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From the **Publisher**

I was an awkward teenager. What a way to start my letter eh LOL, and really aren't all teenagers awkward? I was anti-social, and I hated my body. Nothing was wrong with it, I just hated it, so I always wore long sleeves and pants... even to the beach.

I was obsessed with the colour black. Mom was terrified when I wanted to have black sheets, black drapes, and black carpets, when we were remodelling. I knew I was "different" and that made me scared of what might happen if my family and the world found out, especially being born in a very conservative country like Kuwait. My parents are Lebanese, and born Catholic. This stuff piles up LOL. I liked art and film and BOOKS.

Reading was my escape, from my own awkwardness, from thinking, from the family, and from going out with them to see relatives and friends. I might end up slipping and telling them how I feel about the pressures of being sexually different and not having any support in that society. I always made reading an excuse for everything, "sorry I can't go with you, I am in the middle of this novel and I have to finish it". I would consume a whole big, thick book over a weekend, sitting on my bed, door closed, and food brought in on a tray by my mother.



I read EVERYTHING. Comic books (Superman being my number one), mystery, history, famous Arabic literature, fun-fair like *1001 Arabian Nights*, novels about Russian Tsars, and French novels of times pre, during, and post the revolution were a particular favourite (translated to Arabic or English). I loved films for many reasons, but I loved reading because I could imagine and make up visuals of the characters and worlds that the writer is speaking of.

Reading continued into my 20s and early 30s. I really got into Anne Rice for a while (still do), Dan Brown for a while, but I mostly wanted the chance to catch up on the most influential queer writers, and literature; Oscar Wilde, Walt Whitman, Tennessee Williams, Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, Armistead Maupin, and so many others.

In the last couple of decades though, I haven't had as much time to read with the pressure of a very consuming career and community volunteer life. I still read, but only a book every couple of months. BUT when you can't read, you become a publisher and literary agent, so that's why, when I was approached in the past few months to be part of a queer publishing house, I jumped at the opportunity www.brainspiredpublishing.com

Welcome to our 2021 theme of looking at different disciplines of Pop Culture. It's going to be a fun year. Enjoy.

Antoine Elhashem
Publisher
publisher@pinkplaymags.com

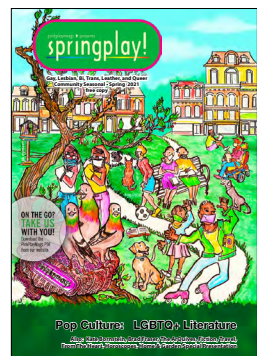
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Cover Pop Culture: LGBTQ+ Literature
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From the Editor

Here we are, 2021, a new year and a new theme for our magazine. Over the course of the next four issues we'll be looking at *Pop Culture* influences from within the LGBTQ+ community and beyond. We begin with a look at *Literature*, with a detailed retrospective from Aaron Rothermund that begins with **Walt Whitman** and **Oscar Wilde**, and takes us through to **Armistead Maupin**, and **Timothy Findley**. We're hear, we're queer – read all about it!

For our second feature, we welcome Mandy Goodhandy to our family, who had the opportunity to chat with author, artist, and activist, **Kate Bornstein**. Since 1989, this trans trailblazer has ushered us into a world of limitless possibility through a daring re-envisionment of the gender system as we know it. Today, Bornstein identifies as non-binary: going by the pronouns she/her or they/them, and has been writing about non-binary gender identity for nearly thirty years.

In our *Travel* feature, we take a look at what the future of travelling might look like post-pandemic. LGBTQ+ individuals are expected to be one of the first demographics to hit the road, and skies, and we chatted with three industry experts to get their thoughts on...what's next? Our *Hot Artist* feature is with author **Brad Fraser**, who is releasing his first memoir, *All the Rage: A Partial Memoir in Two Acts and a Prologue*. With *Community Cornerstone*, we take a look at the work of



The ArQuives in Toronto, chatting with Executive Director, **Raegan Swanson**. Our *Fiction* piece is titled *The Tender Grave*, written by **Sheri Reynolds**.

As always, we have our quarterly horoscopes, and the always inspiring *From The Heart* column written by **Mychol Scully**, our Creative Director, who also designs this publication for us. A special thank you goes to our cover illustrator, **SK Dymnt**, who will be doing the full four-issue series for us this year. Our event listings remain mostly *virtual*, which our Events Editor, **Sherry Sylvain**, takes great pride in compiling for us.

Finally, be sure to check out our special *Home & Garden Special Presentation* that provides some great tips on how to rejuvenate your living space, which is even more important in these days of staying in, and working from home.

Be sure to catch the remaining seasonal issues, as we look at *Fashion*, *Music*, and *Theatre*.

Enjoy the read!

Bryen Dunn
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Tales of the City

A NOVEL

A Historical Look Back at Queer Literature

By Aaron Rothermund

LGBTQ2S+ representation in literature fluctuates in accordance to mainstream society, but the queer community is visibly documented in many cultures throughout history.

From the celebrated homosexuality in ancient Greek mythology to modern day status updates questioning gender identity, we have consistently been on the front lines fighting for visibility and equality.

When **Walt Whitman** published his collection of poems entitled, *Leaves of Grass* (1855), the pages were burning with homosexual imagery. At the time, being queer was considered perverse and unlawful. *The Press* reviewed it as, “a mass of stupid filth,” and advised Whitman to commit suicide, but today it’s considered one of the most important collections of poetry in American history. As an unapologetic dandy, **Oscar Wilde** arrived in Toronto on Victoria Day in 1882, and he spoke on *The English Renaissance of Art, ‘House Decoration,’* and *Art and the Handicraftsman*. Some reporters attacked his flamboyant

appearance, and repeatedly misgendered him in a mock interview. Wilde would go on to publish monumental works, including *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), among others. His visibility led to his incarceration for being homosexual, and he later died in poor health as a result of the hard labour he faced in prison.

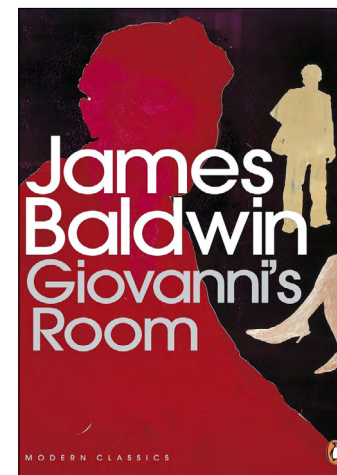
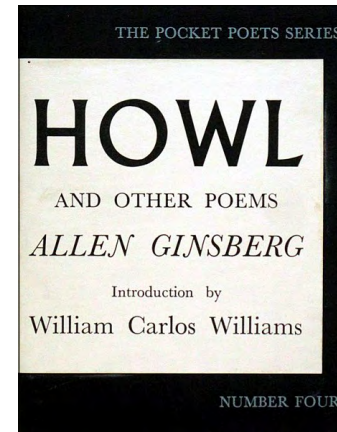
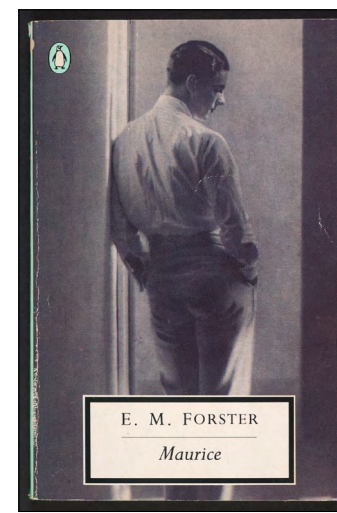
In an effort to circumvent censorship, writers developed sly references for the queer community, including **Sheridan Le Fanu** releasing his lesbian vampire novella *Carmilla* (1872), which later influenced **Bram Stoker’s** bisexually charged *Dracula* (1897). LGBTQ2S+ characters began emerging as supernatural entities, devious outlaws, or murderous villains. In response to the growing fear of gay people, **E.M. Forster** began writing *Maurice* in 1913, but it wasn’t published until 1971.

Forster concealed his homosexuality from the public, but he believed, “Two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows.” Forster would never live to see the day *Maurice* became an essential part of the cultural zeitgeist of the gay community. Other

queer authors were unable to conceal their oppression, such as **Richard Bruce Nugent**, who wrote *Smoke, Lilies, and Jade* (1928) as a modernist stream of consciousness style short story based on his experience being Black and bisexual. Nugent is documented as the first Black author to openly explore biracial relationships, homosexuality, and bisexuality in his work.

Radclyffe Hall wished to present gay society with how life could be if they were able to express themselves freely, and he wrote, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), that follows an upper class lesbian novelist named Stephen Gordon. The novel states that sexual deviance is natural, and asks mainstream society to give homosexuals, “the right to our existence.” In **Mary Renault’s** *The Charioteer* (1953) we closely follow homosexual men in the military, which is still a hot topic issue today. Her novel provided a positive example of gay representation, and detailed how any relationship could be forged by compassion in conflict. The novel became a bestseller in the gay community, which began a niche market for queer stories, and later opened the door for thousands of writers that followed.

Shortly after, the tide began to change, as the queer community began to mobilize. American poet, **Allen Ginsberg** wrote *Howl* (1954), which denounced capitalism and conformity. At the time, sodomy laws meant that having gay sex was a crime, and *Howl* became subject of an obscenity trial. In a fantastic turn of events, the judge declared the poem to have



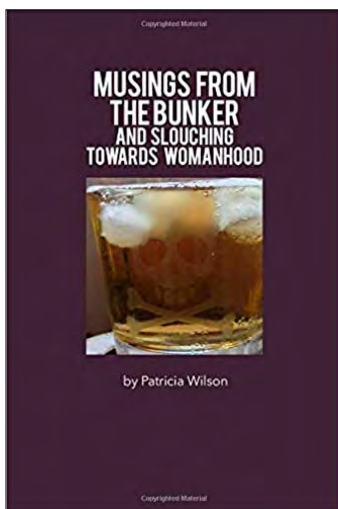
artistic value, the book ban was reversed, and the publisher was released from prison.

Also around this time, American author **James Baldwin** published *Giovanni's Room* (1956), which was a complex story based on his experience being Black and bisexual. Baldwin said he, “witnessed the birth of the queer movement,” but he never wrote ‘gay’ literature. He explained, “if the characters were gay, that was the vehicle that moved them through the story.” **Felice Picano** encouraged the development of gay literature as universal stories, and founded *SeaHorse Press*, and *The Gay Presses of New York* with **Terry Helbing** and **Larry Mitchell**. Picano wrote the popular thriller, *The Lure* (1969), which has since never been out of print in America. It’s success solidified queer books as a solid investment in publishing.

A new kind of confidence was beginning to form in the LGBTQ2S+ community, that was introducing radical ways to protest oppressive forces. **Scott Symons** was among the first to publish homosexual literature in Canada, which was at the time still unlawful. He wrote *Place d’Armes* (1967), which openly explored homosexual liberation. *The Toronto Star* reviewed Symons as, “the monster from Toronto,” and yet in 2005 that same book was listed in the ‘100 most important Canadian novels’ by the *Literary Review of Canada*.

After homosexuality was decriminalized in Canada, **Ian Young** started the first gay publishing

company in the country in 1970, called *Catalyst Press*, and **Jearld Moldenhauer** founded *Toronto Gay Action*, *Toronto Gay Alliance*, and *The Body Politic Gay Liberation Journal*. Moldenhauer also opened and managed *Glad Day Bookshop*, and in 1973 he began the groundwork for the *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives*, “the largest independent archive to acquire, preserve, organize, and give public access to materials by and about LGBTQ2+ people primarily produced in or concerning Canada.”



“It’s still difficult for anyone to be published in a mainstream way, but especially when we are talking about a marginalized group,” says **David Bateman**, who recently wrote the acclaimed novel, *Dr Sad* (2020). Bateman believes, “we must not get complacent, because any success in mainstream society can be taken away again.” **Patricia Wilson** collaborated with Bateman on her literary collection, *Musings from the Bunker and Slouching Towards Womanhood* (2019), and they co-authored *Transmeditations* (2019), which includes potent views on being trans and queer.

During this period LGBTQ2S+ literature was achieving a high level of sophistication, and many works had earned mainstream acclaim. **Timothy Findley** invented the *Southern Ontario Gothic* style of writing, received a *Governor General’s Award*, the *Order of Ontario*, and was a founding member of the *Writer’s Union of Canada*. Findley wrote, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984), that depicts a post-modern queer version of the biblical flood myth.

Wilson believes, “We have been searching for value and acceptance, but we would be better off to find these traits within ourselves by spending time in contemplation.”


Although lesbian, gay, and bisexual literature was finding global success, the community was still seeking basic rights for trans writers. A great resource for this is *Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography* (1967), which is based on her experience being the first documented trans woman to undergo a series of sex change operations. In 2019, Jorgensen was one of the 50 American “pioneers, trailblazers, and heroes” included on the *National LGBTQ Wall of Honor* within the *Stonewall National Monument* in New York City. Her story educated and inspired a new generation of liberal-minded free thinkers.

In closing, I believe that as representation of the LGBTQ2S+ community grows in mainstream media, we must use self-reflection to express our experiences authentically. With progress we must remember to encourage more diverse voices to speak out about the compounded biases they experience, and to write for a universal audience while staying truthful to our radical selves. Finally, we must hold fast to our artistic achievements, and remember to lift up the next generation of oppressed storytellers, so that the future of literature can represent all aspects of the spectrum equally.

In 1978, we were gifted *Tales of The City* by **Armistead Maupin**, and the queer community fell in love with Anna Madrigal, a trans-woman that provided a safe haven for social misfits. The story continued for years in print and television, including a recent *Netflix* remake, giving LGBTQ2S+ representation a dramatic lift into mainstream entertainment.


Aaron Rothermund wrote, directed, and produced two plays, *Ambiguous* and *Charming Monsters*, and made three films in the Script to Screen program at Centennial College. Since graduating Aaron co-directed the film, *Surprise in the Night* and produced, *Baby Fever*, which will be released in 2022.





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Kate Bornstein

Trans Trailblazer Discusses Non-Binary Gender Identity

By Mandy Goodbandy

Accessible literature is imperative to all our young and questioning queer people. It's difficult for a non-queer person to teach a questioning queer person, unless they are, or have been a queer questioning person themselves. This includes supportive parents, educators, or even church leaders.

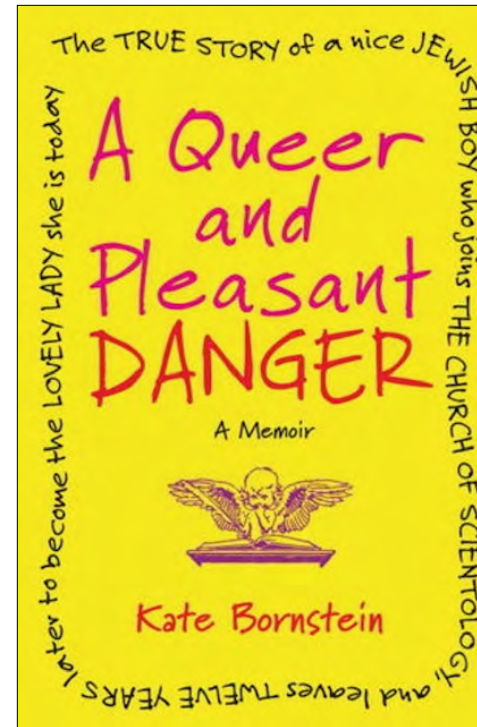
In my pre-internet youth, I wandered around crammed book shelves in the back of libraries hoping to find answers to, "what is wrong with me?" Throughout my "curious" years I found only one solitary book regarding anything to do with queerness. I don't remember where I found it or what the name of the book was, but the description was basically short chapters of

different people sharing their stories of being gay, lesbian or bisexual. I was thrilled to find this book.

I had an opportunity to chat with an individual who had similar experiences back in the day. This ground breaking, self-identified queer, non-binary author, performance artist, and speaker is the legendary, **Kate Bornstein**, a person who keeps changing and growing without apology, or an ounce of shame regarding their gender identity or sexuality.

Young queer folk not only need books and stories from those who came before them, they also need role models. Most people who are described as such do not look at themselves in that way. That in my opinion is what makes them role models. Kate is one of those.

Since 1989, trans trailblazer Bornstein has, with humour and spunk, ushered us into a world of limitless possibility through a daring re-envisionment of the gender system as we know it. Today, Kate identifies as non-binary: going by the pronouns she/her or they/them, and has

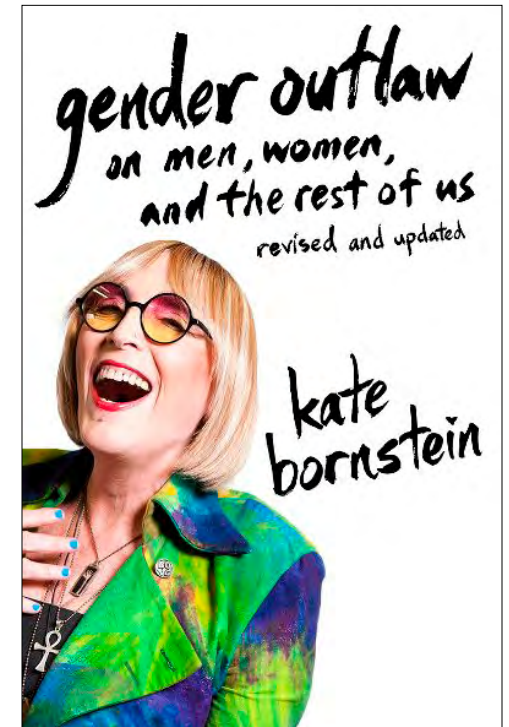


been writing about non-binary gender identity for nearly thirty years. Kate's work is taught in five languages, in over 300 high schools, colleges, and universities around the world. On screen, Kate has appeared as Joan, the church lady, in the film, *Saturday Church*, she was a regular cast member on the second season of *E! TV's I Am Cait*, with **Caitlyn Jenner**, and is the subject of **Sam Feder's** award-winning documentary, *Kate Bornstein Is a Queer and Pleasant Danger*.

When I asked Kate if she also had a difficult time finding queer literature as a youth, she stated that there were some gay men and lesbian women authors, but only a couple of memoirs about people who felt they were being "trapped in a man's body" and freeing themselves by trying to "pass" or trying to "fit in".

As Kate puts it, "writing about queer is writing about how you don't pass and you don't care."

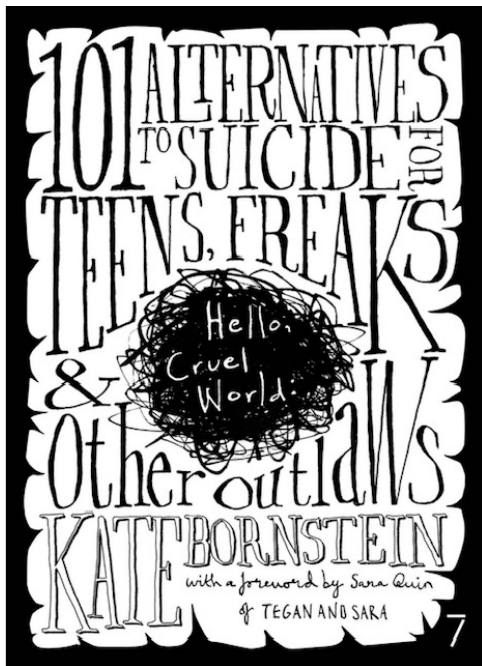
The first queer literature she found helpful was some erotica style books by **Patrick Califia** in the 1980s. Kate then drifted off to magazines like, *Female Mimics*, divulging to me that those



magazines weren't actually erotica, they were flat out porn. "You can do a Google search and still see these fabulous women who were just proud of who they were, just showing themselves off and sharing their own stories," Kate explains.

Many within the mainstream population became aware of trans people through porn and sex-work. Not something all trans people are proud of, or wish to own, however these outlets brought a lot of attention to the existence of trans folk. I was curious to know how Kate felt she was being received when speaking and presenting her books to mainstream folk. She indicated that there were a few ways that people would react, which was either being regarded as a token and a marvel, or a, "Oh, look, it can talk!"

Kate added, "Along with **Leslie Feinberg**, I was one of the first trans individuals to delve into mainstream literature, which at the time I didn't consider it literature, but more like fancy notes. I wrote one piece of literature, which was my memoir, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and*



bodies, it affects entire lives, relationships, and national views.

Kate's point of view may not be the same as all trans or non-binary people, but it is still an important point of view considering her life experience not only as a human, but as an author and public storyteller. I concluded by asking Kate if she had only one message, one thing to say to all the young questioning folk out there, what in Kate's infinite arsenal of wisdom would she choose to say?

This proved to be an easy question to answer. Kate referred back to a book she wrote in 2006 titled, *Hello Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks, and Other Outlaws*. "The thing that's in my heart that wants to come out most is honey, honey, honey, do whatever it takes to make your life more worth living. That includes sex, gender, and anything. Full stop, period." she then added, "There is only one rule attached to that, and that would be, don't be mean. If you're not being mean there is nothing you can do that's bad."

Today, when young queer people are trying to find answers to, "what is wrong with me?" those answers are now much easier to find thanks to the many queer authors and storytellers like Kate who have shared their stories and experiences before us.

Kate is currently working on a new book, *Trans! Just For the Fun Of It: compassionate gender strategies for divisive times*, sections of which she's developing interactively on her blog, where she invites your input and feedback.

katebornstein.com

Mandy Goodhandy is a transgender woman; author, singer, comedian, and recording artist.

mandygoodhandy.com



the Rest of Us, in 2012. Everything else I think is more like self-help books."

Kate explained that the academia's response to her was like an electric current, meeting all these people who'd been thinking about the same stuff that she had been thinking about. This was a whole new world that she didn't know existed, as she had never thought of herself as very academic. She also discovered that there were always trans women who "had a bone to pick with me."

First they believed that Kate was trying to speak for them, and that they were women too. Secondly, by Kate claiming throughout her book, "I am not a woman and not a man", it thereby invisibilized them, and that was terrible. They would say things like, Kate was just a gay man, to which Kate would correct them by saying, "If I'm a man I am a heterosexual one, darling"

Another interesting reaction Kate received was from several feminists. Akin to the academic response, Kate said she was able to talk to really smart feminists who had been thinking along the same lines of marginalization by body type. Also they agreed that by putting gender labels on

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The Future of Travel

By Bryen Dunn

We've passed the one year mark of when the pandemic first hit, and despite the enormous damage its had on economies worldwide, we are starting to see a glimmer of hope ahead.

According to the [World Tourism Organization](#) (UNWTO), global tourism suffered its worst year on record, with international arrivals dropping by nearly three-quarters (1 billion travellers) from the previous year, with an estimated loss of USD 1.3 trillion in export revenues.

It's being predicted that those to lead the path to recovery will be the leisure millennial and GenZ market, beginning with a partial rebound in late 2021, but no significant increases are expected until well into 2022. Looking further ahead, most experts do not see a return to pre-pandemic levels happening before 2023, which is still quite remarkable given what transpired over the past year.

The LGBTQ+ travel sector is valued at an estimated USD 218 billion globally (CAD 12 billion within Canada), based on a projected 80

million travellers, and spending an average of seven times more than the mainstream traveller. PinkPlayMags had the opportunity to chat with a few industry experts to get their thoughts on what the future of travel may look like.



Darrell Schuurman,
CEO of
Canadian Gay &
Lesbian Chamber
of Commerce
(CGLCC),

believes, "We'll see long-standing practices and policies come into play, such as wearing masks in certain spaces,

and the threshold of capacity numbers with more consideration to greater space with fewer people. I also believe that we'll see the requirement of vaccinations for international travel becoming common place."



Zachary Moses is an Explorer/Futurist who has held the CEO position at both [HE Travel](#) and [Out West Adventures](#), served on the Board of Directors for the [National Tour](#)

[Association](#), and is now on the Board of the newly formed [Gay Travel Business Association](#). He shares similar thoughts on the vaccine becoming the norm for travel. "Before long we will start seeing mandatory vaccination requirements for travel to many, if not most destinations. These restrictions will be similar to restrictions we already see for things like yellow fever in Africa."



Phil Sheldon is the owner of [HE Travel](#), which is comprised of [Hanns Ebensten Travel Classic Tours](#) and [Alyson Adventures](#). He agrees, stating, "By

the summer of 2021, we are likely to see a hybrid of requirements for travel – a mix of testing and vaccinations."

In terms of any trends in future travel, Schuurman says, "The Canadian LGBTQ+ traveller has shown a preference for larger metropolitan cities, but there has been an increase in intent to travel to smaller tier-2 cities, the countryside, and National Parks. I believe this is a great opportunity for some of those smaller communities, and more rural destinations to really tap into the LGBTQ+ travel market. I think, at least in the short-term, we're going to see Canadian LGBTQ+ travellers exploring more of our own country, as we have the added advantage to offer so much great tourism product without the large masses of population."

Moses echoes those sentiments, "Small group and private tours are on the rise, and sites like Airbnb are seeing numbers surge as travellers hit the road again. As well, RV's are definitely back, and visits

to National Parks and campgrounds are through the roof. Expect less international travel and an explosion of domestic travel worldwide. Group tours are going to be smaller in general, with more space in transportation vehicles, and social distancing at the centre of group experiences." Sheldon adds, "Outdoor adventure tours with plenty of fresh air are likely to fill before tours to large cities that typically would feature opera, concert, and other indoor performances."

As for what prices will look like, Schuurman states, "There's significant pent-up demand, and plenty of cash reserves waiting to be spent on travel, so I don't think you're going to see reduced rates. In fact, we may see slight increases, not necessarily to recoup lost revenues this past year, but to help cover increased costs due to additional safety measures and protocols now in place." Similarly, Moses adds, "Prices have mostly risen or held strong through the pandemic, and as travel increases again, demand will outpace capacity. This, coupled with inflation and a weakening dollar value, will see rising travel prices that include professional travel consultation, quarantine hotels, testing, and other new unexpected but necessary supplies." As for Sheldon, he predicts, "Clients who survived the pandemic with their net worth intact are often planning to spend more on their next trip, since they can apply both their 2020 and 2021 travel budgets to one trip. Even those who lost their jobs and are worse off financially want to get away, but they are looking for less expensive destinations."

So who will be the leaders driving this tourism recovery? Schuurman thinks it will be, "Those that are able to adapt and innovate. This is where many small and medium sized businesses are well poised, as they tend to have greater flexibility and can embrace innovation faster." Moses believes it will be, "The travel operators who are willing to throw out their pre-pandemic profit models, and embrace the new reality of travel and consumer demand. We are not returning to the pre-pandemic world. Our post-pandemic world will be very different." Sheldon adds, "Many towns that felt overwhelmed by mass tourism before the pandemic are rethinking their relationship with the visitors who also contribute to their local economies."

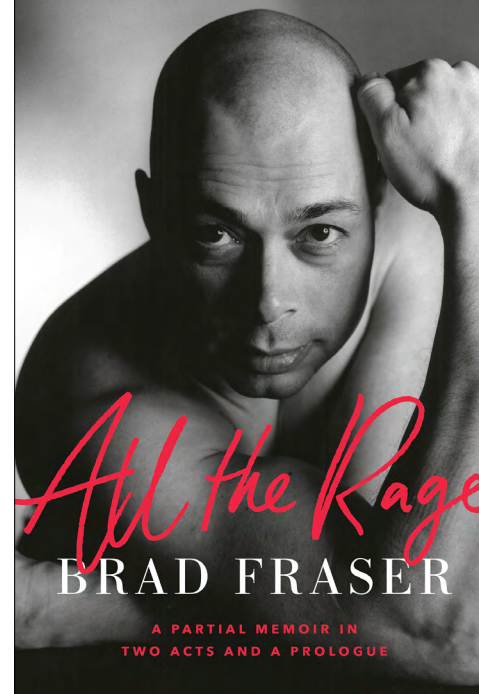


So where are these individuals hoping to travel to next? Schuurman says, "I've been wanting to get to Newfoundland to watch the icebergs, and so I feel this will be the year. Then I have a couple trips that were cancelled last year that are now, I guess by default, on my bucket-list: Japan and Colombia." For Moses, he says, "My biggest bucket list destination is Tristan Da Cunha, a remote group of volcanic islands in the south Atlantic. There is no airport, and very few ways to get to these sparsely populated English speaking islands, which only boast a population of just 264 residents. Talk about the most socially distant adventure available." For Sheldon, "My first international destination is likely to be to Japan where I will host our Japan Cultural Tour."

In closing, Schuurman advises, "We sometimes dismiss what's in our backyard. Travel exposes us to so many new things, and I don't believe that's limited to international travel. So get out and explore more of Canada this year. Our tourism industry needs it. Our small businesses need it. Our communities need it." For Moses, he keeps things in perspective by adding, "The risk of catching an exotic disease has always been one of

the biggest risks while travelling the world. The LGBTQ+ community has been dealing with heightened risk of HIV/AIDS since the 1980's, and we learned how to cope, and enjoy our travel lives regardless of risk. Humanity always adapts. Be flexible and remember that things will just keep getting better as we figure out how to cope, and adjust for a post-pandemic world." Finally, Sheldon advises to remain cautious as we recover, "As the threat of COVID-19 only gradually recedes, we all need to stay patient, wear our masks, and stay respectful of our distance from strangers. If we each play our part, travel will again become one of the largest employers on earth!"

Bryen Dunn is a freelance journalist based in Toronto with a focus on tourism, lifestyle, entertainment and community issues. He has written several travel articles and has an extensive portfolio of celebrity interviews with musicians, actors and other public personalities.



Combative. Abrasive. Notorious. Polarizing. Some might take these personality descriptors as an insult. Not **Brad Fraser**. He's not embarrassed to be described this way at all. He's proud to be an agent provocateur. And with the release of his first memoir *All the Rage: A Partial Memoir in Two Acts and a Prologue* ([Penguin Random House Canada](#)), we'll learn how these traits, and many others, shaped one of the most important voices in the Canadian theatre, television and literary scenes.

Ever the playwright, Brad offers *All the Rage* in true dramatic structure. From his impoverished and difficult childhood in Northern British Columbia and Alberta, to his emergence as a queer man facing challenges breaking into the Canadian theatre world, and his subsequent successes during the grim reality of the global AIDS crisis, Brad details his world with his signature candour up until the year 2000.

Why are we getting just a portion of the play of Fraser's life? Well, because it is still unfolding. "I was approached to share my story in my early 30's," he reveals, "but it wasn't the right time. I was still living that part of my life. I needed some space to look back on what I'd done before I could write about it objectively."

by Jon Pressick

Hot Artist

That right time came after Brad wrote a piece on Facebook about World AIDS Day. Blessed with a good memory to complement one of the sharpest pens this country has ever seen, he knew that it was time to commit his story to paper.

That pandemic, much like our current world situation, brought up certain issues of anger in Brad. He saw so much indifference in the world as friends and lovers were cut down by AIDS. The same indifference we see now from governments and authority figures. "But at the same time," he offers, "there are amazing stories of kindness and resilience, both then and now."

All the Rage is a sharing of stories, and also a rumination on how Brad became who he is today. While he characterizes his story as, "not radically different from that of other gay guys," the entrancing combination of his tales, along with his attitude and opinions, is utterly compelling - growing up gay in Western Canada in the 60s and 70s, embracing a career in the arts, AIDS in the 80s, and the turbulence of the 90s. These all contribute to a fascinating look at an artist's evolution and a cultural critique, that recalls a time that is rarely recounted.

This is what Brad Fraser does. With the odds being stacked against him, and so many challenges thrown in his way, he looks back with both surprise and wisdom. He concludes, "With all of this, people could wonder 'How did he become a playwright?'...and I have to think 'How could I not?'"

All the Rage: A Partial Memoir in Two Acts and a Prologue will be released May 18, 2021.

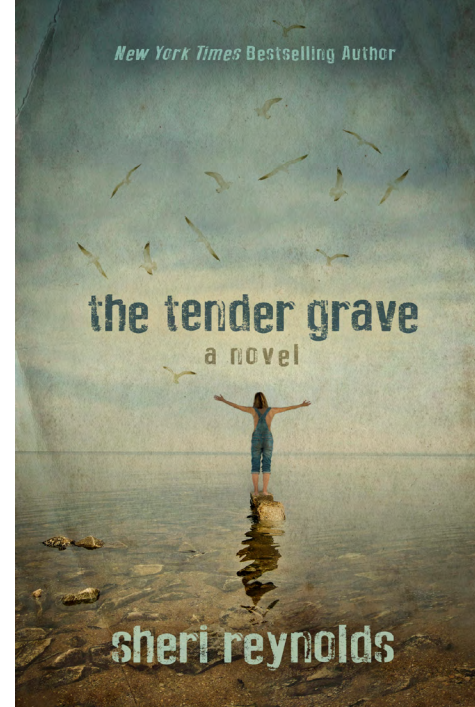
Jon Pressick is a writer who focuses on sex and sexuality. View his work at sexinwords.ca



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Fiction

while she remembered that it was Tuesday, when Randy's granny went to the physical therapist at eleven. So she followed the water, climbed up the bank, and cut through a field of dried hay to a place where some hedges and trees made her less conspicuous. Randy's granny kept chickens, and they ran up to her, clucking as she got close, probably hoping she had corn in her pockets. She shooed them away and crouched behind their coop...

There, she tried on stories in case she got caught: she was doing a 4-H project on poultry and didn't mean to trespass. Or her car had broken down and she needed to use the phone...

In a while, Randy's mom drove up in a green Ford and blew the horn. Then Randy himself hopped out and banged on the door yelling, "Granny!" He ushered the old lady down the steps and into the car, and they all drove away. Dori forced herself to count to a hundred slowly in case the granny had forgotten something essential. In her mind, she recited the pledge of allegiance and also a poem she'd memorized for Spanish class before she hurried to the back door, hoping it wasn't locked. When it was, she kicked at the door, but nothing happened. She kicked it again, hard, remembering the previous night, remembering those boys, remembering karate lessons from back in sixth grade. She kicked up high, near the lock, remembering video games she'd played with her boyfriend, remembering Owen Howe and how easy it turned out to be to crack his ribs.

She wondered if she really had an older half sister named Teresa King at all, or if it was just another story her mom had made up. Her mom made up all kinds of things: visions of the Virgin Mary, encounters with movie stars on far-away vacations, even medical conditions she didn't really have. Her mom was insane. Dori couldn't count on her mom. All her mom's stories were tattered; moths had eaten holes in them. You could fall right through. So why did she miss her mom so bad?

It made Dori crazy, how she hated her and still wished she could crawl into her lap. She wanted to die. She wished she'd died back on that bus, so she could finally stop struggling all the time. She should have thrown herself in front of the Greyhound as it pulled away...

...But suicide was the unforgivable sin. Her dad had called it "a one-way ticket to the Great Lake of Fire," and though she hadn't read *The Inferno* the year before when her teacher assigned it, she'd listened in class to the descriptions of that lowest circle of Hell, where Satan gnawed forever on the flesh of Judas Iscariot. And if anybody had good reason to off himself, it was Judas.

She couldn't commit suicide, no matter how much she wanted to. As she dozed in the cave, the church bells counted out the hours, and in a

The Tender Grave is available from Bywater Books.

Sheri Reynolds is the author of the seven novels and the full-length play, *Orabelle's Wheelbarrow*. She and her wife live in Cape Charles on Virginia's eastern shore. www.sherireynolds.com



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Photo: Courtesy of Dennis Findley



One of the challenges organizations are facing during the pandemic is the need to adapt to online content to keep in communication with their member base. [The ArQuives](#) is one of those places for the queer community, aspiring to be a significant resource and catalyst for those who strive for a future world where LGBTQ2+ people are accepted, valued, and celebrated.

Photo: Raegan Swanson courtesy of Pierre Gautreau



I was so pleased to speak with their Executive Director, **Raegan Swanson**, who has been with the organization since 2016, and is currently working on her PhD focusing on the role of community archives in Aboriginal and Inuit communities. Her focus is on communities that “haven’t been represented, or been able to tell their story,” she said. In this way her work, and the work of *The ArQuives*, are a beautiful union of community space and activism.

The organization is a history holder of personal and organizational archival records called fonds, a group of documents that share the same origin that have occurred naturally, as well as separate collections that consist of materials that have not been amalgamated. It houses textual records, audio-visual records, sound recordings, moving images, music, posters, photographs, prints, slides, negatives, artifacts, and artworks. They also provide educational support, public programming, and walking tours of Toronto, which have all been temporarily restricted to digital exhibitions through the pandemic.

“We house historical records for different communities to access, for *ACT UP*, *Buddies and Bad Times Theatre*, *LGBT Youth Line*, *Inside Out Film Festival*, *Pink Triangle Press* and *the AIDS Memorial* to name a few.” Swanson remarked on the awe of their guests when they visit The

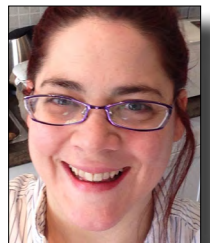
ArQuives and see just how many resources and collections there are. When I visited 34 Isabella a number of years ago, I remember being astonished at the cozy space with the wall-to-wall history.

This hoard of treasures is accessed regularly by high-school and university students, professors, and media organizations. They have even released a book [Out North: An Archive of Queer Activism and Kinship in Canada](#), which is an exploration and examination of the nation’s queer history and activism. It is Canada’s definitive visual guide to LGBTQ2+ movements, struggles, and achievements, written by **Craig Jennex** and **Nisha Eswaran**, in collaboration with *The ArQuives*.

There last in person exhibition was in 2016, before undergoing renovations which were completed in 2019, and included a new elevator and accessibility ramp. With their 50th anniversary on the horizon for 2023, Swanson stated, “The hope is that we can host an online conference component, allowing many other libraries, archives, and museums to attend as well.”

In the meantime, there are a number of free monthly [online trivia nights](#) planned, including *Queer Jesters and Comedians* on April 15. While you’re enjoying a good old queer get together please consider [donating](#) to this marvellous organization. They have some corporate funding partners, but there’s a lack of provincial funding, and therefore it’s vital that the community contribute to this place of our communal history to help keep them in operation for many more years to come.

Kelly Wilk is a freelance writer and single mom to red-headed, Irish, Aries boy who is growing up way too fast. Follow their adventures on PinkPlayMags’ parenting blog “The Ginger Gent”, and also on Kelly’s own website and blog, Brave. Creative. Me at www.kellywilk.ca



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In response to COVID-19 and the closure of venues due to restrictions on social gatherings, all events, festivals, and other group activities have either been cancelled or postponed for the immediate future.

In the meantime there have been several creative virtual events taking place online.

Please check our sister site's listings of events that are happening from a screen near you www.thebuzzmag.ca/events

Our regular events print section will return as soon as venues start reopening.

Let's all stay safely connected.



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From The Heart

By Mychol Scully

Born in the late 1950s, it would be decades before I experienced anything approaching “queer literature.”

In the meantime, during my teen years, I was obsessively interested in science fiction, fantasy and speculative fiction. I think part of the appeal was that unlike other genres of literature, these books offered me fertile ground to imagine worlds different from the one I felt trapped in. Escapism, yes, but a healthy escapism that gave me a sense of possibility and hope that the future had a place for me.

As a confused queer kid, I sometimes felt that I had more in common with the aliens in these stories than the humans who interacted with them. In fact, during much of my pre-pubescent time and into my late teens, I entertained a fantasy that I WAS an extraterrestrial! Looking at the world around me and the humans that inhabited it, I was hard-pressed to identify with my fellow humans. “These are not my people,” was my mantra in those days.

The first gay-themed novel I ever read was *The Front Runner* by Patricia Nell Warren. Published in 1974, *The Front Runner* is noted for being the first contemporary gay novel to achieve mainstream commercial and critical success. I cannot overstate the impact that reading this novel had on me. For the first time in my young life, here was a story about two men, a coach and his star

athlete, in a romantic relationship. The experience shook me to the core and changed how I saw the world. If such a story could exist, then that meant that I wasn’t “the only one” to have these thoughts and feelings. There were others like me.

In modern society, there is much discussion about the importance of representation in media, whether books, film or television. I can absolutely confirm, from my own experience as a young, queer kid, that representation does matter. Whether queer, a person of colour or a member of any other marginalized group, seeing your truth represented in the media you consume is a validation that provides reassurance that you matter; that you belong, and that there is a place in the world for you.

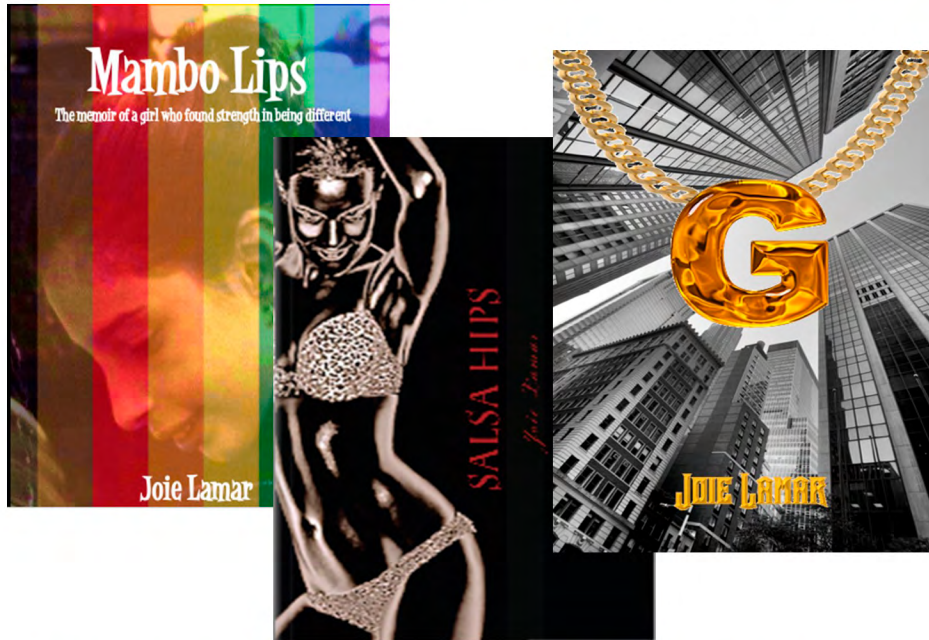
In response to the dinosaurs who complain that “everything is gay now,” I would push back and say that not “everything” is gay, but at least not everything is straight, cis-gender and white now. For kids growing up thinking that they were the only one of their kind, representation can be a life-saving experience. Deal with it.

Mychol Scully is Senior Art Director for INspired Media publications PinkPlayMags, theBUZZ, The Local Biz Magazine, and The Pink Pages Directory. Mychol is available for thoughtful conversation or lascivious teasing any time at mychol@mychol.com.



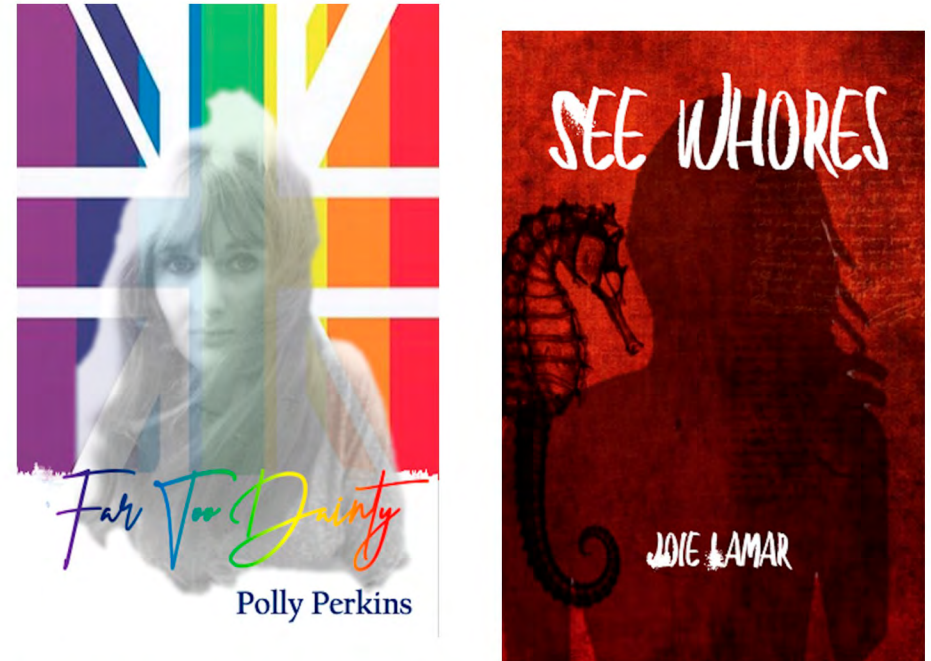
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Spring Horoscopes

APRIL 2021 to JUNE 2021

by Julie Antoinette

Aries (March 21 – April 20)

Remember the scene in the *Wizard of Oz* where Dorothy is travelling along the yellow brick road and meets a fork in the road? It is at this point where she meets the Scarecrow, who supposedly doesn't have a brain. This meeting is very symbolic in the next steps she will take. Sometimes, in life, we are at a crossroads and must choose a path: right or left, backward or forward. Use your brain and choose wisely.

Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

Family matters are at the forefront recently and all other priorities must take second precedence. There are times in life where it is necessary to halt our regular daily routines to attend to interruptions necessitated by other people until they are sorted or well in hand. Step up and do your part – but don't overdo it. Let others enjoy the gift of contribution as well.

Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

You feel a sudden pull toward engaging in creative projects. Whatever that medium may be – painting, music, sewing, crafting – you must give it space to manifest. Your creative energy is burgeoning and seeking expression and it would be wise to allow it.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

Burnout has now arrived. But you can't say you weren't warned. Although you felt you could shoulder the burden that has been requested of you and that the result would be worth it, it has taken its toll. Now you must re-direct your energies to replenishing your own reserves or the consequences could be permanent.

Leo (July 23 – August 22)

You are filled with the desire to carry on a family tradition of some sort. History and cultural tradition hold a deep meaning for you. Perhaps shifts taking place in your family at the moment are prompting you to preserve something of the past into the present and bequeath it to future generations. Your descendants will thank you for your dedication.

Virgo (August 23 – September 23)

Be careful of manipulation from a person who is nearby. This person may present themselves in a victimized manner but you can be sure that they are not the victim in this scenario. You must examine your naivete and the reasons why you choose to believe the best intentions in others at all costs – usually your cost. Recognize the red flags. They are always present.

Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Someone has taken the liberty to harass you in the hopes of securing an object of their desiring. They do not understand that one may attract more bees with honey than with vinegar. Do not feel in the least obligated to respond to their approach. It will only reinforce them in this errant behavior and cause you to disrespect yourself.

Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

They say revenge is a dish best served cold. They also say that he who seeks revenge must dig two graves. Sounds chilly! Be careful to examine the shallow satisfaction that may come from the demise of your enemy. It is transient and vicarious at best and truly unfulfilling. If you could remember a time where the joy of goodwill toward others filled your heart it would be beneficial to engage in this feeling instead.

Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21)

The current world events have forced your need for social interaction to be starved to the point of detriment. You must find a way to circumvent this and to re-engage with others by whatever means possible. Virtual interactions at this time are plentiful. Perhaps you could create an online social group to build mutual support. You will help others in the same boat as yourself.

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

Your life often appears as a straight line with little deviation from the norm. Work, home, eat, sleep, rinse and repeat. Someone in passing has a very different experience than yours in terms of their daily routines. Take note of the differences between your lives and how it has shaped your personalities. What if you were to swap places? What benefits do you imagine would take place from that experience?

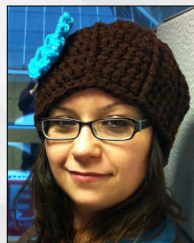
Aquarius (January 20 – February 19)

You are deeply discouraged at the current state of humanity. The events of the past year have greatly diminished any sense of advancement you thought society was making as a whole. Bear in mind that some leaps forward are often preceded by a step backward and that great change always comes after chaos. It's always darkest just before the dawn.

Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

An ending of an era is nigh in your life. The signs are present all around you. The most painful aspects will come from your resistance to the ending. Conversely, the most beautiful moments will come from your embracing change and letting go. Life is a series of holding on and letting go. You will not stop a river's current, so it is best to avail yourself to its direction.

Julie is a Sociology and Psychology graduate, a Psychotherapy Intern and a lifelong student of the psyche. She seeks to relay intuitive messages of guidance from the collective astrological archetypes.



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