



AN ANTHOLOGY...

◆ A WORK IN PROGRESS ◆

*A collection of writings from young
LGBT people, with a special focus on
exploring and expressing gender identity.*



Shalln Irving
KIS

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BODILY SACRAMENTS

• *Ellen Sarah* •

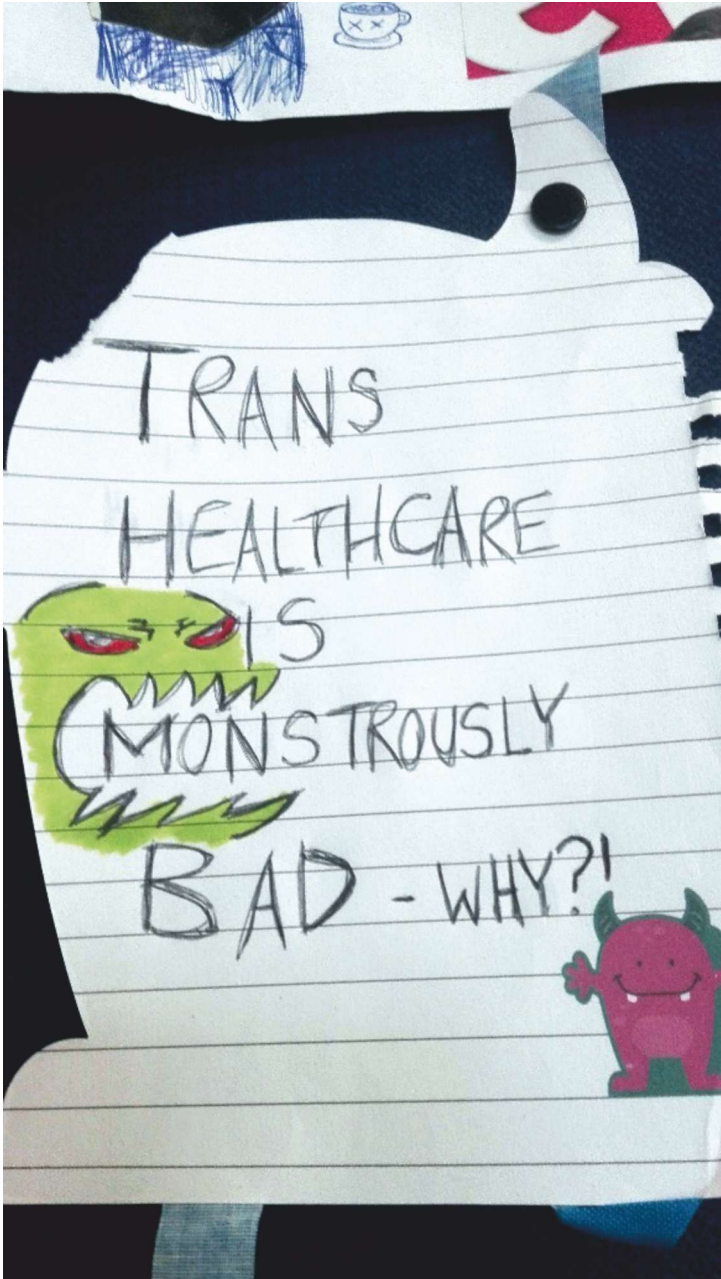
Bath water so hot it turns flesh red
a second baptism to remind me to feel
breathe in steam and fragrant smoke
anoint my skin with perfume
my neck my wrists my navel
behind my knees and ears
and ask myself:
who is it all for anyway?
my hands spread sticky sweet chrism
up to the flat space on my chest
these are visible rites of reconciliation
expressing love without anathema
drip talc onto my stomach
remember you are dust and
unto dust you shall return
pronouns on my tongue are a holy eucharist
and I won't swallow them
the tomb is not dark or empty

and I am not empty within it
push back my cuticles
and bite the skin from my fingers
for my flesh is true food
my blood is true drink
I'm making a covenant with my body
to receive myself anew
and to welcome myself back

MONSTROUSLY BAD

• Patricia Johnston •

I've been in this waiting room for a week now. After my referral went through, I sprinted home to get my supplies. I'd been planning ahead. A rucksack filled with rations, water, blankets and clothes. If you miss the announcement for your first appointment, you're put back on the waiting list. If you're late by even a minute? That's right, back on the waiting list. They don't send letters. No emails or phone calls either. Not even a fax. Every now and then, a doctor will pace through the waiting room with a clipboard. They'll give you a special sign when it's your turn. No one knows what this sign is. If you stand up at the wrong, that's it. Back on the waiting list. After almost a month, I got the sign. The doctor stared down at me from behind her clipboard, her expression a mixture of condescension and disgust. I didn't have time to grab my belongings, so I left them behind and silently followed her to the treatment room. She stood by the open door. Beyond the threshold was a pit full of gnashing teeth and claws, bloodshot eyes and slithering scales. My first and last appointment.



TSUNAMI IN A POND

• nyx n •

Patches of cloud rolling across the grass,
daisies and daffodils,
gentle sunshine warming skin,
a pleasant lethargy;
there are so many lovely sights here,

(I am worried about everything and my mind is clouded by dread and I feel an impending sense of doom looming that could take over at any moment though I can't pinpoint exactly what has caused it today and if you were to walk past and see me sitting on a bench you would think there was nothing wrong with me and even I'm not really sure what's wrong with me but I am constantly fighting against the tide of my own thoughts and right now is no different and I just hope this wave passes as quickly as possible. please.)

COMING OUT

• *Anonymous* •

I came out in a very Jane Austen way: by writing a letter. Well, that's not strictly true. I came out to a friend of mine first, who had moved to America, and whom I shared all my anxieties with. They encouraged me to tell the truth. And that is what I aimed to do.

I had been lying to myself for a very long time, and this where I found myself at the most terrible of impasses: I needed to tell someone, but who could I tell?

I lived under the same roof as a man who thought that Hitler had the right idea what to do with people like me, and who still, to this day, expresses that opinion, and a brother who said that I should never 'feel transgender'. So, today I am glad that I live amongst such an 'adoring family'.

But I sought to come out in the most honest way I knew: I was going to write it.

As a novelist, the best things I have done has been through my writing, and it has since then got better, expanded, and I now write stories of LGBT persons of all kinds; and this is what I intended. I would speak through the words of my pen, for they were the mightiest I knew. I would tell my story to my mother—the woman I could trust most in my family.

I wrote draft after draft, trying to find the right words. I couldn't in most of them (the drafts, I mean). Even when I was trying to come out the words had to be perfect. Those drafts were stilted, had no flavour, and weren't honest. As I wrote the inner critic was still screaming at me.

'Not good enough,' it would say, 'not enough words. Not honest enough.' But I finally came across the right words, and I let them tumble from my brain, down my arm and through my pen. The words were cutting hieroglyphs into the paper, marked for all time the words that would condemn me, or liberate me. And I would be determined that they would liberate me.

I signed my name and waited.

And it seemed that Providence—whatever that is—determined that I would wait no longer.

My dog, then a young pup, had come to see me and in his naughty stages would steal pieces of paper from me. And he took the folded letter and tried to eat it. I cried out and followed him and snatched it from him. I had to redraft, but I knew all the words I had written, so it was no trial to rewrite. The labour was like before, though.

It was time; I could not hide any longer. I had to tell her now; I had to give the letter to my mother.

And I handed to her, and she read it in my presence. I grew anxious, I was scared.

She was crying.

Would she strike me? Would she embrace me? I didn't know. I was so uncertain of her and her mood that I didn't know what I was to expect. But she threw her arms around me, sobbing, telling me that she had always known but wanted me to tell her myself.

I too cried. And we cried together. She had accepted me. But my father was another story. Don't get me wrong. He had always known. But there is only so far he will go to accept things. This, from a man who said that Hitler had the right idea for people like me, and who is unashamed to admit that was what he said. How could I tell him?

But tell him I did some months later.

My mother made me tell him, in the midst of an argument she had with him. I wasn't happy that she forced me to tell him at that time, as ammunition to her argument. Coming out should never be ammunition to anyone, but a liberation, breaking of the chains and the freedom to run free in the great plains of Being.

And so now, I write stories of LGBT. I write in all genres. And I write as honestly as I can, with the knowledge I have in my heart. I want to give people the comfort and that someone is listening, that they have a retreat, even if it is fiction. They can gain courage to be themselves, overcome any great trouble, and defeat the Dark Power that assails them.

You are not alone.

You are not alone.

You are loved.

So do not squeak like an apologetic mouse; roar like a lion out of pride for who you are and what you are capable of doing for others.

I could do it, so can you!

All good fortune go with you friends.

Now, from these garish screens I vanish now forever with a heartfelt, grateful, respectful, affectionate farewell.

TRUTH

• Ethan Cain •

Pull your oversized sweatshirt down over your hips.
Buy big jeans and sag them down low.
Wear a couple sports bras.
Or a binder that lifts your spirits...
But crushes your ribs.
Don't speak,
Because they'll hear
The little girl that hides in your heart.
Don't tell them you aren't actually a lesbian.
Don't tell them they know you are wrong.
Instead, cry yourself to sleep at night.
Hit your hips every day,
Because one day,
Maybe they'll cave in and disappear.
Press on your chest past where it hurts,
Press until little drops sprout from your eyes
– the only true things your body seems able to produce.
Stay inside for a week once a month,

And pretend you aren't bleeding your heart out.

No.

Tell yourself that eventually you'll bleed out and this will all be over.

Hide from camera,

Say you're too shy,

Say you don't like them.

Take daily showers

Even though you know

They'll never clear off what dirties your body.

Tell yourself this is normal.

Tell yourself everyone feels this way about their bodies!

Self-hate has become the culture anyways,

Right?

Tell them its just an eating disorder,

Tell them you hate how fat you are

Even when you are unhealthily small.

Keep your hands in your pockets

– they're too small and too feminine,

To hide how everything betrays you.

Avoid every mirror because

You know will never see

Anything but darkness.

So, lay in it.

Revel in the black.

Let it tuck you in at night

As you let the little drips

Crawl down your face, pooling the sheets

And when they dry,

Don't wipe away the salt

That they leave behind.

Because these drops are the only true things your body seems
able to produce.

Tell yourself this is the way it's supposed to be.

Stare at the monster in the mirror—

Don't try to rip it apart—

This is your punishment.

But you are strong enough to stand it.

So, crawl into bed, and cry yourself to sleep at night.

Forget you're talkative,

Don't say anything,

You don't know how they'll respond—

You don't need to feel that again.

Hate your second X-chromosome

Because why couldn't it

have lost that second leg?

Hate your brother for having that Y.
Starve yourself,
Because maybe then,
You can at least stay a boy.
Boy is closer to man than woman.
Even though woman is what they'll call you.
"You'll never be a real man" she says.
"You're not going to get one of those stick-on parts"
So, hate yourself because you are not enough of a man.
Everything about you says small,
Says girly,
Says not a man.
You are not enough.
And yet you spill over every shirt,
Every bra,
Every piece of clothing you own.
So, hate yourself
Because you are too much
Of a woman.
Your everything is too feminine.
You are never enough
But always too much.
So, love this hate.

Love the little drops
That spill over your eyelids,
And are caught by the chest
That is not yours.
Hold them close to the chest that is not yours.
Hold them close.
Taste their salt as they
Trickle down your cheek,
Past your lips,
Off your chin.
Feel them tickle,
Even though there is
No laugh left inside of you.
Hold them close.
Hold them close.
Because they are the only
True things your body
Seems able to produce.

CITIZENS' ARREST

• Patricia Johnston •

This was my chance. The justice system had failed completely. They had the entire media on their side, constant programmes and news reports about how fluffy and adorable they are. The public were being brainwashed. I had to show them the truth, no matter what it took. After working my way up the live streaming charts, I was certain most of the country was watching.

I walked through the pitch-black forest, the beam of my headlamp slicing through the darkness like a rapier. They stuck to the shadows, flitting in-between the trees. I screamed a list of their crimes into the forest. I knew they could hear me.

'Murder! Animal cruelty! An all-meat diet!' I could hear the anger in their breathing. I spun my headlamp, stopping them dead in their tracks.

'Scottish grey wolf, your reign of terror is over! This is a citizen's arrest, and you have the right to remain silent!'

OH, BOY: A TRIO OF TRANS VERSE

ZS

A real boy
Stop the bleeding
The familiar ache
Because Pinocchio's got splinters
Wishing on a star
Prove your nose doesn't grow
When you walk into a public toilet
Past the urinals you can't use
And seeing red
The beast finds no beauty
Looking for a way
Jumping through hoops
Rosewater injected
To make you the man
You are
Neverland's rescuing
The lost boys who don't know
They're boys

And remember the ones
Who will never grow up
Crocodiles questioning chromosomes
And blood in the water

+

Here's to the hidden
The nameless and
Missed pronouns
Day to day in disguise
The boys in skirts
Are the ones who truly have the balls
To hide
To survive
The girl buried in a suit
With a mis-match headstone
The reject
Letters of sorry and sorrow
In a world obsessed
With what's between their legs
Who's the real weirdo
The freak of nature
Or nurture their kid to hate themselves
Before they were born

You said 'as long as they're healthy

We don't care'

So why do you?

+

Keep walking keep walking

It's a long, slow road

But it's the only way

For own-brand boys

Who can't afford

Private healthcare

Head down keep walking

Words thrown along the way

If you're lucky

That's all from the rioting patriots

Of perverting privacy

Hope for rights before rites

You'll gain scars along the way

And along your chest

Transness on trial

You can tell the whole truth

But they'll still trouble

Cause you to doubt

After decades of denial

You need determination
To determine a diagnosis
Well done
Two
Five
Fifty years
And you're legally you
But the road still goes on.



OPEN BOOK

• *Redel Flores* •

From a young age I knew there was something different about me compared with the other boys I was friends with. I remember having my first 'boy crush' very young, maybe even as young as six years old.

As I grew older it became clear to me that I am gay. I didn't tell my family or talk about it with them. I grew up in a very small and close community and at that time in the Philippines, especially in the more rural areas, LGBT people were not widely accepted. Gay people were often mocked and made fun of and people only thought of LGBT people in the most stereotypical of ways. Although I knew of some other gay people in my community, because of the way I could see they were treated—I didn't want to associate with them as I didn't want others to know that I am gay. Instead I tried to be what I thought of as a 'normal' teenager—having girlfriends and playing basketball with my straight male friends. I also forced myself to get involved with boxing even though I hated it because it pleased my father and again I thought it would make me seem like a 'normal' teenage boy.

Eventually, at the age of 18, I decided to move from the Philippines to Spain. I had some family already living in Spain and I thought it would be an opportunity for a new start and a place where I could live more openly as me. Initially when I arrived in Spain, I didn't find this as easy as I expected. Even though I found Spain to be a country much more open and accepting of LGBT people compared to my rural community back home in the Philippines, I was still around family who I found it hard to come out to.

Slowly I pushed myself out of my comfort zone and one night made my

way to a gay bar only two blocks away from where I was living in Barcelona. That night in the gay bar I saw a familiar face.

It was a distant relative who at that time I didn't know well. He was quick to make his excuses about why he was there—saying he was only there because of gay friends. Over the next few days we talked more, and he told me that actually he himself is gay. At that time, I told him I am also gay and this was the first person I ever came out to. What happened next was a turning point in my life. He started to introduce me to his gay friends. And through them I met more and more gay people. This was the first time I had ever had gay friends. The first time I had socialised and hung out with gay people. It was liberating and it gave me a lot of confidence to start and live my life as the real me.

It wasn't long before I became actively involved in the annual Barcelona gay pride—something that the old me could never have even imagined doing. I no longer felt the need to pretend to be someone else and I was very relieved to stop pretending to have girlfriends!

After several years in Spain I went on holiday back to the Philippines for a visit to see my family and catch up with old friends. I could never have imagined it but I now had the confidence and self-acceptance to tell my oldest friends that I am gay. I was really surprised by their positive and accepting reaction and it made me realise that even though there had been some negative and unaccepting attitudes in that community, with these friends I could have probably always been myself. Not only that, as it turned out, I was not actually the only gay person among all these 'straight' friends.

My family now also all know I am gay. Interestingly with some family members it's not something we have directly discussed or talked about—but that's not because I feel they have any problem with it. Nor is it because it's something I'm unable to talk about with them. I feel it is something we don't even need to talk about because it simply doesn't matter. My mother passed away without us having a conversation about my sexuality but I know she knew and I know she loved

me and accepted me.

Since the day I left the Philippines for Barcelona I've been able to watch on from Europe as the Philippines has totally changed in its attitudes towards LGBT for the better.

WHAT MAKES YOU

• Theo J. •

He wakes. A pair of socks yanked on in haste. Stumbling out of bed, waistband pulled high, too high, papers and books swept off the desk and into a school bag. And so, the curtain rises on the morning number. The mirror looms large in the corner of the room, fierce and unwavering in its assertions while the boy—oh yes, the boy—he dances around it as if it were a sleeping lion. The mirror makes him feel small, and yet all too large. His reflection is more than just flesh clinging to bone, it stands there on the other side of the glass, waiting, leering at him, taunting him, this phantom twisted thing that in all practicality does not yet exist but who has so much power.

What makes you? says the body. The hairs on his legs to the scab on his chin, perhaps the speck of brown in his eyes. His mother's egg which grew him, one in so many miracles of biology that had to happen to draw all of his cells and their sisters, all of the electrons in his brain, every vein and every organ. *Child of the universe* the mirror tells him. But not done—not done, he replies.

This body, he tells the mirror, is not a temple. This body is a construction site. It is in a constant state of being—the noise of the place drills nails in my head. But it is mine, so I kneel to adversity and pain. Here, in the midst of transfiguring limbs, euphoria sounds true like a church bell hailing him come to worship. I am God in the garden of Eden, he says. And so, the music crescendos. He puts his shirt on. Zips his fly. Ties his laces. The curtain falls.

4 THREETWOONE

• nyx n •

Stars will keep on twinkling and burning away, even if you stop looking for them in the sky when it's dark,

green leaves will keep budding on trees in spring, even if you don't lament the brown ones that fell from their places a few months before, and

young birds will keep chirping, trilling and singing their songs, even if you don't remember the melodies of the songs their parents sang before them.

what I'm getting at here is that
life will keep going, even if you stop,

and it will always be there, fresh and abuzz with newness,
when you are ready to start again.



GARLIC CHICKEN

• Patricia Johnston •

I hadn't slept for the past couple of nights. My hands were shaking, and I kept flinching at movement just outside my field of vision. When I did close my eyes, I had horrifying visions of a writhing, feathered mass, with a shriek that sounded like a knife across glass. I needed to eat—perhaps a full stomach would lull me towards sleep.

I struggled to prise open my fridge door, its rubber seal crying out in protest. The shelves were bare except for a single foil container. It'd have to do. I turned it over in my hands. There were drops of water forming on the plastic film, like perspiration. I checked the 'best before' date—everything seemed to be in order. I emptied its contents onto a metal baking tray, which I then fed into the oven's gaping maw. I grimaced at the strong, sour smell that escaped just as I closed the oven door. They must've used a lot of garlic.

I shuffled towards the sofa, deciding that a quick nap was the best entrée. The thought of my dinner cooking in the oven sent me into a satisfied slumber, as if I'd already eaten.

I was awakened by stinging tears. I shot to my feet, choking as my head was thrust into the thick, grey cloud of smoke that swirled around the ceiling. There was the pungent odour of garlic, seeping into all my pores and burning my eyes.

I sprinted to the kitchen. How long had I been asleep? Minutes? Hours? I swatted around me, trying to clear the smoke to get a clear view of the clock. I squinted—surely, I was mistaken. Only fifteen minutes had passed. I picked up the discarded packaging from the counter. The

smoke had loosened the 'best before' label, which fell away to reveal another. Instead of a date it had a series of occult symbols scrawled in black ink. The oven door began to rattle, something throwing itself against the inside.

BREAKING BARRIERS

• *Ash Lees* •

The planet is divided: large cracks separating each and every faction of elemental grounds is the only thing that stops chaos and inter-spatial mingling from taking place. There are four lands; The Fire Space, The Nature Spectrum, Aquatica and Vento Legion, each representing the elements Fire, Nature, Water and Wind, Knowingly. These gaps in the earth are deemed uncrossable so creatures are segregated.

Your average day, The Nature kingdom is thriving. People are gathering, colour tinted skin of reds yellows greens and many others with fluorescent hair, plants of all kinds growing over bodies, vines winding around anywhere they could latch to and eyes that shone like crystals in the sun. They move with elegance, they radiate an ethereal energy, they are plant-kind...

A small, recently weeded boy, thin in structure with vines around his legs and arms, soft green skin with brighter green hair almost as if he were a frail leaf, unknowingly wanders amongst crowds of colour for a time of day that seemed almost programmed into him. The people of this spectrum gather around a large, deep rooted Wysteria Tree. It shone a blinding purple through the land, when first routed you are already aware of the knowledge that this tree? This being? Is your mother, father and guardian.

And this was prayer time, a quiet time.

The twig framed boy was swept with crowds and as the halted found that this atmosphere was... paranormal to him. Managing to escape, he ran across the field of long tall flowers up to his knees until he reached a large hill overlooking this... Appraisal? He found himself bewildered.

Sprouted only moments ago he was rushed into something that he never in a million years would have expected, he turned slowly to take in his surroundings...

Valleys, forests, deep fields and narrow hills. This was his world.

That's when he saw it.

The illuminating crevice that was one side of the worlds divide: the end of The Nature Spectrum and the beginning of The Fire Space. His feet moved before he could command himself, he walked this defeatingly long trail as though he was hypnotised by the blinding gust of heat the area held like a warning... He stared, the reflection of the flames glimmering in his yellow eyes as though it were an independent scar in his vision.

He was compelled. His foot braced the edge and observed the distance when he was interrupted by an abrupt hand on his shoulder.

"Now, now youngling, Come to Wysteria..." A taller woman shone. Her skin tree brown and cracked like old bark, her hair deep sapphire and her eyes a hypnotic green.

The boy looked to her whimsically, she croaked out a soft laugh. "I am Nodrir, Wysteria tells me you are Canvi. Youngling, can't you hear her calling? We must go."

Nodrir took Canvi's hand swiftly and rushed him away from this border.

A yearning for information drove Canvi during this time of worship and to when the period proceeded he quickly set about his pacing, spotting Nodrir again he ran to her calling out her name "Nodrir! Nodrir!!" to which she halted.

"Hello Canvi, did you enjoy Wysteria's speaking?" her tone felt like raspberry coulis sliding off her tongue, which was surprisingly ignored

by Canvi. “The land, this place, what is that sweltering divide? How do I cross to the other side? How do—”

His abundance of questions hit Nodrir all at one to which again, she laughed like vanilla honey. “Oh, sweet Canvi! Did you not hear Wysteria's voice...? Here is what you need... Are you unsure of your position?”

Canvi shook his head.

“Nodrir, I want to be free—”

A silence became on them, Nodrir hesitantly surveyed the surroundings before she spoke a soft word of “come” before leading him far from this middle ground, it felt as though they travelled hours however it was but a minute for someone who knew the lands.

“Canvi.” She spoke sternly. “This isn't behaviour that we encourage in front of Wysteria, do not resent her gift of safety...” she suddenly halted in front of a small cottage and the usual warm expression came to her face. “You will reside with me”

When night dawned and all was quiet, again Canvi found himself pondering the edge, that objectifying heat he'd felt back at the brink, the feeling that came over him as he walked to the edge... It called him: like a voice dawning in his head.

He observed Nodrir for a moment during her slumber and ran as fast as his thin stemmed legs could take him, he ignored crowds of those awake or routing. He had to cross. He had to break the barrier.

He had to feel that feeling again. That strange... Acceptance and longing.

Canvi's feet again carried him to the brink, a cold shiver infecting his body as the heat brushed over him.

He took a few paces back, bent his knees and ran fast for momentum—

he HAD to reach the other side. He jumped. And in absolute fear and regret he began screaming as his body plummeted down. How on this planet did he plan to reach the other side by running?

This was it. When he hit the ground, all was black for Canvi, to which the boy had blacked out.

Canvi's life, however... Did not leave him.

As he opened his eyes he was no longer down this crevice, he awoke to swelteringly hot black grounds as though it was made of coals, he sat, the air here was... Thinner, drops of water disintegrated almost after leaving him as he sweat.

He surveyed...

It couldn't be...

The Fire Space, A dead land of humidity and fire, water poured off Canvi as if it were his life force, he knew that he was at risk out in the open—this was unheard of! This... was new. He embraced it, leaping to his feat he felt his soles hiss, though that quickly was drowned out by the sounds of violent footsteps, a marching that Canvi knew he did not wish to take part in.

So again, Canvi ran, and ran and ran,

Which slowed to a walk, then to a stumble, a crawl, then again... All was black.

Orange, bright orange like a flame flickering in his blurry vision.

He opened his eyes to yet another unfamiliar place, a small shack, its material a deep brown decorated with shelves of... Plants? To his surprise there was an atmosphere here and on the right side of him sat a small orange tinted boy, his hair floating like a flickering flame—with... Mitts on? He held a tub full of a silvery liquid that he'd been dabbing on Canvi only moments ago, he blinked a few times before

opening his mouth, His voice deep and raspy like a jagged rock.

“I... I never thought I'd see you—Err...—Something like you.” Over the walls were sprawled words, mind maps and drawings of someone's aspirations, ideals and dreams of what the world looked like, and what its people looked like.

Canvi opened his mouth to speak but this boy covered his mouth quickly, his eyes beaming with this bewilderment. “No! No, hold on! Spare yourself the words, please! I'm Amor. So many things have washed up from the brink, shells from one side, plants from another, but never a person, never a You...” He spoke with such passion. “Your name, please, can I know it? I have so many questions...”

Canvi opened his mouth to speak, his voice seemed swallowed by that deafening marching sound again, to which Amor closed the small cloth that covered the shack window. “They're here... Speak quietly.”

He shut his mouth for a moment and looked to Amor, nodded then hoarsely let out a small “Canvi... My name is Canvi” before holding his throat tenderly, he was parched.

Amor sprung up. “Water! Do you need some? Stupid—Of course he needs some—he's a plant—Hold on!”

And Amor ran out the shack with a determined look on his face. Canvi took this time to inspect, everything was so different, dust lingered in the air in thick white specks which Canvi feared to inhale. The Fire Spectrum was... Different. Terrifying yet, so exciting, he traced the markings on the walls delicately with his fingers... The Nature Spectrum drawn so bland in comparison to how it truly is.

Canvi took the chalk. He coloured it with his own aura and drew a canvas of blues and purples, pinks and greens. Colours of a Spectrum... In this dark space. Amor came back in and nearly dropped the water in surprise. “What... is that?” his eyes, grey and dull reflected these bright fluorescent markings. Canvi gave a smile. “My home, My spectrum—

and in the middle..." He began drawing a giant purple mark, before he could explain Amor let out a small coo of "Wysteria..."

Canvi snapped to turn at him. "That's right, Wysteria."

Amor seemed to turn sullen. "Here? There's none of that. None of—" His hands motioned to the brightness of things in this room upon Canvi's arrival. "Colour... What I'd give to live in a place like that..."

Canvi took Amor's hands softly with a gentle smile. "Why don't you? Come with me! We can go back to The Spectrum!" Amor met that smile excitably. "What are we waiting for?!"

Suddenly the front door of the shack swung open, a man, dark as obsidian entered with furious eyes. "So, this is where you—What is this?! What... What is the meaning of this?!"

Canvi's hand squeezed Amor's meekly. Amor attempted to stutter out a response but was met with a terrifying call. "A FUGITIVE of all things, Prince Amor?! Guards? Arrest them both!"

"Quick! C'mon!" Amor exclaimed. Keeping his fingers intertwined with Canvi's through the mitten as the bright orange boy and the soft green one ran right through the disgustingly hot coal grounds. Dust trailed at their feet as the an abundance of men stormed after them. They ran around hot magma puddles, Geysir fields and even pools of melted gold that radiated a chemical smell.

Canvi wasn't lasting in this heat. His little leafy body had started to singe and wither away. By the time they'd found himself at the border—his strength had left him. Amor supported his weight by facing him and holding his elbows but clearly the little bloom wasn't doing well...

The men had surrounded them, a general looking at them in disgust. "Amor unhand this... This thing! That is something you may NOT bring home to your father, our leader. Unhand it. NOW."

Amor panicked for a moment, looking at his dreams of the spectrum so far from his reach... yet also clinging desperately to his body to stay up. Canvi was his escape—he wouldn't let him go.

The men closed in. "Amor?! Do you hear me?!"

Amor placed his forehead to Canvi's and shut his eyes adoringly, Canvi looked at him with hints of uncertainty and fear in his eyes, but suddenly felt a wave of... something come over him. He felt ease, shutting his eyes and letting out a weak little smile as they both stood in a radiant of atmosphere.

Canvi and Amor.

A message that roared through the minds of EVERY elemental on the whole planet—regardless of age, gender, status, species.

Canvi Amor.

The two boys leaned slowly over the edge; their smiles wider than the gap between factions.

Canvi Amor.

The bodies of these two plummeted down into the ravine that connected to the cores of the earth.

Canvi Amor.

Those two words sent people into dizzy spirals as a flash of light blinded everyone on this planet.

Canvi And Amor.

Canvi meaning Change.

Amor meaning Love.

As the people of this world's vision came to them, they'd realised

something had changed for good, the cracks that divided them were no longer present.

Canvi Amor

CHANGE LOVE.



LOG FIRE

◆ Patricia Johnston ◆

The gnarled bark looks like the scales of a gargantuan reptile, the black metal a cage. The fire replenishes — I imagine the bark's regrowth, like a lizard's lopped-off tail. Reborn like a phoenix. The warm air from the fireplace brushes my eyebrows. It'd almost be pleasant if my skin wasn't red and angry. The dry, cracking logs are probably in better condition than my skin. I look at the cinders — do they too want to drown themselves in cold aloe Vera?

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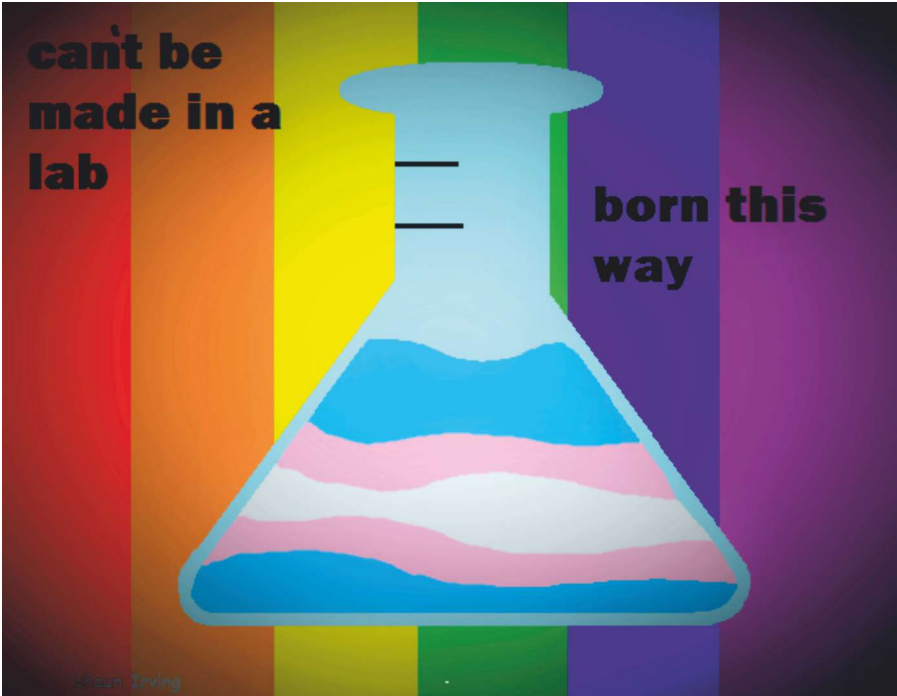
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Shalln Irving ²⁰¹³



Beyond Gender is a youth group for people aged 16-25 who identify as transgender or non-binary, or are questioning or exploring their gender identity.



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