



# THE GAY SAINT

“Dip me in honey and throw me to the lesbians”

## News and Campaigns

### Gender-Neutral Santa (And Other Gay Outrages)

By Anonymous

As we tread hot off the heels of the self-proclaimed ‘most wonderful time of the year’ and into a whole new decade, I find myself wondering how we manage to continually traipse in metaphorical pop-cultural circles. Every Christmas feels like the last in some respects - we put up the same trees, re-stress about what to buy our loved ones and, of course, dust off our favourite familial arguments to then update them with a brand-new 2019 rendition.

I don’t know how applicable my experiences are but personally, I’ve just had my yearly spin on the splendid carousel of distant high school acquaintances and weird relatives sharing the same angry Facebook content. The usual memes about how the evil Grinch-esque gays are here to steal Christmas from you by dancing on the grave of our dear Father Christmas, with tales of a new yuletide icon - a gender neutral Santa Claus.

Droves of tweets fol-

lowing the rhetoric of “I support you gays! Live your life! But this is where I draw the line. Stop shoving it down our throats!” and other knee-slappingly witty remarks parroting this sentiment. And this makes me mad. Not because I’m a particularly avid supporter of a gender-neutral Santa; in fact, I don’t really care (although, why shouldn’t the magic being who gives us our gifts be non-binary? It would hardly be breaking the illusion of plausibility). But more so because the (non-replicated, mind you) study which found that this purported ‘17.8%’ of people who wanted a gender-neutral Santa knew exactly what it was doing - creating a stir for attention’s sake.

Conducted by ‘GraphicSprings’- a graphic design service, one has to question their motives for dipping their toes into the harsh waters of statistics at all. If studying Psychology has taught me anything, it’s that statistics aren’t easy, and that a clean, unbiased result is something many of us take for granted. To put it simply, GraphicSprings knew exactly how to generate a buzz over their modest site. And generate they did. PinkNews.co.uk naturally reported on this figure, and the main-

stream media ate it up. BBC, The Sun, The Mirror, CBS, The Telegraph, Daily Mail - trashy or not - were posting articles and opinion pieces on the matter and adding their two cents until the pot of gold was overflowing. This opulence of coverage started a domino-like chain reaction of news which, of course, ended up where most internet controversies do: Twitter. And this was where the source of this veiled transphobia from the usual crowd came in. The poor souls, baffled by the emergence of all these new-fangled things such as ‘non-binary people wanting to exist’ and ‘the LGBT+ community wanting to be visible’. Ridiculous, right? The big problem here is that all this study accomplished was giving straight people an outlet to express this discomfort, except with quote-unquote ‘evidence’ this time. “See? This time the LGBTQ+’s really are shoving it down our throats! So, it’s okay to complain about them now!”. First of all, participants of GraphicSprings’ study (titled ‘Modernizing Santa’) were actually asked a series of multiple-choice questions regarding how one would (as the title suggests) modernise Santa; one of which specifically addressed Santa’s gender, and offered the options of ‘male’,

'female' or 'gender-neutral' (known as Santx) as possible responses. Spoiler alert: this skews results. How many people wouldn't have even considered changing Santa's gender, if not asked about it and presented with the option?

GraphicSprings' clear search for a snappy, clickbait-y statement to bring traffic to their website aside, the reality of it is that gender-neutral Santa is so far down on the list of the LGBTQ+ community's priorities, it's underground. Sorry, Santx. But what this did was continue the tired and false narrative that to be LGBTQ+ is to be something radical. That we don't simply want to exist like everybody else, but that we're determined to tear down these existing institutions in superficial ways. Homophobes and transphobes were given an excuse to demonise us and reinvigorate their narrative that we're here, we're queer, and we're going to defile all of your favourite childhood centrepieces by rubbing our rainbow-smearred hands on them. And quite frankly, I'm tired of being made out to be the villain.

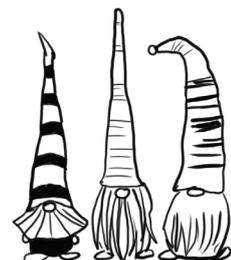
We see this happen again and again - more recently with the news of 'rainbow poppies' sweeping through our news feeds last November. The introduction of an alternative symbol to the standard red is nothing new - many variations already exist: purple poppies for service animals; black poppies for African, black and

Caribbean communities' contributions; white poppies for people who died... the list goes on. What I found interesting was that when the rainbow news broke, I found myself struck with *déjà vu*. The same narratives came crawling out of the woodwork that I'd already seen who-knows-how-many times at this point RE: gender-neutral Santa, except this time targeted at rainbow poppies. While they had no statistics to back them up this time, it was somehow decided upon that rainbow poppies are an act of gross disrespect against our troops, so, naturally, they were just fighting the good fight in defending veterans' honour against the gay agenda to defile these memories.

In all seriousness, in cases such as both gender-neutral Santa and the rainbow poppy, I just find it peculiar how the general public and mainstream media seem to simply adore picking up these stories which give people an excuse to jump down the LGBTQ+ community's throat (whether we even knowingly campaigned for something or not) with the same ideas, simply paraphrased. The world is filled with a virtually infinite number of potential news stories and trends to report on, yet these shockwaves of hearsay about what the LGBTQ+ community is up to more often than not dominates the news cycle. Nobody is going to yell at you for misgendering Santa Claus, nobody is going to scoff at you for wearing a red poppy

rather than a rainbow one, yet as far as the news is concerned, this is worth talking about because putting 'LGBTQ+' and 'controversy' in a headline will draw in uncomfortable straight people's clicks like moths to a lamp.

Of course, the internet is wont to get angry at anything and everything (it's simply a law of nature), but I can't help but feel there's a dangerous attitude being cultivated by this outrage marketing. Very slowly, spaces are being created where individuals can feel empowered in their bigotry on this second-hand information being passed around about what the LGBTQ+ community says, wants, or does, and as long as this blasé attitude regarding what we do and don't believe continues online, I'm not too sure how we can stop it. At the end of the day, by perpetuating this back-and-forth we're completing our role as cogs in the media machine feeding their bloated websites with likes and revenue. And the worst part is that by talking about this right now, I'm continuing the cycle. I don't know if it can be avoided, but I think we could definitely afford to put our pitchforks down to rest more often. Much like new Santa's gender, we could afford to be more neutral sometimes.



## Sex Education

By Ivy Turinsky

It's Friday afternoon. Sunlight pours in through tall windows into the dusty classroom. Inside, a handful of secondary school students sit perched on desks or slouched on the floor. At the front, my friend Lucy is drawing a giant vagina on the white board with a bright green pen. "This," she says triumphantly, turning to the onlookers and pointing to a spot on the diagram, "Is the clitoris!"

Now, you may be wondering, why is Lucy teaching this motley crew, and not a "Real Teacher"? And why has said motley crew decided to dedicate their Friday afternoon to learning about sex? The answer is simple: this is the only place they can.

Lack of sex education is evident in schools around the globe, and, even when offered, often it is not scientifically accurate, and fails to touch on the experience of LGBT+ individuals. Currently, only twenty-five states in the US require sex ed to be taught at all, and only thirteen states in total require it to be medically and factually accurate—what's more, state definitions of what is factual can vary widely, and are often biased. For example, thirty-seven states mandate abstinence-based curriculums, which has been shown to lead to increased risk of STIs and unwanted pregnancies, in addition to promoting a culture of shame around sex.

This attitude may be shifting, but it is shifting slowly, driven only by the determination of the younger generations to receive a proper education on their bodies. Without the support of their schools, young people are turning to online sources, porn, and friends in order to learn about sex. While it's great we're looking for answers, these sources can also be biased and unreliable. Our parents can't be relied on for information either; they pass the responsibility to our teachers, assuming that they will teach us all we need to know, thus abdicating any responsibility or awkwardness they might feel talking about these things.

When I tried to talk to my mum last summer about why she'd never had the awkward "birds and bees" talk with me, or mentioned anything remotely related to LGBT+ issues until after I came out, she was very taken aback that it had ever been an issue. "I thought you knew we were accepting!" She said. "I thought you would learn all you needed to in school, you had a class for that!" Now, I'm not asking for every parent to suddenly give an anatomy lecture to their kid or become an expert in queer studies, but it would be helpful for them to acknowledge that a chalk diagram in aesthetic colours of a penis and a vagina, or - if you're lucky - a condom rolled onto a banana, hardly teaches us all we need to know. Not only is this form of teaching both cis- and het-

eronormative, hardly touching on or completely erasing queer identities and relationships, it is dangerous for the mental and physical health of all students. Expecting everyone else to do the "awkward part" of teaching your kid about sex puts them at a higher risk of STIs and of feeling alienated and shameful regarding their sexuality and gender identity, straight or queer.

Us students aren't having less sex just because we're not taught about it, but we'll fare a lot better if we have access to a proper education. (Of course, if you don't want to have sex for any reason, that's entirely your choice and right.) We need a factual curriculum that encompasses not only straight and queer relationships—without bias against the latter, but also teaches the importance of consent in every aspect, and pleasure. Gone should be the days of "Women can't orgasm" and hosts of other charming and wildly inaccurate clichés; we need to erase the shame associated with talking about sex in all aspects - not simply in regard to your classic, white-picket-fence hetero couple making babies.

One of the best ways to increase acceptance of the LGBT+ community is to teach about us too, to stop assuming that every child in the classroom is straight and/or cis. As one of our predecessors here at The Gay Saint, Steve, put it in March 2000 regarding the proposed repeal of Section 28

(which banned the “promotion” of homosexuality in schools), “Education breeds acceptance, not promotion.”

Section 28 has since been repealed, but its effects continue to live on insidiously in false and biased sex ed. Queer students already face higher rates of bullying and isolation in schools—along with the accompanying mental health impact—and the lack of information and resources on queer sex and gender identities only adds to the problem. Omitting LGBT+ information from sex ed, on top of the myriad of other issues surrounding its teaching, isn’t some casual oversight or slip-up; this omission is purposeful. Omission implies immorality, a term far too many people are still keen to associate with the LGBT+ community in 2020.

Currently, the UK government plans to introduce a new sexual education curriculum—Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)—which will become compulsory for all state-funded schools in England in September 2020. Although this new curriculum appears to contain further, factual information on everything from menstruation to consent, and promises a full integration of LGBT+ content into the general curriculum, it leaves it up to the school to decide how exactly this integration will be carried out. Furthermore, parents have the option to withdraw their child from the sex education part of this new pro-

gram, up until the age of sixteen, at which point the child is allowed to make the choice for themselves - but will children feel comfortable opting in behind their parents backs, with the risk of being caught?

This curriculum update, twenty years in the making, has already faced backlash regarding the inclusion of gay families in the relationship part of the course for primary schools (RSE began to be introduced in fall 2019). Families are stating that their children are “too young” to learn about queer relationships, and that said content goes against religious teachings, held across a variety of religious beliefs. Multiple schools have since suspended the lessons, receiving severe backlash and weekly protests from the families. But, surprise! Us queers exist at all ages and in all religions, and it’s especially important for LGBT+ youth to hear about queer relationships and identities in school, so as not to feel as though they are alone or there something is wrong with them. A lack of information and resources only leads to more hurt and challenges down the line.

Other parents in opposition to the new program claim that they are supportive of the gays, but they want to be able to teach their kids about us themselves, citing an increase of the “LGBT agenda” in lessons as students get older. To me, that sounds an awful lot like a new spin on the age-old

mantra of, “Oh, I support people being gay, but I don’t see why you all have to be so in-our-face about it! Why can’t you just be who you are and keep it to yourself?” (Or, to put it another way, “Love the sinner, hate the sin.”) Parents, you can teach your kids what you want in your own time, but you need to remember that your kids aren’t the only ones in that class, and LGBT+ kids deserve representation and access to information too.

This not to justify the racism and prejudice aimed at religious and cultural minorities who traditionally abstain from sex before marriage—that is your choice. But students, especially women and LGBT+ individuals who are statistically more impacted by a lack of sex education, deserve to know the facts and information about their bodies so they can make said choices. Furthermore, everyone benefits from an awareness of the different forms that sexuality, gender, and relationships can take for people.

We deserve information on the basic functions and risks regarding our own bodies, so that we can make informed choices that suit us best. So, where do we go from here? What, exactly, is our relationship with sex coming from this convoluted background? Clearly, we still have a lot of work to do. Because let’s face it - learning about sex is often awkward. So how can we, like Lucy, make it less so?

## Arts and Culture

### LET IT GO, DISNEY - ELSA IS OURS.

#### Why Disney is queer baiting Elsa, and why they need to step up.

By Charles Vivian



I don't think I'm the only person who would say that Disney has been a huge part of my childhood. So many of my fond memories and the important lessons I have learned were cultivated through the exciting and colourful stories the entertainment giant explored onscreen; I have no doubt that it will always hold a special place in my heart. The Lion King taught me about grief, Inside Out about mental health, and The Little Mermaid about how it's a good idea to sell off your entire identity to grow some legs and quite literally run after a man and society's patriarchal expectations. OK - I feel like there are a lot of issues I could raise (don't even get me started on the rampant sexism in Sleeping Beauty and Snow White), but today I want to focus specifically on LGBT+ representation (or lack thereof) in the Frozen franchise. Sadly, the older I get, the more I start to realise that Disney has a di-

versity problem.

Let's start at the beginning. In 2013, Frozen was released. It took off. I am proud to say that I was one of the relentless thirteen-year olds screeching 'Let it Go' at the top of my lungs and forcefully engraving it onto the consciousness of the nation. THANK GOD I took down my YouTube channel before I started secondary school - the cold may not bother Idina Menzel, but my painfully ambitious pre-pubescent cover certainly would have.

The film was praised for subverting convention and emphasising familial love over romantic love. I live for Elsa's metafictional shade at basically every Disney movie since the beginning of time when she turns to Anna and says, "You can't marry a man you just met." Elsa herself has no romantic interest whatsoever (wink wink), and the act of "true love" that saves Anna at the climax of the movie is her sacrifice for her sister and has absolutely nothing to do with Kristoff.

Frozen resonated with LGBT+ audience members, especially with the character of Elsa, because of the queer subtext. If anyone tries to tell me that Elsa's suppression of her powers is not a metaphor for her coming to terms with her sexuality, then I will fire up my Frozen karaoke set and belt 'Let It Go' at them until they curl into a ball and confess their sins.

First of all, there's the fact that Elsa's parents discover that she is different and literally shut her away for no apparent reason. We find out at the end of the movie that Elsa's powers can be controlled through love. All she needed was support and acceptance for her to be able to learn how to control them. Starting to ring any bells?

Anna's song 'Do You Want to Build A Snowman?' where Elsa is shut away in her room, hiding her powers and her entire identity from her sister, is quite literally the physical embodiment of being "in the closet" - just with a lot more ice.

Don't even get me started on Let It Go...  
"Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know."  
Sounds like an extract from my diary when I was thirteen and trying to write angsty poetry.  
"Let it go, let it go! Turn away and slam the door!"  
Sounds like an extract from my diary when I was thirteen and that one time I put on make-up and drew a cartoon rainbow on my hand.

She goes from trying to suppress her powers to accepting that they are a part of who she is, and embracing them wholeheartedly at the end of the film. I mean, COME ON! Then came the announcement in 2016 that Disney was going to make Frozen 2, prompting the #GetElsaAGirlfriend trend on twitter. I must say, I was

hopeful. But Frozen 2 didn't really provide us with anything more than its predecessor. It doesn't turn Elsa straight (THANK GOD), and I guess the queer subtext is turned up a couple dials, but Disney held back from taking a real step in the right direction. They played it safe.

First off, let's look at what we have.

The first song, 'Into the Unknown', was promising. The line "I'm not where I'm meant to be" hinted at the fact Elsa still had some self-discovery to do, and that maybe there was still a part of her that she has been suppressing, aside from her powers. A mysterious, beautiful female voice entices her and draws her away from her conventional life at Arendelle and "into the unknown". She is unable to ignore this instinct telling her she is different, and spurs her to run out into the wild world beyond.

Then Disney kind of gave Elsa a girlfriend. In a cute campfire DMC with the female character Honeymaren, there was a spark which suggested to viewers who were eager for Disney to make Elsa LGBT+ that they could end up being more than just friends. Their relationship in the film even mirrors that of Kristof and Anna. Both pairs are together (geographically) in the forest at the beginning of the film, become separated in the middle, and reunite at the end, which is when Anna and Krist-

off get married, and Elsa decides to live in the forest where Honeymaren is.

Most importantly, I come to Elsa's climactic power ballad: 'Show Yourself' - Frozen 2's attempt to write another 'Let It Go'. The song starts off with an intimate verse where Elsa declares "I can sense you there, like a friend I've always known. I'm arriving, and it feels like I am home." that made one of my friends label it a "lesbian power ballad". Although, I think that she forgot that it was a duet between Elsa and her dead mother, so let's not read too much into that...

Elsa declares "I have al-



ways been so different, normal rules did not apply. Is this the day, are you the way, I finally find out why?" Of course, this is in relation to her powers, but much like in the first installment, it is dripping with queer connotations.

If Frozen was about Elsa coming to terms with

her powers, Frozen 2 is about her total and wholehearted self-acceptance. Elsa comes for answers, and her mother tells her that she is the answer to her own question - "You are the one you've been waiting for ..all of your life." This is conveyed visually when Elsa looks down, as if seeing herself as she truly is for the very first time, and suddenly has an iconic costume change and unleashes her ice magic in the most powerful way yet seen across the two films. This resonated with me because I spent a lot of my struggle with my sexuality asking similar questions - wondering why I was gay and wishing I wasn't. I finally came to the realisation that it was just who I was, and can no longer imagine what it would be like if I were straight, because that just isn't me. For me, 'Show Yourself' really seemed to embody this feeling of total self-acceptance.

One thing I was very worried about when writing this article, was coming across as if I was trying to undermine Elsa's independence and take away from the empowering message that Elsa doesn't need ANYONE to be as kickass as she is. And she absolutely doesn't. She's one hell of a protagonist in her own right - I didn't dress up as her for Halloween a couple of years ago for no reason. And, of course, my reading of Elsa is significantly tailored to my own experiences. I've seen some readings of Elsa as asexual, which is what makes her character so great!

The way she has been written means that she resonates with the LGBT+ experience on numerous levels. However, I think that the reason why Elsa's queerness has become so integral to my (and others) experience of Frozen, is because I believe that Disney is guilty of queer baiting. Queer baiting refers to the way in which creators market projects by hinting at same sex romances, but then not depicting them onscreen, in an attempt to bring in queer consumers, whilst at the same time not alienating other audience members.

This is the textbook definition of the marketing used for Frozen 2. There were extensive interviews where the stars responded to their excitement for potentially making Elsa a lesbian, and directors like Jennifer Lee responding to the rumours by being deliberately ambiguous and saying they were "really conscientious of these things", and only saying they weren't going to focus on Elsa's sexuality until after the film was released. An ambiguous teaser trailer of a girl playing with magic in a forest - which is something I refuse to believe wasn't playing off the 2016 twitter campaign - made lots of people think Elsa was going to get a girlfriend. However, despite how much I willed Elsa and Honeymaren to have an intense make-out scene instead of that weird segment where a horse spirit made out of water tried to drown Elsa like eight times, her queerness is not canon. It is only hinted



at.

The mysterious voice that everyone thought was going to be Elsa's girlfriend in the teaser trailers turned out to be her mother; the queer connotations of 'Show Yourself' could easily be dismissed as a misreading of Elsa's independence; even Honeymaren is only in the film for a few minutes before Elsa rushes off on her own journey. There is no doubt in my mind that Disney was playing on the queer subtext to reel in LGBT+ fans. But it remains just that - mere subtext. It appeased those who were looking for it, and went over the heads of everyone else.

Unfortunately, Disney's queer baiting is a trend I have seen often these past couple years. I've read so many articles where minimal attempts at representation is praised as "ground-breaking". I read an article which said that the first openly gay character in Disney was an unnamed character in Frozen who sells Anna and Kristoff some supplies, because there's a shot of his family waving with two kids and a man who could be his husband, and how important this was. I read another arti-

cle praising Disney for making La Fou gay in the live action 'Beauty and The Beast', when they had him dance with a man at the end. I watched an interview with the director of 'Avengers Endgame' talking about how ground-breaking it was to have an unnamed man talk about losing his husband to Thanos (in a therapy scene which I know none of you can even remember), as though he was one of the main characters. Most shockingly, J. J. Abrams, director of the Star Wars films 'The Force Awakens' and 'The Rise of Skywalker', has claimed that Disney did not allow him to write a romance between two of the main characters (Finn and Poe) because Disney claimed that it "wasn't ready". And these are only a few examples.

Disney seems to think that merely sprinkling in a handful of unnamed and inconsequential LGBT+ characters is enough. Disney seems to think that subtly implying that characters, such as Elsa, are queer, whilst heteronormative relationships, like Anna and Kristoff, are fully explored and pushed to the forefront is enough. But it's not enough. It sends a message - one that suggests our stories don't matter. By Disney's standards, our stories don't deserve to be in the spotlight.

It reminded me of the whole Dumbledore situation. J. K. Rowling came out and said (no pun intended) that her beloved character had been gay

all along. However, she did this without actually writing it into the text... I wasn't expecting Dumbledore to launch into an erotic monologue about his "kiss of death" dementor roleplay with Grindelwald when Harry asked him what he saw in The Mirror of Erised! It's just that if you have to independently announce that a character is gay (because it isn't clear in the text in the first place), it is not proper representation!

Of course, I am not oblivious to the fact what we have is still progress. Not so long ago, even small things like the lesbian kiss in 'Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker' would have been completely unthinkable. I know that from a financial standpoint LGBT+ storylines and how they translate internationally can be difficult. I know Disney does need to think about money. But, quite frankly, I don't care (and neither does Disney it seems). Disney appears to be overemphasising its contribution to the increasing LGBT+ representation in the entertainment industry, and even uses queer baiting and queer subtext as a marketing tool to reel in viewers, without adequately fulfilling their advertised promises.

In 2019, of the nine movies that managed to gross over one billion dollars at the box office, only one of them ('Joker') was not released by Disney. They included: 'Captain Marvel', 'Avengers: Endgame', 'Spider-man: Far From Home', 'Toy Story 4', 'Frozen

2', 'Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker', and 'Aladdin'. Given Disney's huge influence, I believe that it is Disney's duty to lead the way in representation if any real progress is to be made. I may be fresh from cramming my CO2001 exam and writing essays on the importance of culture in instigating change and influencing public ideology, but I wish Disney had more of a cultural conscience as opposed to just being a blind-sighted ticket sales fanatic.

Maybe Disney should take a leaf out of Elsa's book? Stop suppressing their queerness (or ice powers - same thing), release it onto the world, and then "turn away and slam the door" on anyone who disapproves. Recurring death threats and the near loss of her sister aside, it worked out pretty well for her anyway. Well, enough to get a sequel at the very least. And a cool water horse.



### **Queer Eye: Arts and Culture's Monthly Recommendations**

#### ***Pride* (2014)**

**directed by Matthew Warchus and written by Stephen Beresford**

*By Martin Caforio*

*Pride* tells the story of a group of young activists, who, during their march in the 1984 London Gay Pride parade, decide to form the group Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners

strikes that shook the country that same year. They notice that the police harassment and political vitriol habitually aimed at their own community is now being turned on mine workers, notably in South Wales. In the Welsh town Onllwyn, they meet the (first) miner's spokesperson who is receptive to their alliance, and who accepts the money LGSM have raised and invites them to Wales. On this, and subsequent trips to Onllwyn and London, an unlikely friendship is born between LGSM and many members of the small Welsh community, who, despite one of its homophobic committee member's attempts to disrupt their activities, continue to support the miners' cause.

The main characters, either in their drive for justice and solidarity or wonderful quirkiness, are all incredibly lovable. The relationship between the out-and-proud activist-leader of the group, Mark Ashton, and the closeted, shy but driven and passionate Joe Cooper is occasionally poignant, and it is through this that Joe is able to fully embrace himself. The scenes in Onllwyn, where a community set in its ways begins to open up to LGSM - thanks to the power of pints and disco - and the realisation that there is more which brings them together than separates them, are as wonderfully uplifting as they are hard to watch, as we are aware that not everyone accepts the group, who they are, or their help. The film can perhaps be

criticised for focusing more on the personal than the systemic, with only brief mentions of the broader context of the miner's struggle, homophobia, or the ongoing AIDS epidemic and its impact, but I argue that this did not come to the detriment of the film. It is purposively human story, that makes you believe in the compassion and solidarity of man, makes you want to jump up, grab a sign on the picket line or a banner at Pride, organise events with LGSM, and fight for a cause you believe in. The end of the film is emotional, and it is the final scene, where the filmmakers add a series of descriptions, that the viewer realises not only the basis of truth in this film, but also the real and beautiful relationship that the LGBT+ activists and miners' unions had in subsequent years as they continued their struggles, together. I highly recommend this film, which had me in tears as much as it had me laughing, and was genuinely a touching story.



## LGBT+ History

### **Section 28: Why we cannot afford to ignore the past**

*By Lyssa Gold*

Welcome to the first ever LGBT+ History article of the brand-new Gay Saint! Every edition, I will be exploring a new topic, person or event from queer history. Some of the issues or language that might come up in these pieces will have the potential to be upsetting, so each piece will

have a list of content warnings preceding it, so you can decide whether it's something you want to read. This month's content warnings are:

- (State-promoted) homophobia
- Section 28 and the effects of this legislation
- Mentions of AIDS
- Use of the word queer, but not as a slur

If that sounds like something you are okay with, then please read on!

The Gay Saint was, before its phoenix-like regeneration here, the official newsletter of the University's LGBT+ Society. An eclectic amalgam of pieces informed, amused, and brought the LGBT+ community of the Bubble together. Calls to "be sensible and sexy" and utilise the society's (apparently well-endowed) prophylactic emporium were found alongside queer Christmas carols ("Make this Christmas bright and gay, come on out on Christmas day!") and more political topics such as calls to action over Section 28. In fact, in every issue from 1999, Section 28 is mentioned, often with extreme vehemence. This comes as no surprise, considering the incredibly damaging effect this single piece of legislation had on the LGBT+ community in the UK.

The beginning of the 1980's saw a Conservative government in power, having achieved a recent landslide that allowed them to more fervently pursue the upholding

of "traditional moral values". Section 28, an amendment to the Local Government Act 1988, was introduced by this government to prevent councils from ".intentionally promoting homosexuality", and it was successfully passed for several reasons. Whilst homosexuality had been decriminalised since 1967 for men over 21 (the age of consent wasn't equalised until 2000), homophobia was still widespread in British society and had only gotten worse as the decade proceeded; in the four years between 1983 and 1987, the percentage of the population who saw homosexuality as "always or mostly wrong" increased from 62% to 75%.

The AIDS crisis emerged in 1981 and was met by incredibly negative and homophobic coverage by the media, which only encouraged this prejudice. A strong association was made between the epidemic and gay and bisexual men specifically, with the inference that it was somehow self-inflicted. This narrative, in the absence of proper education and constructive discussion, led to widespread fear and stigmatisation. The government would capitalise on this to help pass Section 28, and further marginalise the LGBT+ community, which had become far more visible and vocal over the past decade. Pride marches demanded that the community's existence be acknowledged, and organisations such as the Gay Liberation Front campaigned actively for equality and societal change, unsettling Conservatives. More

liberal councils, such as the Labour-majority Greater London Council, had begun to include LGBT+ issues in their manifestos, and were providing funding for LGBT+ groups and resources. However, many were unhappy with this use of public money.

The situation escalated in 1986, partially in response to the children's book *Jenny lives with Eric and Martin*, which had been purchased by the Inner London Education Authority. It featured a young girl living with her father and his male lover, and resulted in inflammatory reporting by the *Daily Mail*. This exacerbated the already suspicious climate around homosexuality and provided a populist cause that could be co-opted politically. The then Education Secretary Kenneth Baker used it as an opportunity to attack the actions of these Labour-run councils, accusing them of allowing "... blatant homosexual propaganda" in schools. For some it validated fears that liberal-leaning councils were using taxpayer's money to teach children about homosexuality, with the suspicion that children could and were being "indoctrinated". There was also a wider, pervasive, fear that LGBT+ people, simply by living their lives, were undermining heteropatriarchal norms and the ideal of the nuclear family. At the 1987 Conservative Annual Conference, Margaret Thatcher seized upon this to gain votes in the upcoming election, stating that "children who need to

be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught that they have the inalienable right to be gay", establishing the intent of the Conservative party and the government to "protect" these values at the expense of millions of citizens.

They did this by proposing Section 28, which passed into law on the 24th May 1988 and would not be fully abolished until 2003. This legislation prevented local authorities from "teaching or publishing" anything that "promoted homosexuality" or "pretended family relationships". The only exception was when attempting to "treat or prevent disease", meaning that homosexuality could be freely discussed in relation to AIDS. Nobody was ever prosecuted under Section 28, but it had a massive societal impact, simply because it wrote homophobic discrimination into law, and re-enforced the belief that LGBT+ people were second-class citizens, incapable of "real" relationships. It silenced teachers in classrooms and halted many council-funded initiatives, such as informational leaflets and films, LGBT+ groups and facilities, as grants were withdrawn reflexively, and even resulted in libraries censoring the newspapers they stocked.

But the bill also caused a lot of confusion. The wording was incredibly vague, and although Section 28 applied to local authorities and not to schools, this point was often unclear to schools and teach-

ers, who tended to err on the side of caution. This resulted in widespread self-censorship out of fear of prosecution. LGBT+ teachers felt compelled to stay closeted at work, strongly guarding their privacy out of concern for their safety and careers, and feeling unable to help LGBT+ students.

Many proponents claimed that the aim of Section 28 was to protect children, but it achieved the opposite of this. The Government made deliberate choices that exploited and amplified already homophobic attitudes in society, and demonstrated to queer students that the state supported the feelings of internalised shame and homophobia being forced upon them. It put students in danger of homophobic bullying and harassment, without a clear way to ask for help within school, and undoubtedly did long-term harm to many children during this period. The LGBT+ community consistently experiences higher levels of mental health issues, homelessness and substance abuse, and it is hard to imagine that Section 28 did not contribute to these problems. Even if Section 28 was never enforced, the culture it created was still an attack on a marginalised group with the intention of further ostracizing them, and it resulted in a generation of people being told that LGBT+ people were second-class citizens.

This is not to say that queer people were at all passive about Section 28, either before

or after it was passed. In fact, it galvanised the community, and resulted in widespread protests and long-term activism. The months leading up to the vote on Section 28 saw the largest gatherings of LGBT people in the UK to date, with 10,000 people marching in London and 15,000 in Manchester, including the actors and LGBT+-rights campaigners Michael Cashman and Ian McKellen, the latter coming out during a radio interview discussing the bill. A group of lesbian activists abseiled into the House of Lords after the vote and were held for six hours in Big Ben, and, on the evening before Section 28 came into force, another group of lesbians stormed the six o'clock news. Attending marches and protests grew into the establishment of permanent organisations, such as the non-violent protest group Out-Rage! in 1990, and Stonewall in 1989, co-founded by Michael Cashman, Lisa Power and Ian McKellen (which is) probably the most well-known LGBT+-rights charity in the UK).

Campaigning against Section 28 by organisations such as Stonewall and Out-Rage! continued throughout the 15 years it was in place, until it was successfully repealed in Scotland in 2000 and 2003 in England and Wales. A steady decline in negative opinions towards homosexuality occurred over this time due to freer discussion of homosexuality, in part necessitated by the AIDS crisis. By the time Section 28 was repealed,

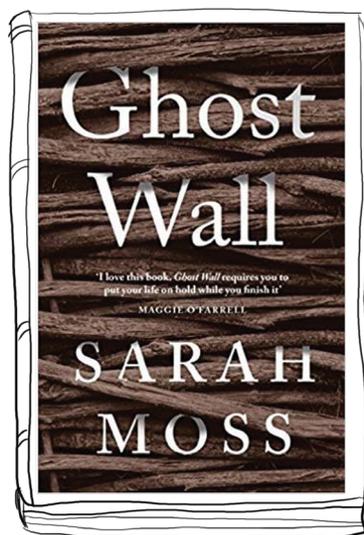
the percentage of people who believed homosexuality was "always or mostly wrong" had fallen to 40%. Despite the harm it did, Section 28 unified the LGBT+ rights movement in the UK, providing a stronger position for future campaigns, such as the Same-Sex Marriage and Gender Recognition Acts. This is important, because although things are far better now than they were when Section 28 was introduced, the fight for legal and social equality, for all members of our community, is not over, and despite being written out of the law, the attitudes that facilitated Section 28 still exist.



## Book Recommendation

***Ghost Wall*, by Sarah Moss**

*By Greysen Braley*



*Ghost Wall* is a suspenseful coming-of-age novel slash psychological thriller that tracks the experience of Northern English teenager Silvie, her Iron-Age obsessed fa-

ther, her passive mother, Professor Slade, and a group of posh university students on an Experimental Archaeology trip gone wrong. Silvie's apparently unhinged father acts as a trigger for the extremist behaviours spurred on by obsession, prompting the phenomenon of groupthink, and what Moss's novel seems to suggest is an inherent and primal human desire for ritual, belief, and identity within the cosmos.

In just 147 pages, Moss manages to shrink the perceived gap between our ancient ancestors and ourselves, all while addressing scapegoating, abusive power structures, societal design, and personal identity. The main character, Silvie, is particularly tied to the broader theme of self-discovery and individuality versus conformity and pack-identity. Her budding sexuality is only a small and singular facet of this theme. Largely, her realisation of identity is more tightly bound with learning how to live, as her father's reign of terror has continuously forced her focus away from personal growth and towards mere survival. By not focusing heavily on Silvie's sexual orientation, Moss gives a multi-dimensional depth to her character and to what constitutes identity, which is often missed in LGBT+ literature. In addition to sexual identity, Moss addresses gender, geographic location, education, and wealth, tying them into the other great theme of social power hierarchies and abuse of power.

I read this book in one sitting on a hot day in the summer over a steaming cup of peppermint tea in Toppings & Co. And, although it was a perfect summer read, I can't wait to read this chilling book again this winter. A little under a month ago I was so adamant that my partner had to read it, that I bought a hardback edition for him myself, and he also ended up reading it in one sitting. We're still going on about what we think of it and all the questions we were left with, now weeks (in his case) and months (in my case) after the fact. I'd highly recommend this to avid and casual readers alike for its distinct prose, entertainment value, short length, accessibility, and, of course, the gayness.



## Creative Writing

### pride as process

By Georgina Beeby

i never really 'come out'.  
 it's more of an admittance - an,  
 'oh you've got me, i'm bi'.  
 i cringe as i think it,  
 worried they'll look at me differently.  
 sometimes they say - with a reassuring smile -  
 'oh, don't worry, i knew.  
 you always seemed like the type.'  
 and i hate that.  
 i know i'm the type (by default i guess) - but what does it mean to be the type of person to be bi?  
 and throwaway statements -  
 'i knew you were gay when you

cut your hair that way' -  
 fill me with rage.  
 i don't look gay. i don't want to look gay.  
 because when you say it like that you make me feel ashamed.  
 you make me feel different.

and then, when they tell me,  
 'it's okay,  
 you're not in-your-face about it, like other people are'  
 i feel relieved -

yet defensive.  
 relieved because, thank god, i don't act like a stereotype.  
 defensive because - well, why should it matter, even if i did?  
 why do i care so much?

- if coming out is a process,  
 then it is a constant circle, a repetitive cycle, of figuring out exactly how you want to be defined.

that's when i realized, it's not for anyone else to decide but me.

i came out to myself in 2018.  
 out to my friends in 2019.  
 it's 2020 now.

(still baby steps, of course).  
 but i can hope to myself - allow myself this one resolution,  
 that maybe 2020 will be the year,  
 where i'll stop wanting to hide,  
 i'll stop feeling like my sexuality is a crime,  
 and i'll start holding myself with pride.

let 2020 be the year i don't care that i'm bi.



## Beginning Again and Again

By Kay Lu

Lying in bed, barely dressed due to the heat of the long summer that slept eternally over my country, I told myself "I am lucky to have reached this long with him." I had just wished my boyfriend goodnight, as he, on the other side of the world, headed downstairs to open Christmas presents with his family. We had not yet given each other presents this Christmas, but we promised each other when we next saw each other, we would have something ready.

This was the first Christmas my boyfriend and I had to spend apart. When we had first started seeing each other in 2018, I had convinced my family to let me stay in Europe for the winter break, and I visited my boyfriend to spend three weeks wrapped indoors, with Christmas dinners and an endless string of fireworks, bursting in applause to welcome in the New Year. If we had it our way, we would be participating



in that same tradition this year, but I had not seen my family for ages. So back home I went, on a red-eye to the familiar heat of my country.

Threading our voices through the phone the night before I flew, my boyfriend told me he would miss me and think of me. Unspoken but assumed, we promised to see each other soon after I returned from my sojourn back to Asia. "We've made it more than a year, and I know we can reach a second," he said, with a simple sentence acting as an anchor.

In that conversation, with only the slightest pause, I had responded *I think so too*. In that silence, I had thought *but what about after the second year?* This deadline floated in almost every visit we had, every night before we went to sleep. Like a great white shark gliding through the air, the question of what comes after had begun to overshadow my final year of undergraduate studies.

It all felt impossibly large to comprehend. I had spent the better half of the 2010s leaving my family behind as I worked overseas before starting my studies at St Andrews. During these years, I lived the fantasy of living my life away from familiar faces, placing me squarely in the lineage of other queer folk who found themselves searching for a better home. The trope of found family endures in our culture even now, recounted to

us in stories, op-eds, and interviews. I let that myth guide me like a lodestone.

The trope of found family rears its head in how my boyfriend and I met, at a comics convention in Belgium. He was a mutual friend of a friend whom I was visiting, and he had invited himself along when he heard I was coming. He was a full head taller than I was, and when he looked at me, I was met with the bluest eyes. Ones I wanted to see again. When it came time to go, we exchanged our details. A



few months of messaging flew by before we would meet up at his place. He brought me to a water theme park, and on the last night of my stay, he asked me if we could see each other exclusively.

From the very start, our relationship was a long-distance one, peppered with calls and the occasional visits. Over the next year, I would meet my boyfriend's family - his young-

er sister, his mother, and his father. We would both start learning each other's native languages, our beginner's accents rough as we searched for the right turn of the tongue. There was friction: thunderstorms of anger and raised voices that vanished almost as soon as we cooled off. The year would wind down into Christmas, where I would stay with him and his family.

Now, as I lay in my childhood bed, I wondered if things were still simple. We had discussed what comes after my graduation, what we would do if things were to go serious. I was to go live with him and see if things would work out. That would however, necessitate a job, or an offer to study in another country. My boyfriend, understanding as he was, was not always the best help. You just have to try, he would say, the simplicity of that sentence, unbeknownst to him, a near-insurmountable task for me to overcome.

The act of trying is a deceptively difficult choice, and I struggle daily with letting someone say "yes", for the possibility of human interaction precludes the possibility of being rejected. This sense of paralysis lives alongside other, more familiar fears: the fear that a family member - however cool they would be - would not be okay when they find out I am gay; the fear that a beautiful boy - lit up with laughter and easy charm - would turn me away with a disappointed

tilt of the head. In each of these circumstances, I took the quiet route of shutting these futures into little boxes that I could keep beside me, hoping the possibility of warmth would translate into warmth itself.

It is perhaps too glib, to say "I am afraid", because that source of fear can become a perverse sense of comfort, a method to survive hostile environments. I spent a year working in Brunei before coming to St Andrews, in a workplace where I had to close off parts of myself in order to feel safe. However, as I came to realize when I came to St Andrews, what kept me going in the toughest times would not help me enjoy my life when I got to St Andrews. My body, filled with fear, would shiver, my hands turning clammy with sweat when I tried attending LGBT+ meetups. I would feel alone, when I visited Pride for the first time in my life, watching people enjoy the life I wanted so desperately to have. What had kept me alive would slowly kill my dreams of truly living.

I imagined what my boyfriend would be doing as I lay in my bed. Him going downstairs to the kitchen, where his family would have gathered their gifts on the mantelpiece. The laughter and cheer as each gift was opened. My own gifts, bought in advance and wrapped by my boyfriend, addressed to people I had come to think of as close friends. My family, religious as they were, did not

celebrate Christmas beyond the yearly church service. When my family joked about the gifts I had bought (and took photos of) for my boyfriend's family, they said that my presence at home would be what they wanted best.

It is a very real possibility that I may have to return home after graduation to find work and accumulate the funds for a Master's. Gaining citizenship has its own battle of rules and restrictions, and the idea of spending time away from my boyfriend is a bitter truth I must confront each day. The options are drilled into me by now: apply for the long shot, or face two to three years of barely seeing the man I love. Faced with the possibility of not seeing the person I care so deeply for is a uniquely exquisite fear, heightening that same fear of being rejected.

In some queer shows, like "Pose", the found family is embraced due to the rejection of one's birth family. The joy of found family, then, rests on its freedom to restructure and form a new life from one that has chosen to disown you. While my parents may not know of my relationship, my siblings have accepted me for who I am. How could I begin to reconcile the pull between my siblings who I love, and the man I want to be with?

The sophomoric struggle of romance appears in the decisions to build something together, and by doing so, bind

two people into one singular life. The differing constellations of age, belief, family, culture, and history are blended into a lived landscape that people slowly come to see as having always existed. But there is, as I have realized, tensions in that process of combining two different lives. That fear that lives within me is afraid of losing this future we will find together, and of losing the family that I will have to move away from.

*I am lucky to have reached this long with him, my brain reminds me, and I realize that this rings true. To have been together so long in itself is a victory, to reach this stage where the path appears to be running thin and unstable. But to be consumed by visions of the future is akin to seeing the totality of the problem, and not the tools in front of me to solve my problems. Yes, I might be unable to see him for a few weeks more. This separation is a possible harbinger for my future. But there is still joy in the faintest of music, grasped from slender possibilities.*

When I come back to Scotland for my final semester, when the future is so awfully dark with ambiguity, there's still pinpricks of light to hold on to.

So, before I slept, I texted my boyfriend one last time and told him I love him. I checked my heart and found that is still true. Then I gave myself to sleep.

**The Sea by the Castle**  
**Chapter I: in which a message**  
**is found, and an offer given**

*By Eve McLachlan*

Where do you go, when you have nowhere to go? To the sea, of course. (I do, at least, and I like to think of myself as sensible.)

Margaret Connor was in the habit of going to the sea. Here are some of the reasons why: it was nearby; it was very beautiful, but partial to wind and rain, and so often she had it to herself, particularly late at night; she could say things while looking at it and not feel like a madwoman, because she was talking to something other than herself. Finally: it was a good place to think about things found in jars, particularly things found in jars by the same sea.

What she had found in a jar was a note. It read:  
WOMAN WHO STANDS BY  
THE SEA BY THE CASTLE  
BE THERE DIDOMHNAICH  
THANK YOU STOP  
in letters blotched with water. Minty, who shared her room and had pasted a star-chart to the ceiling over her bed, said it had come from a selkie.

"Because that's Gaelic, and you found it by the sea," she said.

Margaret said that she thought that was unlikely, but Minty had insisted on showing her an illustration that she had collected, faded yellow and squirreled away in a drawer, of



three figures: a seal cresting a wave; a strange, grey shape that seemed half-human; and a woman, standing on a beach, naked except for the skin of a seal draped over one shoulder. Margaret looked at the last one for longer than was perhaps necessary.

She did not believe Minty, although she liked her; she thought, in fact, that the two were probably related. Minty studied classics and named the spiders in the corners of their room, and Margaret was her second roommate this year, after the first one had gone to the head of halls and complained about something.

Still, the next day in the library, she walked to a shelf she'd never been to before and pulled out a Gaelic dictionary, heavy and bound in sweet brown leather, and saw that Minty had been right, and that DIDOMHNAICH meant SUNDAY. Minty had once told her that she spoke sixteen different languages.

That was Friday. On Saturday night, she filled a flask of tea, wound a scarf around her neck, pulling it over her mouth, lit a lantern, and headed for Castle Sands.

\*\*\*

Minty had a book, written by a woman who claimed to have communed with selkies in Glencoe for thirty-two years, and now it sat with Margaret's third-hand books in her second-hand bag, alongside a

biography of John Keats and *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. The author (E. S. T., and never anything else) said that a meeting-time, unless specified, was always at the dawn of the given day. Margaret had had a nice daydream, half-realised, that she would fall asleep waiting by the sea, lulled, perhaps, by the rhythm of the waves, and that she would be awoken (here was where the daydream went somewhat out of her hands) by a fall of damp hair over her face and a quiet voice like a song.

Instead, she sat up all night, paralysed with cold, cocooned in a wool dress and cardigan and coat, with her red robe over the top of it all, hands wrapped around the flask, trying to absorb the heat that filtered through it. She rationed her sips. The lantern, which she had put out when she sat down, stood like an empty jar at her feet.

Twice she heard the loud clamour of drunk men (boys?), curses at the cold and a brief clink of bottles before the group moved on. There was the sound and smell of an attempt at a bonfire; Margaret shrunk her back against the rock she was sitting against, terrified, somehow, of being found to be a woman who sat alone, looking at the sea. After a few minutes, the cold and damp won out and they left, laughing to each other. Margaret let out a quiet breath and glared at herself from inside her head. *Idiot coward*, she thought. Selkies — or whatever strange person existed in the absence of selkies — would probably not associate with idiot cowards.

Impossible things, she thought, as she edged towards a frozen half-sleep, were possible by the sea in the dark. The sea in the dark was itself very near to impossible: huge and loud but invisible, forever moving. Who really believes in the magnetic forces of the moon?

There had been something else in the jar, along with the note: a frond of bladderwrack, some of its bubbles pierced, although in no clear pattern. She examined it with her fingers as she sat, trying to understand it, trying

to keep her hands busy and warm.

It was approaching four o'clock when she saw the seal. It was only a dark shape beneath the water, but Margaret's eyes, which had spent the night staring almost ceaselessly out at the waves, fell immediately to her lap. The force of her sudden hope, and hopeful belief, surprised her; she shrunk from it. Then she heard footsteps, soft on sleek sand, and decided that she couldn't reasonably keep looking at her knees. Steeling herself for the impossible, she raised her head.

There was a woman walking towards her out of the sea. She did not hail Margaret, who, for her part, was unsure if she should raise a hand in welcome or run in the opposite direction; in fact, she did neither, waiting in an agony of disbelief



and indecision until the stranger was in front of her, standing still and as straight as any human soldier.

The rational part of Margaret's mind would have insisted that she was human, despite the pelt of seal-fur that she wore as a cloak, and the sword at her side with a nacreous glow; but the eyes that regarded Margaret were the pure, liquid black of a seal. Even so, ridiculously, the thing that most struck her was that the selkie was wearing, over her skin, a red woollen robe to match hers — only different in that it was dark with water and fastened with a cockleshell.

The woman — which seemed the most sensible word — laid a hand over her own heart, but did not bow.

"I am Eimhir," she said, "First General of The Sea by the Castle, and guard to her Ladyship, who is heir to all of the waters of Cill Rimhinn."

"Oh." That was not a good enough answer. "I am — Margaret Connor. Margaret Ruth Connor, I suppose." There was a pause, as she grasped for more shreds of formality. Not for the first time, she wished that Minty was there, with her double-barrelled surname and father that knew the Duke of York. "Fourth Year student, reading English." The silence stretched. "Literature," she finished, rather feebly.

Eimhir's eyes were unreadable. Margaret tried to stand up as straight as possible. "Very well," said the former. "Walk with me, Margaret Connor."

She set off towards the wide stone pool, and Margaret scrambled to obey.

"I will speak plainly." Margaret gave a mumble of assent. "You should know, Margaret Connor, that my people plan to go to war with yours."

Whatever Margaret had expected her to say, it hadn't been that. She very nearly tripped over a rock, and hurried to right herself as Eimhir turned on her heel to face her, her eyes cold fire under a dark sea.

"War? But, I mean —" Margaret's mind raced through all the reasons to protest, landing on, "we don't even know you exist!"

Eimhir's expression made her add, hurriedly, "Not in a — a bad way, just... well."

"So, you say that it is a coincidence? Your repeated and violent invasion of our territory?"

"What?"

"Every year," said Eimhir, "without fail, three moons from now, great numbers of your

r people crowd into our — *my* — sea. They make battle-cries; they terrify our families and our livestock; they leave it filled with filth. Do you deny it?"

Margaret opened her mouth to do so, but realisation dawned on her before she could. "Oh! Oh," it would be very, very unwise to laugh, she thought. "There has been a misunderstanding."

Eimhir's eyebrows nearly touched the silver hair, so Margaret wasted no time before explaining. "It's a... tradition. Students at the university here," she gestured at her robe, and Eimhir nodded, "run into the sea, on the first of May, for..."

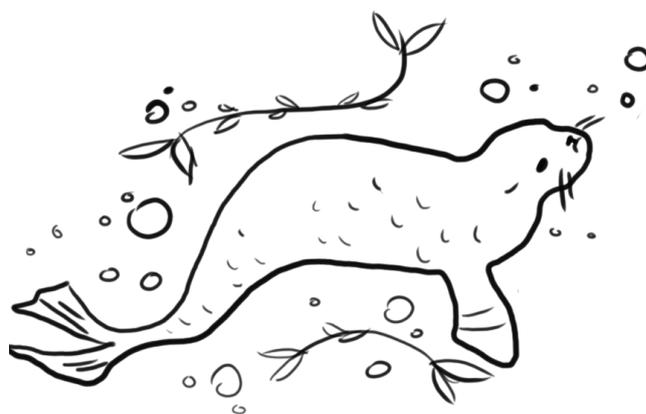
"Yes?"

"For good luck. On our examinations." *A seal in human form is looking at me as if I am mad,* thought Margaret. *I should have thrown that seaweed in the bin.*

"So," said Eimhir warily, "there is no malicious intent?"

"None," she said; she wanted very much, she realised, for Eimhir to trust her. "I — I give you my word."

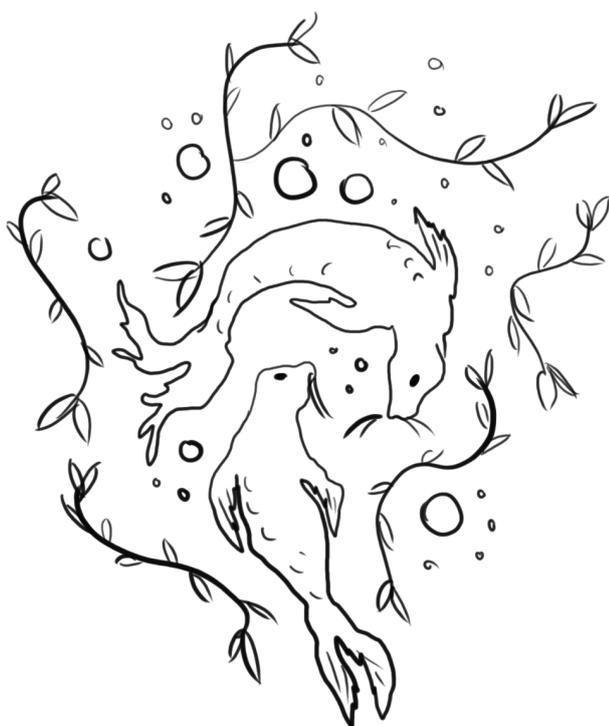
Eimhir turned back to the beach in front of them, muttering something to herself in her language. "It is true," she said, "that it is only recent-



ly, that these — revels — have become so destructive. We had assumed," she addressed Margaret again, "that you were merely becoming bolder."

"Maybe," said Margaret, daring a smile, "but not out of malice."

Eimhir made a thoughtful noise. "Malice or no, that does not change the result. And such an explanation will not be enough to cool the anger of the Prince."



*Oh, more fairy-tale royalty,* thought Margaret, giving Eimhir a questioning look. "The commander of our soldiers is her Highness' younger brother," she explained, "he is himself... bold, and has decided that, this year, your people will be met with an ambush. And he is not one for mercy."

The sword at Eimhir's side suddenly seemed to be shining very brightly in the cold moonlight.

"No!" Blurted Margaret, and she repeated the word several times, unable to think of anything else to say. But then, after replaying the horrible words for the dozenth time in her mind, she paused. "An ambush," she said, slowly, "that you are telling me about?"

Eimhir tilted her head, showing the smallest of smiles. Her teeth were sharp. "My Lady advocates for more peaceful tactics. I have been sent to negotiate a union between our two peoples, that we might not come to war."

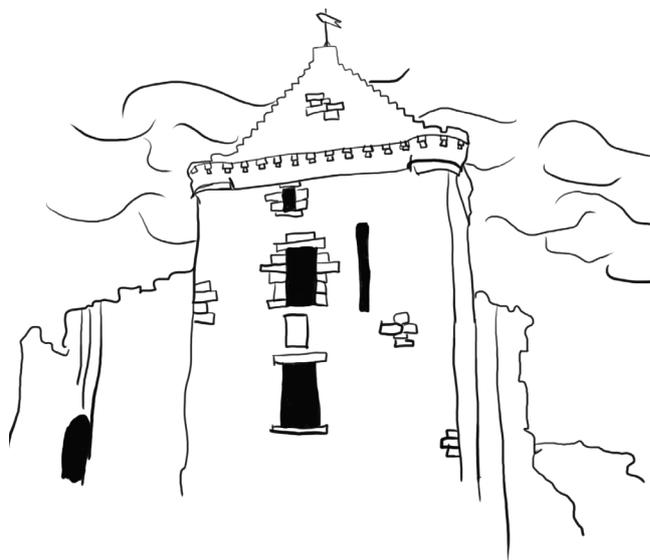
"A...union?"

"Anything less than the strongest of bonds is unlikely to appease his Highness," said Eimhir. "My Lady is happy to offer her hand in marriage, if it results in peace."

"Ah." *And now I'm to play matchmaker for a fantastical princess,* Margaret thought. *Which is something Dr. Errol will probably not accept as an excuse.* "Well, I know a few sons of fairly important people, not personally, I mean, but..." she trailed off at Eimhir's look of confusion.

"You misunderstand," she said. "The princess proposes to marry you."

At first, Margaret was sure she had misheard. Then she opened her mouth; then she shut it again. "I — I cannot," she said, almost auto-



matically, at the same time remarkably, horribly aware of how much she wanted to be able to. It was a feeling very much like, she had time to think, when she had first seen the selkie coming out of the waves.

"You do not consent to the match?" Eimhir's voice was surprised, but not offended. "I would have thought," she looked Margaret up and down, one eyebrow raised, "that it would have been an... advantageous one." Margaret, very aware that her hair was in rat-tails from a night of sea-spray and that her stockings had a ladder in them, blushed ferociously. "Very well. I shall tell her Highness —"

"No!" She yelped, surprising Eimhir and herself. "No," she tried again, "I would be — honoured? — it's just..." She trailed off, caught on how ridiculous it was to explain to a woman - who was also a seal - why two women could not get married. "I will have to think about it."

Eimhir gave her another one of her appraising looks, but, at length, nodded. "Prudent," she said, before turning her attention to the dawn, which, by now, had lit up almost all of the sky and sea in its colours. "Two days from now?"

Tuesday morning. "I — have class, I'm afraid," said Margaret. "Ah — romantic poetry." Pathetic idiot coward, she thought, as she said it.

She waited with worried certainty for Eimhir to say something such as, *you would rather study than discuss the terms of marrying Her Highness?*, mainly because she had no idea how she would answer, but Eimhir only nodded slowly, said, "A week, then," and turned back to the sea before Margaret could agree.

She watched her go, hoping — although not admitting her hope to herself — to be able to see the moment of metamorphosis, the strange second figure. Instead, like a fairground trick, she could not have said when the tall, proud figure changed; her eyes watered from forcing

herself not to blink, but suddenly there was only a seal, dappled grey, disappearing beneath the waves.

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It was a long, cold walk back to her room. Her shoes had gotten so filled with sand that by Market Street she gave up on them, and swung them loosely by the straps as she walked, thinking. The pavement was pale in the half-light with February frost; it numbed her feet through her stockings. She kept her eyes on them as she walked. Did seals feel cold of the sea? Would she be cold, down in the depths where humans were not meant to go?

Her thoughts were half-interrupted by a shout, jeering, from what sounded (she very deliberately did not look up) a boy her age, or younger. She walked on, stiff with shame. *And what do you expect*, said the voice in her head that always managed to sound like herself and her mother at the same time, *walking the streets at five in the morning, alone, looking like a drowned rat?* She was not by the sea anymore. Things, she reminded herself, were impossible again.

"I shall marry the Selkie Princess," she said out loud to the silent streets. "I shall, I shall, I shall!" Her voice shook just a little, with something between rage and grief, and with a sudden resolve that, by the time she had crawled into her bed, avoiding waking the gently snoring Minty, had drained almost entirely away. Sleep came immediately and heavily, and, for the first time in months, she had no strange dreams.



### Big Lesbian on Campus: the origin story

[time sent: 1.37 am saturday]

BLOC: hi !!! have a story and a Half for u lmaoooo,, msg me when ur awake

[time sent: 8.46 am saturday]

GAIN: hello? yes? are you okay?

[time sent: 12.35 pm saturday]

BLOC: yah

GAIN: okayyy.... how was last night???

BLOC: omg ur not gonna believe this

GAIN: ...what did u do??

BLOC: it's not really what I Did

GAIN: !?!?!?!?

BLOC: okay okay

BLOC: SO

BLOC: we're in mainbar just //vibing// and having a Good Drunken Time

BLOC: and all of a sudden this girl that I have Never Seen In My Entire GOtdAm Life comes up to us

BLOC: well to me

BLOC: n she's like getting Really Close to me

BLOC: then she leans in and is like hi,,, you're the Big Lesbian On Campus,, right?

BLOC: and im just there like ??? bc tht's Kinda Really Fckn Weird but she continues to introduce herself n b like ur \*\*\*\*\* , right? I'm \*\*\*\*\* and she starts trying to dance with me

and she starts trying to dance with me

GAIN: WAIT WHAT?!?!?

GAIN: SHE CALLED YOU THE BIG LESBIAN ON CAMPUS?!?!?!?!?

GAIN: sdjdfjkbhai

GAIN: WHAT DID YOU SAY

GAIN: WHAT DID U DO?!

GAIN: WAS SHE TRYING TO HIT ON YOU????

BLOC: idek dude i think so ????

GAIN: fuckin BLOC lmao

BLOC: why b a BNOC when u can be a BLOC amiright ?? lmaooooo

BLOC: anyways

BLOC: she started trying to dance with me but I wasn't really lookin to get with some girl who called me the Big Lesbian On Campus bc Ya Know... on principle, mostly... but also idek if i'm a lesbian ????

BLOC: anyways,,

GAIN: anyways,,,

BLOC: anyways 2.0: basically, since she realises she isn't gonna get with me she moves on to try n shoot her shot with someone else

which like good for her  
except it's with my fwb  
who I was planning on going home with

GAIN: NO!!

BLOC: n I'm like lowkey put out by this n high-  
key drunk

GAIN: naturally

BLOC: so when the two get back from the bop  
i just hang around said fwb n she n I are chat-  
ting a little n she mentions being bored so I'm  
just like welp tht's a bumner n start making  
out with her in front of 'UR THE BIG gAy' Girl  
and then we went home together lmao

GAIN: jfc  
That's a BLOC move right there

BLOC: can't help being a mf legend xx



## Opinion

### Queering out my wardrobe

By Ben Wood

A few years ago, I was out for drinks with my boyfriend at the time. The sun was shining, and we were outside in the beer garden. I was living in Newcastle at the time, whereas he'd managed to get a job in Leeds, so we'd gone from essentially living together in our days of undergrad to only getting to see each other every other weekend. He was wearing a bright red shirt with shiny gold accents on the sleeves. I'd never seen it before and asked if it was new. "Oh no", he said. "Do you like it? I've had it since before we met but never really felt I could pull it off. I'm trying to dress gayer". It was slightly ostentatious, but I was into it. Without Jack's slightly louder than usual dress sense, we were just too blokes having a beer. Now, for the first time, people might even read us as gay for once, or even a couple.

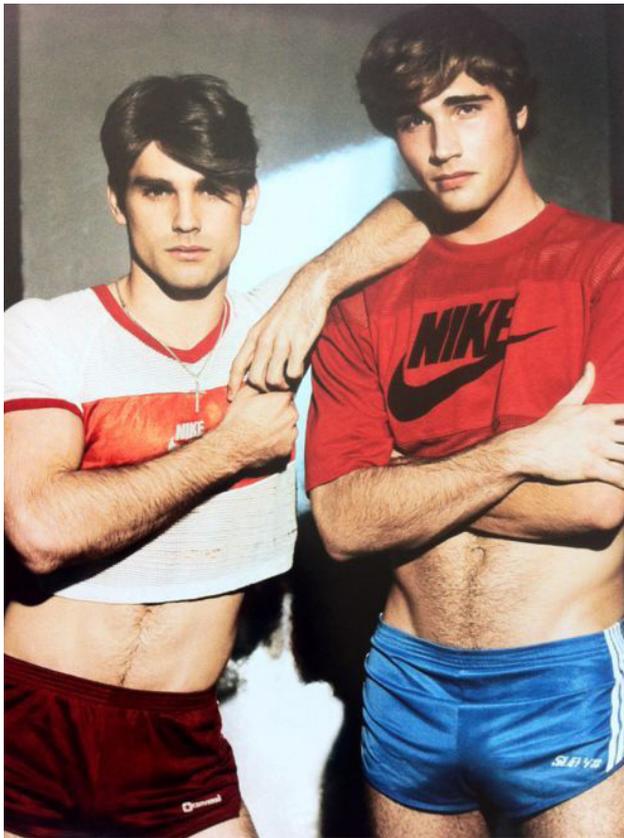


Elton obviously never struggled..

In fact, I wanted to dress gayer too. I'd been to a party a few weeks before and borrowed a particularly flamboyant shirt and the reception was so positive that my friend let me keep it. Where I struggled with this idea was finding the confidence. Jack is far from a shy person. In all the time I've known him — we were friends for three years before we got together and had been together 4 years at that point — I have never seen him show a shred of self-doubt, except for that day. He's tall and he's got a jawline you could cut glass with. I used to say he could wear a binbag and still look good. I, on the other hand, have been riddled with anxiety since the day I was born, especially about how I look.

Based on a difficult set of teenage years struggling with bullies at school, disordered eating, and parents who would tell me to "straighten up" in one way or another on a near-daily basis, I didn't think I'd be dressing gayer at any point in the future. The nagging voice in my head reminded me of the time I bought some purple skinny jeans and I was told to take them off immediately. Apparently, they were too feminine. The voice also reminded me of how I would look at myself in the mirror and no matter what I wore, I would believe I looked terrible. Even when my friends were telling me how good my shirt looked, the voice told me they didn't really believe what they were saying. What would change now? Nonetheless I decided one day to take that nagging voice and stuff it in a box for a day or two.

In my final year of undergrad, I could actually count on one hand how many straight men I knew. Three — even then, they were comforta-



In the 1980s, the mainstream blurred masculine and feminine

ble enough to embrace their camper sides if they felt like it. When I left the gay bubble of my undergraduate and started an office job, I struggled to adapt. Suddenly, I was surrounded by macho straight men and before I knew it, someone assumed by “partner” I clearly meant girlfriend and my anxious brain couldn’t figure a way out of the web of lies I’d inadvertently spun for myself. Around this time, I also broke up with Jack and dramatically lost much of my confidence. There would be no dressing gayer in this office. I simply didn’t have the guts.

So much of this is to do with being gay. Not only are you attracted to men, you also find yourself making comparisons between you and them, sometimes damaging your self-esteem in the process. You might pretend to be someone you aren’t but end up miserable because you can’t be yourself even though you might fit in. You’re trapped in between a rock and a hard place which doesn’t exist. This all seems obvious, but it took me years to figure this out. When I eventually left my boring finance job to move to St Andrews, nobody knew me, so I dug out that one shirt in my wardrobe and

and went shopping. Eventually, I had a more varied wardrobe which didn’t always read as gay, but it did often enough. The most exciting part was that this didn’t terrify me.

Fast forward one year and my parents are coming to visit for the first time since I moved to St Andrews. It’s the first time they’ve visited since I graduated from my undergrad five years previously and the most frightening of all, the first time since I’ve come out. I haven’t seen them in person in over a year, but our relationship hasn’t been the best. So, understandably I was nervous about them coming to visit. I had already thrown away much of my straight-passing gear. There would be nowhere to escape to while they were in my house. I wore something relatively



The Flamboyant Gay Man Harmful Stereotype to some, Mundane Reality for others

inoffensive — a pastel pink jumper, some boots, and black skinny jeans — and to my surprise the first words out of my mother’s mouth were “oh, you look lovely, darling. I like your jumper”. I was dumbfounded.

If masculinity weren’t so fragile, my parents would never have felt the need to police my style choices, I would just be a man by virtue of identifying that way. Now I’m a grown man who evidently doesn’t cause the sky to cave in by wearing a floral shirt, there’s nothing they can do. What was at the core of their panic then? Surely some kind of misplaced parental concern, some crossed wires and miscommunication, the desire to protect me from the bullies? Or was it something more manipulative? In all honesty, it could have been all of these things. Parents were children once: victims of the same restrictions on their gender expression which they pass onto us to try and maintain the status quo — for no other reason



Style Icon Billy Porter (right) paying homage to Ballroom Legend, Hector Xtravaganza

than that's the way it's always been. Boys don't talk like that, don't walk like that, don't dress like that. What they were afraid of was obviously not the case when confronted with the reality. Now don't get me wrong, this isn't some kind of coming out, but the more time I spend away from the stifling environment of where I grew up, the less I find myself striving towards being masculine.



If I could, I would wear high heels 24/7

Dressing a bit more adventurously is just the first step of course, but it reminded me of a conversation I had with a friend about the first time he started binding his chest. "Yeah, my family were a little bit weird about it to start with, but it was worth it". Now obviously me wearing the odd jazzy shirt and occasional-

ly painting my nails is not the same, but with just a few small changes comes a huge amount more freedom. Rather than having to come out over and over again, I get the chance to just be myself and we can go from there. People assume gay rather than straight. People have noticed the boost in my confidence. I myself noticed that I would keep closeted if nobody asked and that's no longer the case. You'd be surprised how people will respond. So if you, like me, have that one shirt (or a dress, or high heels, or a haircut, or a binder) that you just don't think you can pull off and you're in a safe position to do so, be brave and try it on.



## Astrology

### Horoscopes for 2020

By Madam Asteria

2020 is going to come in fast, and it is going to come in swinging. January 3 has Mars moving into Sagittarius until February 16. This adventurous sign motivates us to try new things and expand our horizons, in addition to being more optimistic about your ability to get back up, regardless of the outcome. This may prove to be helpful with the Lunar Eclipse in Cancer on January 10th with the Saturn-Pluto conjunction in Capricorn on January 12, indicating a major emotional wake-up call regarding your own needs and desires. For some, this may be a fulfilling realization, where you realize you are self-sustaining and for others, you may become scared and feel as if you've lost something or someone you are too reliant on as an emotional safety net.

You will already be the subject of this breakdown, so if it occurs, it was most likely a long time coming. Pluto is destructive, and he may be coming to tear down support you rely too heavily on. It may be time to let go, and build something for yourself to support you better.

Next to Western Astrology, Chinese Astrology is the next biggest Astrological system. Rather than the zodiac, it is based on a twelve

animal cycle, and is assigned by year as opposed to date of birth. In addition, they follow the Lunar Calendar (similarly to the Thai and Hindu people), and as such their new year doesn't begin until January 25. 2020 is the Year of the (White Metal) Rat. The Rat is the first animal in the twelve animal cycle and represents new beginnings. This year, we should expect overall; new possibilities in business, new promotions, healthy relationships.



**ARIES** (March 21-April 19)  
Climb the fence and get those oranges. Who do they think they are, hoarding all that fruit anyways?



**TAURUS** (April 20 - May 20)  
Obliviousness is a gift. Can't sweat the small stuff if you don't notice it.



**GEMINI** (May 21 - June 20)  
Congratulations, you have a sword! She wants it back at the end of the day.



**CANCER** (June 21 - July 22)  
Your bones rattle. That's okay, they just want another friend. Maybe try a salad?



**LEO** (July 23 - August 22)  
Stand in the sun, see if you explode. Stars said so.



**VIRGO** (August 23 - September 22)  
A mohawk is only as powerful as its bearer.



**LIBRA** (September 23 - October 22)  
You're in luck! There's a small frog in your future.



**SCORPIO** (October 23-November 21)  
Is it not enough to stride around an empty house, screeching? Get it together.



**SAGITARIUS** (November 22-December 21)  
Don't condone violence. Challenge it to combat by math.



**CAPRICORN** (December 22-January 19)  
Sometimes you just gotta throw things. May the stars recommend a bottle of diet soda?



**AQUARIUS** (January 20 - February 18)  
There will be a goose nearby soon. Pet it. Nothing bad will happen if you don't, the stars are just highlighting an opportunity here.



**PISCES** (February 19 -March 20)  
A large stick may come in handy soon.



### Meet the Signs

**CAPRICORN; Sun approx. December 22 - January 19**

Capricorn is the 10th sign in the Zodiac, and is thus associated with the tenth house. The tenth house rules career and profession, contribution to society, social standing, reputation, material success, and as such, Capricorns are driven by these motivations. It is ruled by the planet Saturn, and is an Earth sign (similar to Taurus and Virgo). Saturn brings structure and meaning to our world, reminding us of our boundaries, responsibilities and commitments; making us aware of the need for self-control. It is a cardinal sign, meaning that it is aligned at the beginning of the solar season, in this case, winter.

Capricorn is anatomically associated with the knee, bones and the skeleton. Lead is the met-

al associated with this sign, signifying durability, stability, strength and endurance. It is also associated with the gemstones amber, representing wisdom and clarity, and onyx, representing discipline, focus and self-control. The colors for this sign are purple and brown, symbolizing steadfastness, dependability and simplicity. Peonies, representing consideration, carefulness and pondering, and the Lotus, representing patience and faithfulness, are the flowers of Capricorn.

Symbol: Goat, specifically Mountain Goats that find security in cliffs and heights, the highests places that can be climbed slowly but surely. Associated with the strength of character. In ancient times, it was associated with the sea goat.

Keywords: tenacious, conservative, resourceful, disciplined, wise, ambitious, prudent, constant.

### **AQUARIUS; Sun approx. January 20 - February 18**

A fixed sign, aka, falling in the middle of the Winter solar season, Aquarius is the 11th Zodiac sign. It is ruled by Uranus, a planet of enlightenment, progressiveness, objectivity, novelty, ingenuity, and the spark of intuition spurring invention. Similarly to Gemini and Libra, Aquarius is an air sign, who are often characterized as intellectual, detached, and fair-minded. As the 11th sign, Aquarius is associated with the 11th house, which rules acquaintances, friends, groups, organizations, hopes, wishes, personal goals, inner purpose and humanity.

Aquarius is associated with the ankles, shins and circulation. Uranium, with shape-shifting and awakening properties, is the metal of this sign. The gemstones of Aquarius are garnet, which assists with spiritual grounding, and amethyst, which has healing properties. The colors associated with this sign are blues, especially sky blue, electric blue, and ul-

tramarine, which symbolize loyalty and trust. The orchid, symbolizing refinement, unusualness, and fertility, and gladiolus, symbolizing integrity and strength of character are the flowers of Aquarius. The Aquarius constellation is found in the Sea region of the sky, Beta Aquarii being its brightest star.

Symbol: The Water Bearer, symbolically and eternally giving life and spiritual food to the world. The water from the vessel washes away the past, leaving room for a fresh start. As such, Aquarians are forward-looking and growth-oriented, while also steadfast and resilient.

Keywords: individualistic, assertive, independent, humanitarian, inventive, original, eccentric, opinionated, intellectual, idealistic, cool, friendly, detached



### **2020 Lunar Calendar**

The Lunar New Year begins on January 25th, and lasts until February 11th.

Jan 3:	☾10: ○17: ☽24: ●
Feb 2:	☾9: ○15: ☽23: ●
Mar 2:	☾9: ○16: ☽24: ●
Apr 1:	☾8: ○14: ☽23: ● 30: ☽
May 7:	○14: ☽22: ● 30: ☽
Jun 5:	○13: ☽21: ● 28: ☽
Jul 5:	○13: ☽20: ● 27: ☽
Aug 3:	○11: ☽19: ● 25: ☽
Sep 2:	○10: ☽17: ● 24: ☽
Oct 1:	○10: ☽16: ● 23: ☽ 31: ○
Nov 8:	☽15: ● 22: ☽ 30: ○
Dec 8:	☽14: ● 21: ☽ 30: ○

## **Significant Lunar Events\*** (*as visible from St. Andrews*)

Penumbral Lunar Eclipse Visible: January 10 (Wolf Moon), June 5, July 5, November 30

Super Full Moon: March 9, April 8,

Super New Moon: October 16, November 15

Micro Full Moon: October 1 (Hunter's/Harvest Moon), October 31

Micro New Moon: March 24,

Black Moon: August 19

Blue Moon: October 31

### \*Glossary

**Penumbral Lunar Eclipse:** The Earth's shadow (umbra) misses the Moon during this eclipse, there are no other locations on Earth where the Moon appears partially or totally eclipsed during this event. It is quite subtle, and can be difficult to observe.

**Super Full/New Moon:** When a Full or New Moon occurs at the Moon's closest position to Earth

**Micro Full/New Moon:** When a Full or New Moon occurs near apogee.

**Black Moon:** Third New Moon in a season with four New Moons, only happens every two and half years. Also known as 'dark moon' or 'Lilith moon' by astrologers.

**Blue Moon:** second Full Moon in a single calendar month, happens every two to three years.

## **Your Guide to the Moon and Her Cycle**

An ancient and powerful feminine symbol, the moon has always held significance in human life. Its impact can be traced back to how we track and understand time, planetary rotations and the moving tides of the ocean, not to mention its believed influence over our energetic fields. Among other things, it represents wisdom, illusion, intuition and spiritual connection.

Each phase of the moon has astrological significance, on each sign independently and generally speaking. In this issue, I will cover the general significance and meaning of each moon phase.

### **New Moon**

#### Beginnings

In this phase, the Moon and Sun are joined in the same sign. It represents the beginning of the planting cycle, and as such gardeners maintain that this is the best time to plant seeds. It is a tentative moment, with the outcome very uncertain. At this time, the world is a blank slate for you to do as you wish, and make your own rules for yourself. This is the time to start anew.

Corresponds with the Winter Solstice

### **Crescent Moon**

#### Initiative

In this phase, the Moon is waxing, half-way between the New and First Quarter Moon. The seed that was planted has now begun to grow, but now must contend with an environment that can be perceived as wearisome, difficult and even hostile. Despite resistance, you charge forward with new ideas, invested in a sense of purpose. However, you are also aware of challenges represented by the status quo.

Corresponds with Imbolc and Candlemas

### **First Quarter Moon**

#### Action/Growth

Seven days after the first new moon, in this phase the Moon is waxing and squares the Sun. It represents the seed sprouting leaves. You are willful, confident in your ability to build the structures to bring your ideas to life. Although accompanied with struggle, now is the time to exert the effort to make your dreams reality, to do something practical.

Corresponds with Spring Equinox

### **Gibbous Moon**

#### Movement/Perfection

This phase has the Moon waxing, halfway between First Quarter and Full Moon. As such, the next seven days have a forward momentum. The sprout has begun to bud, a flower soon to come. At

this point, if you had begun something new, you should begin to see the beginning of some results. You are drawn even more to accomplishing your goals in an analytical and detail oriented framework, not content to be done until everything is perfect.

Corresponds with Beltane and May Day

### Full Moon

Harvest/Clarity

Now the Moon and Sun are directly opposite each other on opposite sides of the Earth. Lunar energies peak now, 14 days into a cycle. The planting cycle sees the flower emerge. . Emotions peak, and you become aware of your impact on others. The key words of this cycle are objectivity and relationships, and you see the influence others have, as well as your own influence. Work and accomplishments mean nothing without other people.

Corresponds with Summer Solstice

### Disseminating Moon

Thinking/Sharing

As the Moon begins to wane, energies and thoughts turn inwards. The flower now bears the first appearance of fruit in the planting cycle. As you have learned from your experience and accomplishments as a creator in a specific field, your purpose is to now share with others. It is a good time to think about the projects and directions you are following, to use what you have learned, bide your time. As with the planting cycle, you have seen the fruit of your labor.

Corresponds with Lammas and Harvest Festival

### Last Quarter Moon

Shuffling the Deck/Decline

In this phase, the Moon is waning and squares the Sun. The plant has now been harvested, and what remains returns to the ground. This is a time to work with what you have, and make it better. Not necessarily a good time to go after anything new, but a great time to polish up your skills and make things work out. You may be discontent during this cycle, so anything you find you don't need, or isn't work-

ing can be thrown out or recycled.

Corresponds with Fall Equinox

### Balsamic Moon

Release/Preparation

This phase has the Moon waning and half-way between Last Quarter and New Moon. The seed from the fruit is maturing, awaiting a new planting cycle. If you want to let go, now's the perfect time to focus on that desire. You may feel peaceful or empty, distanced/disconnected from reality. You may feel the need to leave the past behind, and face forward with a new sense of mission to help something new emerge.

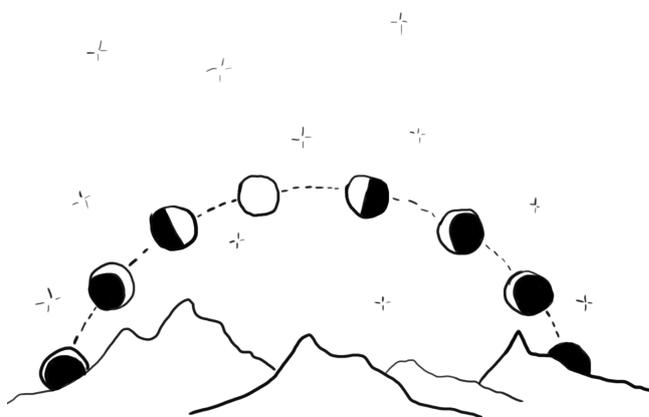
The final days just before the New Moon are also called the dark of the Moon, because they shed so little light. Symbolically, this suggests the inner world is more important than the outer world at this point in the cycle.

Corresponds with Samhain and Halloween

### Void of Course

Confusion

Not truly a moon phase, but rather a period of time usually lasting less than a day when the Moon "wanders" after her last major aspect to another planet, and until she enters her next sign. Things can be more difficult, and subject to unexpected changes. People can be less likely to make decisions during a void of course Moon.



## Agony Auncle

Hello, dear readers of the Gaint! Before I get started on answering this edition's agony, I thought I would introduce myself a little bit. I have an adorable nephew, and to him I am his Auncle - a mixture of "aunt" and "uncle". It's a name I wear with pride as my family's resident queer. Otherwise, I am an ex-Albany resident (RIP), reader of tarot and lover of podcasts - including Dear Sugars, which was part of the inspiration for this column.

If you're feeling brave and kind enough to send in your agonies to me, please fill out the google form on our Facebook or Instagram pages.

Dear Agony Auncle,

*I'm looking for some relationship advice. I'm newly polyamorous, which seems to be somewhere between newly married and newly deceased. I came to polyamory after a series of long-term relationships in which my partners and I became far too co-dependent in one way or another. Since my last break-up, I've tried to foster romantic relationships where everyone can be autonomous. Unfortunately, I've struggled to show my partners I care for them in different ways, and I worry it hurts them more than I know. Further, there seems to be a pressure to establish a hierarchy when it comes to romantic relationships, and I don't know how to establish bonds that aren't based on their relation to other bonds. How do I let someone know that I care, and that valuing their friendship as well as their romance is a key part of the relationship for me? Any advice would be appreciated.*

*Sincerely,*

*A Perplexed Polyamorous Ponce*

Dear Perplexed,

Firstly, thank you so much for writing in. I want to start by congratulating you on recognising the negative patterns of your previous relationships and taking what sounds like some great steps to breaking those patterns.

Also, remember that you're learning anew what it means to form romances without these habits. So, you can't expect yourself to have it all worked out just yet. Equally, you can't expect to have polyamory perfectly worked out yet. Proceed gently with yourself!

There seems to be two sides to your current issue: one is showing that you care; the other is not wanting to establish a hierarchy. To start with, letting people know that you care about them - especially if you're trying to express a specific form of care, and if you're new to doing in a healthy way - is hard. I feel your pain. My first piece of advice is, if you're finding it hard to show that you care in subtle or emotional everyday ways, just be obvious about it. Saying something specific like "I love holding your hand" or leaving a little note after seeing someone could help you to open up. Beyond this, you seem like you've got a fair handle on where you're at, so communicate that to your partners. If they're not able to hear you and meet you halfway, maybe this isn't the relationship for either of you to be in right now.

On the point of hierarchy, I think you need to consider that maybe the pressure that you're feeling isn't yours to bear. If hierarchical polyamory doesn't feel right for you, then it doesn't feel right for you. I did some research into alternative styles of polyamory and there's plenty out there that I'm sure you've come across. You might want to look into relationship anarchy (if only for the name) or non-hierarchical polyamory. In terms of practicality, how you allocate your time needs to be a conversation between you and the people in your life. Throughout these conversations, let them know that you care, and try to strike a balance between what feels right for you, practical time constraints and their needs. Easier said than done, I'm sure.

You asked how to let someone know that you care, and that valuing their friendship as well as their romance is a key part of the relationship for you. This, I think, comes back to my earlier advice about just going for it when expressing yourself. Saying something simple like "I love that we're also such good friends" to a romantic

partner, or “I love you and I love our friendship” could be a way to talk about what it is you value in your relationships. This way expressing what you value doesn’t have to come from a point of renegotiating the relationship any time you want to talk about it. Phrasing your expressions of love like this might sound a bit clunky at first, but I think it’s a good way to be explicit with your partners. I’d also much rather hear clunky truths than feel like my friend or partner isn’t communicating with me. You can work on honestly communicating in a beautiful way later!

Throughout all of this, bear in mind that St Andrews can be quite a limiting place, especially in terms of finding people to strike up a romance with. There is hope though. I did a quick google for polyamory community groups in the UK and it seems like most major cities have them. This is something you might find useful for building a support group with people who understand where you’re coming from, and who can help you work out how you want to practice polyamory. So, just remember there’s a whole wide world out there for you to explore, and it’s full of so many people who’ll be on the same page as you.

Finally, I did a little 3 card major arcana tarot card reading while considering your question and this is what came up:

- Internal state: **inverted wheel of fortune** - signifying difficulty in going with the flow.
- External influences: **the devil** - a calling towards unhealthy vices; watch that you’re not leaning on destructive crutches. May also be unwittingly signing up to a contract with unfair terms.
- Advice: **inverted hierophant** - it’s time for you to let go of society’s constraining ideas of how you should be living your life.

You’ve got this Perplexed, I believe in you. I hope this was useful.  
Sending you big love,  
Agony Auncle



## A Note from our Editors

Dear reader,

We here at The Gay Saint would like to thank you so much for taking the time to read our newspaper. This is something that as a team we’re really passionate about and we hope that you get as much joy, inspiration, outrage and curiosity from reading it as we did from making it.

This all started when Jess was approached by a previous member of SaintsLGBT+ with the task of relaunching this mysterious thing called “The Gay Saint” — something they had found in ye olde archives of SaintsLGBT+ history. When a group of us looked at these old documents we knew this was something we had to bring back — they were works of art (and please, if you want to see these original editions let us know, they are truly beautiful and it seems cruel not to share them.)

Fast-forward a few months and we have a team of incredible writers working together to make an updated version of this glorious mess called The Gay Saint. We had the aim of making sure that this newspaper had something for everyone, so please, take a break from your work, get a cup of tea and enjoy the first edition of the relaunched Gay Saint.

