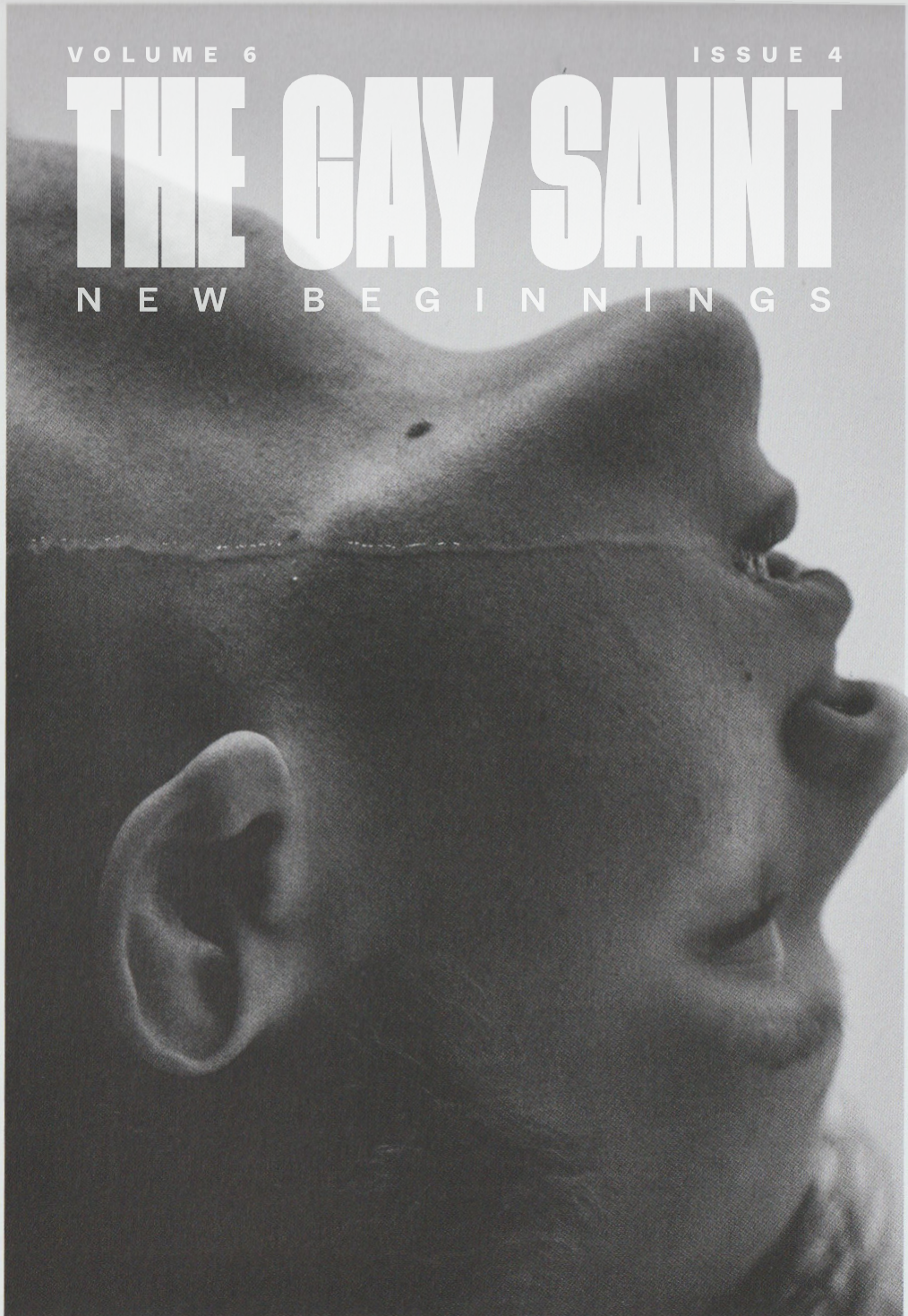


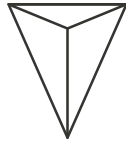
VOLUME 6

ISSUE 4

THE GAY SAINT

NEW BEGINNINGS





New Beginnings

***The Gay Saint
Volume 6 Issue 4***

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A Subcommittee of
the University
of St Andrews Students'
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Foreword

**Written by Jack Travers
(he/him), Editor-in-Chief**

Winter break is often a tricky one for many of us. University gives us a space to be our authentic selves in a safe and friendly space. Unfortunately for many LGBTQ+ people, being home over the break deprives us of that safe space, and the ability to feel unashamed about who we are and who we love. Whether it be forced time with unsupportive family, THAT family member with all the problematic views, the struggles of a long distance relationship, or the feelings of isolation and loneliness that can come over the holidays, town is often a safe haven to come back to. To friends, near and far, our community and the supportive family member(s), thank you for being there for us. As we trickle back to town, and St Andrews regains the hustle and bustle of university life, take a moment to breathe and focus on yourself, and make that new beginning this semester. Whether it be a resolution, an intention, or a bucket list of things you want to do this semester, you can do it!

I'll write the first one for you: pick up a copy of *The Gay Saint!* *tick* See? You're on a roll!

This edition of *The Gay Saint* marks a new beginning. As we enter 2023, *New Beginnings* reflects on the past, and

looks forward into the future, with all our hopes, dreams and fears, as a community.

Brigid Rawdon's article *Progress Towards a Solution: 5 People Cured of HIV* embodies our hope as a queer community in the fight against HIV worldwide, and the immense progress being made in our lifetimes. It also asks us to recall and remember the lives which have been taken by AIDS. Looking forward in hope, Ishani Khemka's *Drag in The Saffron Land* takes a look at emerging and traditional drag culture in India, the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights and unveils an inherent queerness at the heart of Indian dance culture. This article is a must read, showing the power and beauty of drag. Dheirya Sonecha takes a look at the Ancient World with the Gods of Beginnings and Endings in his history piece, and Kamilya gives us a refresher on feeling safe and sexy in their sexual health article.

New Beginnings is packed with creative writing talent; M. J. M. Norwood's *New Stars* shows there are no limits on where love can be found, with their sci-fi love story taking place on an intergalactic transfer station in the middle of nowhere. Tina's poem *i am yet to meet you, but i wish you the best* captures new beginnings as we look out into

the unknown, with all the hope of meeting our people this year. This is accompanied by poetry on the themes of love, relationships, grief, self-identity, gender, and change in ourselves and the world around us. Logan Sibbald's creative writing piece *False Start* highlights our struggles, as well as the planet's this New Year, making the same pledge it makes each year - 'to return next spring, scared yet whole', one which we too often make.

We have your future covered with our horoscopes, as well as some tunes for the month with *Caroline Polachek - Through the Eras - Your Newest Musical Obsession* written by Jack Kennedy. If you're aiming to read more this year, S. Joy has reviewed *The Mermaid the Witch and the Sea* by Maggie Tokuda-Hall to get you started. Our Agony Auncle is back with gossip and a double page spread of advice tackling friends to lovers and a (shocking) crush on an IR student! If you're needing some advice, send us your agonies through our Linktree. We hope this edition has something for everyone, and gives you a bit of entertainment, joy, hope, and reflection at the start of this new semester.

From all of us at *The Gay Saint*, have an amazing and beautifully queer 2023!

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HOROSCOPES

LGBTQ+ News

Progress Towards a Solution: Five People Cured of HIV

***Written by Brigid Rawdon
(she/her)***

By 1981, over 330 Americans had been diagnosed with what would later become known as Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV. With little understanding of what caused this illness and how to treat it, by the end of the year roughly half of all patients diagnosed with HIV had died. Because of the lack of knowledge surrounding HIV, most doctors' main course of action was to treat the symptoms brought about by the virus. This included providing antibiotics when a patient would experience significant illness due to their weakened immune system. The issue with this treatment method is that the result is similar to a game of 'Whac-A-Mole' in which doctors constantly struggle to tamp down infections and other maladies caused by HIV while unable to prevent HIV from causing more issues in the future.

Many prominent health agencies were slow to prioritise research on preventing and treating HIV during the early years of the AIDS epidemic. One possible reason for this lack of enthusiasm for HIV research is the fact

that the virus disproportionately impacted socially ostracised groups such as gay men and intravenous drug users. It was not until six years into the AIDS epidemic that the American Food and Drug Administration would approve the use of Zidovudine, also known as AZT, to treat HIV. However, this drug was widely considered inadequate for treating the virus and preventing transmission. Additionally, it came with negative side effects including headaches, ulcers, and insomnia.

It was not until the 2010s, over 30 years after the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, that the modern treatment for HIV was approved in the UK and USA. Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), are drugs that aid a person's immune system in managing the virus and help to prevent a person with HIV from spreading the virus to others. One significant slogan connected to taking PEP is 'Undetectable=Untransmittable' meaning that when a person with HIV obtains an undetectable viral load as a result of taking PEP, that person is unable to sexually transmit HIV to others. However, PEP and PrEP are not cures for HIV. If an individual stops taking their medication, the virus will continue to replicate and possibly lead to AIDS. Additionally, for PrEP to work effectively, it must be taken once per day, which may be difficult for HIV+ people who work long and inconsistent hours or people experiencing homelessness.

Nevertheless, in recent years there have been significant strides towards finding a permanent cure for HIV, even

if only in rare cases. As of December 2022, five individuals are believed to have been cured of HIV using a stem cell transplant. This procedure works by giving a person diagnosed with HIV a stem cell transplant from a donor that has a genetic abnormality that makes them naturally resistant to HIV. When this transplant is successful, a patient's immune system is able to manage HIV without the help of medication such as PEP, effectively 'curing' these patients of the virus. The five patients who have successfully undergone this procedure range are of different sexes, nationalities, and ages. The oldest patient believed to be cured of HIV was 63 at the time of his procedure and was originally diagnosed with HIV in 1988, only a few years after the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. However, while these transplants are a significant step towards curing HIV, they are not a 'one-size-fits-all' solution and have only been used in extreme cases. Many of these patients received stem cell transplants to treat blood cancer and stem cell transplants are not recommended for otherwise healthy HIV+ people. Additionally, there have been many cases in which these transplants have failed to cure patients of their HIV as this treatment is not a magic solution that will eradicate the virus any time soon. Today, there are well over 30 medications used to treat HIV and, as a result, HIV is no longer thought of as the death sentence it was in the 1980s.

Sources:

NBC News, HIV.gov, CDC.gov, MayoClinic.org.

Sex Education

Little LGBTQ+ sex ed corner

Written by Kamilya (she/her)

Only a small percentage of the LGBTQ+ community has access to a good quality sex education while growing up, usually thanks to their parents or the school curriculum. Although the importance of sex education has been acknowledged countless times, its implementation into the normal school curriculum is certainly a slow uphill climb.

We grow up knowing things but not really, learning the majority of our sex education from our friends and the contradictory monstrous giant that is the Internet. Getting first-hand experience in the field feels slightly too late by the time you're an adult, it is automatically assumed that you are up to speed on all things sex-related, and it becomes embarrassing to admit otherwise. The reality is that the number of people who actually know what they're talking about in terms of sex are few and far between. The system turns on its axis and comes back to blame us for the high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the gay community. While it is widely known that men who have sex with men (MSM), are a more vulnerable group for getting STIs, they are not provided with decent sexual education and the tools to protect themselves. They are subsequently punished for this ignorance when it comes to things such as blood donation.

While we wait for sex education to become more readily available to the LGBTQ+ community, here are a couple of definitive answers to questions that I was personally wondering about as a fellow rainbow child at an embarrassingly mature age. Let's all kindly help each other to be more in the know!

1. Males who have sex with males are more likely to encounter sexually transmitted infections. Cases of chlamydia, syphilis and gonorrhoea, and HIV are all on the rise. 1 in 4 men who are HIV positive are unaware of their HIV status, so it is important that all sexually active men are tested on a regular basis. It is recommended to book a full STI screening every three to six months or after changing a sexual partner. Of course, this is also extremely relevant for all sexually active people despite their sex and sexuality.
2. Females who have sex with females are not safe from sexually transmitted infections and it is still important to be tested! Women can catch STIs such as herpes, genital warts and chlamydia while exchanging bodily fluids. Oral sex or using the same hand when touching yourself and then your partner can put one at risk. If both partners are menstruating, there is a higher risk too.
3. Put a new condom on a sex toy for each partner or between penetration of different orifices. Sex toys should be washed with soap and water and some of them can be boiled between sessions.
4. Avoid oral sex if there are any cuts or sores in the mouth or on the lips, or use a dental dam. A dental dam is a latex or a very thin, soft plastic square which can be used to cover the anus or genitals during oral sex.
5. Infections can be passed on by hands, fingers and mutual vulval rubbing. Wash your hands before and after sex.
6. Wear latex gloves and use plenty of water-based lubricant for vaginal or anal fisting.
7. It is important for trans or non-binary folk to find out which screening appointments are the right ones for them. The NHS has developed an information leaflet to make health screening accessible and inclusive for all eligible populations. The leaflet explains who they invite for breast screening, bowel cancer screening, cervical screening and abdominal aortic aneurysm screening. It includes important information about all four screening processes and how to access additional support and advice and is available online.
8. There are asexual people who are more open to the idea of having sex and may be willing to have sex for the benefit of a sexual partner because asexuality exists on a spectrum. Some prefer not to have any type of sexual relationship at all, it is down to the individual.

Stay safe and have consensual sex!

Queer History

Beginnings and Ends

***Written by Dheirya Sonecha
(he/him)***

As humans, our passion for ceremony and circumstance is well manifested in the gods we venerated, none more so than those that signified new beginnings or final ends. Each religion, mayhaps, has its particular divinity in this regard. Hindus have Aditi, the Norse famously had Heimdallr, the Avestan Persians had Gāthā, the Erturians had Culśánś, and so the list continues. The most legendary of these, of course, was the two-headed Roman god, Janus.

Janus, known by many epithets, was the ancient Roman god of beginnings, gates, transitions, time, duality, doorways, passages and endings. He was frequently portrayed as having 2 faces, confronting opposing directions. The calendar month of January is named in his honour, as it is the first month after the winter solstice and of the Roman year. Janus presided over the commencement and conclusion of conflict, and consequently war and

peace. The gates of the Temple of Janus (not truly a temple, as it is habitually titled, but an open enclosure with gates at either end) in Rome, that was named after him, were opened in time of warfare, and closed to commemorate the advent of peace. New Year's Day was consecrated to Janus since it was the first of the new year and of the *kalends* of January. To the Romans, the beginning of anything was an omen for the whole, and thus, a merry feast and exchange of food and a short while of business was the order of the day. Worshipped as the guardian of the gates of heaven, and the initiator of human life, Janus served as a critical deity to the Romans.

The *Rigveda*, the eldest text in Hinduism mentions Aditi as 'two-faced'; much the same as Janus. She is the goddess of numerous aspects of life - past, future and fertility being principal among them. The daughter of one Prajapati (a procreator of human civilisation) i.e. Daksha, and the wife of another i.e. Kashyapa, she is mentioned over 250 times in the *Rigveda* in verses replete with admiration. She is the mother of the more worshipped Devas such as Indra and his court of heaven and Vishnu, the god of preservation. The *Shatapatha Brahmana*, a compendium

of ritual worship, declares that Aditi connotes and is revered to begin and conclude holy ceremonies. Theosophists see her worship as the eternal cyclic re-birth of the same divine essence and wisdom. She is the deity that binds and liberates a person in the myriad vicissitudes of life, as custodian of the universal moral order.

From the example of these two temporal deities, it is easy to infer the mortal allure with turning on new leaves and the auspices of new beginnings, and the importance of knowing every day is not a new one, instead now our resolutions and celebrations are a torch-bearer for age-long traditions.

Sources:

Saturnalia by Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius; *Fasti* by Publius Ovidius Naso; *Naturalis Historia* by Gaius Plinius Secundus; *De Natura Deorum* by Marcus Tullius Cicero; *Ab Urbe Condita* by Titus Livius; *Aeneid* by Publius Vergilius Maro; *Bhagvata Purana* by Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa; *Rigveda* by various authors (traditionally attributed to Ved Vyasa); *Shatapatha Brahmana* by Yagnavalkya.

Book Review

'The Mermaid, the Witch and the Sea' by Maggie Tokuda-Hall

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

Few things are certain in life, but one of them is that pirates, are gay. Something which Maggie Tokuda-Hall has capitalised on within her 2020 novel, *The Mermaid, the Witch and the Sea*. The book follows several different viewpoints, but primarily we see through Florian/Flora and Evelyn, a pirate aboard the Dove and a noble woman seeking passage aboard. The two develop a budding romance which is painfully contested with the knowledge that the Dove is not the merchant vessel the captain claimed, but a pirate vessel intending on selling or murdering its noble passengers. Flora must find a way to save Evelyn without putting their loved ones in the captain's crossfire. The story, through its central and several side characters, allows a pleasant understanding that queer people are a natural part of the complex world that Tokuda-Hall has built. Florian/Flora's gender fluidity is lovingly depicted. At times it is clear that their authorship is not genderfluid herself, but there is nothing woefully incorrect about their portrayal that might insight a feeling of pandering. They simply feel like a character finding themselves within the pages, which is nothing but fitting for the queer experience.

This novel does not make waves with its pirate-y plot and cunning witches. The world is unfortunately restricted within the short space afforded to a deeply considered setting, and at times lore and location explanations can take time away from understanding the characters. Perhaps Tokuda-Hall will expand on the world in its anticipated sequel (release date yet to be announced). But the value of the novel is not lost in spite of this; the fantasy world is still fun and the characters and their relationships are heartwarming to say the least. This is a classic fantasy novel that does not have to force queer people into its pages, but rather has a world that welcomes them easily. As such this is an easy, fun read, ready to cure the lack of representation within the fantasy books of our young adult phases.

Source: Prettyokmaggie.com

Renascentia
BY DAISY PRICE
(SHE/HER)



daisy price

Creative Writing

New Stars

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

There was very little interesting about Hasamelis transfer station. It wasn't near any habitable planets, there weren't any mineable bodies nearby, and the station itself was a rather basic construction. The only thing of note about Hasamelis was that it was at a crossing point for several major transport routes. In fact, the reason Hasamelis existed was because ships needed a place to refuel and restock, and passengers needed to make changeovers.

For the people going through Hasamelis, travelling from planet to planet, it often didn't occur that there might be people who actually lived there. Of course, the station needed manning, mechanics to work on the ships, chefs to run the canteens, cleaners to look after the hostels, gardeners to maintain the greenery that kept the station from being an oppressive metal box, but it rarely occurred to people for whom it was a

transient place that a space station in the middle of nowhere was a hell of a commute.

So, people worked there, which meant that people lived there, and sometimes they fell in love, and started families. There were children born on Hasamelis, and all they knew was the station. They grew up there, went to school there, and got jobs there like their parents. They didn't know what it was like to walk on a planet, under an open sky.

Mona and Fern had been born on Hasamelis and had lived there their whole lives. Mona was a chef in one of the best-regarded eateries on the station. Station food had a reputation for being all dried and preserved, but a surprising amount of fresh fruit and vegetables was grown on Hasamelis, and cooking was as much an art there as anywhere. Fern was a shuttle pilot, responsible for ferrying passengers to and from the big liners that made stopovers at Hasamelis. Fern often took her lunch breaks at the eatery where Mona worked, and Mona had thought Fern looked very dashing in her uniform, so, after several weeks of working up the courage, Mona had

asked Fern on a date, and they became another Hasamelis love story.

When Mona and Fern were approaching their thirties, they took a several-months-long tour of the planets closest to Hasamelis. These planets were not particularly well-known as tourist destinations, but they were new worlds, and for Mona and Fern, who had known nothing but the station, the universe expanded.

When they returned to Hasamelis, their parents saw their enthusiasm, and suggested they move planetside, but that wasn't right for Mona and Fern. If one station wasn't enough, one planet wouldn't be enough either.

So they saved up, and Fern got her ship pilot's licence, and several years later they bought a passenger ship. It was only a small craft, with just ten guest bedrooms, but when Mona and Fern stepped aboard it felt so much bigger than the station. It still needed repairs, and a crew, but it would soon be ready to fly, and take them to countless new worlds, carrying new people. They slept on the ship that first night, in the captains' cabin, and dreamed of an endless universe.

False Start

*Written by Logan Sibbald
(he/him)*

Embedded in a thick slab of ice, the gravel path bore few protrusions. It was very easy to mistake rocks encased below the transparent surface for those above offering grip. I realised this as my legs were swept out from under me, my head jerking upwards to the velvet night sky. On the way down, I thought of dark chocolate – a solid ingot packed with hazelnut chunks, just out of the refrigerator, so hard it could shatter your back molars. I could taste it mid-flight – rusty and saccharine. I thought this was hysterical.

I knew the fall would break my humerus; I began laughing before my elbow had even kissed the ground. On impact – for just a second – the pain was ecstasy, a blinding sugar rush. It numbed my whole left side, blurring the tissues as if the cells were pixels, smudging them to indiscernibility with a perspiring thumb. I felt like a sketch. An animation. Stop motion. In that brief instant, I wasn't real. I wasn't moving. I was just a few loops of graphite on a page, remaining catatonic while my world was drawn for me. When physical dimensions rushed back in, my senselessness was snuffed by

mortality. My body, alone, responded appropriately. I dry-sobbed. Wept without tears, without emotion. It was a complete segregation of mind and corpse. Staring up at the stars, fireworks burst in my periphery, and verses of Auld Lang Syne rang out in the distance. January First.

I recognised this unfortunately timed incident as an omen – a malnourished, moulting corvid sinking its talons into my shoulder for the rest of the year. I felt acutely susceptible to change and chance – my cells responding to the injury by pumping out regenerative, yet potent, chemicals that had never before grazed the delicate surface of a vein.

Once home, I wrapped the bulging, fluid elbow in ice. Of course, this did not ease the pain – probably due to the sheer irony. It must have been like sending a serial killer into the theatre to suture up his own victim.

The following morning saw a trip to A & E. My baggy elbow slumped down on the target stage, despairing as x-rays torched through it. Somehow, the fissure was only minor – just a fracture – it would heal in a sling, in time. But that didn't change the fact that it was my first skeletal break. It felt like a violation, that some impact had sneaked through the flesh and attacked the precious milky white. It

made me think of baby teeth being pulled. I became skittishly aware of my own skeleton – that all my tissues and organs were being held up by a haunting framework, a calcium abomination that would outlive the pinkish suit it hides behind.

On the way home, arm in a frayed cloth, I despaired at my misfortune. Why must a new year commence in the middle of winter? Why commit a further twelve months of life to resolution when the planet is dead? I wished to begin again at the turn of the vernal equinox, upon entering astronomical spring. I wished for recovery at a time when my bones weren't traumatised by frost. I hoped for cotton candy on cherry trees and prayed to Persephone; willed her to rush back with hot, garnet fingertips and flood the fields with pomegranate.

By March of that year, the bone had resealed, with only a subtle dent in the fender of the joint and corroded flexibility indicating any history of damage. By this time, a solar phlebotomist had drawn the green out of the soil – spring had bled back into the earth. Having spent those few months at home, resting, I had seen the world recover. During that period, I observed our planet make the same resolution as it has done every year – to return next spring, scarred yet whole. I make that same promise now too.

Arts & Culture

Drag in The Saffron Land

Written by Ishani Khemka (she/her)

The way I would define Drag as someone who has witnessed it on social media, streaming services, and the occasional drag show I attend, would be an exaggerated display of masculinity, femininity, or essentially anything drag performers *want* to be. It is beautiful, eccentric, over the top and profoundly political. It is both the art of defiance and the comfort of acceptance. The origins of drag, from a western perspective, are credited to the lack of female performers in theatre. Men used to take up women's roles in plays from Ancient Greece to Shakespearean theatre. We can then trace the inception of drag balls organised by the black queer community in early 20th century New York, followed by drag queens protesting against police raids during the Stonewall riots, and the advent of the cultural phenomenon that is *RuPaul's Drag Race*. However, this is not the whole story. I'm here to tell you what you might have missed from this history.

Gender subversion has been a part of Indian culture for an incredibly long time. Dance forms like *Kathakali* and *Kuchipudi* were traditionally performed by men and utilised both feminine and masculine roles. An ancient treatise on dance, the *Natya Shastra*, says that

one's gender or sex cannot limit one's performance. Similar to the West, Indian theatre was also performed solely by men, who took up women's roles and exaggerated their femininity. While the saffron tinted godmen and members of the ruling party deny this gender subversion and queerness as a part of our culture, everything from our myths, to our varied classical dances, to our history is riddled with acceptance and pride. Today, the Indian Film Industry can make movies about trans lives (*Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*; 2021, *Taali*; TBA), and movies that display Indians performing drag at nightclubs (*Tara Vs Bilal*; 2022), something I never imagined I would see. It's not to say that these movies are politically perfect, as being queer has mostly been the butt of the joke in Hindi films, but they're better than anything I've ever seen before.

It would be wrong to say that drag is performed and appreciated solely by members of the LGBTQ+ community. However, it is inherently queer, and it would be hard to provide a context to its emergence without acknowledging queer struggles. Historically, India doesn't have the BEST reputation when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights, but it is a work in progress. I should mention that this hostility towards queerness can be traced back to the colonial era, though some would argue that's getting nitpicky (I promise you, it isn't). For many years post-independence, these colonial laws remained without a second thought until the year 2009, when a non-governmental organisation decided to contest the criminality of same-sex love. After overcoming many hurdles,

in 2018 the Chief Justice moved to decriminalise homosexuality. Only a few years before that in 2014, transgender individuals were for the first time recognised as citizens.

The reason why I believe this type of drag is new is because it's developing in a country where artists don't have to be as afraid as they once did. Drag in India is growing at a time when laws are being passed that allow queer people the freedom of expression, when Delhi is able to hold its first Pride march since the pandemic and have it be more beautiful and colourful than ever, when the film industry, one of the greatest reflections of Indian society, is making movies on this culture. This drag is political, its performances question caste, religious politics, and Hindu nationalism. It is also totally unafraid—something the LGBTQ+ community hasn't felt in this country for a long time. It's new, and it's exciting.

I have a bad habit of being pessimistic when it comes to things like this. The *Bhartiya Janta Party*, and the occasionally ignorant uncle you'll meet on the road, are exceptionally skilled at fuelling hate. But these small shifts in the fabric of our society and this brave community that grows larger every single day gives me hope.

To new beginnings, 2023.

Sources:

BBC, The Quint, LGBTQNation.com, India Times, Asia.Nikkei.com.

Caroline Polachek – Through the Eras – Your Newest Musical Obsession

Written by Jack Kennedy
(they/he)

Opening doors and running through, Caroline Polachek is an ethereal solo artist that you need to be following. From Minions to Charli XCX, Beyoncé through to Tiktok, Polachek continues to flourish and expand an impressive set of artist credits. Releasing this Valentine's Day, Polachek continues to soar with her new album, *Desire, I Want to Turn Into You*.

Polachek's artistry starts with the band *Chairlift* (formed in 2005) that is notable for its rich and outer-body style. Songs like *Amanaemonesia* and *I Belong in Your Arms* pull the listener through the magical and uncanny world which *Chairlift* crafts, whilst the synths of *Bruises* and *Moth to the Flame* create unforgettable sensory experiences. *Crying in Public* creates a surreal and ethereal reaction in the listener. This era of Polachek is defined by its powerful and mystical, almost nonsensical, vocals that you can find deep meaning within. Almost posing a question, Polachek's vocals ask us what we are 'mistaking for magic' alongside exploring what stops us from 'turning away'. Perhaps this is why Apple reached out to create an advert with

Chairlift in 2008 to promote the iPod. Later in 2013, Polachek wrote *No Angel* for Beyoncé's Grammy nominated fifth studio album. Ultimately, this era for Polachek is characterised by *Chairlift's* eclectic and elastic compositions and the beginnings of broader collaboration.

Without *Chairlift*, Polachek worked individually under the moniker of 'Ramona Lisa' to produce *Arcadia* in 2014. In an interview, Polachek described how the process of making this album was entirely different. In place of studio recordings and even external hardware, Polachek created recordings with her laptop whilst on tour in the quiet places of everyday life. The titular song is soft, electronic yet mysterious in its slow dance of 'sun and death'. The pastoral *Backwards & Upwards* encapsulates Polachek's relationship with music as a more experimental track yet with reminiscent vocals from *Chairlift*. The gentle backing vocals and soft melodies of *Dominic and Izzit True What They Tell Me* feel warm and result in an elegant hybrid of more traditional and electronic music. At this stage, Polachek also released instrumental electronic pieces under her initials, CEP, with a similar feel and sound.

Working with Danny L. Harle in 2016 acted as a turning point for Polachek's music style and feel. *Ashes of Love* almost collects different elements from Polachek's different projects into an upbeat and melodic masterpiece. Furthermore, her collaboration with Charli XCX on *Tears* in 2017 not only was a success in pop experimentation but was full of raw emotion that shows at this point, Polachek is not Polachek's next releases then formed her album *Pang* in 2019. *Pang* is

undoubtedly an auditory masterpiece that received critical acclaim in the same year. Polachek describes the feeling of *Pang* as an unexplainable rush of adrenaline that kept her awake. The album captivates this 'sixth sense' feeling thanks to Polachek's artistry and the production of previous collaborator Danny L. Harle and even some influence from A.G. Cook. Highlights from this album include *Pang*, *Ocean of Tears*, *Hey Big Eyes*, *So Hot You're Hurting My Feelings*, *Caroline Shut Up and Door*.

Succeeding *Pang*, Polachek has proven that she is continuing to release powerful music that gives you that 'pang'. Covering *Breathless*, by the Corr's, Polachek's vocals prove sensual in their delivery that also carry through to her collaboration on *La Vita Nuova*. This era of alternate pop is signposted by further collaborations such as on Charli XCX's *New Shapes*, Flume's *Siren's* and even recording a cover of *Bang Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down)* for *Minions: The Rise of Gru*.

Polachek's incoming album includes many of her single releases and boasts formidable producer credits. Working once more with Danny L. Harle and Sega Bodega, Polachek is unstoppable. From a powerful tune that all Polachek fans will know (*Bunny Is A Rider*), to recording a sensational track with melodic youth vocals (*Billions*), through to welcoming us to her album with an almost siren call (*Welcome to My Island*) to a flamenco inspired single describing a warm horizon (*Sunset*), Polachek's evolution is at its peak. Through all of her previous projects, *Desire*, *I Want to Turn Into You*, is reminiscent of so many high-powered elements that Polachek has mastered. Truly, Caroline Polachek's discography is a class act.

Poetry

on the beginning of endings

Written by crm (she/her)

Every new beginning
Starts with an ending
New Year, new me, new plans, new
hopes,
Dreams, desires, fears
Resolutions lit like the flame of a fresh
candle

This particular New Years
We watch the fireworks illuminate the
rain
Pattering softly to puddles by our feet
Each spiral, whirl, glittering jet
Pounding with the toll of the bells

And with each gentle pop in the
moonlit sky
Over the city I love so
The new year dream envelopes me
Each flame reflected in the glass of my
eyes
Sparked then fading
The loss of last years burdens

Fears of coming out to grandparents,
Taking that chance to move abroad,
Telling her I might, maybe, possibly, be
falling for her, at exactly the wrong
moment
Gone with the 12 o'clock bell

Every new beginning
Starts with an ending
Bright, beautiful, unpredictable, and, if
you think about it too much, absolutely
terrifying

But this particular New Years,
I watch the fireworks, heead tilted
skywards, ignite my beginning
Swept into the haze of hopeful
unknown
As the dying embers of last year
Fall at my feet

In a month or two

Written by Sophia Haigh (she/they)

When I wake up the grief is removed. I walk to my classes and the grief is removed. I get off the phone with your brother and I start thinking of figs digesting dead wasps and how you could never really love me from the inside out. Oh, you tried, but we defaulted to the same roles again and again, me – hungry and you – hunger. I think about buying your favourite meal deal for lunch but I'm vegetarian now. How long will I preserve your rituals before they become my own? I am tracing the line between adopted habits and pity, the grief is removed but the guilt still follows me around. You were loveable in the same way wood is flammable – not without cost. I smell burnt toast on the wind and I hope it is you haunting, but I might just be having a stroke.

a perpetual renewal

Written by crm (she/her)

Far in the meadow,
She stirs

Glittering winter frost retreats, old news,
Making way for new beginnings of dew lined grass

She unfurls from soft green blankets, breathes in,
Exhales a sweet, mellow sigh, warming to spring

Reflects on long months past

She yawns deeply
Stretches out delicate limbs

Pale pink in the new sunlight
Preparing for spring, summer, autumn again

Far in the meadow,
A tulip blooms, poised for yet another year

as the tide rolls in

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

I have never experienced peace like
this,
The ocean rolls steadily beneath me,
The music soft in my ears,
The only other sounds to exist in my
solitude is water and the turning of the
pages in my book.

And it is quiet.

I grew up in a house of noise.
Of bellowing and screaming,
Harsh cityscapes and a cramped house
built over once rolling fields,
Car horns and dogs barking
uncontrollable storms.

I prefer it here,
Sitting on a stone pier,
Watching the footprints in the sand
disappear,
Like no one was ever there in the first
place.

I'd like that,
To make no mark on the world,
To have no one know me,
No one remember me.

I'd like to become a ghost,
I would be spectacularly good at
haunting,
Passing through the world like a
whisper,
Like an ocean wave.

Hartley's seedless raspberry jam:

I named myself after a constellation,
Because that's what my body feels like.
Just a cluster of organs and blood and
tissue,
My bones are the only things tying me
to Earth nowadays.

And somewhere this glass jam jar full
of rotten bones,
Feels comfortable in a skirt as well as
trousers,
It's not entirely sure what it wants to
be,
And I'm struggling to find the words to
describe it.

I finally cleaned up my converse
yesterday,
The beaten ones with lyrics and poetry
all over them,
Sprawling ink spiderwebs and dumb
stuff I liked when I was fourteen,
But I've never felt so at peace with my
body than when I put them on.

And it's just a pair of shoes,
And it's just a body,
And it's just a skirt,
And it's just a binder.

But it means everything to me.
This jam jar is a little broken,
And the bones are all spilling on the
floor,
But I can pretend everything is fine for
a little while.

I have never experienced peace like
this,
The ocean rolls steadily beneath me,
The music soft in my ears,
The only other sounds to exist in my
solitude is water and the turning of the
pages in my book.

And it is quiet.

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Harsh cityscapes and a cramped
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This jam jar is a little broken,
And the bones are all spilling on the
floor,
But I can pretend everything is fine for
a little while.

Changes

*Written by Anne McGhee
(she/her/hers)*

The years have faded away my scars of
resentment
And gone are the waves of grief that
crashed along my shore
All my dirty laundry has been cleaned
and put back in the drawers
And if I'm honest, I'm not sure what to
make of my contentment

As I look over at the man lying across
from me in bed
Sleeping contently as if he has no cares
in the world
As I lie on my back and think of the
things I've observed
How I was supposed to hate this man
but love him instead

I can't help but think that the others
would say if they knew
The quiet words and the private
moments we have shared

If they got to bear witness to all of the
love we've declared
If they would be able to see what I do
and marvel at our breakthrough

And it's strange to think about how
angry I used to be
The way that I'd get frustrated over the
little things
How his mere presence felt like it had
clipped my wings
All the feelings and words I shared
before I could finally see

I can still hear my own voice on my
worst days
And I cringe at the mere sound of my
own crying
Screaming at the world, angry at all of
the lying
As understanding of each other saw
many delays

In the end, it only took a few dozen
mutual friends
Serious moments where we had to
trust each other
Giving each other desperate support
in the heat of the summer

Before we were able to finally grow up
and make amends

His jaw dropped at my first apology,
my sudden approach
And the way I had decided to rewrite
the course of our story
The offer for the two of us to work on
undoing our tense history
With both of us feeling that our
actions were cause for self-reproach

And even in those early moments of
my peace offers
I couldn't have possibly predicted what
we would become
The things that we could discover over
the shared glasses of rum
The way he'd make me laugh as I
continued to test the waters

One happy moment led to a million
small others
And I couldn't help but find myself
being pulled in
And the past starts to fade away as
love begins
As strangers turn to friends, and
friends turn to lovers



Super Saints

**Words by Sofia Johnson (she/her)
Photography by Gayle MacIntyre
(she/her) @stgayleshoots**

What is your 'superpower'?

"My superpower is my passion for making the world a better place for LGBTQ+ youth. I want to dedicate my entire life to making sure I have a positive impact on future generations of queer youth. I want my future children and their friends to feel its okay to tell their parents they're gay. To not worry about being rejected, being kicked out of their homes, or worse.

I want to use my privilege to be a visible and prominent transgender woman to inspire those who hurt. I want LGBTQ+ lives to no longer be lives of trauma and shame, but to be lives of happiness, ambition, and love!"

What brought you to St Andrews and how do you hope it will change you as a person?

"I never initially applied to St Andrews. I remember being in my advanced higher English class feeling like I wasn't good enough to apply to somewhere like St Andrews. [...] I got into the university on the gateway to arts program after being invited to an interview. I am really happy St. Andrews has programs like these for students who have contextual reasons as to why their grades aren't outstanding. It's such an important issue to tackle and really highlights how grades don't make a person. I wouldn't be here if the university wasn't giving chances to students like me from working class backgrounds and I believe I have proved why I deserve to be here."

How important is the community to you?

"My first day of university on the 7th September 2018 was also the first day I begun permanently identifying and presenting as the woman I felt inside. I had older, more experienced trans students to go to for advice, for help, for guidance. I had queer students around me that I could become friends with and relate to. In fact, most of my friend group now are LGBTQ+."

Poetry

you don't have to bear it

Written by Andreas (he/him)

call it what you want
—indoctrination—cult mentality—
whatever buzz words you come up with
as you grasp for straws,
chase dandelions in the wind.

perhaps you are right.

perhaps the devil came to me,
and whispered in my ear;
perhaps he showed to me, the
forbidden fruit,
and spoke—
come on, come now,
just one little bite couldn't hurt.

in the end, one little bite
was all it really took.

because it's never just one little bite,
is it?
not really.
it's a second—and a third—
and a fourth,
slightly less tentative
this time.

i could have stayed,
in that world.
i would not have been happy, no.
but it would have been a dull,
intangible

sort of unhappiness—
an ache you don't really know is there
but feel all the same.

i would have borne it,
is what i'm trying to say.
i would have borne it,
and never even dared dream
of something different.

but one little bite is all it really takes.
now i have tasted of the fruit
of good and evil
and good and evil
—joy and suffering
and the difference between—
are indeed what it revealed to me.

yes—
perhaps the devil came to me,
and whispered in my ear:
you see now, all this pain.
you see it now and it only hurts
even more, because
you have glimpsed of
that forbidden knowledge
and you know
that there is a way out,
that there is light
at the end of the tunnel you
did not even realize you
were trapped in and
you can see,
you can see all those people on

the other side, shouting and
waving and beckoning and saying
come on, you can do it,
we believe in you; we did it,
we escaped, we escaped and
you can escape, too;
we were once like you and now
look at us, look at us though
to even do so makes your heart
ache and ache and ache,
because this is the future that
could be yours.
if we did it, so can you.
so can you. so can you.

i did it.
i made my decision and i will make
myself
a new beginning;
be, if you will,
born again
according neither to holy man
nor holy book but to myself and
myself only and
don't you dare say that i
have not taken the thin
and narrow path, for
there is nothing—
nothing—
you could say that has not
hurtled around already,
like an electron,
a thousand million times
inside my head,

and god.

god.

i tried so hard.
can't you see that?
i tried so god damn hard.

so—
perhaps, in the end
you are right:
perhaps i have been lied to,
brainwashed, and
perhaps the devil came to me,
sowing unto my life
his ungodly seeds,
but i can no longer find it
within myself to care
about piety or veracity
or righteousness.

you don't have to bear it, the devil
says.
you don't have to bear it.

i am yet to meet you, but i wish you the best

Written by tina (she/her)

Sometimes i sit
In the dark. By the sea.
And watch the lights across the water. They remind me
Of all the people,
Across the world,
That i have yet to have the pleasure, or displeasure, of
meeting.

When the people i have met move on,
Or begin to build a wall,
Or i feel i can't keep up,
I think of those lights.
Those hundreds of tiny lights across one tiny stretch of
one tiny country.

Those lights,
So bright and twinkly,
So far away they seem otherworldly.
Those lights,
That, if i got close enough,
Could each show me a window into someone else's
world.

Each is a person i am yet to meet.
A story i am yet to hear.
A love i am yet to fall into.
Or fall out of.
A bond i am yet to make and then break all over again.

Each,
Of those hundreds of lights,
Like an open door to my future.
To their future,
Those many people i am yet to know. Maybe,
Those futures are one and the same?

I look for that future,
In those tiny specs of light,
So many miles away.
A bright future,
For those who can and cannot watch the lights with me.

Gaps

Written by Cass Gemmell (she/they/he)

There're so many things I wish to tell you.

Like how many scars I have collected,
And how many tattoos I have gotten to cover them,
How many freckles have dusted my nose in all the summers
you have missed,
All my heartbreaks and tears and nosebleeds.

I wish I could collect it all up and give it to you in a cracked
box,
Pack it all up and let you look through the memory box you
never got to make,
Of all the widest gaps in my life,
You are the cavern,
The wasteland,
The beautiful expanse of space.

Once I thought you were the sun,
And the day you died I thought the sun burnt out
And for six, nearly seven, long years I have lived in abject
coldness,
Hanging onto the moon like I used to hang onto your hand,
And I never saw another sun-rise until now.

Until I forced myself to go outside and breathe,
To let all the dust and the pollen and the rot and the grass fill
my lungs up.
I choked on clean air and felt your ghost evaporate,
And it hurt more than any razor blade that has ever kissed
my skin,
But your soul seems so peaceful now you are with the wind.

I still feel you in the rain and the snow,
In the heavy air of football games and your favourite
perfume,
Your laughter ricochets like church bells when I giggle
because,
We have always been too similar for our own good,
And everyone still says I'm your little replica but I'm not sure
I'll ever feel that way.

No one could have ever compared to you,
And sometimes I feel like I'll always live in your coffin-
shaped shadow,
But I know now that the sun did not burn out and the stars
did not all die,
You did.
But nothing is ever truly gone forever.

I tore myself to pieces for you because I loved you.

Written by Kamilya (she/her)

The I tore myself to pieces for you because I loved you.
I tore myself to pieces for you because I thought you were different. Special. A person of unique circumstance with great potential and big destiny.

You're so intelligent. You have so much experience and so much skill.

I felt poorly matched, like you'd get tired of my dimness being contrasted with your bright light. Like you'd think of me as a bore.

So, I tore myself to pieces for you to equal the match.
Did you finally get tired of me?

Your light stings my eyes; maybe I've been staring at it for too long.

I tore myself to pieces for you because I didn't know any other way.

I thought this was how relationships were supposed to be.
If you're bleeding, I'm bleeding with you.

I'm feeding you with my thin anaemic blood until the end.
It's the last thing I've got to offer. Literally nothing else.

Why isn't it enough?

It's hard to think clearly while bleeding out.

Maybe I have the wrong blood type. Maybe you do.

I tore myself to pieces for you because we are a team, right?

You're my best friend, right? You need me, right? You meant those things, right?

The team is still here but I'm the only player, right.

I tore myself to pieces for you.

Was it stupid? Was it funny? An obvious mistake?

Written words like to have a resolution, an answer, a moral of the story, a full circle.

I like to have that too— so written words are pleasant company.

I can't have things that I like though.

I tore myself to pieces for you because that's life, because it is what it is.

We have to get through things, through the motions.

Numb heavy chest, burdened sick mind, lead limbs.

The only way is forward, but the past keeps calling and taunting me to turn back around, to look at it again and again.

It turns me to stone when I do.

I'm getting a look

Written by Kamilya (she/her)

I'm getting a fascinating look into who I am and who I can be.

Without you.

I was always clear on who I was to you and what my function was by your side.

I was a good partner to you, and you can't deny that.

Positive enough to push through struggles, realistic enough to sense them coming.

Smart enough to be fun to talk with, not smart enough to be competition.

Funny enough to humour struggle, not shining bright enough to take your spot.

Understanding enough to accept you as you are, swallow your entire being

– all the sourness and bitterness, oversalted with tears – without choking and with a smile on my face, yet entertaining enough to call you out on your bullshit from time to time.

It's less boring that way, right?

I'm getting a fascinating look into who I am and who I can become.

I've changed and experienced so fucking much and it's only been a couple of months.

I thought it was you bringing trouble into my life but maybe it was the both of us.

A pair of losers who cannot be left alone. Who bumped into each other and got stuck for a while.

Did I not grow enough when I was with you that it's so apparent now?

I changed and aged and weathered so much with you.

Was that not growth?

Maybe not all of it.

I thought I knew a lot about myself, but I was discovering who I was with you.

I'm getting further and further away from my teens yet the growing pains are stronger.

I'm convoluted, confused, suspended, paused.

I can't decide if I'm betrayed.

My joints are slowly being twisted out of their sockets but I feel freer.

For the first time, I have glimpses of what I want from the future just for myself.

I fucking want something? I have the capacity for that?

What would it feel like to burn with passion?

That's fascinating.

Were you Ancient Greece to my Rome? I thought I was in control.

Ivy Boy

Written by Cass Gemmell (she/they/he)

I am somewhere in between,
Somewhere confused and inherently exhausting,
I like to be called a multitude of names,
but sometimes I just miss my old one.

It's in the way I miss swinging my hair,
And I miss having it in long braids down my back,
And I wish wearing what I wanted without fear,
And sometimes I miss walking without thinking about
how I was presenting.

If gender is a performance,
I am a second grade talent show and there is no script,
Everyone is just playing along because they have to,
Not because they actually believe in it.

My body is a truly twisted thing,
I wish I could take it to pieces and put it back together
again,
With all the right parts this time,
And I would tie it together with strings made of weeds.

Because weeds are beautiful even if they're dead.
Those thick and veiny green stems speak to me from
their graves,
As they're removed from the garden every year,
But they still grow back stronger.

I wish to be ground ivy,
To creep over the ground with an easiness I fear my
body will never find,
For I am poison sumac,
And all I will create is a rash.

Pass the Torch

BY ELYSE EDWARDS
(SHE/THEY)



Agony Auncle

Dear Dear Agony Auncle,

Is it immoral to date an IR student? My friend has been lovelorn for a matter of weeks over an International Relations student, and I'm not a particularly religious person but that kind of relationship seems like a crime against nature. Is this really a red flag, or am I too caught up in my own moral sensitivities?

Signed, Skirts are cool but I'm cooler

Dear Skirts are cool but I'm cooler,

It seems you have quite the predicament on hand, but as an IR student I feel I am the one to help you. A friend crushing on an IR student is one of the hardest inevitabilities of this town and university. There are three realities of this town, you are A.. an IR student, B. know an IR student or C.

your best friend is dating one, that's it, that is this town. But how to handle this? Woe is you. Woe is all of us unfortunately.

Although this is a battle we all must face with pride and courage, we must recognize we are the immoral ones to deny a love like this. If this IR student is nothing but good to your friend, brings them happiness, allows them to experience the world in new and exciting ways, who are you to deny this? Our internal issues with IR students (trust me I am one we all have them) can not stand between love.

How to fight this battle internally? Firstly ask yourselves, what does an IR student do that other majors do not? Are they too talkative? Do they have too much academic work? Do they correct others too much on historical political events? Once you identify this root issue I implore you to think about the other majors that do the same

thing. Every major has those that are talkative, busy, and keen to correct others when wrong. Recognizing these problems in everyone is the beginning of your journey of accepting your friend's crush.

Secondly, ask what would you do if your friend was an IR student themselves. Would you drop them for this? No you would be able to see beyond it, and that is brave of you. So be brave now and see beyond this in your friends' crush.

So encourage your friend to be brave and ask them out. Help them move beyond the lovelorn into the love and begin your tough inner work to move beyond your own negative feelings of IR students.

Sincerely an IR student on this same journey,

Your Agony :(

Dear Agony Uncle,

Help! I'm Aro Ace and have never really thought about pursuing any kind of romantic relationship (I never thought anyone would be interested in me like that, especially when I can't reciprocate romantic attraction) but one of my best friends confessed they have feelings for me! What do I do? I really care about them a lot and I love the idea of a romantic relationship with them but I don't know if they would be into what would basically be a glorified platonic relationship. I also don't know if it would jeopardise our friendship and the dynamic of our current friendship group (up until now we have almost exclusively hung out in a group setting). I also have no idea what our relationship would look like - I have absolutely no models or examples to follow from the media or celebrities or anything like that. Can a relationship between an Aromantic and an Alloromantic work?

Signed, A clueless romantic

Dear Clueless,

Situations like this one are always going to be tricky, as relationships are so often built on shared views of romance and sex. However, they are most keenly built upon friendship, so it won't be impossible. I will implore you to be careful. If you do choose to get into a relationship with your friend, there is a chance that they will struggle to truly understand your non-romantic view of the relationship. Only you can choose to stand up for yourself and set boundaries. As well, backing yourself in a situation like this can become hard to do when you are aware that your friend's emotions are at stake.

I think it is important to ask yourself why you want this relationship; is the romantic pleasure that you will give the other person genuinely what motivates you, or is there something else at work? Make sure it is a healthy motivation, whatever that might mean for you. While it is hard having no models of similar relationships, the media has a terrible habit of showing romance as synonymous with fulfilment. In reality, friendships and a good internal relationship are all we really need to feel loved. Look for models in your real-life friendships that you think could offer you that same feeling of long-term happiness.

Speaking on friendships, please remember that your group is just a complex web of individual relationships. One of the strands becoming romantic shouldn't alter the entire web.

I would suggest, as I often do, a great deal of communication. Decide and express what you want and need. Establish boundaries for what you are comfortable with in terms of sexual and romantic contact. There is often compromise in long-term relationships, but no one should be compromising their comfort. Ask them to do the same; what would they want the relationship to look like? What are their needs? Ask them to understand how a relationship might be different with you. Ask them, and this is important, to understand that just because your feelings are different from theirs, doesn't mean that you don't have real and important love for them. I think that it is likely that the success of the relationship depends upon your friend's definition of romantic love and attraction. Their definition and its alignment with your comfort in fulfilling it, is likely what will show you if this will work.

Wishing you much strength and happiness,

Your Uncle

Written by Jack
Kennedy (they/he)

HOROSCOPES

♈ *Aries*

(21 MARCH - 19 APRIL)

Face your fears, Aries. Have difficult conversations with yourself and others. The tough act is getting a little stale.

♉ *Taurus*

(20 APRIL - 20 MAY)

Taurus, you need to stop and think — is every decision you make the right one for you? Harness your confidence and be your own cheerleader.

♊ *Gemini*

(21 MAY - 20 JUNE)

February is a month of pursuit and commitment for you, Gemini. You will look back on this month and be thankful that you chose not to give up. Continue to blaze new trails but don't forget who you are.

♋ *Cancer*

(21 JUNE - 22 JULY)

Appreciate the beauty in the world around you this month, Cancer. Your life is magical and full of surprises. Recognise, reveal, and release all your past baggage.

♌ **Leo**

(23 JULY - 22 AUGUST)

Leo, February is your time to evolve. Reflect on your lowest lows and transform that energy into focussing on making your highest highs. Flourish your successes.

♍ **Virgo**

(23 AUGUST - 22 SEPTEMBER)

Redefine your goals this month, Virgo. Your expectations were incorrect. You gave it your all but seemingly missed your mark. That is okay — sometimes, machines just need recalibrating...

♎ **Libra**

(23 SEPTEMBER - 22 OCTOBER)

Don't go to school, Libra, break the rules! This February is about fulfilling expectations and being your authentic self. Be the baddest.

♏ **Scorpio**

(23 OCTOBER - 21 NOVEMBER)

Oh dear, Scorpio. It has happened again. You have taken up far too many commitments and can't seem to get your head around any of them. Take a step back and plan. Positive energy is coming your way soon.

♐ **Sagittarius**

(22 NOVEMBER - 21 DECEMBER)

Sagittarius, it is time to let your impulse run wild. Whether you're having a night out or night in, treat yourself. Go full throttle and live your truth in February.

♑ **Capricorn**

(21 DECEMBER - 20 JANUARY)

Capricorn, you must remember that you are growing into your true self. Whether you're a moth or a butterfly, you write your narrative. Stay focussed.

♒ **Aquarius**

(21 JANUARY - 18 FEBRUARY)

February is a fulfilling month for you, Aquarius. You're high voltage, full of constructive energy, and making all the right choices. Thrive.

♓ **Pisces**

(19 FEBRUARY - 20 MARCH)

Pisces, the truth plays a significant role for you this month. Whether you are looking for it or not, by remaining true to yourself or appreciating new truths, you are eradicating self-doubt in every step. Be excited for the version of yourself that is to come.

