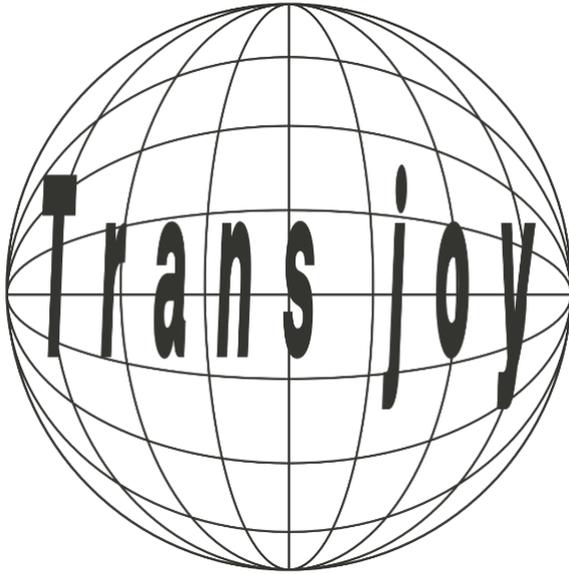




THE GAY SAINT
T R A N S
J O Y



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Editorial: Becoming Myself in St Andrews

**Written by Sofia Johnson
(she/her)**

On 19 November 2022, it will be three years since I started Hormone Replacement Therapy. When I was asked to do this editorial about trans joy, I was more than happy to submit something, as this year has easily been the biggest year for my transition. In June 2022, I underwent Gender Reassignment Surgery after four years of presenting as my true authentic self, Sofia Johnson.

My first day of university was my first day of transition, 7 September 2018. I was a shell of whom I wanted to be. Socially anxious, unable to even go into my flat kitchen due to fears of having to talk to people. I was so scared of being perceived as male that I didn't want people to perceive me at all. I ended up taking a leave of absence after a month and then came back in 2019. This year-long break was a turning point for me. I learned makeup, I experimented with fashion, I changed my hair, I had a new name. This small town was honestly the perfect place for me to transition. I was so welcomed by the LGBT+ community here, and I felt safe to be who I wanted to be. My progressing confidence and happiness was supported by the construction of relationships made possible by St Andrews. My best friend Sam got me out of my room and making friends, and my boyfriend (also called Sam) made me believe that if I can do something as courageous as transitioning, then I can do anything, and I am capable of being surrounded by love.

In third year, I felt as though I was reaching complete happiness with

myself. I pushed myself into running for the role of Trans and Non-Binary Officer despite never being someone who has led an organisation, been a representative, or even done public speaking. The role immediately threw me into finding a subcommittee for Transfest. This was my first ever big project where I could be proud of something I've helped create for the community. My subcommittee members were absolutely amazing, and we received terrific feedback. A standout moment for me was the vigil. Despite the vigil being emotionally taxing, I was filled with so much trans joy as way more people than expected attended and showed support for the trans community. I cried multiple times that night because I was so overwhelmed by love and care by not only fellow trans students but also by the allies that came and reminded us that we are beautiful and loved.

In my role as Trans and Non-Binary Officer, I felt I was finally able to give back to the community that made me the happiest I have ever been in my life. My self-confidence shot up after this. I began hosting quizzes in front of more than 100 people, and even hosted Drag Walk which is crazy to me considering just two years before I was unable to open the front door for a delivery.

The amazing people around me pushed for me to run for LGBT+ Officer. I always wanted to be the kind of person who could do well at this role, but I still had that inner doubt. For a lot of trans people, life is only life while you are who you are. I felt I only had a few years of life experience despite being 22 years old at the time. It was unbelievable when I ended up winning the role with around 1,100



Pan Cookie

BY BLUE
(THEY/SHE)

votes. I was in shock that so many people believed in me when I still didn't wholly believe in myself. I'm so grateful for all the support I received throughout this time. It brings me so much happiness that I can be a visible trans woman to inspire young closeted trans people, as I feel I never really had that. I underwent Gender Reassignment Surgery this summer. It was the last part of me that gave me major dysphoria, I had been on this waiting list for three years, but I finally got it. I was only told about my appointment three weeks beforehand. It was frightening, but exciting. The recovery period of three months was probably the most difficult three months of my life. I would go through

it all over again if I had to. I finally feel as though my transition is 'complete.' I'm the happiest I've ever been, my body rarely gives me dysphoria now, and I can truly be myself. I am now that girl that 15-year-old me always imagined being and never thought she would become.

So, to end this off, I want to thank everyone around me. My boyfriend Sam, my best friend Sam, my close friends, my family. I also want to thank the community of St Andrews. Trans joy wouldn't be a thing in my life without you all, and I really hope we can reach a point soon where our community experiences nothing but trans joy.

Rishi Sunak Threatens To Remove Protections For Trans Rights Under the ‘2010 Equality Act’

Written by K. Holloway (they/them)

According to a report by the Telegraph, Rishi Sunak, the latest Tory prime minister, pledged to review the 2010 Equality Act ‘to make it clear that sex means biological sex rather than gender’. Sunak said in his leadership campaign that the Equality Act ‘has been a Trojan horse that has allowed every kind of woke nonsense to permeate public life’ and his guidance would ensure that self-identification would no longer have any legal merit. As it stands, the Equality Act ensures that those with protected characteristics, including sex and gender reassignment, are not discriminated against. The Act currently protects transgender people whether they have medically transitioned or have a Gender Recognition Certificate, allowing anyone who self-identifies to be protected under the Act. The clarification of ‘biological sex’ in the Equality Act would bar trans women from women-only facilities, including women’s refuges and changing rooms. Trans presenter and broadcaster India Willoughby called this pledge ‘appalling discrimination,’ saying, ‘if this happens it would make life intolerable for many trans people, costing lives’. Willoughby was not the only one to point out the damage a reversal would cause. Jolyon Maugham, director of the Good Law Project tweeted in response to *The Telegraph’s* article:

‘Undoubtedly, the political temperature is hugely hostile in England to trans people. They are

friendless in the legacy media and the Tories, like every ugly autocrat ever, are looking for distractions.

‘Things are going wrong and the Equality Act has become hugely important.

‘Legally, there is nothing to stop the Tories from changing the Equality Act.

‘They have a majority in parliament and our (object) so-called “constitution” says that Sunak, if he can carry parliament, can remove the rights of whichever friendless minority he decides to target.’

Maugham later emphasised that enforcing a reversal of the Equality Act would be difficult and invasive to enforce, saying: ‘What will cis women who don’t want to conform to patriarchal presentations think about Rishi’s toilet police?’

Despite the Conservative Party’s 2019 manifesto pledge to ‘vigorously combat harassment and violence against all religious groups, and against LGBT people; the Tory government has yet to hold up its promise. Sunak re-appointed the controversial Kemi Badenoch as Minister for Women and Equalities. Badenoch, formerly a junior equalities minister under Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, has failed to ban conversion therapy and has a long history of transphobic comments. In addition, she was backed in her bid for PM earlier this year by the far-right fascist group Britain First and has connections to the anti-trans group LGB Alliance. Sunak also said during

his leadership campaign he would look at withdrawing from the EU Convention on Human Rights. In addition, this year's funding to *The Global Fund* to combat HIV and AIDS was slashed by £400 million, despite other G7 nations upping their contributions by nearly 30 percent.

The reversal of the *Equality Act* is still up in the air. However, even if the *Equality Act* is not reversed, Sunak's transphobic rhetoric is still damaging. As of March of this year, transphobic hate crimes reported to police in England and Wales rose 56 per cent, which the Home Office said could be because of better police records but also because 'transgender issues have been heavily discussed on social media over the last year'. It is evident that anti-trans rhetoric has real-world consequences even if no legislation is passed. Sunak's use of 'the trans issue' to stoke the fires of the culture

war is nothing new for Tory leaders, and many have criticised the Prime Minister by saying the strategy is merely another attempt to draw attention away from unsuccessful leadership. Indeed, Sunak dropped several of his campaign promises in his first week in office. Said his press secretary:

'We are looking at all the campaign pledges and whether it is the right time to take them forward. We need to take some time to make sure what is deliverable and what is possible. Obviously, those are pledges that were made a few months ago now and the context is somewhat different, obviously, economically. We need to look again.'

Sources:

BBC, Pink News, Telegraph.

Issues Trans and Non-binary People Face When Accessing Healthcare in the UK

Written by Kamilya Yerenchinova-Fisher (she/her)

Many trans and non-binary people are scared to access the healthcare they're entitled to in fear of discrimination, misgendering, or being denied the help they need. As a member of the alphabet mafia and a medical student, I am here to share some advice on navigating the brutal world of health and medicine through our beloved yet rotting NHS.

1. First and foremost, my loves, know how to stand up for yourself. We

queer folk should know our rights. It is the responsibility of healthcare professionals to make the practice more inclusive. The General Medical Council's guidelines for Good Medical Practice — a.k.a the doctor's bible — states: 'Good doctors work in partnership with patients and respect their rights to privacy and dignity. They treat each patient as an individual. They do their best to make sure all patients receive good care and treatment that will support them to live as well as possible, whatever their illness or disability'. So, if your local GP wasn't too nice to you lately for reasons of homophobia and/or narrow-mindedness, you know what to reference.

Our incredible doctors and nurses might look like superheroes, especially after the pandemic, but they are human. Unfortunately, like all humans, they are flawed. It's easy to feel judged and start doubting yourself when questioned by medical professionals. In those moments, remember that you're not here to prove anything to anyone. You're asking for what you are due. Homophobes do regretfully show their ugly faces in all professions, but you were not put on this Earth to put up with their abuse. There are incredible medical professionals with hearts of gold (this is what the whole thing is about at the end of the day), so don't be discouraged to try again and give your health another chance. Request a different medical professional and don't give up. You deserve to find your health fairy — and you will!

2. They *can* update your records to your new name and true gender identity. And no, they do *not* need to wait for your new NHS number or birth certificate to come in! They might not be aware of it themselves, but you are now, my beautiful people. So, go make sure that dead name is *truly* dead and ask your healthcare professional to check out the General Medical Council's guidelines on Trans Care if they are in doubt and need that extra push.

3. Unfortunately, there is a very apparent lack of knowledge of gender science and transition among medical staff. The number of gender clinics and qualified and educated healthcare professionals in this field are quite limited. A shift is happening, but it's taking its time. In the current turbulent times, when being trans is being made into a hot hashtag on social media and a polarising political topic, we take one step forward and twenty steps back. However, mama raised no quitters (no matter what she has to say about it herself).

We keep fighting and, in the meantime, continue to care for our health and wellbeing. We're all aware of how huge the NHS waiting lists are.

For transition care, those lists double, if not triple. If you're in any doubt about booking your first appointment or taking that next step, please do. It'll take long enough for them to get to you anyway. So, don't waste precious time doubting yourself if, in your heart, you *know* transitioning in whatever shape or form would make you happier. Don't be scared to be proactive. Call and ask. Be polite yet firm. You've got this!

4. A little advice for the bravest... Since society has insisted on turning trans and non-binary folk into a hot discussion, maybe it's time to jump on the bandwagon! Transitioning remains incredibly hard to afford. Consider starting a fundraiser on social media. Ask your friends to chip in, do something fun together, and turn it into a celebratory, memorable experience. Remember – you can always fall back on your community! Reach out to your local girls, gays, and theys to see if they can offer you a helping hand.

5. Lastly, be aware that some medical professionals might assume that you coming in for care somehow has to do with your transition. However, our lovely trans and non-binary folk might be out of this world, but their bones still break. So, stay safe, listen to your body, and vocalise your concerns. Sometimes you might have to disclose the sex you were assigned to at birth, but this is only necessary if it affects your treatment, condition, or care quality in any way. Medical professionals are obligated to keep your confidentiality, so execute your rights and continue slaying, loves!

Scotland's Gender Recognition Act Reform And How It Will Change Lives

**Written by Anna Pilgrim
(she/her)**

History

The *UK Gender Recognition Act* (2004) enables transgender people to obtain a new birth certificate with their 'acquired gender' over the one they were assigned at birth. It comes with restrictions: applicants have to be at least 18; to have lived fully for the last two years in their 'acquired' gender; and have been diagnosed with having gender dysphoria, providing two medical reports in support of this diagnosis.

Additional legislation includes the *Scottish Offences (Aggravation by Prejudice) Act* (2009) which outlines explicit legal protection of transgender people against hate crime, and the *UK Equality Act* (2010), which makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on the basis of 'sex' or 'gender reassignment' and is neither limited to just those with a Gender Recognition Certificate but also anyone who has undergone relevant treatment or surgery.

Scotland's 'Gender Recognition Reform Bill'

The new *Gender Recognition Reform Bill*, which was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in March of this year, amends the 2004 Act to instate new application procedures for applicants living in Scotland. It aims to cut down the required two years living in their 'acquired' gender to just three months. It also seeks to replace

medical reports or evidence with a legally-binding declaration that they intend to permanently live as their 'acquired' gender, removing the need for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

The NHS defines gender dysphoria as 'a sense of unease that a person may have because of a mismatch between their biological sex and their gender identity' which 'may be so intense it can lead to depression and anxiety and have a harmful impact on daily life'. Receiving a diagnosis first requires a referral from your GP to attend a Gender Identity Clinic. In Scotland, there are only five of these clinics, including one private clinic where a single appointment is £180-£360, and the waitlists are around 1.5 to 3 years long.

Personal Experiences

How will this amendment change lives? For many, including students here in St Andrews, this amendment is a large improvement to the process of being legally recognised in their preferred gender. One student told me, 'On the medical side, it's a right joke.' They had first self-referred to the Glasgow clinic, but after being told they needed a GP referral to one in Edinburgh, did so in October 2021.

It is now November, and they have still not had any form of confirmation or updates about being on the list for the Edinburgh clinic. The waitlist for this particular clinic was 2.5 years at the time they signed up, and they fear the waiting time has only grown in this time.

This person also made the important point that the *Gender Recognition Reform bill* will not help solve these medical problems but instead reduce the medical barrier to formally changing their identity, allowing changeover to be much quicker and easier for transgender people. They also believe that people going to medical practices for trans healthcare will be taken more seriously as a result of the bill being passed.

Transgender Identities in Scotland

Research on transgender identities in Scotland is limited. A Scottish Public Health Network (ScotPHN) report published in 2018 reported that an estimated 0.5% of the Scottish population are transgender, with referrals to Scottish Gender Identity Clinics markedly increasing each year.

A 1999 report concluded that 8 in 100,000 people in Scotland had gender dysphoria, although this figure did not include those still waiting for a gender dysphoria diagnosis or those who had self-diagnosed. The figures given in both studies are expected to have increased.

The Current State of the Gender Recognition Reform Bill

A vote by MSPs on 27th November 2022 saw the bill pass through Stage 1, in which the general principles of

the bill were established. 88 MSPs voted in favour of moving the bill to the next stage, around 70% of the total membership of the Scottish Parliament.

While First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has received backlash from within her own party, trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) and famous authors, such as she-who-shall-not-be-named, a BBC poll conducted in 2021 found that over a majority of respondents supported gender recognition reform.

Sturgeon herself also responded to the criticisms that the bill is somehow an infringement upon women's rights, explaining that the gender Recognition Reform bill 'Is about reforming an existing process [...] it doesn't take any more rights away from women.'

The bill, at time of writing, is currently in Stage 2, where MSPs can make minor amendments to the proposed bill. Due to the demonstrated support from MSPs, the bill is expected to pass after reaching its final stage. For many, it couldn't come sooner.

Sources:

BBC, Scottish Trans Alliance, parliament.scot, NHS, Pink News, ScotPHN, British Journal of General Practice (Vol. 49, No. 449), gov.scot, YourGP,

Christine Jorgensen and Coccinelle: Transgender Celebrities of the 20th Century

**Written by M. J. M. Norwood
(she/her/he/him)**

Christine Jorgensen was born in 1926 in the Bronx, New York City. She was drafted into the United States military as a clerical worker in 1945, and after finishing military service she returned to New York and began seeking gender-affirming healthcare with the help of Joseph Angelo in the US and Christian Hamburger in Denmark.

In the early 1950s, she was able to get an orchiectomy and a penectomy in Copenhagen. She later received a vaginoplasty in the US. Jorgensen's positive experience with her surgeons shows the mental health benefits gender-affirming care can have for many trans people. Jorgensen wrote about her experiences in Copenhagen in a letter to friends:

'Remember the shy, miserable person who left America? Well, that person is no more, as you can see, I'm in marvellous spirits.'

Jorgensen initially wanted to live a private life after her surgeries, but found that the publicity around her transition made this difficult, and instead arranged to meet with members of the press. She became a public figure and had a successful career as an actress and nightclub singer. In a signature part of her nightclub act, she would end her song *I Enjoy Being a Girl* with a quick change into a Wonder Woman outfit. She also published her story in her book *Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography*.

While Jorgensen was a popular public figure, she still faced transphobia, especially as the press became more scrutinous of her. Publishers would ask her to pose nude for pictures. She was denied a marriage licence due to being listed as male on her birth certificate, and her partner lost his job when it was revealed they were dating. Jorgensen struggled with depression, but was supported by her family and loved ones. She wrote in her autobiography:

'The answer to the problem must not lie in sleeping pills and suicides that look like accidents, or in jail sentences, but rather in life and the freedom to live it.'

Throughout her life, Jorgensen spoke at venues around the country, advocating for trans people. She passed away from bladder and lung cancer in 1989, and her contributions to queer acceptance have been remembered with her inclusion in the Legacy Walk, the Rainbow Honour Walk, and on the National LGBTQ+ Wall of Honour in the Stonewall Inn.

While Christine Jorgensen was bringing awareness of trans people to the US, Jacqueline Charlotte Dufresnoy, better known by her stage name Coccinelle (Ladybird), was doing the same in Europe. Coccinelle was born in Paris in 1931, and adopted her moniker as a teenager after wearing a red dress with black spots to a party. She had a vibrant career as a cabaret performer and club singer.

The Parisian club scene offered her space to present as female, and later had a vaginoplasty from Georges Burou in Casablanca.

Coccinelle was a trailblazer, and her first marriage set a precedent for trans people being allowed to marry in France. Her marriage was even accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, on the condition that she be re-baptised as a woman. She married journalist François Bonnet at the Saint-Jean de Montmartre Church in Paris in 1962. Her relationship with Bonnet did not last, but she later had two loving marriages, the first to Paraguayan dancer Mario Costa (who tragically died in 1977), and later to fellow trans activist Thierry Wilson.

Coccinelle received pushback from the French government as they tightened laws to make it harder for

trans people to be legally recognised, but she kept working to support fellow trans people. She founded *Devenir Femme* (To Become Woman) and the Centre for Aid, Research, and Information for Transsexuality and Gender Identity, both organisations that provided support to people wanting to transition.

She remained an activist and star throughout her life, producing records where she sang about her trans identity, and acting in several films. She died in 2006 following complications from a stroke, leaving a lasting legacy in fighting for the rights of trans people in Europe.

Jorgensen and Coccinelle were two women who show that, even in times of horrific transphobia, trans joy is possible. We are here. We are queer. And we're not going away.

Queer as Rome

Written by Dheirya Sonecha (he/him)

Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, more universally identified as Nero Germanicus, served as Caesar of the Roman Empire from 54 to 68 CE. While there are countless tales spun by subsequent raconteurs who had vested interests in damning their memory, including the Roman Senate, there are some anecdotes about them that were greater in truth than propaganda.

Much of what is declared about Rome's popular young emperor, can be taken with a mountain of salt — the Flavians (the dynasty of emperors that succeeded Nero) wished, indubitably, to paint Nero in a terrible light to make their time on the throne of Caesars appear far more palatable. It is widely believed by modern

historians that Nero may have been transgender, though many ancient sources, who seemed clearly to espouse prejudice, claimed Nero had been under a curse of the gods.

In 64 CE at the Saturnalian feasts, Nero dressed in the bridal veil and married a freedman, Pythagoras, with all lawful custom observed. Tacitus writes, 'He stooped to marry himself to one of that filthy herd, by name Pythagoras, with all the forms of regular wedlock. The bridal veil was put over the emperor; people saw the witnesses of the ceremony, the wedding dower, the couch and the nuptial torches; everything in a word was plainly visible' and Suetonius corroborates this story.

Our human link to this popular but misunderstood persona comes from Suetonius and Marcellinus who write

of Nero's marriage to Sporus, a youth that resembled their cherished wife Poppoaea most faithfully in face and form. This marriage quelled much of the burning grief in Nero's heart, so much, even their critics state unabashedly. Sextus Avitus Bassianus, more frequently known as Heliogabulus or Elagabalus, ruled the Romans as emperor from 218 to 222 CE.

He sat on the throne at 14, it was little wonder the child grew to be the most unqualified emperor in the history of Rome: they were regularly surrounded by sycophants who sought to sway their actions, and who, likely out of contempt for their queer identity, as Elagabalus was known to be a passive partner in their relationships, finally sought to be rid of them at 18.

The most denigrated ruler of Rome, very little actual history about them comes to us that isn't enveloped by a heavy shroud of prejudice and disdain. What can be gathered, at most, is that Elagabalus was likely queer. They apparently married five women and *The Augustan History* alleges that Elagabalus also married a man named Zoticus, an athlete from Smyrna, and had a complex and likely romantic relationship with their former wife's husband, Hierocles.

It is worthy of note that Dio expresses the contrasting opinion that Zoticus was simply their *cubicularius* (concubine). Dio goes on to pronounce that Elagabalus preferred to be called Hierocles' mistress, wife, and queen.

The emperor frequently altered their appearance through makeup and wigs, desired to be called Domina and not Dominus, and supposedly offered vast sums (30 to 50 talents or 1000 kg of silver) to any physician who could 'make [them] a woman'.

Out of all the contemptuous and condescending statements, evidently it can be inferred that Elagabalus felt that their sex and gender did not align. As such, they earned the scorn of history in pursuit of finding catharsis.

These two instances demonstrate that trans and non-cis identities are not 'new' as many politicians might wish us to believe. If what we can whittle out of the disparaged history of these figures is true, then Nero and Elagabalus are only two small examples of how long humanity has been attempting to reconcile the understanding that sex and gender are not synonyms.

Sources:

Roman History, Lucius Cassius Dio; *Nero*, Edward Champlin; *The Twelve Caesars*, Gaius Suetonius Tranquillius; *Histories*, Publius Cornelius Tacitus; *Annales (ab excessi divi Augusti)*, Publius Cornelius Tacitus; *Natural History*, Gaius Plinius Secundus; *The Augustan History*, Pseudo Suetonius; *History of the Empire from the Death of Marcus*, Herodian of Antioch; *Res Gestae*, Ammianus Marcellinus



Trans Joy

BY DAISY PRICE
(SHE/HER)



Price

Dancing Dysphoria

Written by Kiki (they/them) _____

I feel confounded in this binary world where complexities that define me suffer an oversimplification.

When there are no parts of my history I'd erase, it gets difficult to construe a sincere chronicle of Kiki.

I will always be mummy's gudiya* and nanu's** little girl.

It will always make sense.

But why can't my present mirror my past?

Why do my old habits feel so wrong?

Why can I feel my own skin crawl?

This colluded understanding of self is getting strenuous to perform for my spectators.

I rattle my train, brush my mane, unsheath my antlers, and hope they uncover their senses. A lie, I know.

Enacting futile efforts, I've now learnt my dance is only mine, It revels under my costume, within my soul.

It glows with summer music – yellow, white, purple.

My body paints the world that is now my stage.

* doll

** grandpa

Crucifix Catacomb

**Written by Cass Gemmell
(she/they/he)**

Picture this:

The year is 2014 and you are ten years old. The carpet is irritating your hands, the scratchy fabric seemingly tearing through your skin to the very blood that runs in your veins and lays it's horrible, itchy bed there. All you want is to scratch it off, to pick at it and make it stop hurting, but you cannot, because the teacher is watching and you haven't finished the rosary yet.

This is around the time you had stopped believing in God.

It just didn't make sense in your child brain, this idea of some mythical being deciding what happened to you in life and death, along with the fact you were being told that everything that you felt in earnest was wrong. That you were going to burn in Hell just for wanting to kiss a girl, that all those feelings that maybe you weren't even a girl were going to get you kicked out of church, it was all just piling up and suddenly, you're renouncing God completely and pretending that sitting in church every Sunday didn't make you feel queasy.

This was my reality.

It had all really began with my name. People had always gotten it wrong, which made sense as it was a name that was already considered a nickname, and I used to get so upset when people would say it wrong, or claim that it just couldn't be my name, I vowed I would change it the minute I knew what my real name is.

And this is something I think a lot of trans or non-binary people can relate to, finding that perfect name to describe you, that one label that doesn't make your skin itch, that feels like coming home. It can take years, it took me seven years to find mine, but once you do; it's like finding a new constellation of stars named just after you, as cheesy as that sounds.

But growing up, I didn't know what I was going to become. I knew that I liked girls, and I knew that the church thought that was wrong. A war grew within my stomach, as my mother's acceptance of me battled with my religion's disapproval, and I was caught between them in no man's land.

I was twelve when I realised that I hated being a girl.

I'd known something was wrong in my body, but I figured it was just growing pains or my strict ballet teacher making me hate myself, I didn't think it had anything to do with gender. Besides, my church thought it was wrong, anything I thought didn't matter as long as the priest's word was law. I spent my nights lying awake on YouTube or Tumblr, scrolling through endless feeds of boys with long hair and girls with pixie cuts, and I'd long to exist in their androgyny, to orbit their own comfortableness they had in their bodies that I'd never truly felt in my own.

My skin had begun to feel like a crucifix-painted prison, with shame as my jailer and confusion as my executioner. I had become caught between wanting to stick with what I knew, stick to my religion and being a girl and living the way God had supposedly intended, or I could abandon everything.

Become a stranger in my community,
leave everything I had known, accept
that I was probably not making it
Heaven and move on.

In the end, that's what I did. I got older
and I changed my name and accepted
being non-binary, and also had to
accept that what was drilled into me
as a child about religion was not
entirely accurate. I was taught that to
follow the Bible, to follow what the
priests spouted and that what the
archaic teachings of my small-town
Catholic school told me were law,
were right, were just. None of this
was true.

Growing up non-binary and Catholic
is a debacle. It's being taught that you
are inherently wrong and that
everything you feel is a sin, it's being
punished for simply asking to wear
jeans to church instead of a skirt, or
that you cannot choose a male saint
on your Confirmation day because you
are supposedly a girl. But what I have
found is that religion can be whatever
you want it to be. I don't believe in the
God I was taught because his rulings
are too strict. I believe there is
something out there, something I just
don't quite understand yet.

Religion is a different experience for
everyone, this juts happened to be
what I experienced. Finding my name,
shedding religion, accepting myself,
that was how I escaped, but
sometimes I miss it. Sometimes I miss
the simplicity of Sunday school, of the
wonder of learning about Noah's Ark
or the Garden of Eden, or debating
over the realism of the Ten
Commandments.

But at the end of the day, I'm glad that
I left the church, that I left my old self
behind. I'm happy that I found a way to
open the door to my cell and let who I
really am roam free, because I'm
much better because of it.

Cardinal

Written by S. Joy (they/she/he)

I grovel at the feet of those who have
Both looked and found, but those
who've left know that
there are no directions. I will refuse
to walk unguided

I am to blame for my purgatory
and limbo is carried upon my back.
I could not offer it to another,
I hold it alone

Weighed down with the horror that
true north does
exist and I will always be searching.

And with my nails I will scratch off
pink paint
until I bleed but I will pour it back
With only a word from my mouth,
return.
Which bearing am I

I fear of walking in the dark, so I
hold out a hand to someone who can
see.
He does not know if he wants to go if
He has to leave her

Why does she get to look like that, so
right
and logical. I wish I had never
heard the word beautiful so that I
would
never have to worry that I was not
someone else's art

I mix my own colours to paint my map.

The Exact Same

**Written by Logan Sibbald
(he/him)**

All the light in the world seems confined to this box of a shop. Restricted by the dark encasings of the winter night outside, the light presses up against the glass of the display window. Unable to travel any further, it concentrates on the glass, forming a reflection of the shop interior which obscures the world beyond.

As I hang dresses in this empty charity shop, the bell above the door chimes. A woman with a wrinkled cardboard box in her arms enters, her face hidden by the mountain of boys' clothes rising up from it. She pants as she brings the box in. "Hiya, you still taking donations?"

I smile and take the box from her arms, thanking her as I lay its colossal weight on the counter. Hearing the woman's voice, Carol emerges from the stock room, the varifocals lifting off her nose as she beams. "Hiya! I haven't seen you in a while! How's things going?"

As the long-time-no-see conversation between the mother and the widow who once babysat her children starts to spark, I return to the dress rack, remaining tuned in to their voices.

"I was just next door and thought I'd pop in with some stuff, how's you?"

Although their rally through the usual topics is chirpy and fluid, I sense some evasiveness when the subject of family is put into play.

"Are the kids with you?"

"No, no, I was just in getting some shopping for the week. You seen the shelves next door? I'm surprised this place isn't as busy"

"It's always dead quiet on a Saturday. How's Amy's work? I bet it's always busy at the weekend?"

"Yeah, sometimes. Are you always here on a Saturday, then?"

She swerves and redirects for as long as she can, until the shot she has been avoiding hits directly. "God, it seems like just yesterday I was tucking those kids in bed. How's Kyle finding his last year at high school?"

The question pinches her forehead and tilts her eyes down. She searches for an answer on the floor. There is a pause, then she says it.

Her words print on the blank sheet of paper in my head. The sentences written in standard-size Times New Roman, the appendage – "she's transitioned, it's Kayla now" – is supersized and flashing red within the script. She says it with so little emphasis that its presence is entirely striking. Her apprehension ripples through the air. Her anxiety saturates me.

"She", "her" and "Kayla" slip out of Carol's wrinkled lips just as naturally as her own name. In fact, they begin to spill rapidly into the conversation as her joy increases, as if they have been piling on her tongue for years. Though she isn't at all surprised, her glee is electric. The woman is stunned, which, in itself, saddens me. She adds that Kayla is doing hair and makeup at college, prompting Carol to share memories from years ago.

She speaks like she is repainting a gallery, going from one canvas to the next, brush and paint palette in hand. “You know, she used to ask me for my makeup! Not for herself, though, she only wanted to do mine. The first time I handed her a pink No7, I thought she would use it like a crayon! But I’ll never forget how she furrowed her brow, pouted her lips and applied that lipstick like it was liquid gold.”

As I continue arranging the dresses, whilst listening in simultaneously, I notice the reflection in the window. In it, I become a child, desperately searching through a wardrobe. It is as if my hands are theirs – the bones and the skin home to two different people. I watch both our faces flood with powders, pigments and gels. I see our hair grow like spun sugar – the granulated, fine buzzcuts melting off our scalps and stretching into gold strands as they descend.

In Carol’s reflection, I see the history brushed into her hair — every strand once combed and admired by a curious ten-year-old. I see a child dancing in her eyes. Pirouetting on the trough of her iris, the blood from their toes seeping into the whites of her corneas. It’s like her memories have been waiting to be edited, like her heart never believed her eyes all those years ago.

Carol eagerly asks more questions about Kayla — which are all answered with relief and honesty. It is clear that a positive reaction to this woman and

her daughter has been a rare occurrence.

A sixty-year-old widow gushing with love and acceptance for a young trans person fills me with a blueish hope — an optimism tainted with sadness. I don’t know why.

Maybe because I expected her reaction to be the exact opposite. Maybe because I expected most adults to display a heinous reaction to the news of a young person freeing their soul.

Perhaps Carol’s response provides a little more evidence that humans are actually capable of listening to a heartbeat without labelling the features of the chest it resides in. Perhaps it provides a little more evidence that humans can feel a heartbeat and recognise that it pulses for a different body.

The mother leaves as the shop nears closing time. I don’t say anything after she’s gone, I just finish the stocktaking. Carol dances as she cleans up.

On our way out, she switches the lights off.

The reflection in the display window vanishes, and the interior of the shop equilibrates with the night outside, becoming what it only ever dreamed of being.



Agony Uncle

Dear Agony Uncle,

I tripped on the sidewalk in front of my parasocial instagram crush. What should I do aside from self immolate?

Signed, Distressed in David Russell

Dear Distressed,

In a town as small as this, our embarrassing moments are abnormally likely to occur in front of people we know or have developed questionably healthy relationships with via social media. It is only natural to seek fiery self-destruction. But I will warn you that the last person burned in Scotland was in 1727; picking up the trend now might come across as a bit desperate. There is little action to be taken in situations like this one. Unfortunately, making mistakes in front of people is one of the pillars of life.

I will admit that it always feels worse in St Andrews; the embarrassing feeling gets trapped in this pressure cooker between East and West Sands.

But the best part about this is that you are trapped here with thousands of other idiots, so there is a 100% chance that someone else in this town did something far more embarrassing immediately after you decked yourself on the concrete.

The most practical advice your uncle can offer you is this; you cannot be embarrassed without your own consent, and running from appearing stupid will only make the stupid things look worse when they eventually find their way out of the woodwork (and trust me, they will).

So simply lean into it! Express a hardcore wrong take in a tutorial, do May dip naked, eat a whole chilli to impress a date (tried and tested by yours truly). At least you can sleep well knowing you've tried everything you can.

And, if it helps for the next time you trip in front of this person, try making it look way worse than it was so they're obliged to ask if you're ok. Then at least you've talked to them.

Rooting for your crush to become a social one,

– Your Agony Uncle

Dear Agony Auncle,

I broke up with my partner roughly 5 weeks ago due to issues in the relationship that couldn't really be fixed on either end. In general I'm past it but recently I found out they're already seeing someone new and I reacted way stronger than I thought I would. Any help to get past this? Since I know I have no right to be upset so I just want to wrap it up :.)

Signed, Anxious gay

Dear Anxious Gay,

It seems like you are surprised by your reaction. You mention 5 weeks as if that is an adequate time to move beyond a relationship and for some people it is. It might have been enough time for your ex-partner to process your relationship, but for some people 5 weeks is all but a drop in the lake of time needed to move on. And that is okay. There is nothing wrong about your reaction to your partner moving on, if anything I think you should spend some time exploring those feelings. Are you sad? Angry? Jealous? It is important to name those feelings so you can work through them, because unfortunately working

through them is the only way to move one. If all you do is invalidate your emotions, you'll need a lot more 5 weeks to be able to fully move on.

Some tips for working through your emotions at a variety of price ranges include discussing with a close friend (always lovely to hear more perspectives), journaling about your feelings, going for a long walk with or without music, creating a piece of art, writing poetry, a self care night, writing a song, creating a minute long dance to Olivia Rodrigo's *Good for You*, really so many options as long as they are safe and support your end goal of finally moving on. It is also important that you keep in touch with your feelings in case there is a point where professional help is needed, resources at the uni are below!

Anxious Gay I really hope this has helped, at least to let you know that your feelings are valid. I hope for your sake a little self-care, a little expression, and some introspection help you move on quickly from this ex.

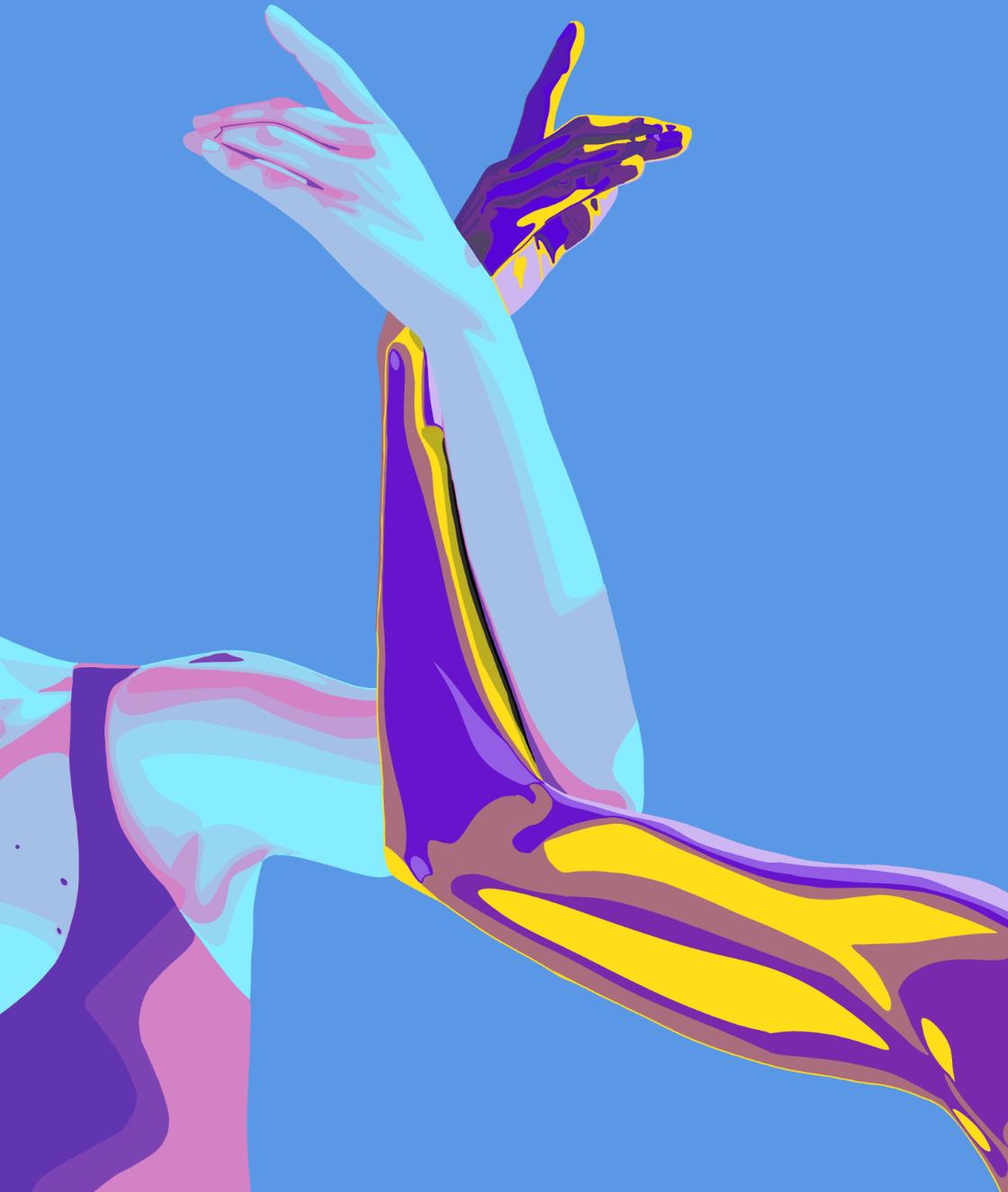
– Your Agony Auncle

Resources:

St Andrews Student Services;
Nightline St Andrews; [Saintslgbt.com](https://saintslgbt.com)

Euphoria

BY ELYSE EDWARDS
(SHE/THEY)



Trans Joy in the Bohemian East Village Musical 'Rent!' by Jonathan Larson

Written by Cosmo Billing (he/they)

As we near Christmas, it feels appropriate to revisit arguably the best musical to put you in the mood for the holidays. Set in the 1990s New York, *RENT!* tells an authentic account of the Bohemian struggles and triumphs of the poor and marginalised communities in East Village, Lower Manhattan. *RENT!* features predominantly lesbian, bisexual, and trans characters: it is a musical that every queer person should see. Heck, everyone should go and see it. In this article, I will focus on the transgender and genderqueer character – Angel Dumott Schunard.

Who, I would say, is the soul of the show. Angel shares similar struggles to the other characters: HIV/AIDS, discrimination as a genderqueer person, and poverty as a marginalised person in America. Yet, I could not think of another character as joyous and hopeful in their daily life as Angel. From ours and the other characters' perspectives, she is the star of the show. She truly represents the musical's essence in a way that no other character can. Let me explain.

Angel is a drag queen. She fucking kills drag. In one of her first scenes, she performs an elaborate dance routine dressed as a stylish lady Santa. While dancing (and doing somersaults) in heels, Angel comically describes how she sent the antagonist's dog to 'doggie hell'. Angel is a lover. A testament to her compassion is her taking in her partner, Collins, after he was evicted

due to being unable to pay his rent. A very touching moment between the two is when they sing *I'll Cover You*: 'live in my house, I'll be your shelter. Just pay me back with 1000 sweet kisses. Be my lover, I'll cover you.'

Collins compliments Angel and her identity perfectly and Angel expresses her love for him through the unconditional 'live in my house, I'll be your shelter'. Perhaps, the most badass thing about the couple is that throughout their struggle with HIV/AIDS, they continue to support their found family. Three songs in *RENT!* feature the Life Support meetings which Angel and Collins attend together. The songs are crucial for setting the tone of the musical: each one speaks about the different pains and anxieties that people with HIV/AIDS (I would argue, as well queer and trans people) live with.

These fears include trying not to be overtaken by worry for the future; losing your friends and family, your own life, and your dignity; and finally, actual loss. Angel captures trans joy perfectly. Firstly, she is proud and unafraid to express herself: the breaking of boundaries and social norms makes Angel an empowering source of light for her partner and friends. Secondly, she is resilient: while fighting for her very existence – on Earth and in an unkind society – she is helped by those who embrace her queerness without prejudice or hatred. Even in her final moments, Angel is always there comforting her friends. In essence, Angel achieves what I believe many Queer people seek: to face fears and battles upright with joy and glee.

As the ACLU said recently, the musical is revolutionary in its rejection of convention and social conformism, acceptance of oneself and others, and how it brings power to the community. I believe that no one in *RENT!* does this better than Angel.

Escaping and Shaping the Material World: SOPHIE and Paul Preciado's Cosmological Multiplicity of Living, Breathing, Loving Creations

Written by Jay Martin
(they/them)

It is, I admit, difficult to write about SOPHIE without feeling a deep sadness. She was a pioneer and someone who meant so much within our communities. What this piece will not be, however, is a biography of SOPHIE's life. As she reiterated many times, anything the world needs to know about her can be found within her music. 'The past isn't sexy, the future is sexy,' she said in response to a question about her time in primary school.

The wholly new and transgressive framework crafted by her ideas and soundscapes gives us an upgraded arsenal of weapons to continue the fight against the normativity of the world around us. SOPHIE noted that her music was inspired by feeling 'overwhelmed at the ridiculousness and complexity of the world we live in and how difficult it is to comprehend'

Through her music and its philosophy, SOPHIE was shaping the world to her liking, or, perhaps, building a spaceship to another world: a Whole New World. In his 2019 collection of essays, *An Apartment on Uranus*, trans scholar Paul B. Preciado expanded upon his previous work pertaining to trans and gender non-conforming people's place in society. As he notes in the introduction to the book, 'I am the multiplicity of the cosmos trapped in a binary political and epistemological system, shouting in front of you. I am a Uranian

confined inside the limits of techno-scientific capitalism.' The cis-heterosexual matrix wants to integrate us into its systems of logic, hierarchy, and definition. It wants to understand us, medicalise us, legalise us. Thus, when we refuse, when we lash out, when we express ourselves in ways they don't understand, they expel us to the fringes of society, even to the fringes of the universe.

It is on Uranus where we find strength, fraternity, and community. It is in a world so hostile and desolate that we are forced to create reservoirs of hope and optimism. We call into question their normality, their families, their laws, their borders, their science, their conception of God. We destroy their matrixes and we conceptualise a world of our own, one that is truly free. When asked if she believes in God, SOPHIE responded, 'Yes, God is trans.'

SOPHIE's 2018 debut album *OIL OF EVERY PEARL'S UN-INSIDES* is a sonic tour-de-force and a defining album for the hyperpop genre. Tracks such as *Ponyboy* and *Infatuation* explore the vociferous power of trans sexuality. The malleability of our bodies and the fulfillment of the way we desire to look is examined in *Faceshopping* and *Immaterial*.

SOPHIE explores the emotional vulnerability of trans people with songs like *It's Okay To Cry* and *Is It Cold In The Water?* Rather famously, nothing in SOPHIE's work was ever sampled. For every track, she would spend hours in her lab creating every

sound from scratch. She often referred to her process as becoming one with the technology and machines she was working with. The tracks which populate the album are not merely individual parts of a wider thematic and artistic whole, but their own living, breathing, and loving creations, all exploring the beauty, joy, and boundless freedom one reclaims as a trans person.

SOPHIE was not attempting to critique or analyse the world around her, but rather she was creating new possibilities, splitting off from a world which she didn't feel at home in. In his essay *My People are the People of the Ill-Born*, Preciado outlines the way in which trans liberation cannot focus on the assimilation of our identities into the cis-heterosexual matrix, but rather must focus on 'rupture, transformation, mutation'. Tracks on SOPHIE's album such as *Whole New World/Pretend World* highlight Preciado's ideas in her work.

'Feelings

Feelings in my skin

Feelings I want to know

Want to hold

Broken free

(...)

Promises

Promises might come true

Promises of a life uncontained'

There's an overwhelming sense of immanent revolutionary potential for trans people in both SOPHIE's music and Preciado's writing. The idea that rebellion against the systems which oppress and repress us is not something we choose to engage in, but something we merely come to recognise already exists within us.

Preciado introduces us to the concept of being 'countersexual' in his 2018 book *The Countersexual Manifesto*. The revolution against the cisgender heterosexual matrix resides within us. It will become us. It is us. It will live on after us, because of us. This is what Preciado refers to as 'somatic communism', an emotional investment in our future, a politics of feeling, being, moving, changing. There will be no way back. *OIL OF EVERY PEARL'S UN-INSIDES* is its own kind of manifesto.

A 'poptimism' album which gives us the tools to create a 'whole new world, for you and me'. We're fighting our own way out of history, and the future will be sexy.

Sources:

The Future is Sexy, Interview with SOPHIE by Ivan Guzman; *SOPHIE's Whole New World*, Interview with SOPHIE by Justin Moran; *An Apartment on Uranus*, Preciado B., Paul; *The Countersexual Manifesto*, Preciado B., Paul.

Book Review: ‘She Who Became the Sun’ by Shelley Parker-Chan

**Written by S. Joy
(they/she/he)**

She Who Became the Sun is Shelley Parker-Chan’s debut novel and a striking feat in terms of its creation of a believable fantasy world within the real history of the fall of the Yuan Dynasty. The novel has only small glimmers of fantasy in an otherwise incredibly realistic text that plucks many characters directly from history. The story primarily follows Zhu Chongba, who begins the novel only referred to as ‘the girl’, but after the Zhu family’s only surviving son dies due to famine ‘the girl’ is left alone with the choice to either succumb also, or take the son’s name and identity and attempt to make something of herself.

Zhu’s character follows a strong arc of an anti-hero, as he begins simply attempting to keep himself alive, and eventually carries on a slow progression into tyrannical power. The novel won in the British Fantasy Awards for Best Newcomer, and Best Fantasy Novel, and was a finalist in the Lambda Literary Awards for transgender fiction. Zhu’s transition is seamlessly done; the novel is written in the third person limited and offers us many of his thoughts, thus we see his pronouns changing

alongside his comfort in his new identity over the course of many years. Whether Zhu is transmasculine, non-binary or another identity entirely is left up to interpretation, but Parker-Chan manages to make Zhu’s identity as non-cis, in a historical setting where there were generally no words for such a thing, clear. The novel features multiple queer relationships and does not shy away from allowing queer people to act just as nefarious and cruel as everyone else. This is not a novel that leans heavily into deep emotional charters or grand sweeping descriptions, but rather is a feat in political tactic and a great example of gripping war strategies.

At times the lack of deeper description is missed as it can prevent one from feeling attached to some of the characters and the quick introduction of military leaders and locations does become confusing, but the plot is never lost to this slight fault. The twists and turns in the narrative still feel earned and brilliant.

Sources:

Shelleyparkerchan.com

Not Alone

1 Sometimes...
Corvus (they/them)

2 It's hard to feel...
Trans-trender.
It's just a phase.
Valid.

3 On days like those...
3

4 *click*
History_Trans

5 I like to give myself a small reminder.
Hey.

6 ...could you remind me who you are? One more time?

7 Sure thing!
Call me Empress Elagabalus, if you please, ruler of the Roman Empire!

8 Greetings! Expert diplomat, spy and soldier Chevalier d'Eon at your service, from la belle France!
Not only did I get the royal court to undo my exile. I got them to recognize me as a woman while living in the 1700s and 1800s!

9 Billy Tipton here- ready to play a little jazz. Just like the good old mid-1930s, '40s, '50s, '60s and '70s!
I lived my entire life as a man- it wasn't known I was trans until I died!

10 I'm Sylvia Rivera! I fought for trans rights, drag queen culture and the homeless from the 1970s to the early 2000s!
I don't like thinking about labels- just be who you want to be!

11 Greetings from Germany. I am Karl Baer, and I advocated for women's rights in the first half of the 20th century.
I was the first to undergo sex reassignment surgery, and was most likely intersex considering the midwife's confusion in identifying me.

12 I'm Pauline Park! I helped to co-found Queens Pride House and New York Association for Gender Rights Advocacy!
I'm openly trans myself, and still fighting on behalf of all our trans siblings!

13 I'm Asushunamir. I rescued the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar from the underworld and got the gifts of healing and prophecy.
I was created to be neither man nor woman.

14 Inari here, Japanese deity of rice, foxes and much more! I can be man or woman depending on the artist!

15 Loki here! I was spreading mischief and messing around with the fluidity of my form and gender aeons before the days of Marvel!

16 Dionysus speaking! I'm the Greek god of wine, insanity and a general fun time!
Some accounts of my myths suggest I decided gender just wasn't for me.

17 Now, remember. We've always been here.

18 And we always will be.

There is joy in knowing you're not alone

Shie

Horoscopes

By Jack Kennedy (they/he)

♈ *Aries*

(21 MARCH - 19 APRIL)

Get ready for an interesting month, Aries. December will be full of activity, challenges, and sudden change. It is up to you whether this is for better or worse. Make the most of December by turning a challenge into an opportunity.

♉ *Taurus*

(20 APRIL - 20 MAY)

This month is all about control for you, Taurus. You will experience lots of 'pushes and pulls'. Reflect on different areas in your life, from your finances to relationships: do not get pushed or pulled too far in one direction. Stay in control.

♊ *Gemini*

(21 MAY - 20 JUNE)

As per-usual for Geminis, this month comes in a set of two. The first half of the month will be full of adversity. The second half, however, will be very favourable regarding your health and career. Try to safeguard these aspects in the month's beginning so you can reap the rewards in the second half of December.

♋ *Cancer*

(21 JUNE - 22 JULY)

Cancer, this month is about taking time. Take time to reflect on your stresses and contemplate the things that you have been putting off. Remember, this is not always negative. Things will turn out how they are supposed to. The previous month for you was full of inward battles – you are now victorious.

♌ *Leo*

(23 JULY - 22 AUGUST)

This month comes with a promise and a lesson. Firstly, inspiration and great ideas are coming your way. Try manifesting into a late-night study session. Also, remember that those who annoy you are on their path. Take time to reconcile with others.

♍ *Virgo*

(23 AUGUST - 22 SEPTEMBER)

December suggests a new chapter for you. Loose ends in your life are tied: maybe, a feud or relationship has come to a close. You will find peace this month. Get ready to turn a page.

December 2022

♎ *Libra*

(23 SEPTEMBER - 22 OCTOBER)

Personal and non-material pursuits are coming your way this month. Make a Spotify playlist, light a candle, and rest. Your month will be about finding peace and reconnecting with friends. You are not alone on this journey.

♏ *Scorpio*

(23 OCTOBER - 21 NOVEMBER)

Stop overloading yourself with responsibility. You are part of many teams in life that you can delegate. At the end of the month, be pleased with your decisions, even if you feel you did not always make the right ones.

♐ *Sagittarius*

(22 NOVEMBER - 21 DECEMBER)

Happy Sagittarius season. 2022 has been difficult for you, though extravagance, happiness, and joy are coming your way in December. Do not let this overtake you – keep those impulses in check and remember to show your appreciation to others.

♑ *Capricorn*

(21 DECEMBER - 20 JANUARY)

Sometimes, for you Capricorn, reflecting on the month gives you a sense of newfound freedom. Or it does the opposite and reveals the loneliness in your life. Be yourself. By embracing who you are, you will begin to see yourself in a new light.

♒ *Aquarius*

(21 JANUARY - 18 FEBRUARY)

Breathe, Aquarius. Your month needs equal amounts of moderation and care for others. Please, put your Oxygen mask on before helping others with theirs...

♓ *Pisces*

(19 FEBRUARY - 20 MARCH)

Revisit the issues that have been troubling you for a while. Do not fall too deep: you can not escape if you are too deep into the ground. December could be a tough month for you. Searching for what you need is always challenging – own it and don't let it be.

Acknowledgements

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