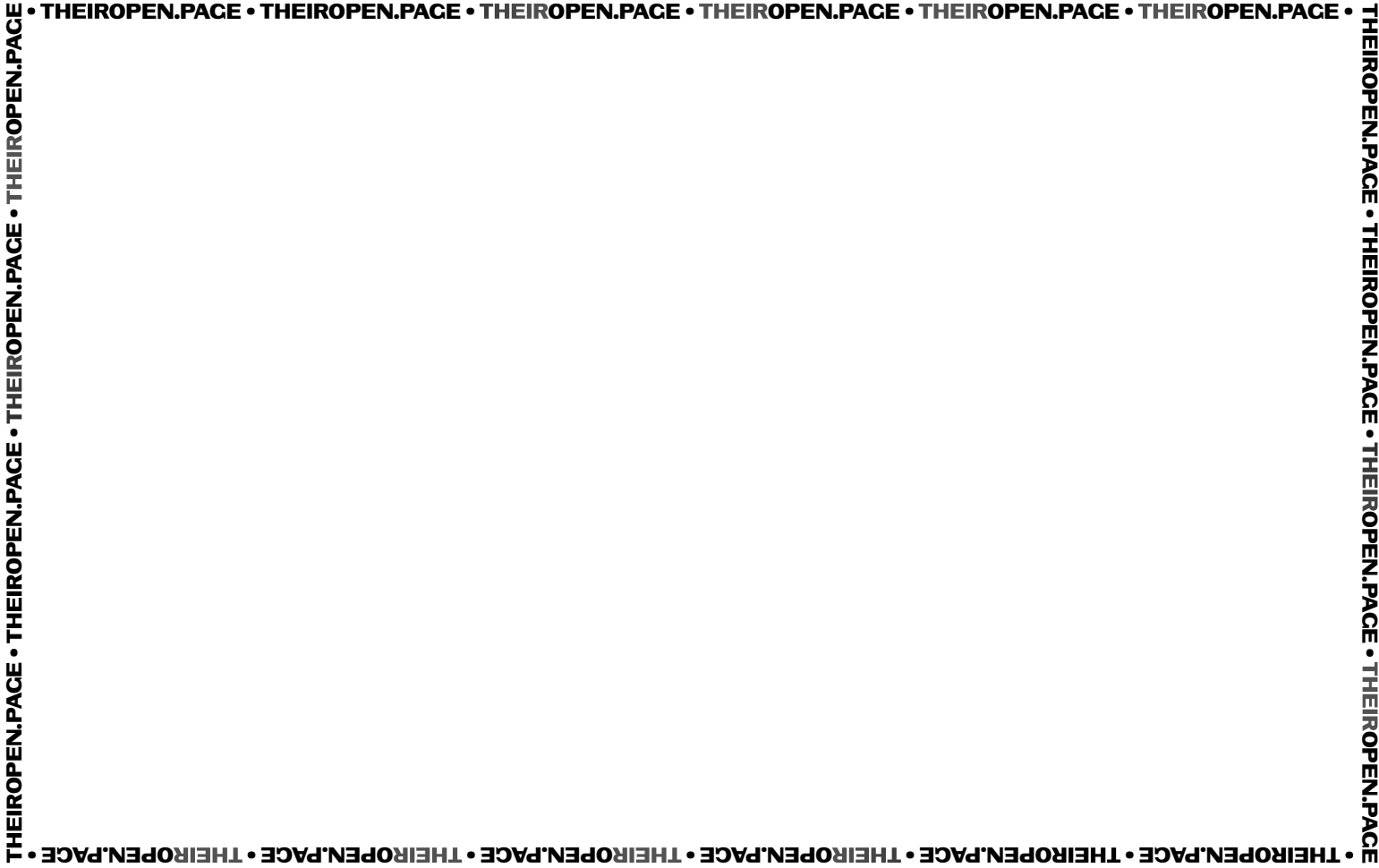




I started this project to give away 21 queer books in 2021.

The stories can be nearly anything people want to share:

- Queer stories have played a huge part in understanding and finding comfort in claiming my queer, trans identity. This project is an opportunity for me to read and share more queer stories, support queer authors, and patronize local independent bookstores.

Thanks for existing!

Booklist 2022

PERFECT RHYTHM

Jae

LAKELORE

Anna-Marie McLemore

OBIE ^{IS} MAN ENOUGH

Schuyler Ballar

ONE LAST STOP

Casey McQuiston

DEFEKT

Nino Cipri

^{THE} MEMORY LIBRARIAN

Janelle Monáe

PAUL TAKES ^{THE} FORM ^{OF A} MORTAL GIRL

Andrea Lawlor

WE ^{ARE} WATCHING ELIZA BRIGHT

A.E. Osworth

BITTER

Akwaeke Emezi

DETRANSITION, BABY

Torrey Peters

SEVERAL PEOPLE ^{ARE} TYPING

Calvin Kasulke

JULIET TAKES ^A BREATH

Gabby Rivera

FUTURE FEELING

Joss Lake

HONEY GIRL

Morgan Rogers

ELATSOE

Darcie Little Badger

^{THE} BODY ^{IS} NOT ^{AN} APOLOGY

Sonya Renee Taylor

LAST NIGHT ^{AT THE} TELEGRAPH CLUB

Malinda Lo

FIERCE FEMMES ^{AND} NOTORIOUS LIARS

Kai Cheng Thom

TOO BRIGHT ^{TO} SEE

Kyle Lukoff

ALL SYSTEMS RED

Martha Wells

MAN ALIVE

Thomas Page McBee

EIGHT KINKY NIGHTS

Xan West

Not
Out

a sudden, encroaching quiet wakes me
the clothes dryer, my snoring partner, and
the podcast I was playing to drown out the other two
all have ceased their ramblings
three distractions from the din of despair in my mind

a door slams in the hallway
I know dawn is distant
darkness lingers beyond the curtains of my room

the creatures I love are stirred, provoked by the quiet
sensing my attention may be available
my boy comes to step on my face
I cover my soft eyes with my hand
I experience the sensation of both my hand and my face
feeling as though they are too small

the words of this poem loop over and over in my mind
by the time I get out of bed to record them
the first lines have slipped from my grasp
what I have written down will never be as good
as what I composed with my eyes shut
only wanting to be asleep

8:50AM

light drifts past the curtains of my room
the UV rays threatening to lyse my despair
succeeding only in harpooning my sleep

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Entering My Thrive Era Tori

I just moved to a new city for the very first time.

New city, new job, new gender (lol).

It's been a big year for me.

I graduated from my second degree and am finally able to strive for the

vegan diet I've always wanted now that I live alone.

I started testosterone and read more books this year for fun.

I travelled and slept in.

This is the start of a new chapter for me.

It's scary, but it's exciting.

me whole but you definitely helped me find my missing parts. I spent years praying to someone who I imagined hated me, yearning for the broken pieces of myself to be washed away so I could have the eternal favour of heaven.

"You're not broken," you whispered through the phone after our second date.

This may not be eternal, but I'll have you as long as you let me. This love, this simple life... this is the heaven I had been searching for.

Untitled J.S.

When I came out to my best friend in high school, she didn't talk to me for 2 days. She came around and she and her family were incredibly supportive, especially in a time when my parents were more hesitant, but that first reaction has stuck with me over the past 6 years. It's made it more difficult for me to speak with others about being trans or making it a big deal, even when I so badly want to. It obviously doesn't have to be one, but it can be. I fell into this trap again recently when I got top surgery in the middle of my final semester of grad school. Though I was living with friends and had a very supportive partner, people still seemed to not know what to say and so didn't say anything and I didn't push it. I've been ruminating on those two experiences and am just thinking a lot about what it means to be supportive and what kind of care I need from the people around me and how to specifically ask for it, even as I try to make everything seem like not a big deal all of the time. Even as I show up for other people's not big deals. I love being trans and I want to build a community where I can fully express that with the people I love.

a simple heaven cin

Rolling over in the morning to meet your sleepy gaze and gently kiss your soft lips is the closest thing to heaven I've ever known. Settling our frozen bodies into each other underneath the cloud-soft comforter, legs intertwined and fingers dancing across torsos. My soft stomach will spill out of the top of my shorts while we hold each other and the thought barely crosses my mind. The air is cold on our noses and it's still summer, but imagining winter in your basement isn't too miserable.

When we do eventually make our way upstairs to make coffee and toast, your selection of spreads never fails to make me giggle. You land on the off-brand Nutella, I choose raspberry jam. I never liked jam before I met you. I never imagined this love was obtainable. I'll spend the rest of my life mystified by the sporadic, adventurous, familiar, kind, patient, fiercely strong love I found at 21.

Basking in the soft, warm sunlight in your sunroom is the second closest thing to heaven I've found. Laid out on a cushion thrown on the floor, listening to you softly strum the nickel-bound strings of your guitar. I forget the words, but I'll hum along. Every time you sing a song you are able to fully make it your own—as if I had never heard the song before it left your lips. Old favourite songs take on bright, new colours, yellows and sunset pinks—you colours.

We'll plan the day and find ourselves on a bus downtown. To say we "planned" is a bit generous, we often wander about and go toward the first thing that catches our eye. Maybe we'll get some lunch in the village, or find a vendor. Walking hand in hand down a busy sidewalk, talking about nothing and everything all at once. A woman on the street stops us and says, "I love your love." So tangible and apparent, even strangers feel our love.

Sometimes I think about all of the memories I have in this city and it perplexes me to think that you'd have similar memories. You've had your own unique experiences in the city I've spent my entire life in. It used to make me sad to think of the times we might have brushed past each other—sat on the same bus, shopped in the same store. We've had 21 years of possibilities but I think we met at the perfect time.

I climb into your bed, soft and familiar. I gently coo in your ear a story from my childhood, and you giggle and share a memory of your own. You have work in the morning so we'll fall asleep early but I don't mind. I don't think you made

Worth a Thousand Words

Namitha

I give you the gift of pausing this moment in time and allowing you to hold on to it for as long as you would like. I place it in the palm of your hand and fold your fingers over it. "Don't shake it like in the song—you have to put it in a warm place." I instruct them with my hands to put it in their back pocket and they continue to play. They strum the vocal chords of this hourglass instrument. Hold its neck firm but gentle around its curve. They always have that one curl that hangs solitary on his forehead when they lean their head down to play. The music floods this room with its sound, and I do not drown for I take a sip every now and then. We both do not say a word, but somehow I hear them say 'I love you' and I mouth it back with my eyes shut like a closed casket. If this moment is my last, so be it. This moment may not last forever, but the memory of it will. The once blank canvas will bleed in colours to recreate the image that my eyes strain to refurbish. They say you will stop time for the ones you love. I'm just glad I have the Polaroid to help me do it.



What did you call me? Abigail Guidry

It goes like this: I was comfortable being called a girl. Then in middle school I started noticing it more and more. WOMEN. The doors always seemed to be yelling at me, but I couldn't quite hear them.

So I stared down the word on my way in, making sure I was going into the right one and the word wouldn't jump away. There was often a jolt of panic, right at the end, that I'd chosen the wrong one and I'd be in the wrong bathroom and everyone would know. The women would notice I was not one of them.

I realized that when they said this word, they meant it to include me, too. Just like any other description they tagged me with, it didn't fit.

It's not that it's a bad word or a bad thing to be. It's not a curse. It's not a judgment at all. It's just another word that doesn't describe me. Just like I couldn't be described as "tall" or "straight sized." Or "straight," for that matter.

"That sounds awful," I remember them saying. I don't even remember who it was I'd described this to, but I'd meant it as a little reminder of a thing we all go through. I remember understanding then that not everything I'd struggled with was universal. That there are people perfectly comfortable and accurately described by the labels they've been handed.

1989 Vexx

His name was Paul. He was into comic books and rap music. He had the biggest goofiest smile. I didn't know I was, non-binary, trans or even in love. It was 1989 and growing up in rural Ontario we didn't have names or understandings for these things. Just don't stand out and don't draw attention to yourself and maybe no one will notice. We started grade 9 together and finished grade 13. We were best friends in the same way historians classify same-sex lovers as roommates. We had sleep overs with mountains of VHS horror movies from Block Buster Video and Sega Genesis games we pooled together. We became mall-rats together and would spend every weekend at the movies or hanging out in the park until the moon was out. When we graduated the two of us drove down to Canada's Wonderland together and rode every rollercoaster a dozen times. The park had just opened and there were a few patrons the whole day. We held hands at one point for a moment. I didn't know what this meant, only that it was important. I felt alive. We ate so much junk food and were so sick. On our way back Paul gave me a gift. He cut the tip off of a Buck's rack his dad had hunted. He drilled a whole through the bone and tied leather twine. I wore that necklace everyday for three years. I wore at school, work, in the shower and slept always touching it to remind remind me of him. After that graduating summer I never saw him again. Years later I'm queer as fuck and a year into transitioning. I guess he was my first love without ever realizing it or maybe I did. I saw his pic once on linkedin after 20 years of not being able to find him. He still has that goofy smile. It was the first thing I recognised. I'd reach out but truth is I want to keep my memories of him the way they were. In some ways it's still 1989.

I am in love with a girl named Clíodhna and sometimes when I run her name through a computer there is a big harsh rectangular question mark in the middle of it, Clí-?-odhna. It pisses me off but I don't want to abandon í, i-with-grave-accent, alt + 0236, hold i-press 6, for the blank incorrect i-no-accent, standard-i, i-with-nothing.

She doesn't call me by my name, which is good, because I don't have one. She calls me swan. She calls me anything she wants. Around her my name is 'swan'. Around her my name is whatever she wants it to be and that is exactly what I want. It means the same thing when she says it in the same way that a million people could say the first name I ever had and it would never mean me. I can't find a name that fits. Everything itches. I've gone through so many. I feel like nobody gets it, except of course Clíodhna.

She's trans. She has not told her parents. She has only told a few people. When she told me I laughed, because I had been falling for her hard and fast and I didn't understand why because I didn't think I liked boys. And I took her hand and I saw that she had clear nail polish on and I squeezed her so hard I thought both our ribcages would crack open and she squeaked her new name in my ear and I yelped "Clíodhna!" because I was just that excited about it, and then she had to coach me through it a few times until I got it right.

She likes poetry and I love poetry. I love the peace of scansion. I love finding the rhythm of words. I don't speak Irish. Clíodhna is semi-fluent but she learned the pronunciation young so she speaks with clarity. She laughs when I tell her about my late-night Wikipedia-Wiktionary-Wikitongues Celtic language adventures, or about how I'm trying to learn a Spanish poem even though I don't speak Spanish either.

Last night we laid on her grey rug and listened to a podcast about a poem called 'Suibhne is wounded, and confesses' (by Seán Hewitt). I nearly fell asleep to the lyric rhythm of Pádraig Ó Tuama's voice but this morning I went to the library and printed out the poem and taped it to my ceiling.

Untitled Anonymous

I asked some queer friends to use he/him pronouns for me. Well, that's not quite true. I told them that my pronouns were she/her and he/him, and one of them asked me if I had a weighted preference. I don't think I would've gone so far as to ask, but *they* asked *me*, and if there's one thing I do well, it's answering direct questions truthfully. So I did.

A couple days later I was hanging out in their backyard. I happened to go in to use the bathroom. Alone in their kitchen, I saw on their fridge, written in dry-erase marker, three sentences about me, using he pronouns.

They were practicing. For me.

It felt so good, painfully good. A good that you can't help but accept, even when you think you don't deserve it. A good you can't predict or explain or deny.

Shrapnel Anonymous lesbian

If a foreign object in the body doesn't pose a risk, it's left in place. Sometimes the surgery to remove it is riskier than just letting it stay where it is. The body has defense mechanisms. It forms capsules of scar tissue around intruders. Sometimes it can even push things out. I had a metal splinter in my arm and my body pushed it out three weeks later.

It's been ten years and still the cruel words of teenage girls remain embedded in my soft tissue. Every time I dig to pull out the pieces, I'm left with a gaping wound. It doesn't heal me like everyone says it will. It only makes me sicker.

Redwork A.

When I started making crafts more seriously four or five years ago, I didn't anticipate that it would lead me to so many connections. I work primarily in fabric crafts, sewing, embroidering, and printing patches, pins, dolls, and small objects. A group for queer youth in my area that I regularly attended brought Dollarama embroidery materials to the shed once and I was immediately smitten. I went from an 'if I must' sewist to someone who spent many a night furiously stitching while streaming a show. These types of crafts were very accessible to me, since not only can you buy basic supplies at Dollarama, but my grandmother, an immigrant, sewed and mended for her whole life, and my mother had inherited a lot from her. I had fabric, needles, buttons, Velcro, quilt batting, and thread at my fingertips, buried in the upstairs closet underneath tall piles of dusty winter blankets. I spent hours a day on my projects, and at this time I was also spending a lot of time at the local trans centre, where people were encouraged to drop in and out. I would go there and take my projects with me. Sometimes I would actively show them off, and sometimes I would just sit there, carrying on conversation while I worked. People often commented on the work I was doing. They would tell me they liked this part or that part, or this colour, or the overall design. It was a real conversation starter, even if I was already conversing. I would take my printed patches there in a little pink folder and ask if people liked the designs or the colour scheme, or even if they wanted to buy them. I wanted to network with the cool trans artist scene in my city, and network I did, learning names and pronouns, carefully cataloguing faces and mediums. I've remembered a lot of them for a long time, even re-meeting or -encountering them as recently as this year! This month, I completed a lidded, insulated, and carabinered cup holder to clip onto my backpack and began planning a purse for occasional use. When I'm working on these things out and about, on a café patio or at school, I still get plenty of interested comments from random strangers. If you're feeling chatty, it's a great way to make new friends!

Something's Fishy **Roxi Nicolussi**

I am a (feminine cisgendered) woman and I love traveling alone. So it was no big deal when I booked a trip to Morocco alone. At least, it was no big deal for me. It was a big deal for everyone that I told I was going alone. Upon arrival I realized how rare and unusual it was to see women traveling alone in Morocco.

When waiting for a bus in Marrakech to get to Essaouira, I saw another woman traveling alone! I spoke to her a little and learned: She went by Bella. She was from Shanghai, China. Her English was not very good, but she was very friendly.

We exchanged numbers for when we would have WiFi and be able to be in contact. She told me that she booked the seat next to her to keep it empty for safety. I wish I had done the same... but that's a story for another time.

Once I arrived in Essaouira, I was walking with a local who was showing me around. We went to the fish market and who do I see? My new friend Bella. Bella says "I buy fish, you come for dinner?" That evening, I oblige. This is so cute! I bring a bottle of wine and arrive at her AirBnB. She has dinner ready and we are chatting away...

I'm eating this fish and I don't know if I'm doing it right. I'm wondering if she has experience eating fish in this format. There are a lot of bones. It's quite small. It's staring at me. To me, it doesn't taste great but, of course, I keep eating it because my new friend made it for me! I also assume it must be a typical Moroccan fish to eat so I want to make the most of the experience. We're chatting away, despite the language barrier, and slowly picking away at this unique fish dish. She seems to be enjoying it. And I'm enjoying the company.

About an hour passes by before she finally says "This fish no taste good. This fish ... really bad. Very gross." We laughed and laughed at the fact that neither of us wanted to address the horrible tasting fish. We threw it away immediately, and that was the beginning of a beautiful international friendship.

We spent the night in my local friend's jewelry shop after hours, and got wine from the black market. She says it was one of the best nights of her life.

Recently, I had a layover in Shanghai and I had the privilege of eating (edible, this time) fish with Bella again.

Every Once in a While **Caoimhín MacGhabhann**

I can see her: she's tall like me, strong like me, but she's not hard like I am—she's soft and gentle, resting somewhere between curvy & thin, and her kindness shows plain on her smooth, beautiful face like the warmth of a sunbeam falling just right on your favorite chair in the wintertime.

Her long & wavy hair is tucked back behind her ears, much like mine was when I was younger, back before age chased so much of it away and spattered the rest in silver. She's happy, content in who she is, and I'm definitely jealous.

Her graceful movements flow like a dancer as she walks boldly, confidently out into the sunlight, carrying only a little smile and a bunch of delicate white flowers arranged just so. I loved to do that, too, on early summer mornings before the heat came down and turned the world into a furnace that wilts the sweet petals before they have a chance to bloom out into their fullness.

I call out to her, and she turns to glance back over her shoulder. A playful little smile cracks the serenity of her cheek, and I just wish so hard that I could hold her and never, ever, let her go.

But, as it always happens, my rough and scarred hands can't reach her, and, as she fades back into the shadows, I feel a tear run down to navigate its way through the tiny forest of stubble on my cheek, and I wish, with all of my heart, that it all could've been different.

Magnetic Fuck [redacted]

it is what she want s
she ache s for his spark
silent anxiety beneath the beauty

Untitled Felix

I'm working at a summer camp right now, and it's my first time going only by my new name. It's so freeing and makes the space even more welcoming. Most people here don't know my old name, which is much nicer than I ever would have imagined. I was so close to just using my old name for camp and dealing with that because it would have felt simpler at the time, but I'm so glad I decided to use my new name here. I hope everyone reading this can be in a similar environment at some point <3



Cedar Point Story

Lotus Lloyd

“You didn’t think I’d pass up a Percy Jackson moment,” you say into her hair. She just laughs and kisses you again. “Let’s grab a bite to eat, I don’t want to miss the sunset.”

.....

Sunset country never disappoints. A magnificent watercolour wash of pinks and blues and violets and orange and yellow and that nothing colour you’re always talking about. The clouds catch the colours— “I wish I could just reach out and grab one” —and you’re both completely enthralled. You breathe deeply into this feeling, one you’ll hang onto for a long time.

“I can’t believe it’s only Friday,” she says quietly, leaning further into your embrace.

“The whole weekend ahead of us.” You smile.

The sunset fades and dusk settles in. You leave them to admire the last glimpse of daylight and run up to grab a couple more beers, your guitar, and your towels, still a little damp from earlier. You rush back down the stone steps, and her voice is so soft as she thanks you for the drink. You sing their favourite songs, your voice ringing through the stillness of the night. The sky deepens to the darkest shade of blue, filling with stars. A new moon; the darkest sky and the brightest stars. The milky way streaks across the sky. And she looks so beautiful sitting there. You sit together in silence, in awe.

.....

“ ... Let’s go skinny dipping.”

“ ... Okay.”

.....

The cool lake water envelops your warm bodies once more, and you could swear you’re the only people in the world. Suspended, floating, infinite.

The day before yesterday I was at Cedar Pointe and I had to stop myself from getting on many rides because they aren’t “suitable for larger riders”. I remember one time maybe in 8th grade going to cedar point and having to get off of a ride I and my friend had waited in line for like 40 minutes because they just wouldn’t fit. On my second trip there I got myself prepared I researched which rides would be too tight, which I would have to walk out of so I could avoid them altogether. When I got there I was doing good, but there was this one ride, Mayhem something, that I really wanted to reach for. I was told that there was a tester seat before the actual ride so I thought that I would be able to try before I was at the seat. I also believed that because I saw people who were larger than me riding that I had a good chance. I was wrong. I had to walk up without my glasses because the ride was supposedly so intense that they would fall off, so I didn’t see that there was no tester seat, and when I was hustled to the front and onto a seat, I had to try to buckle my seat together. It didn’t work and I was told “that’s as far as it goes” so I had to get off. They wouldn’t let me go through the real exit so I walked back through the line of people waiting to get on. Exhausting and embarrassing. Of course this park which had an American frontier section stocked with a Chik-fil-a and about a 100 people in Trump or sleepy Biden T-shirts wasn’t going to be for my fat Black Trans Queer ass. No seat was intended for my thick thighs and seatbelts made for two could barley accommodate my behind, my chest overwhelmed many front harnesses and my tummy forget it. It felt like the real life implications of an ungended Blackness came to get me then. The white passengers, of a similar weight but of a “more optimal distribution”, who stared at me and my friends in every line had far better luck.

This was a last trip with my elementary-high school friends and my mom. After this one I worried that maybe I’d never go to a place like this with someone ever again. I saw the sign that said no riding after surgery and thought of the few I assumed I’d be in perpetual recovery from. I also worried that maybe I’d never want to go to a place like this again. They were fine to me but this park opened in 1870 about 5 years after Black people made into chattel were freed from slavery but then were sent to jails, ghettos, and back to farms had some energy that felt unfriendly. Ain’t no way they let Black people in here until the late 1970’s. But all others seemed to be happy or at least fine with the celebration featured on signs and refillable cups. I had more questions than answers. I don’t think I will return, fine park 3.5 stars.

Love Drunk Mae

::My First Love::

The summer after my first year of college I discovered booze. I also discovered girls.

The first time I saw two girls kiss, I spent days obsessing over it in my diary.

Dear Diary, I think it's just fine when two girls kiss. I want them to be happy.

Dear Diary, Okay, maybe I'd kiss a girl someday if it was like a dare, but that's totally it.

Dear Diary, I'm almost pretty sure I like kissing girls. Like as a fun thing to do at parties. But I would never want to do anything else with them. No. Freaking. Way.

Dear Diary, So there's a slight chance I'd perhaps possibly be interested in whatever comes after kissing with girls (what DOES come next exactly?), but I totally don't want to date one.

This went on for a while. And then I met W and those diary entries got a whole lot more interesting.

Dear Diary, I definitely kissed a girl last night. And it was definitely a solid life choice. I wonder if she likes me?

Dear Diary, It would appear there is a slight chance that I'm a lesbian. Do I need to cut my hair short? Because that's not going to work for me.

Dear Diary, It has become increasingly apparent that W may be a bit unhinged. But I love her. What am I going to do?

Dear Diary, She says she loves me but she says that to lots of people. What does it all even mean?!!?

Dear Diary, She broke my heart. And also some of my stuff. Love sucks.

Turns out you're at least 50% gay, but 100% a terrible judge of character.

Moral of that story? One should choose carefully before embarking on that inaugural voyage into Girtown.

You can feel the anticipation rising in your chest as you get closer, just the last stretch now. Easing on the brakes as you get in town, their face lighting up brighter than the evening sun. You rest their hand on your thigh as you navigate up the hill, around the corner,

"We made it."

.....

You close your eyes and take a deep breath, filling your lungs with the fresh pine air. A few trips up and down the stairs to unpack the car, and you've made it. You've made it.

You're already cracking beers but she's too busy looking at every room in the cottage. Observing and letting her take her time, you find tears in your eyes. Here they are, in this wondrous place, and you're together, you're here together. They see you watching and pull you in for a kiss, wiping your tears away. You smile graciously.

"Let's go swimming."

.....

You rush down to greet the lake, beer and towel in hand. The sun reflecting off her surface shines up at you like a glittery 'welcome here, welcome home'. Your partner doesn't even have time to say anything, as you run off the edge of the dock into the clear, cool water. The lake wraps you in a comforting caress, the soft water a relief against your sticky, hot skin. You savour the feeling against your scalp, gliding beneath the surface. They've already followed you in, and you meet them at the edge of the dock.

"Hold your breath."

And you take her face in your hands and plunge underwater, pulling her lips to your own. You come up to the surface laughing; they bury their face in your chest.

weekend devo sapph

You're frantic.

You started packing too early and now it's almost too late. (The timeline is all in your head, but that's why it's so fucking important). You run around the house in a flurry, grabbing things and crossing them off lists and checking your phone and double-checking your bags and almost forgetting the beer. But you make it. You're on the road two whole minutes ahead of schedule, you can breathe. You silently pray they're ready for you; it would be too much to get upset over, but your stomach is still clenched. You settle into the music, the familiar, comforting drive to your partner's house.

They're already walking out the door as you turn your car around. Her smiling face greets you with a kiss. You feel your nerves settle.

"I'm so excited," she murmurs, still smiling up at you. You can't contain your grin.

"Let me grab those for you."

You don't resist as they help you pack the car, stealing kisses and laughing. She waits expectantly as you find the playlist the two of you curated over beers and a joint the other night. The music fills the car, their hand finds yours, a quick kiss, and you're on your way. This is it.

Singing and conversation take over, your hearts are warm and full. Your favourite song comes on and you roll down the windows, letting the wind rip through your hair and your ears and your mouths as you perform for the highway. You snap their picture before rolling the windows back up, you can't resist. You want to capture every moment. She snatches the bright yellow camera away from you, always laughing, and takes your picture when you're looking at the road ahead. You give in to the feeling.

.....

It will never matter how many times you take this drive, it'll never get old. You watch her in awe as she takes it in. (You wonder who is more in awe of whom or what; perhaps the answer is yes). You point out your favourite spots, tell your backseat childhood stories, she peppers you with questions, you sit in silence.

::My Last First Love::

My last first love is still one of my favorites. G and I had some fabulous times being young and hot. She lost a couple boyfriends because of me and I lost half a tooth because of her and we both almost lost our jobs.

As it turns out, the boyfriends couldn't handle their jealousy and I may have reveled in that just the tiniest little bit. There might have been some talk of special ordering a "Boyfriends Hate Me" t-shirt. I was pretty drunk on my own power (and also on vodka and orange juice sometimes) and it was titillating to watch the boys slink away with their egos shattered. I was probably a terrible person, but we did have a lot of fun.

As far as the tooth, well, it's generally a poor life choice to drink a couple of screwdrivers in rapid succession and then set out to declare your love for a girl, even when you are fairly certain that the interest is reciprocated. It's an even worse idea to set off on this mission in platform shoes and a short skirt, especially when you forget that the curb won't just move out of the way to avoid you running into it. Word of caution—Eating curb never leads to the romantic evening you were hoping for.

Hundreds of dollars in dental work later, someone asked me if it was still worth it to pursue this girl.

I just smiled.

And about the possible job loss, well, she may or may not have been my boss and we may or may not have worked for a company with a strict no fraternizing policy. But I'd be a dirty liar if I didn't tell you that all of that just made it more fun.

Moral of the story? If you can't declare your love soberly, at least declare it far away from concrete.

I Came Out and All It Cost Me Was \$40.48

Ari Conrad Birch

Aftertaste of too-boogie pizza meets
Tongue thick lip lick, yum.

Fans drone while bus idles out the window
It is 26 degrees

Only May but my bedroom traps heat
Like a greenhouse

Greenout

Was the name of the pizza

Tongue in cheek

Tongue tied and tongue tired

For half an hour today I could not speak

Haven't I said enough already?

I am certain I will have to say it all over again

A circular trade of trust—crushed—olive branch

You could construct a wreath with all these half assed attempts

Tell the delivery driver “leave the pizza on the doorstep”

Retrieve the pity party when the zoom call ends

And contemplate never visiting them

here's to bec falleur

Nicté Trujillo (she/her)

I found a lot of answers in writing a fictional story based on the women of my family.
I used a book to ask all the questions I can't get answers to since they have been
long gone and while I haven't been able to finish writing this book and the drafts
haunt me some times, since the first zine came out, many things happened.

I came out to my family and it went well
I met an amazing woman and it went well,
I felt like I was moving upward...
then I got diagnosed with cancer.

I'm going through hell,
I've lost (hopefully temporarily)

my autonomy,

my energy,

my hair,

Pride celebrations and riots,

being able to kiss the girl I like,

being able to see my loved ones without a mask, once again.

And it's hard;

to have felt a glimmer of a good summer

and have it melt between your fingers and hide away.

But your zine gave me such a beautiful poem.

I read it out loud to friends that needed it as much as I did,
and before I knew it, I started reading poetry on the internet,
whenever the chemo side effects allow.

So here's to bec falleur,

and all the drafts I'm sure had to be written to get to 'its possible'.

I'm holding on to the possibility
of a better summer,
next year,
because its possible.

