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Preface

“The reason I didn’t know I was queer is because queer people like me didn’t exist in the media” – II.

What is your name, age, and how do you identify? Where did you grow up? What’s your family like? Are you in a relationship? Can you tell me about it? What is your biggest dream? What is the thing you’re most proud of? Most afraid of? What’s your favourite memory? Do you think love exists? How do you know? What does it look like? Have you ever felt uncomfortable in a public space? A private one? Who was your first crush? Have you ever experienced a time when your expectations did not align with what actually happened? Was there ever a time when you felt you had to act a certain way or look a certain way to make people feel more comfortable?

These are questions that, as a Queer person, I have to think twice about before answering. We must constantly assess and monitor the people and places around us, questioning whether or not our identity is acceptable in every space we’re in, to every person we talk to. As a Queer writer, I believe this is partially due to the lack of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) representation and themes in literature, art, film, and the media. This lack of representation is problematic because it isolates LGBTQ+ youth who aren’t aware that people like them exist, and it makes it more difficult to educate heterosexual people who do not have very much interaction with the LGBTQ+ community. As a result, I have decided to put this piece together, where I have created a series of poems based on interviews I conducted with three members of the LGBTQ+ community. Some of the poems solely use the words of the interviews, some are experimental black out poems, and others are free verse poems based on responses to the questions I asked. The free verse poems are generally my interpretation of the responses translated into poetry. In no way is this a representation of the entire LGBTQ+ community, but it is a step in the right direction, and discusses intersections that are often forgotten, like queer women of colour or those who refuse to identify with any label at all.

Identity

I.

[REDACTED] Carla, [REDACTED]
19, [REDACTED]
I guess [REDACTED] gay [REDACTED]

II.

Okay, so, wait, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Okay, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Becca [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Queer / Bisexual [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] 19 [REDACTED]

III.

[REDACTED] Marisa [REDACTED]
20 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Queer. [REDACTED]

Relationships

I.

I am, yes.

II.

Um, no

III.

I am in a relationship
with a girl named Carla.

Memories

II.

Remember when
we camped out on the countryside
and you led me blindfolded through
an overgrown trail. And

when I tripped on that branch
running away from home, you picked
me up and found some clearing hiding
behind a hole in the trees. I think it was

carpeted in blue bells
that we fell asleep in the middle
of the field, and I think I forgot what it felt
like to go home.

III.

I left a rock by your doorstep
when you weren't looking. I found
it at the beach hiding beneath the muggy
shore of Lake Ontario. It took a nap in my pink
bucket that I dropped on the way here,
and I was going to keep it with my other
dinosaur eggs, but it looked
like your name was scratched into that chip
on the bottom, so I thought I'd sneak over here
and leave it in your garden.

Love

1/3: "Do you think that love exists?"

I.

Yes

II.

Yeah.

Yeah,

for sure.

III.

I do think love exists

2/3: "How do you know?"

I.

I'm in it. this
relationship
this is what people
are talking about.

II.

I've felt it. but I felt
not in the way I want friends
different types of love
I love so much just as deep
I was
caught up and swept away.

III.

love things, people, over time love
changes in love
out of love you
still love it.

3/3: "What does it look like?"

I.

This morning I rolled over and you
were staring, eyes like fish
hooks caught between bed sheets, beneath
heavy lids
I memorized your freckles, the ones
beside your left eyebrow, tracing your
cheekbones like
a perforated map.

III.

I found myself hiking through your memories
again like a forest, losing
myself in the oak and branches, getting
caught in spider webs and white picket
fences or the way your eyes light up
when you think about spaghetti, and I can't
help but think of the way your hair must
have curled as a child, or what it felt like when
you lost your first tooth, and when I
finally reach the clearing, you reach out your hand
and pull me back in.

Fears

I.

Your hand brushes mine
in a busy subway station, and beneath the lull
of rusty tracks, my lips whisper
to you, trapped
behind tarnishing teeth. You lean in
to kiss me, a pregnant space between us, but my sister
calls. She calls
to me from climbing stairs, so you place one hand
on my shoulder and the other
on my concrete back as your voice
sweeps into the wind with the rushing train.

II.

Trapped in a circle of skysrise
buildings, your muggy eyes leer over
me. Spiteful winds yell at the way
the murmur in my chest grows silent,
quietly drilling through my skin, past
my rib cage, and down my spine, but my voice
reverberates off of concrete walls, screaming
that I am not
afraid, I promise I am not
afraid.

III.

Your bodies enclose me like a picket
fence or cell bars or barbed
wires and I know that even though your eyes
are closed your pupils burn through your lids, through
the air, through me. I feel you
beneath my fingernails digging
deeper even though I pulled you out with the pair of
pliers I keep in my back pocket. You sit on
the table in front of me, waiting
expectantly.

Media

I.

HOLLYWOOD Presents...

“I HAVE SO MANY QUEER FRIENDS THOUGH”

a STEREOTYPICAL production

Director	SOME STRAIGHT GUY
Lesbian Character	PRETTY, STRAIGHT, WHITE FEMALE
Gay Character	PRETTY, STRAIGHT, WHITE MALE
Trans Character	FAMOUS CIS ACTOR
Pansexual Character	DOES NOT EXIST
Asexual Character	WHAT?
Non-binary Character	ALSO WHAT?
Two Spirit	LITERALLY WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT

Knowledge

II.

I should've known that I was Queer
this girl in my class was
so pretty, I just
played it off
And as I grew up, the rhetoric
was very, negative,
so I'd say
you are straight you like guys,
no in between, straight or lesbian for me there was
that's it.
I started realizing that
I
couldn't deny that I was queer in some way

(Dis)comfort

I.

Maybe it was the way you looked at me
like you knew that when I was young I used to make
my Barbies hold hands behind peeling door frames
and when my mom walked in
I'd hide them beneath my bed sheets
like a treasure chest or
my brother's glasses that I stepped on when
I was seven and a half or maybe

II.

it was the way my eyes were like
tangles of sea trash—
plastic six pack bottles dissolved
in mouthfuls and tossed aside
before you looked at them and so you whispered
“you cannot waste
time only yourself”
and I looked at you and smiled and
said “you cannot waste
yourself only time” or maybe

it was the way I carved
the word QUEER into the bottom
of my left shoe like a price
tag when I was sitting on
the greyhound and my
mom asked me what
pansexual means as the old
guy next to me lifted the armrest
and spread out his legs like butter
or maybe

III.

it was the look we shared
after some guy honked at us holding
hands on the street and
I rolled up my sleeves as you looked down and pulled
at the hem of your skirt and I squeezed
your index finger with my thumb
as you whispered
“you cannot waste
yourself only time”

Acceptance

III.

I was dating someone who was also half Asian, all of her friends were Asian, LGBTQ, I felt really accepted included, but in a white space, I was cautious in the middle: I have a close friend who's black and she's treated like shit. we can dissolve hierarchies isolation alienation separation and support each other

Advice

I.

I, you, he, she, it they, we
are
 normal,
are
 human, I feel
so
 much like you,
just
 different.

II.

Dear Outsiders:
I am a pullout couch.
An old ripped green pullout couch that
used to hide in my mother's basement beside
a suitcase of Barbies and monster
trucks, but
I am here, and my cushions are wrinkled,
and my springs have rusted, and the mattress is
hidden, but I am still
here, this part of me is
here.

III.

When you stood in front of me
yesterday at the grocery store down
the street, I
wanted
to rest my head on your shoulder,
pressing my lips against your ears, my
arm clamped around yours. We don't look
so different that way – don't feel
different that way, and so I whispered,
"I know you're afraid, I
am too"