a magician just Witch.

Gay Hive Magazine is thrilled to announce that we are now accepting submissions for gay witch content! If you have a passion for exploring the intersection of queer identity and modern witchcraft, we want to hear from you. Our new section will feature thoughtful articles, personal journeys, and insightful discussions on the powerful ways that magic can enhance self-expression.

We invite writers, creators, and enthusiasts to share their unique perspectives and experiences. Whether it's spells, rituals, or personal stories, we are eager to showcase the diverse voices within the gay witch community.

If you're interested in contributing, please email us at hushmagazine001@gmail.com. Join us in celebrating the vibrant world of gay witchcraft in Gay Hive Magazine!

Path of a Gay Witch

By: Thred Ardor,

This is the 19th article in a series detailing my path as a gay witch. I am a cis gay white man; your mileage may vary.

I wrote my first play about Dionysus, queer icon. It was a love letter to the Greek god I've been reading about since Junio High school. It started with origin mythology, romanticized his loving relationships, and ended with a ritual modern witches might utilize today. I decided to continue writing plays with a distinct occult POV. Currently I'm working on a play about artist, publisher, suffragette Pamela Colman Smith.



Pamela Colman Smith, affectionately known as Pixie, was a boundary-pushing artist, illustrator, and writer whose vibrant, symbolic work left an indelible mark on occultism and art, despite her dying in relative obscurity. Though best known today as the creator of the iconic 78 illustrations for the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck, her life was a tapestry of artistic, theatrical, and mystical pursuits that challenged the conventions of the early 20th century.

Born in London in 1878 to American parents, Smith spent her childhood traveling between England, New York, and Jamaica, developing a uniquely cosmopolitan and fantastical perspective. This diverse background influenced her later work, particularly her interest in folklore and storytelling. In 1893, at just 15 years old, she enrolled in the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, where she studied under the influential artist Arthur Wesley Dow, who championing a stylized approach inspired by Japanese art.

Smith was a prolific creative force, producing illustrations for books, including those by her friend William Butler Yeats, and designing theater sets. She was known for her "open house" evenings in London, attracting a bohemian crowd of artists, writers, and actors. Her artistic style was highly personal, featuring dramatic colors, flowing lines, and mystical symbolism. She was also a strong supporter of the women's suffrage movement, showcasing her engagement with the political and social changes of her time.

Path Of A Gay Witch

XXI

CONTINUED



“Gay Witch Energy”



GAY MALE THRU

However, it was her collaboration with occultist A.E. Waite that would define her legacy. In 1909, commissioned by Waite, she created the 78 tarot card illustrations that would become the most popular tarot deck in the world. Unlike previous, more abstract decks, Smith’s innovation was to create detailed, narrative scenes for the minor arcana cards, filled with symbolic imagery. This move made the tarot far more accessible for intuitive reading. Despite the immense popularity of the deck (only recently called the Rider- Waite-Smith deck to acknowledge her contribution) Smith received only a small, one- time fee for her massive effort, rather than ongoing royalties.

Following the First World War and her conversion to Catholicism in 1911, Smith moved to Cornwall, where she continued to paint and write, but her artistic style fell out of step with the modern art world. She died in 1951, penniless and largely forgotten, with her personal effects, including her drawings, auctioned off to pay her debts.

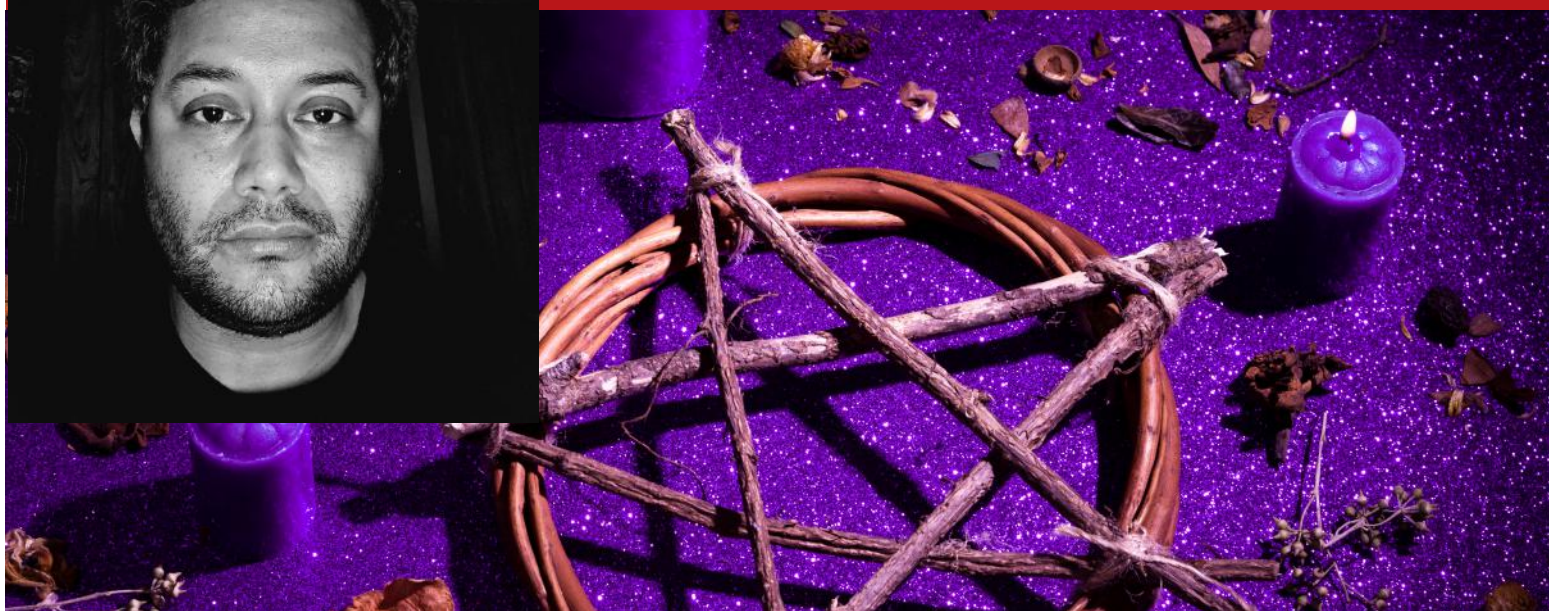
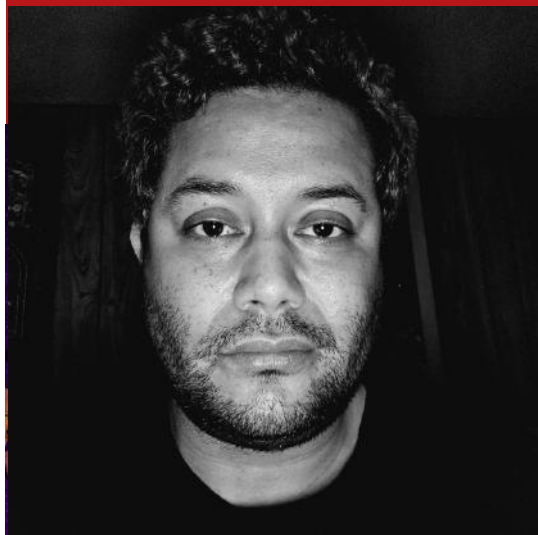
Today, the work of Pamela Colman Smith is being rediscovered and celebrated, with many rightfully calling her a co-creator of modern tarot. Her legacy lives on in the tens of millions of people who use her cards for insight and guidance, ensuring that the Pixie behind the magic is finally receiving the recognition she deserves.

Thred Ardor, an active community organizer, holds a Master’s degree in Social Psychology with a research emphasis on LBGT+ prejudice and stigma.

Big Comfy Witch Vibes

“basic spells and the theory behind them.”

Written by:
Adrien Clarke



Hello Readers and thank you for your patronage! This article will tackle the issues of basic spells and the theory behind them. For the next few articles we will dive into the four basic categories of spells and methods to execute them. The four basic categories every magical practitioner should learn are purification, protection, healing and prosperity. The methods we use to execute these spells are the elemental types of air, water, earth and fire. To execute air spells I will primarily discuss burning incenses, resins and herbs. To execute water spells I will discuss teas and brews to drink, as well as herbal baths and floor/wall washes. To execute earth spells I will discuss food, the use of roots and herbs in container spells, and powders. We will round out this discussion with the execution of fire spells by using


candles and lamps. I will try to avoid advanced spell theory for now as it may be confusing.

Purification in the context of spell work generally involves the removal of negative or undesirable influences or the presence of something on a person, object or space. When we burn herbs, incenses or resins to fumigate a space with smoke (using the air element here!) our aim is to purify the thing in question by using air to gently push out whatever we don't want. When we use the element of water we ingest liquid infused with certain herbs to change our spiritual composition from within. We can infuse liquid with herbs by boiling them and use that to douse our bodies after a cleansing shower. We

Big Comfy Witch Vibes

“basic spells and the theory behind them.”

Written by:
Adrien Clarke



Let spell candles
burn completely
when used to
cast

can also dress the body with magical oils or perfumes/colognes we prepare from combinations of herbs, resins, spices and oils (for magical oils) and the addition of alcohol with the aforementioned (for perfumes/colognes). Liquid sprays can be utilized to purify a space or object using the same preparation method. Using the element of earth we can use dried or drying herbs and leave them to hang on a wall near a threshold, in an open container (to absorb the influence in question), in a jar or bag, or swept on the floor.

Finally, using the element of fire we can burn paper, effigies, candles and lamps to affect a specific person, an area or an object. Removing the unwanted influence or presence is the first step because it

allows us the space to make further changes to a person, thing or area which would have been occupied by whatever is unwanted.

Protection can be approached in different ways. All the methods described above can be adapted to incorporate protecting herbs, spices, incenses and resins, powders, containers, roots, plants, food items, candles, lamps, papers and effigies as well. The theory behind protection after purification involves keeping out what you don't want or redirecting energy sent to something somewhere else. To keep out what we don't want we start with passive methods and gradually work our way up to more direct approaches. A passive method would involve wearing

Big Comfy Witch

Vibes

“basic spells and the theory behind them.”

Written by:
Adrien Clarke



a protective amulet or charm, container spell or magical oil on your person, or leaving it somewhere to continue to do its work. This approach is generalized and is meant to ward off what is unwanted by remaining in place. Direct approaches are more targeted to a specific person, area or object and require identifying information about the thing in question (names, addresses, locations, timing, etc.). Redirecting energy sent to you can be done with wards, effigies, food items, container spells and sigils/symbols drawn on paper. The redirection generally happens by first gathering the spiritual signature of the person, area or object and then leaving it somewhere to be targeted rather than the target itself.

Healing as a magical practice is usually seen as bringing a broken or maligned thing into wholeness or balance again. This task is more complex and advanced than purification or protection and requires those practices to be applied before healing can occur for it to be effective. When something is purified it makes space for further magical changes to occur. When something is protected it keeps in what you want and keeps out what you don't want, thereby stabilizing it. Now comes the healing work! We can use each element in ways I have already described to help something or someone to become healed. As I was first taught, we must change the energy within something before we try to make material or physical changes to it.

There are many approaches to healing so I will tackle this subject in greater detail in a later article.

Big Comfy Witch Vibes

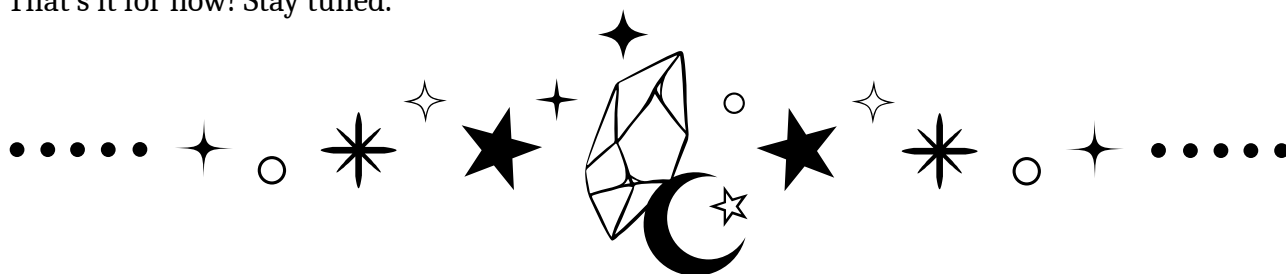
“basic spells and the theory behind them.”

Written by:
Adrien Clarke



Prosperity is the final variable to consider. Once the other phases have undergone their changes we are ready to achieve success in our personal goals, change the trajectory of our lives and finally thrive and flourish. Each element is representative of an aspect of a person's life in a theoretical sense. Air represents the mind and psyche. Water represents emotions and feelings. Earth represents the physical body as well as material possessions. Fire represents beliefs and passions. After purifying ourselves and the situation, applying protections and healing where needed we must take stock of where we are and where we want to be. We must first assess our beliefs about ourselves to see what we are working with, and brainstorm new ideas to help us grow into what we want to achieve. This task can be gargantuan depending on what kind of environment you grew up in, which is why it comes last.

That's it for now! Stay tuned.



Sacred Becoming: The Rise of Paganism Among Queer Practitioners

Written by:
By Kenneth Cunningham



In recent years, a noticeable shift has been taking place at the intersection of spirituality and identity: a growing number of LGBTQ+ individuals are turning toward pagan and earth-based traditions. While this movement is often framed as a trend, the reality is more complex. For many, it represents not a departure, but a return—toward forms of spirituality that feel expansive enough to hold the full truth of who they are.

Data supports what many practitioners have observed firsthand. Surveys from organizations like the Pew Research Center and the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) consistently show that LGBTQ+ individuals are significantly less likely to affiliate with organized, institutional religions—particularly conservative branches of Christianity—than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts. At the same time, they are more likely to identify as “spiritual but not religious” or to explore alternative spiritual paths, including paganism, Wicca, Druidry, and other nature-based traditions.

While pagan communities remain relatively small in terms of overall population—typically estimated at under 2% of the U.S. population—internal surveys and community studies suggest that LGBTQ+ representation within these spaces is disproportionately high. Some estimates within pagan and witchcraft communities place queer identification anywhere from 30% to over 50%, though exact figures are difficult to standardize due to the decentralized nature of these traditions.

Sacred Becoming: The Rise of Paganism Among Queer Practitioners

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Kenneth Cunningham



This disparity invites a deeper question: what is it about paganism that resonates so strongly with queer practitioners?

Part of the answer lies in structure—or rather, the lack of rigid hierarchy. Pagan traditions are often decentralized, non-dogmatic, and highly adaptable. Authority is typically experiential rather than institutional, allowing individuals to form personal relationships with deities, land, and ritual practice. For those who have experienced exclusion or harm in more rigid religious systems, this flexibility is not just appealing—it is necessary.

Equally important is the mythological and symbolic landscape of pagan traditions.

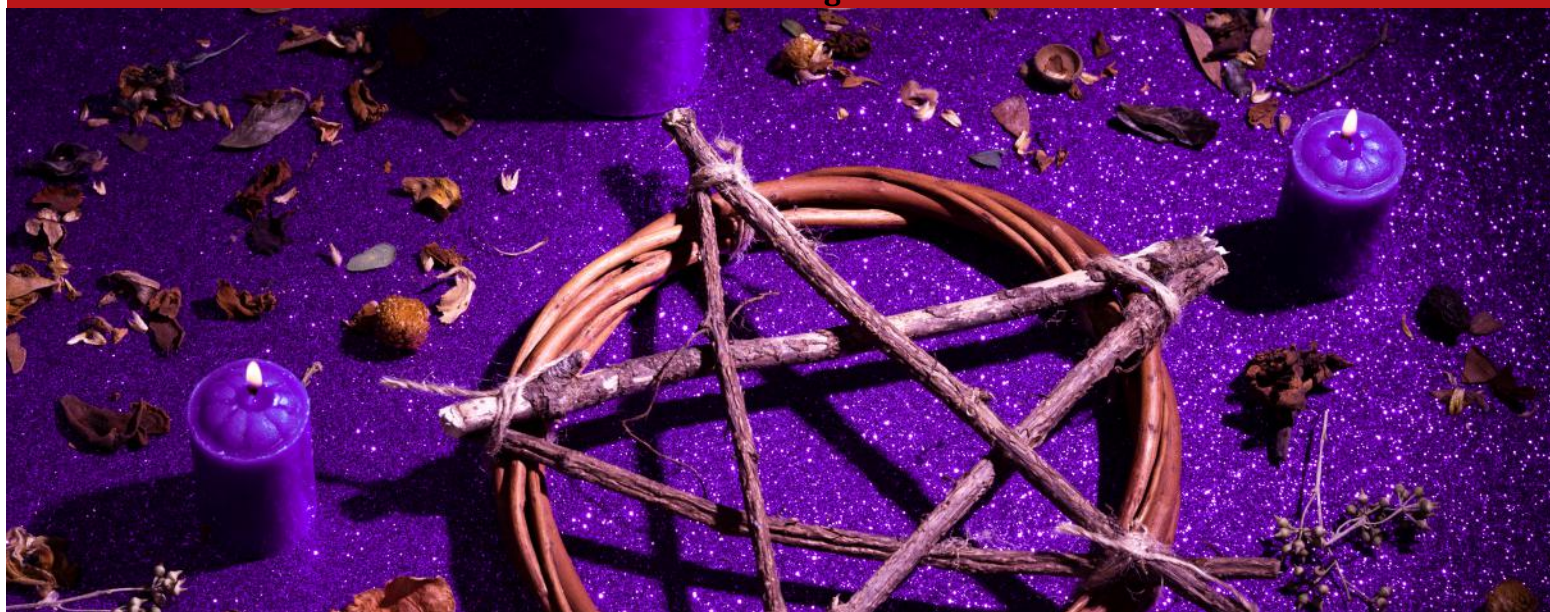
Across Celtic, Norse, Greek, and other polytheistic systems, one finds numerous examples of fluidity in gender, form, and relational dynamics. Deities who shift shape, embody dual or multiple genders, or engage in relationships that defy modern heteronormative frameworks are not anomalies—they are central figures. These narratives provide a spiritual language in which transformation, liminality, and multiplicity are not only accepted but revered.

For LGBTQ+ practitioners, this can be deeply affirming. It offers more than tolerance; it offers recognition.

In regions like Appalachia, where folk magic and ancestral traditions intersect with contemporary

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pagan practice, this dynamic takes on additional layers. Many queer practitioners are engaging in acts of reclamation—revisiting cultural and spiritual traditions that may have been suppressed, fragmented, or filtered through dominant religious narratives. In doing so, they are not simply preserving the past, but actively reshaping it to reflect present realities.

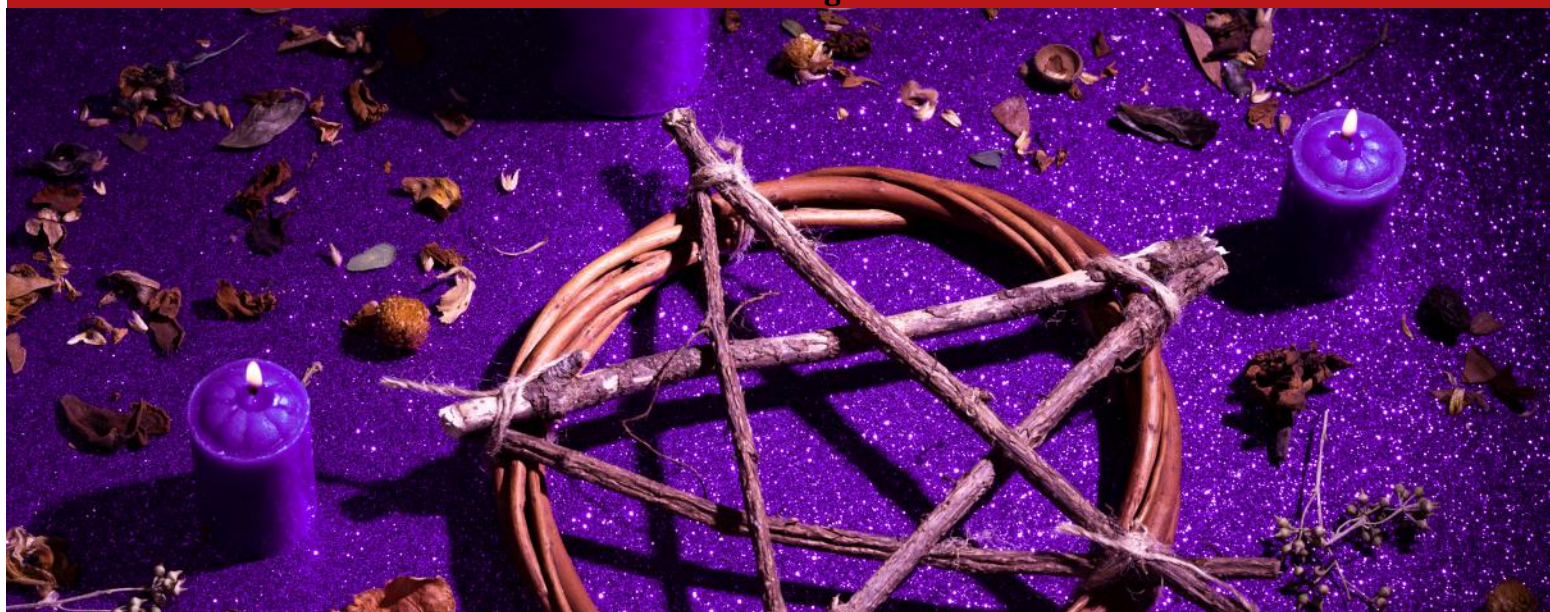
This process is also communal. Pagan spaces—whether physical covens, online groups, or public rituals—often function as sites of chosen family and mutual support. In a broader social context where LGBTQ+ individuals still face disproportionate rates of

discrimination, mental health challenges, and social isolation, these communities can provide both spiritual grounding and tangible belonging.

At the same time, it is important not to romanticize these spaces. Pagan communities are not immune to issues of exclusion, cultural appropriation, or internal bias. Conversations around inclusivity—particularly regarding race, gender identity, and cultural boundaries—remain ongoing and, at times, contentious. However, the decentralized nature of paganism also allows for a degree of self-reflection and evolution that can be more difficult to achieve in highly centralized institutions.

Sacred Becoming: The Rise of Paganism Among Queer Practitioners

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What is emerging, then, is not a monolithic movement but a pattern: LGBTQ+ individuals are seeking spiritual frameworks that affirm complexity, honor embodiment, and allow for transformation. Paganism, in its many forms, offers a vocabulary for this kind of spiritual life—one rooted not in conformity, but in relationship and becoming.

Rather than viewing the rise of paganism within LGBTQ+ communities as a passing phenomenon, it may be more accurate to understand it as part of a broader cultural shift. As traditional religious affiliation declines and individualized spirituality becomes more prominent, marginalized groups are not merely leaving old systems behind—they are actively building new ones.

And in those new (and newly reclaimed) spaces, identity is not something to be reconciled with the sacred.

It is part of it.





Message How to with Gay in the rainbow Scarf today!

Welcome to: "How to with Gay in the Rainbow Scarf," the latest addition to Gay Hive Magazine! Here, we celebrate the vibrant spectrum of LGBTQ+ culture while offering insightful tips, and creative ideas that will elevate your everyday life. Our mission is to provide a welcoming space for everyone, whether you're a long-time member of the community or just exploring your identity. Join us as we share inspiring stories, showcase unique styles, and promote inclusivity, all wrapped up in the colorful energy of the rainbow scarf. Dive in and discover how to embrace your true self with confidence and flair!



**How to with
Gay in the
rainbow
Scarf**



Welcome to Story Two

Welcome to the sixth short story I've released since the first one in January 2026. Most of my shorts have been dwelling in the shadows of psychological thrillers. We've explored the unsettling "getaway spa" of Anonymous Arron, the chilling future-tense human rights violations of Moist. Crunchy. Purple. Then we looked inside the eerie, "perfected" versions of ourselves promised in Something is Amiss in the Clinic.

We stepped out of the clinics and the underground bunkers. And stepped into the

DE-MASKING AT THE TREE-LINE

Written by:
Axton N. O. Mitchell

open air, in His Granite Skin.

We drove back into the realization that we are the next under-productive people in The Shelf Life of Productive Individuals.

Today we should probably try to seek out more fresh air along with a way to get this mental binder dressed up as armor off of my back.

While my previous stories focused on external systems and authoritarian pressures, this piece is about the internal landscape. We are going to unpack identity

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differently. Not through poetry for advocacy, self growth, or expression. Not creative writing and definitely not through forced procedure.

Here comes your identity via a thru-hike with me visually. Backpacking in the open-air with deliberate creative visual descriptions. What are you waiting for?



DE-MASKING AT THE T

ree-Line Continued

Written by:
Axton N. O. Mitchell

Let's find a good spot to start undoing this mental armor of performance.

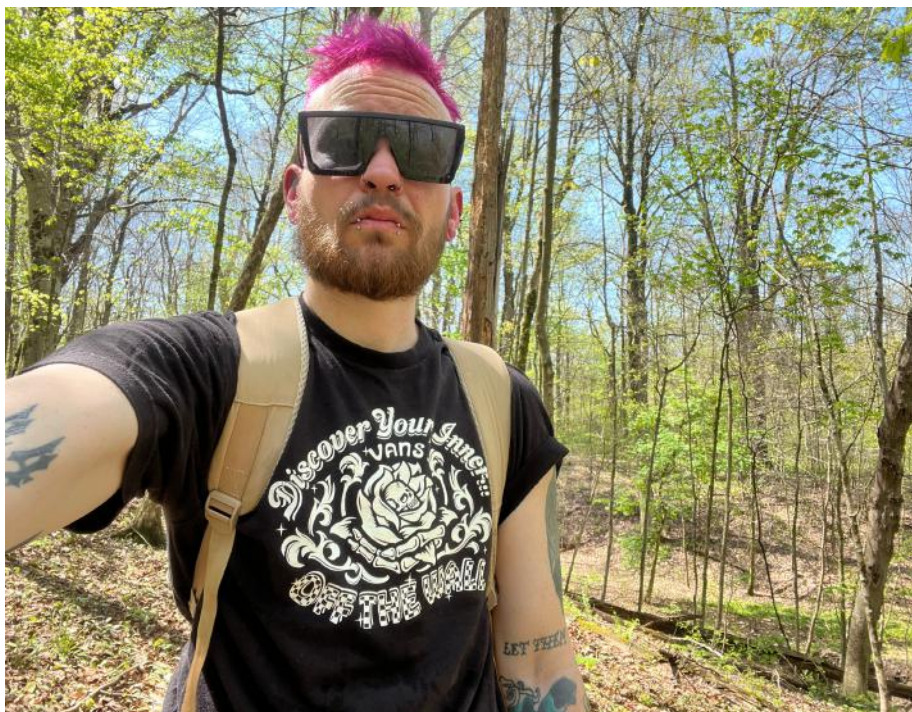
While you watch the embodiment of transition unfold through these words in nature...

De-Masking At the Tree-Line:

Down here the Valley isn't just a geographical location; The valley is a state of high-alert existence. The place I call home.

This valley is where prying eyes peer around every grocery store aisle just to guess what's in my pants, here I am a walking science project.

Before I even grab my keys, I have to check the rivets and grooves in my social armor. It acts like a mental replacement of my old chest binder. I feel it in the tightening of my throat after It squeaks as if I'm still the fifteen year old boy, that I never got to be. I can tell it is near in the conscious squaring of my shoulders when I notice myself succumbing to the urge to shrink.



When hyper-vigilance causes me to scan every passing face in public for a flicker of disgust, I feel the nylon binder cutting in, as if it's actually pressing against my ribs again.

By the time I reach the trailhead, and put my car into park... I am already exhausted.

The exhaustion isn't in my muscles though; it's my memory. As the structural fatigue the bridge carrying too much weight feels. It is in every "Good morning" to my neighbors in the valley as a disguised stress test.

I have to calibrate the depth of my voice, the way I choose to say "hello," and the steady stillness of my hands ensure my armor doesn't rattle. I preform to hide the ghost of a girl they never even knew.



DE-MASKING AT THE T

ree-Line

Written by:
Axton N. O. Mitchell

Continued

My jaw is a locked vice, holding up the mask of a man who has to be twice as certain as anyone else just to be seen as half as real.

On my back I plan to carry thirty pounds of gear in my pack. I know I have planned well for this; the invisible plate-mail built by my mental binder for public performance weighs twice that, at least.

Like a knight who forgot he's not at war, I prepare to clank around a silent forest.

The First Mile: Breaking the Rivets: The Ohio humidity is a thick, wet hand pressing against my chest as I take the first few steps into the tree line. The scent of damp moss and rotting oak leaves hits me, and for a split second, my armor feels slightly heavier.

In the valley, my physical binder was a cage. Though albeit necessary, a suffocatingly built triple-layered nylon compression garment.

Through life I was able to shed those extra three layers of skin but my internal protective system built

something new where it once lived.

The trail starts to incline, and something changes, about a mile in. The path narrows where the roots of ancient hickories begin to lace across the dirt like veins. The first chunk of my performance armor falls off.

It's the weight of the title "Sir" I used to crave but now carry like a lead vest. In the valley, "Sir" is a boundary I have to sometimes defend, seemingly with my safety.

Here, the hickory trees don't care. As the incline steepens, the first rivet pops with the need to keep my chest expanded and my stomach tight.

I let my breath fall heavy and jagged. I stop pulling my shoulders back to articulate mass.

I don't feel like performing today. The piece of my armor did not just fall; Each piece hit the forest floor with a metallic echoing bang.

I left them to rust and dissolve into the forest floor with the humidity and quiet knowledge.

I could breathe again.

When it happened, I'm not fully sure, but I just made notice to the fact that I hadn't yet peered over my shoulder or glanced around out of fear. The human gaze of prying eyes in the valley are miles behind me.



DE-MASKING AT THE T

ree-Line

Written by:
Axton N. O. Mitchell

Continued

The trees don't have a checklist for manhood. The squirrels aren't debating the ethics of my existence in a comment sections.

I feel a second rivet pop in my armor. Then another. I'm not performing to pass anymore. I'm just breathing in the forest air.

The Tree-Line Filter:

As the elevation gain starts to burn in my quads, and the forest continues to change.

I am moving through a cathedral of sandstone and shadows.

I begin to think about the stories I used to tell myself to survive, the "she" and "her" I used to wrap around me like a shield... that was actually a shroud.

This hike is a negotiation.

Every switchback a new chance to leave a piece of my performance armor behind.

I drop a gauntlet at the base of a buckeye tree, leaving the heavy, iron-plated need to prove I am man enough for the room.

I leave a greave in a patch of wild ramps, along with the way I've trained my legs to move so they don't betray a softness. I unbuckle the chest plate of hyper-vigilance that typically keeps me scanning for a sneer or double-take.

Each piece hits the forest floor with a metallic bang. Eventually the pieces begin dissolving with the humidity and quiet knowledge.

I am stripping down to the marrow.

When I finally reach the higher ridges, the wind starts to pick up as the canopy thins, my Mental Binder has snapped. The last piece of it falling to the ground with a sudden and echoing clank.

The physical binder hasn't been there in years, soaked in sweat, T-shirt tight against my skin. Even the straps of my pack is wet in my hand from perspiration. The suffocation I felt even after the fabric wasn't physical, it was the fear of a society who doesn't wish to coexist with you.

I find a small basin of rainwater caught in a depression of Backhand Sandstone. Today, I look at my face and I don't see a need to preform manhood. I feel no inclination that I have to defend or prove myself to anyone.

I see a face that is finally at peace, relaxed. The

*Continued***DE-MASKING AT THE T***ree-Line*Written by:
Axton N. O. Mitchell

muscles around my eyes have let go of that frantic tension of forever performing in the valley. My mouth is no longer set in a defensive line. I look like a man who has just put down a heavy box he's been carrying for thirty-some years. Without the armor to block it, the light hits me differently. No longer is it flat, hard, and defensive., bouncing off of me. Standing here at the tree line, the sunbeams break across me. Soaking the rays into my skin, ritualistically. The ochre of my stubbornness, the deep mossy green of my peace, the sharp silver of my new authenticity.

Carrying the Light Down:
I stand on a ledge overlooking a deep tree covered ravine. The wind up here is fierce, still, yet I feel invincible in comparison. Yet, as I continue to take in the view out over the Forest, a hard truth settles in. The dream isn't to stay up here forever. Living in the woods is a retreat, and I didn't transition or hike this to hide. I transitioned to exist.

The real work isn't found at the summit. It's what happens when I start the descent. How do I carry this feeling back into the valley? How do I keep the mental Binder from forcing itself back into my closet the second someone stares a moment too long? I begin the trek back down. I pass the place where I dropped my gauntlets. The weight of what's left is the hardest part of the descent. Even without the iron plates, my muscles remember their presence. My shoulders still forcibly hunch as the canopy thins and the sounds of the road begin to bleed back into the soft silence. I focus on the sensation of the sun hitting my face. I practice the feeling of my lungs expanding without hitting the wall of my mental binder. If the valley wants the knight, they will have to settle for the man first; I've left the suit to rust in the rain. I am too light now to ever go back to crawling. I leave the rusted husks left of my dissolving performance in the topsoil to be reclaimed by the earth. Walking back into the world as a man, without performative armor. I finally have the courage to stand in the sun without it.

Journey Summary
This piece moves away from the geological permanence of the first story and focuses on the psychological shedding of the social armor. It

*Continued***DE-MASKING AT THE T****ree-Line**Written by:
Axton N. O. Mitchell

explores a metal binder that replaced the physical one as internal restriction. Trans people often feel this in cis-normative spaces and I use the treeline as a literal filter for that exhaustion.

Key Imagery:

The Social Armor: The heavy, polished performance of gender used for safety in the valley.

The Reflection of Peace: An expression for the peace found in nature, where identity exists without the pressure of an audience.

Carrying the light : The concluding action, taking the freedom of the wilderness back into society to change the world.

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QUEER POETRY

The title "QUEER POETRY" is written in a large, bold, black, serif font, centered on a white background. The text is framed by a pink honeycomb pattern. Two bees, one on the left and one on the right, are positioned on the honeycomb pattern.


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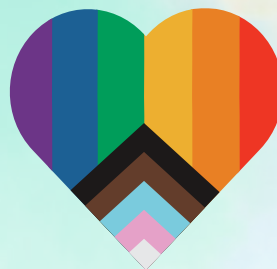
A Little Bit About the Author



"From this moment forward, the moon is trans." – **Joshua Jennifer Espinoza**

Tiffany Ambrose is a Queer, Neurodivergent, Canadian writer. They are a stay-at-home parent living in Ontario. Per writes from the heart when it comes to poetry as well as from experiencing life. Other genres per enjoys writing are fantasy, romance, and a little hint of mystery woven in.

They prefer to be called Tiff and per is also polyamorous. When writing fantasy romance or even poetry per write as the thoughts flow out raw, and often untouched.





Shed a Little Light

Written by:
Tiff

Shed a little light

I'll sit with you in your darkest hours
 Try to make it so you don't feel so
 alone
 Goddess knows the world is dark
 enough
 And so I'll shed a little bit of light for
 you
 The darkest day could rise and still
 I hope you can feel me there at your
 side
 It don't matter to me how dark it is
 I'll still shed a little bit of light for you
 Even if time loses all meaning
 I'll still do my best to remain
 here
 Darkness doesn't bother me
 Not when I have my own light to share
 So even if we are here awhile
 I lean on you, let you lean on me
 Hope you can feel me there even
 Though I'm far away, and shed a little light for you
 We walk hand in hand
 As the light embraces through
 Slowly chasing away the darkness
 Bringing on a brand new day
 Should the darkness come on back
 We'll still be there holding hands
 Leaning on each other and
 Shedding a little light for us.

You and Me

Written by:
Tiff

You and Me

There's not a day that goes by
 That you're not somewhere on my mind

Steadily becoming the exception to all my rules
 It's been quiet, a few years since I last felt this
 way
 But here we are and I'm wondering
 What you're doing whenever we're not talking
 In the has your day been good to you kind of way
 While always a phone call away
 There are days where I wish
 I was already there, close enough
 To drive or even walk to
 So I can hold you while we talk
 And if needed chase the bad moments away
 When those moments refuse to leave
 Be there to hold you anyway
 Cause I want it all my friend
 The good and the bad, the light and the dark
 Let our shadows mingle and mix
 From what I can tell, you're becoming part of the
 feeling
 Of what makes home feel like home

And maybe one day we'll be able to share a space
 Filled with mostly the peace we bring to each
 other
 Even when we're angry the love will still be there
 There will be no more second guessing
 Just repair when it's needed and growth.

A Little Bit About the Author



"Poetry is like standing on the edge of a lake on a moonlit night and the light of the moon is always pointing straight at you.

Billy Collins

Axton N. O. Mitchell is a Scorpio and an Ohio-based trans FTM poet, publisher, spiritual and witchcraft teacher, hiker, rockhound, lapidary artist, and advocate. His work is known for emotional

depth and survival-coding truth. Through Poeaxtry and The Prism, he curates, publishes, and uplifts minority voices, blending poetry, craft, and

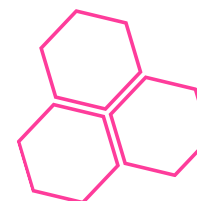
site community. Explore his work and resources through [HTTPS://Poeaxtry-link.my.canva](https://Poeaxtry-link.my.canva)

Now I Want to Hear From You

What resources, creators, or topics matter most to you? What type of interviews would you like to see here? Where do you see gaps in support or representation?

Email your ideas, opinions, and suggestions to poeaxtry@gmail.com.

Your voice shapes this space as much as mine. site community. Explore his work and resources through [HTTPS://Poeaxtry-link.my.canva](https://Poeaxtry-link.my.canva).



A Little Bit About the Author

Self Interview Highlights

Q: What drives your work?

A: Love, advocacy, and holding space for voices often ignored. My lived experience, grief, LGBTQ+ life, immigrants, politics, and the pulse of current events.

Q: How do you choose your topics?

A: By creating what I feel when I feel it, listening to the world around me, and following the natural ebb of my emotions and experiences.

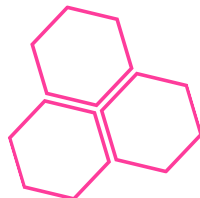
Q: Where can readers find you?

A: Poeaxtry's Links page, social media, and stores, all in one place.



"A poem begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a lovesickness."

— Robert Frost





Turning Identity to Specimen

Written by:
Axton N. O. Mitchell

I exist in the long, fluorescent hours of caretaking, a body used for its labor, its patience, and its silence.

But the air turned clinical and cold the moment my history was stolen from my throat and handed over like a laboratory slide.

She didn't just speak; she performed a public dissection.

She peeled back my clothes, my hormonal transition, my other medial procedures, my growth,

my years,
and my skin to show a stranger.

The picture she painted was of the before she saw and the her manufactured after.

She was betting on a seventy-year-old's prejudice
to

validate her own curiosity.

My humanity was traded for a moment of gossip, turning my identity into a specimen for a resident to examine. She hoped...

The violation has a physical sound... like a ringing in my ears that makes the walls feel like they are closing in.

I retreated.

Upon later confrontation by her I chose silence and space until she no longer allowed that.

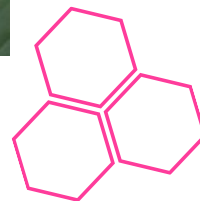


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Identity changes by the second, you turn into someone else every time a new thought rewires your brain. You're already a different person than you were ten minutes ago.

— Peter Watts





Turning Identity to Specimen

Written by:
Axton N. O. Mitchell

I attempted to walk away from her repeatedly asking me what was wrong.

I sought the mercy of a locked door, a eating area for the residents on a locked unit. One square of space where I could try to stitch my autonomy back together.

But she followed.

She pushed through the obvious physical boundary, and the social one as well.

She demanding my energy, demanding my usual yapper energy. While demanding that I comfort her as if I wasn't still reeling from the theft of my privacy.

At her hand.

The ultimate obscenity wasn't just her tongue; it was the institutional silence that followed.

When the office turned their pens toward me, accusing my boundary of being "harassment," the gaslighting was absolute. I was a staff member over multiple years she barely out of her 90 days.

It is a violent kind of math: to be outed is a non-issue, but to be quiet is a crime.

They wanted me to be a hollow vessel, functioning enough to do the work, but transparent enough for them to look through. My dignity wasn't just ignored; it was categorized as a liability.



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Our identity is like a kaleidoscope. With each turn we reset it not to a former or final state but to a new one that reflects the here-and-now positions of the pieces we have to work with. The design is always new because the shifts are continual. That is what makes kaleidoscopes, and us, so appealing and beautiful.

— David Richo





Turning Identity to Specimen

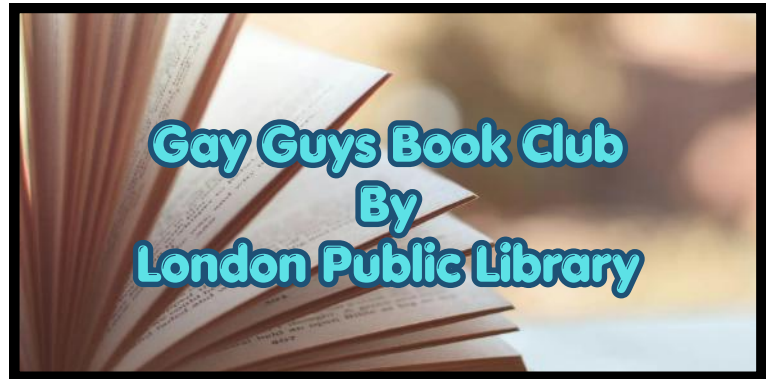
Written by:
Axton N. O. Mitchell

It stays with hyper-vigilance in the center of my spine. It is in the way I now carry my history like a concealed weapon that might go off at any moment in the hands of a stranger.

There is a lingering, jagged distrust that settles in the back of my throat every time I walk into a shift, a cold awareness that the people standing beside me might be mentally cataloging my parts instead of my work.

I find myself haunting the edges of conversations, listening for the sound of my own name being stripped down, waiting for the next time my privacy is traded for small talk.

The institution didn't just fail to protect me; they left me with the permanent, vibrating exhaustion of knowing that in their eyes, my boundaries are an inconvenience, but my exposure is just part of the job. It's a phantom itch of being watched through a glass wall that never quite goes away.

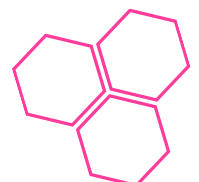


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Overview

Gay Guys Book Club

Join us as we discuss a diverse range of books predominantly of interest to gay men, from classics to new releases. Our meet-ups include some book talk and some socializing, as well as discussion around the role of gay men in society, both past and present. All are welcome. Register in person, online, or by calling 519-661-4600. This book club will meet the 2nd Tuesday of the month from September 9, 2025 to June 9, 2026 excluding December, 2025.





Turning Identity to Specimen

Written by:

Axton N. O. Mitchell

bleached rock actually matches the architecture of my mind. I was no longer “presenting” or performing a role for an audience of strangers in the valley; i was simply existing.

The first frost arrived one morning, silvering my face. Upon which a fine, dark dusting of hair appeared like lichen on a stone, the natural growth of the wild, on my face. I felt the shift in my chest, a resonance that matched the low thrum of the wind through the canyons. I wasn't a woman anymore, I never was; I'd clung to it for safety. I am a man, carved out of the

distance i have traveled.

I arrived at the summit and saw a crown of winter white, silent and absolute. Standing at the peak, finally the man I see inside is projected outward. I look back at the valley where we would have been 200 something years ago.

We all know winter has started. The transformation wasn't a surgery of the flesh, but a shedding of dead things where new will regrow. I walked until the person the world saw finally caught up to the man who had been walking all along, leaving the old names behind in shallow graves in the topsoil of the lower trails.

[HTTPS://Poeaxtry-link.my.canva.site/](https://Poeaxtry-link.my.canva.site/)



Our identity is like a kaleidoscope. With each turn we reset it not to a former or final state but to a new one that reflects the here-and-now positions of the pieces we have to work with. The design is always new because the shifts are continual. That is what makes kaleidoscopes, and us, so appealing and beautiful.

— David Richo



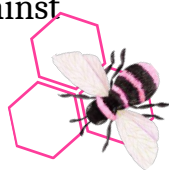
THE ARCHIVE THEY CAN'T BURN: WHY WE MUST JOIN THE PERMANENT INK PROJECT

Written by:
Axton N. O. Mitchell

In my first two segments, I talked about being treated like a clinical specimen and the exhaustion of the "mental binder." But now, I'm putting my own stories aside to talk about something bigger than any one creative individual.

I've been following a project called Permanent Ink, run by a creator named Iden. In a political climate where our history is being treated like a target, Iden has launched a "doomsday measure" for the transgender, nonbinary, and gender-queer community.

This isn't just art. This is digital and physical guerrilla warfare against erasure.



[HTTPS://POEAXTRY-LINK.MY.CANVA.SITE/](https://poetry-link.my.canva.site/)



The Mission:

Iden's goal is simple and terrifyingly necessary: Preserve our names so they can't be deleted.

The Permanent Ink Project collects the stories of gender-queer Americans and stores them in a decentralized way.

The idea is that we don't just leave our history on a server that can be shut down by a hostile regime.

We download it.



THE ARCHIVE THEY CAN'T BURN: WHY WE MUST JOIN THE PERMANENT INK PROJECT



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Axton N. O. Mitchell

We print it.

We hide it in our drawers, our floorboards, our old sneaker boxes, and our offline hard drives.

How We Step Up:

I am calling on everyone reading this, especially any international readers, to get involved right now.

We aren't just spectators; we are the archivists.

- Submit to Iden: If you are gender-queer, send your story. No word limits. Just your name, your pronouns, and the truth of your existence. Don't let them tell your story for you later.

- The Global Shield: If you are outside the U.S., you are our "safe harbor." Iden is asking international allies to download these documents and keep them on foreign soil where U.S. policy can't touch them.

CALL FOR ARTISTS

- The Physical Print: Go to the links below, download the archive, and print it. Hide a copy. Give a copy to a trusted friend. Make our existence a physical fact that cannot be "unclicked."

Why This Matters to Me:

As a creative individual, I know that when they want to kill a movement, they start with the books. Iden is making sure that even if the worst happens, the future will know we were here, we were beautiful, and we were real.

There are no copyrights here.

There is no ego.

There is only the ink.

Get Involved; Support Iden's Mission:

"Be vocal, or be silenced. Be visible, or be erased." - Iden

- Permanent Ink:

<https://www.mynameisiden.com/the-permanent-ink-project>

- website:

<http://www.mynameisiden.com/>

- Instagram:

http://www.instagram.com/my_name_is_iden/

RESTART, RESET, REFOCUS: MY RUN TOWARD THE LIGHT



Written by:
Danilo Mezzatesta



A few days ago I was walking along the beach in Rimini. I was tired, the trip was catching up with me and I just wanted to shut myself in my hotel. Then, all of a sudden, I saw it: a giant reconstruction of a camera. In that moment something clicked. I remembered that I had already been in that exact spot back in 2011. I had almost erased it, it was just one of many stops on a trip I had planned at the time, but seeing it again brought everything back.

2011 was the year of my first real rebirth. I had lost 60 kg, a change that completely transformed not just my body, but my entire way of being. It was the moment when I started to make my voice heard, to show the world who I really was. Since then, there have been many other rebirths, and each one has helped build the Danilo you see today. So I decided to pose there in front of it, but from the opposite side compared to that old photo, to make a comparison. I wasn't interested in the physical side, I wanted to look back at everything that has changed over these 15 years. And I thought that the Danilo from 2011 would be incredibly proud of who I've become in 2026.



*"You are the
greatest project
you will ever work
on. Restart. Reset.
Refocus. As many
times as you need.
Just don't give up."*

RESTART, RESET, REFOCUS: MY RUN TOWARD THE LIGHT

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Written by:
Danilo Mezzatesta

Rain on dry land

This growth hasn't just been professional, it has touched everything: friendships, love, relationships. Just a few days ago, someone I used to be with told me something that really stayed with me: over time they realized that my efforts to help them improve, what I used to call my "intensity," were exactly what they needed. Eleven years have passed, but knowing that they finally understood that my way of being came from a good place made me feel lighter. I had always feared I had gone too far, but those words fell like rain on dry land, finally allowing the seed I planted long ago to grow.

Don't lose yourself in eyes that don't see you

I've learned the hard way that you should never lose yourself in the eyes of someone who cannot see your true worth, or in the hands of someone who expects you to be "less" just so they can feel like "more." Your heart is not a hotel room where people come and go leaving only a mess behind. You are too valuable to be just an unfinished chapter in someone else's story.



The dream that became reality

Photography has always been my passion, but back then it was a dream I kept hidden, almost out of fear. Today it is my job. It has allowed me to travel, to meet incredible people, to improve myself and even to teach my techniques to others. The Danilo from back then would never have imagined reaching this level.

Of course, along the way there have been failures, many of them. But today I say: welcome them. You shouldn't be afraid of failing or of tearing down everything you've built over the years. Often what we think is the finished product is just a necessary draft to get to the final version. Every failure has helped me become a better professional and a better man.

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I spent too much time waiting for someone who rarely showed up, feeling worse every time. Then I understood: that pain doesn't stop until you stop waiting. You can't force anyone to be there, but you can learn the lesson when they aren't. That's karma: it removes those who don't know how to love you to make space for those who truly will. That emptiness you sometimes feel? It's just the time it takes for something better to arrive.

The run toward rebirth

Today I know that it wasn't fear of jumping into the dark. I was just stepping back to get a running start. Blessed is that drop that makes the glass overflow, because it's the one that gives you the strength to leave a place where you don't feel you belong.

One day you'll look back and understand that the pain was necessary, that those tears carved the ground to create your path. One day you will thank yourself for being so brave.

Restart. Reset. Refocus. Without fear. If I did it, starting from that guy on the beach in 2011, anyone can.

Happy rebirth!





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**THE HUMAN, THE
KLINGON, AND
THE VERY BAD
GAY PLAN**

**BY MICHAEL
SCHECTER**



THE HUMAN, THE KLINGON, AND THE VERY BAD GAY PLAN

ADAM BOUSKA



Written by:
Michael Schecter

Darkened Corridors: Starship Horizon

Kor strode through the dim corridors of the Horizon toward Engineering. With the ship's power levels so low, he had to climb the ladders between decks. He forced his mind to stay on the task at hand. It was imperative that he reach Engineering as quickly as possible. They had secured the area for now, but one never knew what the invaders might attempt next.

He also wanted to talk to one of them. Or more accurately, he wanted one of them to talk to him. With a bit of coercion, he might learn something useful. They still knew very little about this enemy or why they wanted to take over the ship. Perhaps they simply wanted to conquer. If that was true, then this race might be similar to his own people.

Kor doubted that, though. These aliens were scrawny, even scrawnier than Humans.

And there was one particular Human who was extremely scrawny, one Human he hoped he would never see again. Kor wanted to refuse to acknowledge that this Human was even on the ship. He had a hard



THE HUMAN, THE KLINGON, AND THE VERY BAD GAY PLAN

Written by:
Michael Schechter

time believing that Sherwin Porter was here, right now, in...

Sickbay: Starship Horizon

Win tapped his commbadge. "Porter to Security."

"Security here."

"Sickbay is secure from intruders," Win reported.

"So noted."

The line cut quickly, but Win did not hear anything after that anyway. He knew that voice, that Klingon voice. It had to be Kor.

Corridors: Starship Horizon

Kor did not know exactly how the counselor had been poisoned. The doctors had said someone had slipped him a love potion and that Sherwin had not been in his right mind.

As he moved down another level toward Engineering, he sneered at the recent memory.

He felt like the unluckiest being in the universe to have been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

THE HUMAN, THE KLINGON, AND THE VERY BAD GAY PLAN

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Michael Schecter

Sickbay

Win had not meant for Kor to become the sole object of his affection. It had been a pure mistake. Yesterday, before this strange invasion of the ship, Sherwin had been at a Carnival, and the Fortune Teller had given him a love potion. At first he thought it was a hoax, but evidently there were pheromones mixed with a hallucinogen and who knew what else. When the Fortune Teller told him he would fall deeply in love with the first person he came into contact with, he honestly had meant to target someone else.

He ran into Kor coming out of the tent, and Kor knocked Sherwin over.

“Watch where you’re going, Human,” he grunted, not even bothering to help him up.

Sherwin was startled when he fell over. He looked up at the Klingon to apologize for running into him, but as soon as he saw that...that absolutely stunningly handsome face, he was speechless. All he could do was stare at the fine looking specimen ‘s backside as he strode away.

‘I...have to have him,’ was all Sherwin could think about as he stood up and dusted himself off, ‘no matter what it takes.’ His heart was all sixty-nine ways aflutter. He didn’t take his eyes of Kor until he was out of sight.

THE HUMAN, THE KLINGON, AND THE VERY BAD GAY PLAN

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The next day was... well... let us just say embarrassing for Sherwin.

Sherwin Porter was a medical officer, a counselor, and, courtesy of an ill timed love potion, now disastrously in love with Kor, the ship's most magnificently irritable Klingon. Kor had no intention of attending his scheduled counseling session, but Win had the crew roster, a commbadge, and the kind of optimism that borders on a hazard. So when Kor skipped his appointment, Win did the only logical thing. He went to find him.

Personal Quarters: Lt. Jg. Kor

Kor looked down at his daily schedule. Four hour shift, half hour lunch, then a three hour shift, then...

"What?!" Kor yelled at the empty room. He hit his commbadge to call his mate. "Kor to Re'lari."

"What is it, Kor? Something wrong?" Her voice was strong over the channel.

"I told you I was not going to go to counseling," he barked. He heard her sigh. "I know. And I respect that decision."

"Then why did you set me up for a session?" he demanded.

"I did not," she replied, confused. Kor frowned. "You did not? If you did not, then who did?"

THE HUMAN, THE KLINGON, AND THE VERY BAD GAY PLAN

Written by:
Michael Schechter

Counseling Office

Sherwin grinned as he looked at his daily schedule. Kor would be his last appointment.

Win had looked up his file, found that Kor had indeed been one of the crewmembers who had not yet been counseled, and gotten clearance from the Chief of the medical clinic to set Kor up for an appointment with him.

He wondered if perhaps Kor would want to have dinner with him afterward. Hmm...

Seven and a Half Hours Later

Kor stood in the center of his room, practicing with his Daqtagh. His shift was over, and he had no intention of going to an irritating counseling session. He would use this extra time to hone his fighting skills. He bent one knee and waved the knife in the air, jabbing forward, then to the side as he dodged his invisible opponent.

He stopped, realizing he could get much better practice in a holodeck. He sheathed the Daqtagh and headed for the door.

"Oh, hello!" said a startled Sherwin as the door opened. He had been just about to press the chime.

Kor stopped short to avoid running over the Human. "Watch out..." he began, looking down at the scrawny male.

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“S... sorry,” Win managed, grinning ear to ear. “I am here for our appointment.”

“Appointment? What app... oh. You must be the counselor,” Kor said with a sneer.

Sherwin extended his hand. “Yes, that is me. I am Sherwin Porter. I am so happy to meet you. Shall we get started?” He peered past Kor into the quarters, hoping for an invitation.

Kor ignored the outstretched hand. “I do not need counseling. Cancel the appointment.” He brushed past Win and strode down the corridor.

Win dropped his hand and hurried after him. He had to almost run to keep up. “Oh, but you were on the away team during which several members were killed, were you not? Do you not want to talk about it? I am a great listener!”

Kor picked up the pace. Maybe he could lose him. “No, I do not need to talk about it,” he said over his shoulder. “I am fine.”

Win panted as he tried to talk while running. They passed a technician who flattened himself against the wall to avoid them. “But was not your mind taken over by aliens?” Win called.

Kor ducked right down another corridor, nearly knocking over a couple heading home from their shifts. “Yes, but that is all over now. I am myself again.”

THE HUMAN, THE KLINGON, AND THE VERY BAD GAY PLAN

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Win jogged past the couple. “But did that not leave repercussions!” he shouted.

“No!” Kor roared, breaking into a full run. He was going to lose this idiot if it killed him.

I CAN HELP YOU! LET ME HELP YOU! Win shrieked, still chasing him.

Doors along the corridor slid open as people peeked out to see the commotion, heads turning as Kor and Sherwin raced past.

Kor reached the turbolift and was forced to stop. He turned to face the Human closing in behind him. “Look, Counselor. My mind was taken over by aliens. They made me do things I would not have done. I will have my revenge, somehow. Some day. End of story.”

Win slowed to a hopeful smile. “Now we are getting somewhere. Let us talk about this revenge you want to have, shall we?”

Kor shook his head. “No. We are not going to talk about revenge. We are not going to talk about aliens. We are not going to talk about anything. Get it?”

The turbolift doors opened.

“But...” Win started.

THE HUMAN, THE KLINGON, AND THE VERY BAD GAY PLAN

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Kor put one finger to his lips. "Shh. No butts," he said as he stepped backward into the lift.

Win tried to follow, but Kor held out a hand, glaring. Win froze, disappointed, and lowered his foot back to the corridor floor.

"We will talk again," Win said brightly.

Kor shook his head as the doors slid shut on Win's hopeful face. He sighed and closed his eyes, wondering how good it would feel to use the Daqtagh on one particular counselor



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