

# SPAGHETTI PARTY



The Pride Issue

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Curated by Flo Petite & Spencer Thomas.

Layout by Spencer Thomas

# Hello folks!

We're excited to share with you The Pride Issue: the second issue of the Spaghetti Party zine dedicated to showcasing the words, thoughts, and art of those in our local queer community. Hagerstown is small, but we house a lot of amazing people in the LGBTQ+ community, and it continues to grow thanks to places like Hagerstown Hopes and The Spaghetti Party.

I am happy that we have created a space where people from the local queer community can feel safe and openly express themselves. I'm excited to see where this pasta party goes, I've loved watching you all grow; each party I can see a new spark within you that I'm excited to see grow into a fucking giant raging fire, that we can use to light our torches as we run through the streets of Hagertown.

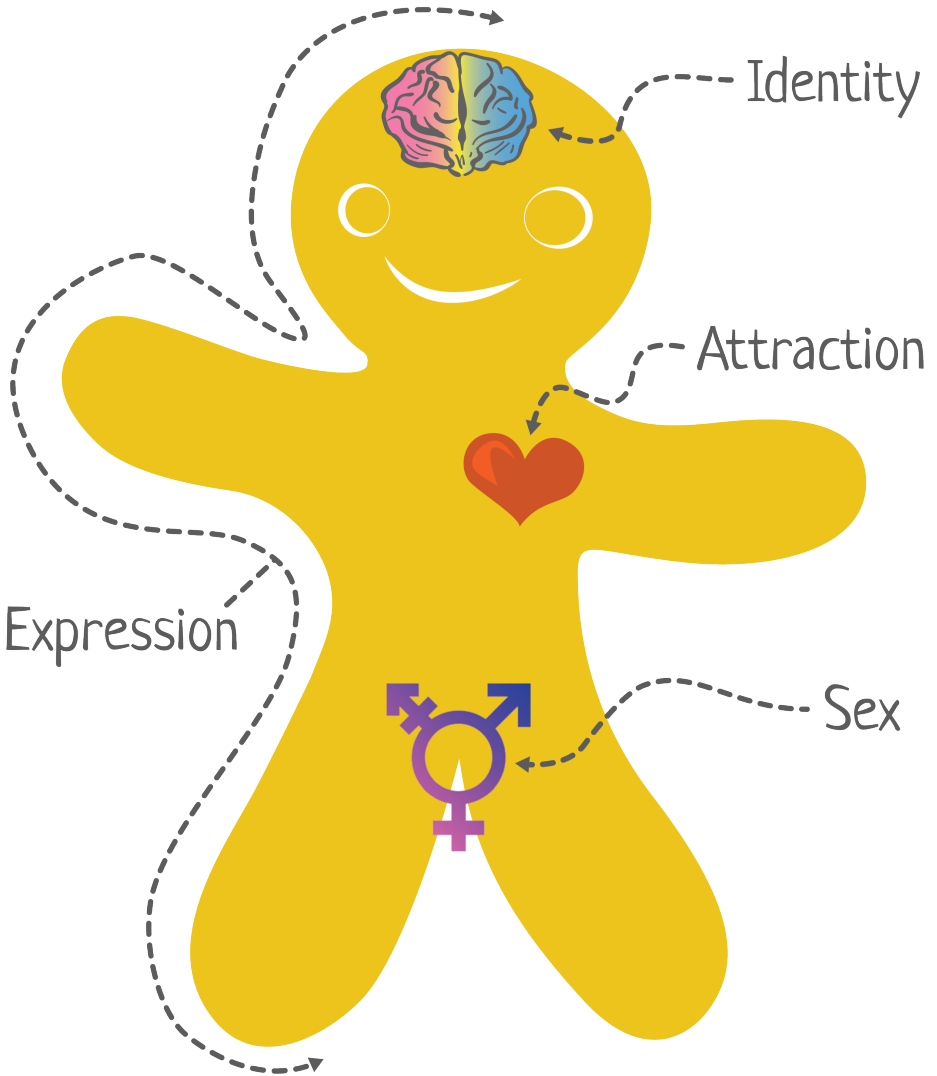
Let it rage on,

**Flo Petite**



# The Genderbread Person

by its pronounced [METROsexual.com](http://METROsexual.com)



*Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In fact, in many cases it's many things. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for gender understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more after reading it... That's the idea!*

**Identity** is how you, in your head, experience and define your gender based on how much you align (or don't) with what you understand the options for gender to be.

**Attraction** is how you find yourself being drawn or turned off to other people in sexual, romantic, or other ways (often categorized with gender)

**Expression** is how you present gender (through your actions, clothing, and demeanor, to name a few), and how those presentations are viewed based on social expectations.



**Sex** is the physical traits you're born with or develop that we think of as "sex characteristics," as well as the sex you are assigned at birth\*.

- Male
- Intersex
- Female



\***Sex Assigned At Birth** is typically based on external genitalia present at birth (ignoring anatomy, biology, and change throughout life). Sex Assigned At Birth (SAAB) is key for distinguishing between the terms "cisgender" (when SAAB aligns with gender identity) and "transgender" (when it doesn't).

We can think about Identity, Attraction, Expression, and Sex as existing on continuums, where a lot of people may see themselves existing somewhere between 1 and 100 on each.



## Gender Identity

 Woman-ness  
 Man-ness



## Gender Expression

 Femininity  
 Masculinity



## Anatomical Sex

 Female-ness  
 Male-ness

## Sexually Attracted to... and/or (a/o)

 Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People  
 Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People

## Romantically Attracted to...

 Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People  
 Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People

# Identity ≠ Expression ≠ Sex Gender ≠ Sexual Orientation

personality traits, jobs, hobbies, likes,  
dislikes, roles, expectations

common GENDER IDENTITY things

style, grooming, clothing, mannerisms,  
affect, appearance, hair, make-up

common GENDER EXPRESSION things

body hair, chest, hips, shoulders, hormones  
penis, vulva, chromosomes, voice pitch

common ANATOMICAL SEX things

**For a bigger bite, read more at:  
[genderbread.org](http://genderbread.org)**

# Tower of Lonesome

by Taylor Knable

I've been sitting here for years.

Once in a blue moon, I'll pull pictures of you  
from the stars

and watch

as meteorites

paint your face with their tails.

Suddenly, my loneliness,

piled into brick upon brick,

begins to tower.

You see, I'm building a  
wall

around my mind,  
something that surrounds me all the time.

It may look like a weight to

you

but to me

it's  
fine.







I'm lonely. I cry. I'll look out windows  
at night,  
Watch trees crest

over far away mountains

and listen

to rivers that bubble

through far away forests,

and wonder

how far away

those mountains are,

how far away those rivers are,

how far away

you  
are.

Tears drip down my cheeks

like stars falling to the earth.

Splash against my palms,

Puddle into my shirt,

Replace my hand with yours,

find a better fit,

something to keep my mind

Off these lonely things.

You

were my Milky Way.

I've had enough of

“honeycomb laughter,”

And I've had enough of

“Happily Ever Afters,”  
If you’d sit with me,  
If you’d have time  
to go over things I didn’t like  
You’d find that there is

much  
more to me.

Weighted blankets just aren’t doing  
enough

anymore,  
and neither are you,  
And I’m sick

of wondering  
When these brick walls  
will break because  
opening up isn’t easy.

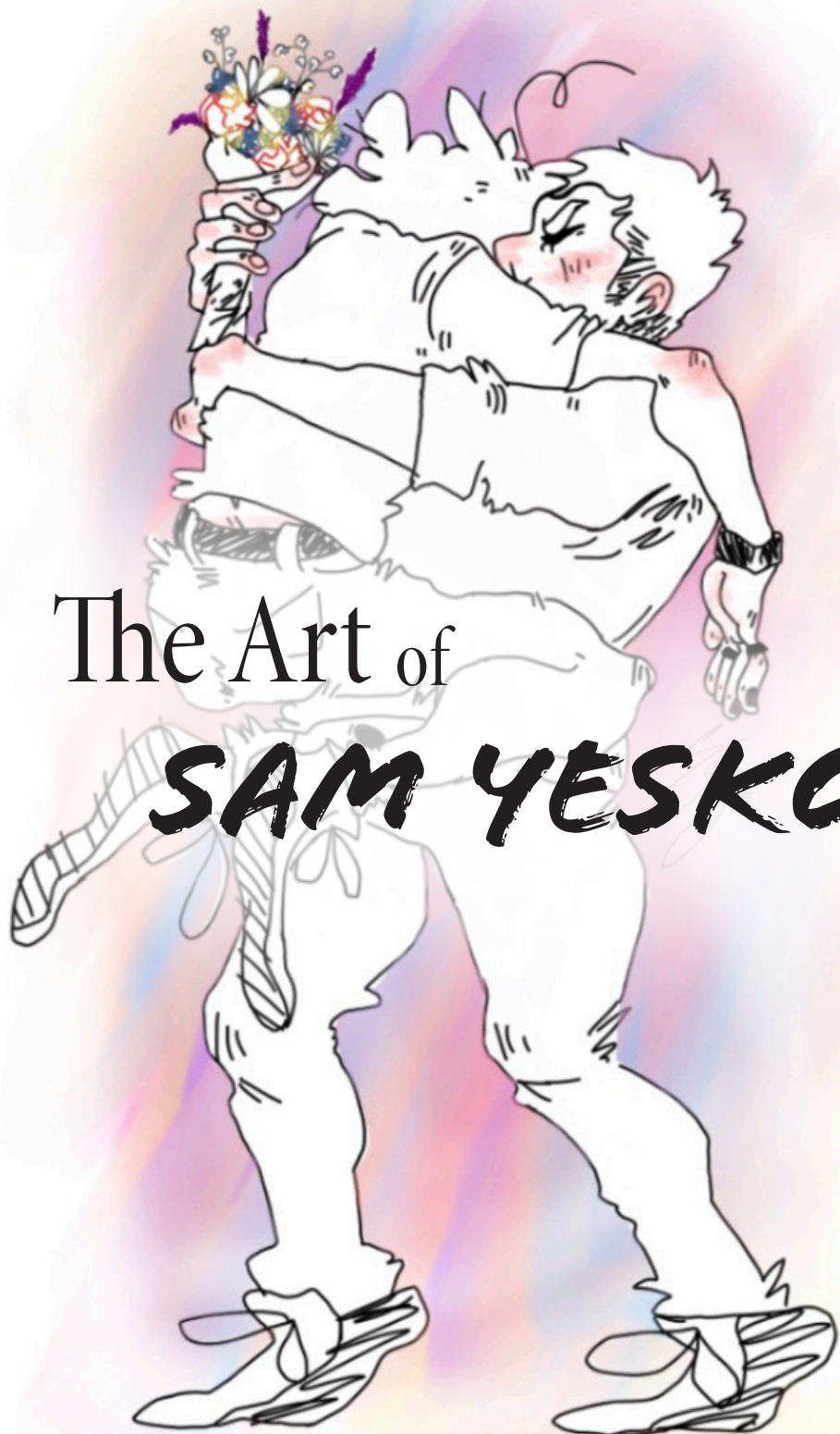
It’s a 20-step process,  
It takes time and skill and energy and  
half the time

I’m barely even awake.  
I’m drained.

And frustrated.

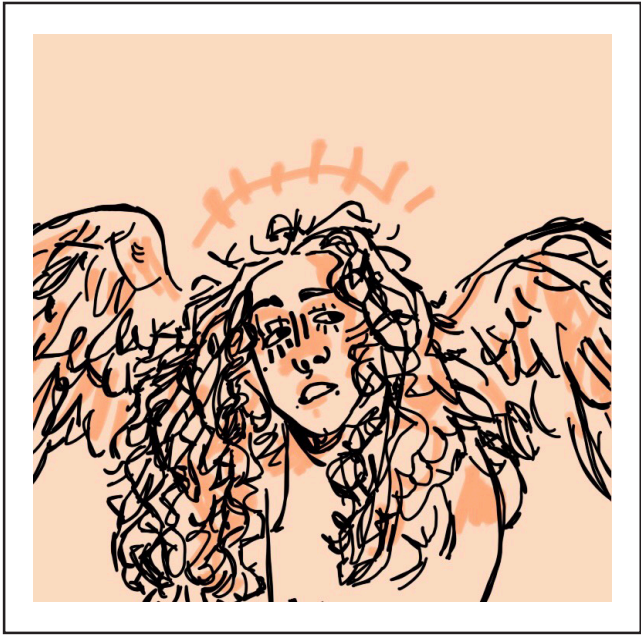
And laying by myself.  
This tower is consuming me.





The Art of

**SAM YESKO**





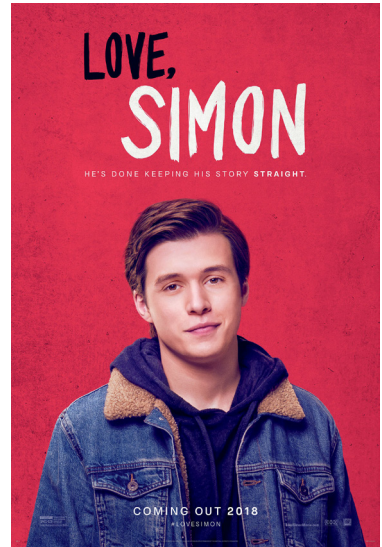
The past decade has entailed many triumphs for the queer community, including the legalization of same sex marriage in the United States and the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell” legislation affecting queer individuals who wish to serve in the military. Also among these triumphs is the increased presence of positive queer representation in mainstream television and film. While the impact of this may seem superficial, this newfound representation is vital, as it provides queer people with someone on the screen to relate to and can offer much needed validation to those struggling with their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, even despite the benefits, the unfortunate truth about mainstream media featuring prominent queer characters is that much of the conflict revolves entirely around their queer identity. Whether it be the hardship of coming out or the presence of some homophobic antagonist, the constant portrayal of the negative experiences plaguing the queer community denies it the sense of escapism associated with much of the fictional media consumed by the masses. Plots that closely reflect real life have, of course, always been a feature of television and film, but so have aspects of fantasy and idealism. Is it so much to ask for the same sense of unwavering fairytale romance that on screen cisgender heterosexual couples have received since the dawn of silent film?

The dawn of mainstream queer media came at a time when the

mortality as well as morality of being queer was threatened. From the 1993 cinematic landmark *Philadelphia*, to the 2005 adaption of the musical *Rent*, films centered around the AIDS crisis have presented a cast of characters who are written as queer for the express purpose of being sick. This made sense an era where the call was less for queer people to be portrayed as only fully rounded humans, rather than vessels to promote awareness of the disease. But, as the widespread panic surrounding AIDS was separated from the popular conscious, the disease itself was separated from queer characters living outside a historical narrative, paving way for stories not only featuring queer characters defined by traits other than their health, but with an ever increasing emphasis on the mental rather than physiomedical fallout surrounding homophobia.

One example of a successful modern queer narrative is the 2018 film *Love, Simon*. Although the plot deviates slightly from that of the young adult novel on which it was based, the overall premise remains the same. “Everyone deserves a great love story. But for seventeen-year-old Simon Spier... it’s a bit complicated: he’s yet to tell his family or friends he’s gay and he doesn’t actually know the identity of the anonymous classmate he’s fallen for online,” explains the official plot synopsis from 20th Century Fox’s website. That is not to discredit the film’s artistic merit. Visually the film is wonderful, and it’s soundtrack thoroughly danceable in its own right. However, as the synopsis makes

apparent, it’s no typical story of falling for the mystery boy. Simon and his love interest spend a majority of the film terrified by the implications of coming out, and their fear isn’t exactly helped when paired with scenes of the school’s only openly gay student being bullied and harassed for his sexuality. The main issue wasn’t Simon finding his true love through the fog of anonymity, but finding both himself and his love through a fog comprised of bigotry. Simon’s life takes a detour through a living hell, with pit stops made to be blackmailed



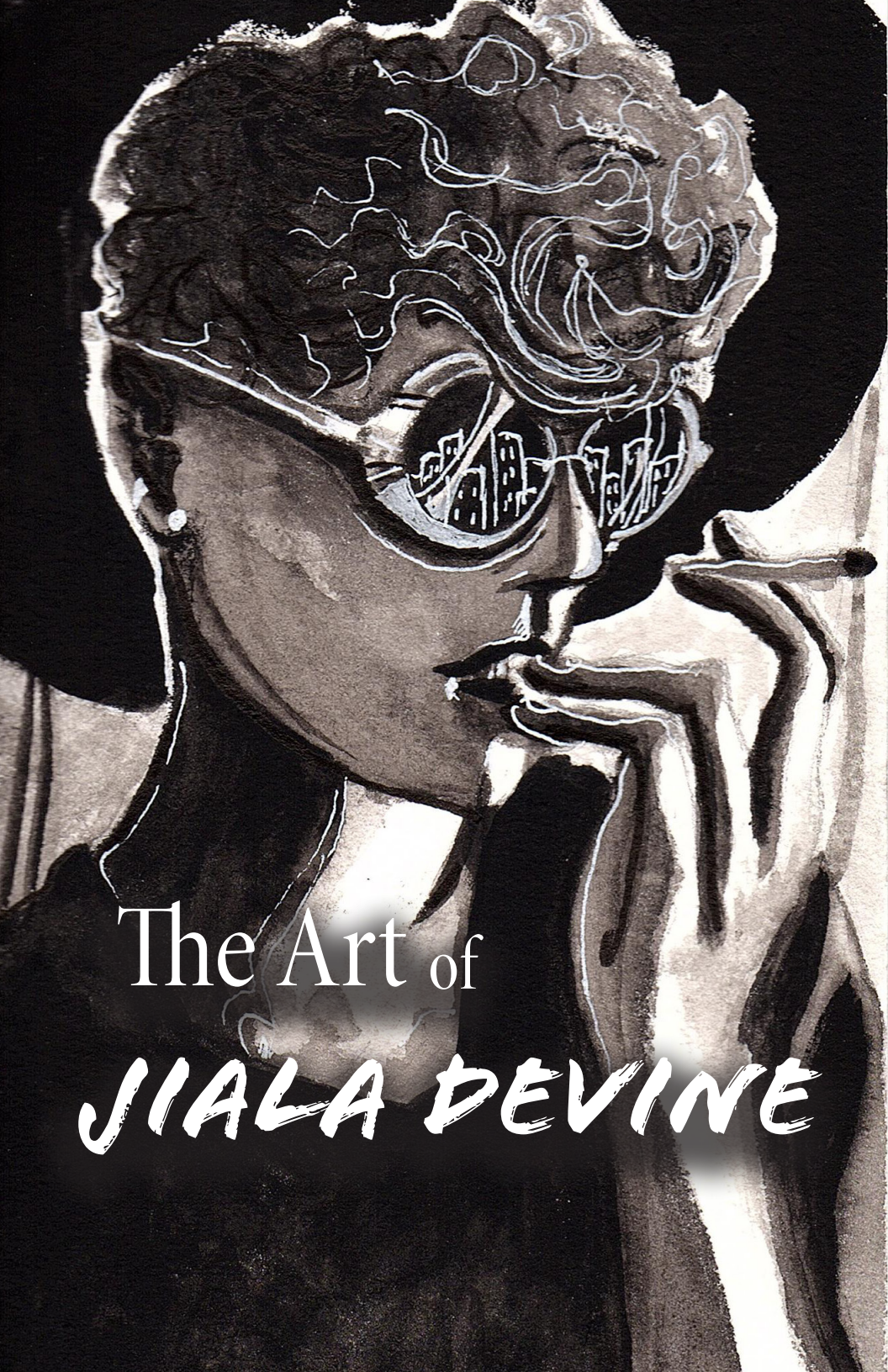
© 20th Century Fox

and brutally outed along the way, and only at the end is he granted an ounce of happiness in the form of a single intimate scene at the film's conclusion.

Another recent successful work, the 2016 anime series *Yuri On Ice*, paved its own way for tackling queer romance. While Japanese media is no stranger to queer representation, the show departed from the conventions of yaoi or “boy’s love”, a niche genre familiar to the west which usually depicts a more sexually charged form of male on male love, in order to showcase a more honest relationship. The show’s main conflict is firmly rooted in the competitive world of professional figure skating, while the two male protagonists fall for each other unimpeded by homophobia (although their relationship is not without self-doubt, as the title character struggles with nearly every element of himself but his sexuality). Even so, what little of their relationship is explored can prove at times underwhelmingly subtle. Displays of affection are either obscured, as in the case of a pivotal kiss scene, or up to interpretation as to whether they were truly meant to be queer romantic gestures or mere zealous bromance.

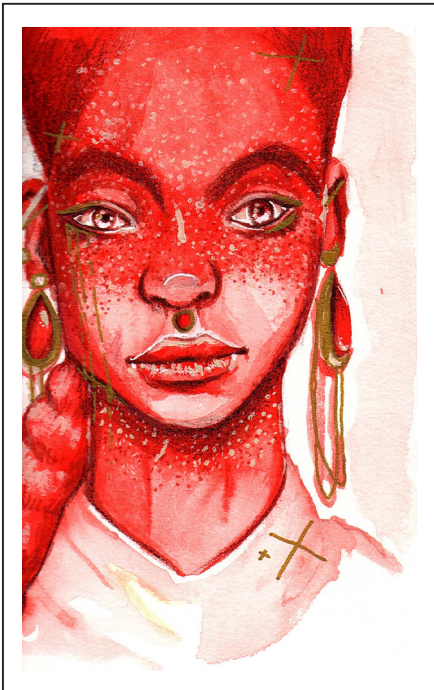
Perhaps the biggest roadblock on the path to a queer fairytale is that, in a sense, many of the narratives featuring queer characters are already employing the tropes. It has been argued that every story that can be told, already has been. Indeed, queer narratives have their dragons and damsels in distress; however, instead of being literal dragons, homophobia (internal, external, and otherwise), runs amok. And, if a true love’s kiss can’t break any spell, those elements certainly should not make every queer narrative. Is that to say these kinds of stories should be moved past entirely? Not at all. The argument could even be made that, as familiar as these concepts are to queer media, stories may not even be recognizable as explicitly queer enough in their absence. Even if that is true, it’s time for creators to branch out and take risks. Give queer people literal dragons to slay, and they have the opportunity to rise triumphant not only in any number of tales, but at the box-office as well.





The Art of  
**JIALA DEVINE**





## Interested in a Commission?

Jiala currently has single subject (one person, animal, object, etc.) commission slots available starting at just \$15! For more information contact:

[owlover201@gmail.com](mailto:owlover201@gmail.com)

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You can also check out their back catalogue on Etsy, with a focus on Black Girl Magic and Afrofuturistic content.



# Tell the Colony, "I'm Gay!"

by Flo Petite

When I woke up, the day seemed to be as regular of a day, as any, for an ant. Surrounding me, were the familiar dirt walls, dirt bed, hill made of dirt, and a kitchen filled with leaves and whatever we could get our hands on, or, actually, our legs. But, I had decided today was not going to be as regular. After work, while I was walking home, I passed The Critter, my ant colony's only gay bar. I had an epiphany, which started an internal conflict. After collecting all my rations for the day, I scurried home anxiously. My thorax felt tense and was probably a physical foreshadowing for what was to come.

As I walked in, my mom was busily tidying the house. Ms. A, was a single mother, and it had been that way most of my life. After my parents and I took a trip to Australia and my Pops ran into an ant eater, that was the end of that. She was simple-minded, and stuck to the ways of a traditional ant. My mom greeted me as I was entering our hill.

"Hi, honey! How was work," she inquired?

"Mom, I'm not a bee. Work was fine."

"Alright then. Everything okay?"

BEEZ! I don't know. Maybe everything wasn't ok.

"Ya," I replied abruptly.

I could see my mom becoming concerned and I felt like I might implode.

"Mom, I'm..." I choked.

I can't do this.

"HUNGRY," I blurted out!

"Queen Bee, you are so dramatic," she replied. "There are leftover seeds in the fridge. Fix yourself some!"

I felt absolutely pathetic. Later on I meet up with the realest ant I know, Qween Ann. We met in Ant High School and bonded. Neither one of us were self-aware enough back then to recognize it, but we had a lot in common. Q. Ann told me she was gay on the last day of Ant High School, before we graduated and headed off to work. I remember her confession brought up something in me, too, but I couldn't quite put my finger (leg) on it.

"Beez, Jay. You looked terrible! What's wrong," she asked?

I sighed. "I don't know. I guess I'm just hungry."

"Alright," she said, as she took a sip of her drink. "You are spun tighter than a tarantula's web."

Needless to say, talking with Q. Ann comforted me, as a good friendship often will. She took me to The Critter for the first time, and we had some drinks. I headed home feeling better about my self-realization, coupled with a little mania.

I rushed through the door (we don't really have doors, but I'm just trying to help any human reading this visualize the scene) to find my mom still up reading in her Lazy Bee recliner.

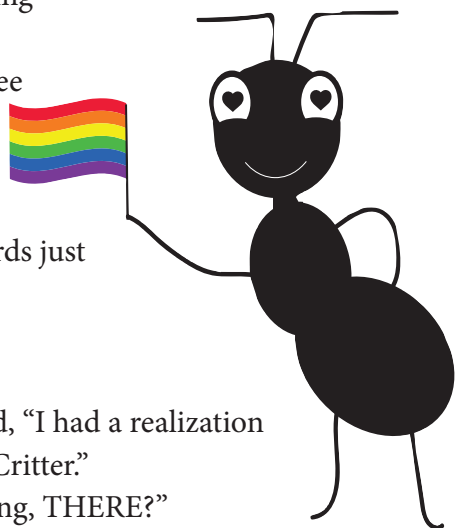
I don't know what came over me, or why I decided this was the moment of declaration, but the words just came out.

"Tell the colony, I'm gay!"

"What?" she says

Yelling through my mandible, I said, "I had a realization today, when I was walking by The Critter."

"The WHERE? What were you doing, THERE?"



“I was meeting sweet green grasshoppers, the shade of peas that taste like freshly cut grass, and dancing with spiders and opilions with legs longer than any human. They had beverages fruitier than bubble gum on the sidewalk. I never felt more like myself! ”

“Your bee friend is gay?”

“NO, Mom, I AM GAY! I am a gay ant!”

And that’s the last thing I remember until I wake up on the couch the next morning, as my mom was cleaning and ranting, as if I were listening.

It must have been the pesticides they are spraying in the grass these days, or something,” my mother rambled. “It certainly ain’t my fault!”

I sat at the table in our kitchen eating my breakfast-flavored leaf, listening to my mother continue to babble on about tradition and morals. She had been like this all morning, screaming and crying.

“You know technically, I’m not even your mother! This isn’t my fault!”

I finished eating my leaf and crawled out of our hole. It’s like the sun shone for the first time, and I no longer felt like I was living in the dark, even though I live in a dirt hill. I felt hopeful.

# Pride.

A Playlist by The Spaghetti Party

Only on  Spotify





Photography by  
**MADISON HAMIL**

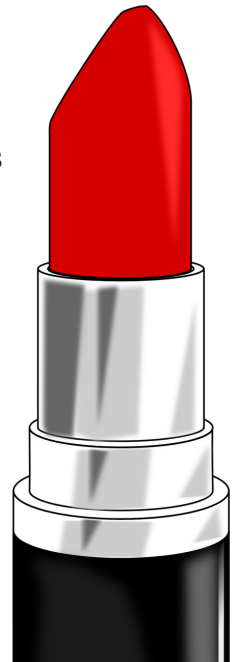




## What to Expect at a Drag Show

First of all the energy in the room is normally that of Christmas or Disneyland. Just pure excitement even before the show starts. But my favorite feeling accompanying this electric energy is love. Everyone is welcomed and should feel at home at a drag show. It's a safe zone for all walks of life.

All drag shows are different but here in Western Maryland you can expect to see everything from high energy dance routines to celebrity impersonations. The whole point of a drag show is to carry you away from your troubles for just a bit, to help you feel a little more comfortable in your skin or maybe empower you to be brave in your everyday life.





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# SMALL TOWN QUEERS

Being a queer person loving in a smaller town can be an experience all it's own, and we're diving into that with some of the folks from our community.

## **Being someone from the LGBT+ community, what has your experience been like living in small town?**

"I think it's one of those things where you're closed off in many ways: many conservative sentiments, not a large enough "open" community, etc. I don't think I've necessarily felt threatened as I am not completely out yet, but I fear things getting around fast since the town is so small and everyone kinda knows everyone else. I fear being pictured in my Pride attire or being apart of my pride clubs with the potential of being outed by someone who might see those yearbook pictures or pictures on the internet, so it has its positives and negatives depending on what your situation is." - *May*

" My experience was honestly pretty nonexistent until about 9th grade. I was exposed to very little lgbtq+ until high school, and it was mainly because I went to such a liberal school. But since I became aware, I've realized just how schismmed our small town is, you're either completely accepted, or you're not." - *Audrey*

"Homophobia was very prevalent among my peers growing up. As a teenager I only knew of a few people that were out so I felt very isolated and uncomfortable. It took(and is still taking)

quite some time to unlearn the shame I was taught to have about my gender and sexuality. Nowadays most people wouldn't say anything rude to my face, but I'm hesitant to believe their opinions have changed in a small town that has rarely seen changes. Accessing healthcare as a queer trans person has been a struggle and I've been denied care in the ER for being trans. I've had to travel ~2 hours for basic healthcare because local doctors have little knowledge of my health needs. After 20 years, I moved from my small hometown a couple weeks ago. I am realizing how much it has negatively impacted my mental health to live in this small town as a queer trans person. I didn't realize how heightened my stress and anxiety was until I was living somewhere that I feel safe and at ease. I passed confederate flags every time I left my old house and now I see a variety of pride flags near my new house. It makes an incredible difference."

- Paisley

### **What were some things that helped you in your coming out process? How did your friends and family react?**

"I have never formally come out. It is just over time I became more and more comfortable making jokes about being gay or gushing about girls in public. Having great friends, seeing the online lgbt community, and inspirational public figures helped me to reach that point. Seeing people in the community happily live their lives encouraged me to explore my sexuality. I am comfortable with most people knowing I am pan, except for my family. I am not ready for that stage but hopefully some day."

- Kayla

"My sister was a huge part of my support system in my coming out journey, as were the close group of friends I had in highschool at the time. My parents initially were confused, upset, and scared for me. I was told by them that it was probably I phase, I was only 16, I was struggling with my mental health,

ect. However through a long journey of communication, and learning on both ends, they are now (and have been for several years) some of the most supportive people in my life. Outside of my family, it was easier because I was going to an art school and it is far more acceptable to be queer when you're an artist, but even there myself and a group of students had to fight for acceptance, so we started "Spectrum" as a safe place for LGBTQ+ students and allies to come and learn and be their most authentic selves. (To my knowledge this was the first LGBT club in any WCPS school)." - *Beth*

"I went to an LGBTQ+ discussion/support group at a camp I went to as a teen. That was the first time I conversed with openly queer adults. I joined a roller derby team a few years later when I was 19, the only local queer community I could outside of bars. After coming out as queer, connecting with trans people online was very helpful in exploring my gender. I devoured many blogs and videos from those that documented their experiences with gender and sexuality. Any friends I was close to were totally accepting. Most of my immediate family were surprised, but understood better with time. Some of my more distant family is too religious and close minded to be worth my time - their loss. Overall the most helpful thing was seeing other people like me exist." - *Paisley*

**Have you ever felt that you wouldn't find someone because of your sexuality? How has that changed as the queer community gains more attention?**

" I don't think I've ever felt that way because of solely my sexuality, but I fear my religion and culture will get in the way of pursuing a relationship with someone of the same gender. I no longer fear as anxious, as I see people such as Blair Imani step up with all her Muslim and Queer energy and pride, but

it's such a small minority that acts that way and I only wish that she and others continue to change the minds of so many people, regardless of religious affiliation, to make the world a more accepting place." - *May*

"I always assumed I'd be alone forever when I came out as queer. I met someone through derby but after a 5 year relationship I was living as another gender and definitely thought I'd never find anyone after that. To my surprise, there are many people that are attracted to me and love me, regardless of being trans. I think people are starting to become more openminded to the beautiful variety of people that exist! I have quite a fan club now that second puberty made me so beautiful ;)" - *Paisley*

"I've always felt like maybe I wouldn't find someone, because who doesn't fear that, but I definitely have had a hard time with the idea of being in a relationship with a girl during my time in Hagerstown. It's just so small, you feel like you know everyone in the community. Then you feel like everyone is taken because there really isn't that many options in the first place, I've always just kind of thought "yeah, it'd be great to date a girl, but here it just seems unrealistic". But as we're growing, and more people are coming out, I feel like I could maybe find someone here, and I'm sure I could in college." - *Audrey*

### **What are some things your think the local community could do to be more supportive?**

"I think local businesses could do things as simple as putting out signs to welcome people of the community or posting on social media just to assure that LGBT+ people feel safe in those establishments." - *Kira*

"Being more loud and public about their support would help. I only recently learned that my community had a lgbt center. Resources and groups like that should be advertised and made more accessible to the youth. Schools could also do a better job showing support by opening up conversations about equality or little things like pointing out lgbt figures who had an impact in art or history. Any reminder that lgbt people exist and can live happily fulfilling lives." - *Kayla*

"We need to talk more about individuals, especially historic icons and other important people, who also happen to be LGBTQ. One thing I only recently found out about was Alan Turing being gay, and I had learned a lot about him in class (historically & philosophically). It seemed weird that we weren't told anything about how being gay impacted his life afterwards (he unfortunately committed suicide) despite his "legend" status. The more we talk about these identities that certain individuals carry, the more we normalize and thus eradicate the erasure and stigma that comes with it. LGBTQ people are just as capable of being "normal" as straight people; being LGBTQ isn't a quirk, it's an identity that lives on in people and will persist." - *May*



## About us:

*The Spaghetti Party* is a creative collective located in the Hagerstown, Maryland area. Our goal is to create more of a local scene and give people a supportive place to share their music, art and creative expressions. Our monthly gathering, The Spaghetti Party, features live music, a pot of pasta, and lots of good energy!

Instagram: [@thespaghettiparty](https://www.instagram.com/thespaghettiparty)

Check out our website! [thespaghettiparty.org](https://thespaghettiparty.org)

If you want to submit for a future issue of our zine, have questions, or just wanna chat you can email us at [info@thespaghettiparty.org](mailto:info@thespaghettiparty.org)

