

QT

flirting
with
FIRE

ISSUE NO. 19



**BI+ ARTS
FESTIVAL**
CELEBRATING QUEER CREATIVITY

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September 2025

key CUTIE

QT and the Bi+ Arts Festival invite you to explore *Flirting with Fire*.

Whether it's the initial spark of someone new or the slow burn of an ongoing crush, flirting ignites a fire within us. Maybe you've felt that excited embarrassment that will blush and burn your cheeks, or the way a lover's touch will leave a trail of heat on your skin. Maybe you've been pulled into a dangerous, explosive passion like a moth to flame. Maybe you've gotten too close to the fire and been burned.

Creators were asked to consider the following prompts:

- When was the last time you felt hot and bothered when flirting?
- Describe the first time you felt ignited. What was it like to feel a spark for the first time?
- When do you feel drawn to a dangerous flame? How do you give in to those desires? What's it like to get burned? What's it like to enjoy the burn?
- Fire can be dangerous but it's also a gathering place. The hearth fire is a place that communities come together to connect. In what ways does flirting feel like a hearth fire?
- Tell us about your flames that have burned fast and bright. Tell us about your slow burns.
- Have you found a twin flame? What did it feel like to see your own fire in someone else?
- Sometimes, whether on a personal or societal level, you have to burn everything down in order to be reborn in the flames. What does it look like to find freedom in flames?

Our 4th edition in the Flirt series, *Flirting with Fire* showcases artists and writers who identify anywhere and everywhere across the bi+ spectrum.

Feed You to EACH OTHER

by **Daryl Bruce**

Short Story

Daryl Bruce (he/him) is a queer scholar, poet, and writer based in Kijipuktuk/Halifax. A recent graduate of Concordia University's Creative Writing MA, his creative work has appeared in The Malahat Review, The New Quarterly, PRISM, and others.

Carter tells himself he came just for Dana, but he's lying. He also came for the slip of River's grin through firelight, for the sick-sweet thrill of maybe ... maybe. He stands too close to the bonfire, jeans itching with ash, eyes watering from smoke and hormone-laced curiosity.

River circles the pit barefoot, a feral dog with a bottle of bloodshot-tinted wine. The crowd feeds the flames with anything they can find: trodden leaves, ripped photos, a chain of plastic beads. The fire eats it all, licks at their fingers for more.

Dana stands beside Carter, shoulder brushing his. She sips beer and watches River like a girl who knows exactly how dangerous her pet is, how penetrating his bite. She leans in, lips glinting. "We should feed it something real," she murmurs. "Don't you think?"

Carter's throat tightens. He says nothing.

Dana spots a girl by the logs; small, with a shaved head, glitter on her cheeks. Dana crooks her finger, beckoning her close. The girl hesitates. Dana leans to her ear, voice low but clear, "Want to do this with me? You can say no." The girl smiles, a shy thing that breaks open when Dana cups her jaw. "Yes," she breathes, and Dana's mouth is already on hers, greedy as the flames before them. The kiss isn't sweet. Dana pushes the girl back onto a stump, climbs into her lap. Their teeth click, hands digging under each other's coats, fingers twisting in belt loops, Dana's mouth working its way to the girl's throat, licking the pulse there like she's tasting a peach she wants to split open. The fire spits sparks onto Dana's hair. She doesn't flinch. The girl moans, soft but real, the sound making someone behind Carter bark out a low "fuck yeah."

River's voice drifts over Carter's shoulder, mocking, "This is the kind of show they want, right? Innocent little girls gone bad, eating each other alive."

Dana pulls back, eyes glassy, lips raw. She turns her head, hair falling over her face. "Oh, you want a show?" she calls to the circle of boys leaning in, hands shoved in pockets to hide their cocks twitching at the sight. She presses her mouth to the girl's ear again, another whispered question, another nod. Dana's fingers slip under the waistband of the girl's jeans, slow and slick, just enough that the girl gasps, thighs quivering under Dana's hips. Dana grins, her gaze pinging toward Carter, catching the way his breath stutters.

"It's so easy for you to watch us," she purrs. "Two girls? You'd pay for it. But two boys? That's different, huh?" She climbs off the girl, fingers shiny, wipes them on the hem of her skirt. The girl's eyes flutter open, dazed but

smiling, as she melts back into the shadows, sated and sticky. Dana scans the ring of faces around her. Her eyes snag on two guys by the edge, both scruffy in army jackets, beer bottles clutched like shields. She saunters over, hips rolling with leftover heat. “You two,” she says, voice bright with wickedness. “Kiss. Right now. Do it for us.”

One snorts. The other shifts from foot to foot. “What, like, really?” the taller one says. His face is blotchy with sunburn. Dana smiles, all teeth.

“Yeah, really. Open your pretty mouths. Let us see what you’re hiding. Or are you too scared to look like us?”

A ripple of laughter rolls around the circle. One of the guys, the shorter one, bites his lip, cheeks flushed pink. He glances at his friend, eyes grazing his mouth, then back to Dana. “Fuck it,” he mutters. The taller one laughs, a raw, startled sound that cracks halfway out of his throat. For a second it looks like they’ll bail, but the shorter boy tugs him by the collar, so hard the bottle in his other hand thuds to the dirt. He pulls him in, lips landing rough. At first, it’s clumsy, both of them stiff, awkward. The taller boy tries to pull back, but the short one growls, grabs the back of his neck. They both laugh into each other’s mouths, noses bumping. Then the taller boy’s hand fists in his friend’s hair, and the push becomes a pull. They part, gasping, but the taller one chases him back down, open-mouthed now, licking along his lower lip like he’s tasting the sweat, the beer, the stupid daring heat of the fire all at once. Someone close enough to see it all groans low and guttural. The short one grips a handful of his friend’s ass, a squeeze that leaves no doubt what he wants the crowd to see. Their hips nudge together. It’s messy, not polite at all, and that makes the circle lean closer, makes some howl like wolves.

Someone flicks beer into the flames, steam coils around the boys like a halo about to catch. The taller boy pulls back just enough to let a string of spit break between their lips, forehead pressed to his friend’s jaw. Both of them flushed, pupils dilated, breath heavy, ragged.

Dana laughs, soft and mean, her voice a promise. The boys stumble apart, but not far, knuckles brushing like they might want another taste when no one’s watching. She locks eyes with Carter, who’s still rooted to the same patch of dirt, every inch of him strung tight. She steps close, waves her fingertips under his nostrils so he can smell the other girl’s sweetness. “Next time,” she whispers, eyes drifting to River behind him. “Next time it’s you two. I’ll feed you to each other if you don’t do it yourselves.”

The fire roars like a living thing, hungry for more skin, more smoke, more sins that taste good going down. Carter doesn’t move. He wants to. He doesn’t. Not yet.

The bonfire’s collapsed to hot coals, but it’s still hungry, snapping at the scraps they throw in. Most of the party has bled away. The short boy and the taller one stumble off into the trees, arms locked, necks bent to whisper. They keep glancing back at the pit like they’re leaving something behind they’ll come back for.

Carter stands a few feet from the embers, boots sunk in the churned-up dirt. River paces the edge of the glow, bare feet streaked in ash, bottle swinging loose in one hand. Dana crouches on her haunches, elbows on her knees, watching them like they’re animals that don’t know they’re about to be caged together.

“You could run,” she says, voice low, sly. “I’d love to see you try.”

River lets out a laugh, sharp enough to break the night. “He wants to. He always does.”

Carter tries to spit something back, but his throat closes. He wipes his palm on his jeans, eyes flicking between them, caught on River’s grin, Dana’s stare, like she could bite him just to see him squeal.

“When did you know?” Dana asks, words sharp enough to nick skin. “Not the sweet lie. The real moment. Give it to me, filthy.”

River tosses the empty bottle into the pit. It lands with a crack, glass melting into the glow. He wipes his mouth with the back of his wrist. “Last day before Christmas break, tenth grade. Locker room smelled like sweat and piss. He’s pretending to read stats at the bench. I go to shower. He follows.”

Carter snorts, but the sound breaks halfway out of his chest. “I didn’t follow.”

“You did,” River says, voice bright with cruelty and something kinder under it. “You came in slowly. Kept your shoes on. Tied and retied your laces while you watched the steam rise off my shoulders.”

Dana’s lips glitter in the coals. “He always puts on that sweet boy mask. The altar boy, the tenor in the choir. I’d have paid to see you both in there.”

River keeps going, stepping closer. “I left the curtain open. I stood there, soap running down my back...down my ass. I said, ‘*Come here, hero. Lather my calves.*’ He laughed. Called me a slut.”

→

"I was scared," Carter retorts. "I thought..."

River doesn't let him finish. "You thought if you stepped in the water, you'd never come out. You'd lick the soap off my hip, taste the back of my neck, let your fingers drift down further ... further."

Carter's breath rattles. "I went home and laid in bed. Thought about how you'd smell, the feel of your hair. I bit my lip so hard, I savoured the blood it produced."

Dana hums, her grin soft and wicked at once. "And you never touched him. All these years, you let the fence stand."

Carter tries to look away. Dana's hand shoots up, grabs his jaw, holds him in place. "Look at him," she says. "Look at your best friend, your dirty secret, the passion you tried to drown into extinction."

River strides in, chest to chest now, breath warm on Carter's cheek. "What did you think about? Say it."

Carter's voice comes out raw. "Your mouth. The way you'd bite my shoulder. The way you'd laugh after."

Dana laughs sharp, nails digging into his chin. "Was that so hard?"


The wind kicks the last embers loose. They scatter like fireflies gone too soon. The three of them stand hip to hip in the mud, shirts reeking of smoke, hair tousled.

Carter's lip twists into something that might be a smile. "I hate you."

River presses his forehead to Carter's. "No you don't."

Dana slips behind him, wraps her arms around his waist. Her voice cuts through the hush, bright and mean and bright again. "Next time, I'm not asking. Next time I'm feeding you to each other."

The wind moans delicately around them. They don't touch more than this, but they know. They're standing on the edge with no more lattices, only flame.



“
I'm
BISEXUAL.
Don't ignore
HALF
of me so
you can
FIT
me in a box.
”

– Taylor Jenkins Reid
(The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo)

Something REAL

by Gladys Lou

Sketch / Poem

Gladys Lou is a curator, writer, and artist based in Toronto. She is currently pursuing an MA in Curatorial Studies at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College in New York, and holds a BA in Art & Art History and Psychology from the University of Toronto. Her writings have been published by *Femme Art Review*, *Pleasure Dome* and *Hamilton Artist Inc.* in Canada, as well as *Impulse Magazine* and the *AMP* in New York.

Angels and demons and queers,
friends, muses, and whatnot?
A blue rose turns yellow,
then bursts into rainbow
petals flipping day by day,
like photographs shared between
the three of us.

I said *I love you*
to my ex-lovers,
to people I thought I loved.
So why should I say
I love you
to you?

"Chill it, don't spill it,"
the carton warns,
as thoughts fizz like coconut water
between knowing glances,
playful touches,
and the careful keeping
of each other's secrets—
bottled up
in warm midnight air,
somehow everywhere at once.

Drunk on lime soda and beer
beneath a gas station glow,
five TV screens buzzing,
your voice
and an ice cream sandwich
the only things keeping me
conscious—half-awake.

Your words ignite
a phosphene drift
a taste of light
I didn't know existed.

Frank O'Hara's ghost
dwells inside
Grace Hartigan's
brushstrokes.
Yayoi's dots pulse
in the soft, hidden corners
of Joseph's quiet dreams.

The sky blushes queer.
We're somewhere between
midnight and sunset,
too far along the lines
to step back —
must step back
before getting too close.

And still,
I want to say
something real.
But instead,
I just said:
See you next time!
Because maybe
that's the purest form
of love I can give



unmet NEEDS

by JAM

Poem

JAM or Julia Amerongen Maddison is a scientist-turned artist who is learning to let herself be angry sometimes. // IG: @sciartjam

The wildfires blaze, and so do I.

All of these untended wounds burning on the surface;
we have been telling you that enough is enough,
we the forests and we the people —

but apparently we must show you.

These are unmet needs combusting.

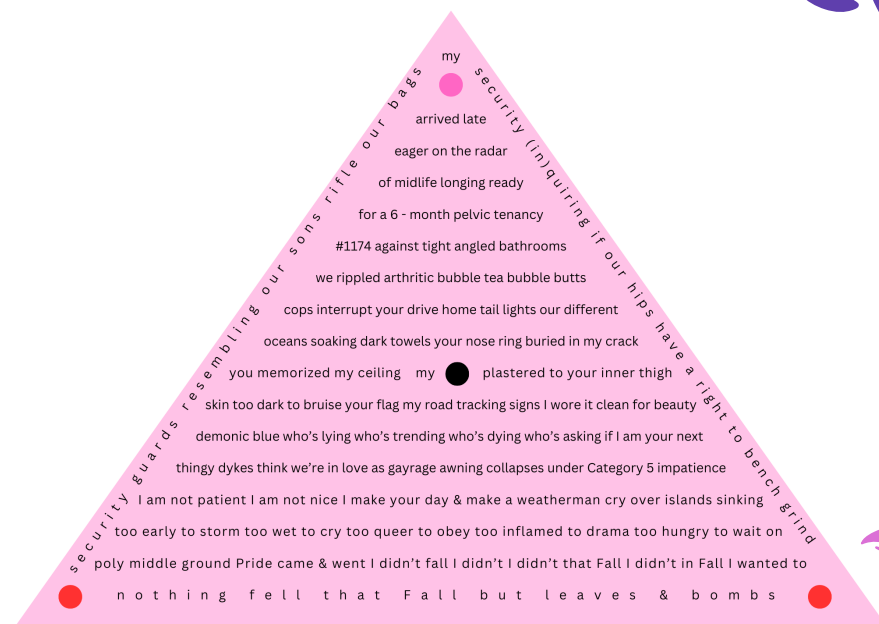
This is a hunger that should have been fed incrementally. Now, raging.

Pride CUMS b4 Fall

by Gitanjali Lena

Visual Poem

Gitanjali is an Illankai diaspora poet, comic, and cellist from T'karonto. They co-founded the Teardrop Collective for South Asian theatre artists. Their writing appears in Fireweed Feminist Quarterly, Whose Your Daddy Queer Parenting Anthology, Parallel Tracks 2.0, Hir Magazine, the Maza Collective Digital Anthology, and the forthcoming Coven of the East Anthology.



you grow your hair LONG, i cut my hair SHORT

by **Leila Kazeminejad**

Creative Nonfiction

Leila Kazeminejad (she/they) is a bisexual woman-of-colour dedicated to colouring her writing in honesty. Derived from her life experiences, Leila feels her way into writing and hopes that her perspective can affect others in the exact moment of life where they need it the most.

the first year we were together, you revealed yourself to me and changed indefinitely. i remember that night, the way you asked me for permission before transitioning before my eyes. i didn't like how you changed my plans, the visions i had of a future uncomplicated, a lens blurred with vaseline and pastel smiles, happiness in a white dress and a fitted black suit. i thought you ruined that. but then i saw you hadn't changed at all, you were not the stranger i envisioned, you changed and you didn't.

when i chopped my hair into an a-line bob with microbangs, i wanted you to see a change in me. maybe it was just so you would tell me i was beautiful, maybe it was because i wanted you to see that i was different from the girl who didn't fully understand or accept you. i asked you if long or short hair suited me better. you didn't pick either; just said i looked good either way.

i wanted to hear your heart pound for
me. i wanted to hear your mind think
of me. i wanted you to see me.

you grow your hair long, i cut my hair short.

you disappeared without telling me. i showed up to your house. you told me you didn't want me anymore. you wouldn't respond to me begging for answers; i wouldn't accept the end. my hair was just above my chest with overgrown bangs, slightly stringy, worn down from a day full of lectures.

our break-up lasted a month and during it, i cut my hair into the a-line bob again. i got bangs again. break-ups need transformation, i said to myself, but was i just returning back to the girl who wanted to say she was always by your side? was it a physical change that stated i was leaving you behind or was it just a return to form?

i took you back immediately when you asked and held onto the resentment of being the girl you left behind.

i had those fuckass bangs again, growing, growing, growing out. again, i am the same girl. i changed and i didn't.

you cut your hair short.

i grow my hair long.

this time felt different. maybe i feel it now after going through it with every single day break up. and the way you turn off and ignore me when i come to you with something that you did to hurt me. i'm screaming at a wall, i'm making myself the villain so you don't have to be, i'm strategizing tone, script, time-of-day so that you will be able to listen to me and participate.

you said i start fights.
and that they're exhausting.

i told you that i don't.

i just share my feelings.

they only become a fight when you
insist my feelings shouldn't exist and
then you cry about how you're a bad
person when you decide that my
feelings are valid enough. and then
i'm apologizing for making you feel
bad. and then my feelings are
forgotten because you are the only
thing you think of and cherish which
is funny

(you say you hate yourself, you say you love
me. you will yourself to believe i'm
self-sufficient so you can keep prioritizing
yourself even when i need you. you hate that
you love yourself, but still think you're a
piece of shit, and you think it's everyone
else's fault that you are so alone when
you're the one who pushes everyone away).

i don't care that you cut your hair: i don't know why you did it, but i don't want
to be in your head again, thinking about why you do the things that you do so
that i feel better, thinking about if you think im pretty or if your love for me
was ever real.

i didn't cut my hair this time.

i took myself on the date we never finished and finished it myself.
i don't need you, but more importantly i don't want you,

i don't want you at all.

“

BISEXUALITY has the potential to subvert the **STRUCTURE** of the gender binary, since bisexuality is perceived as a type of **DESIRE** that doesn't distinguish between people based on their **GENDERS**.”

– Shiri Eisner

(Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution)

High WATER (water x earth)

by Alyssa Jane O'Dell

Poem

Alyssa Jane O'Dell is a queer writer, regenerative farmer, and visual/audio artist living on unceded Algonquin Anishinaabe territory (Ottawa). She once had a full breakdown after being asked by a teacher to perfectly reproduce Vincent van Gogh's Irises, but has been doing better since. // IG: @janefloe

Rivers converge within you
a flood that traces with long fingers
marks of high water across my soil
then recede in easy flow

I can only move as stone grinds stone
never quite able to stay shoulder to
shoulder

with you like water
— playful, silver-quick light.
and me like earth
— sturdy, burn-slow eruption.

my thirsty rock bound roots
may sip,
may never hold

surrendered to the sheer-shape current
debris of what came before
strewn across every inch of shore
layers powerless before the carving
the crack breaking
the life bringing
that is water

a millennia from now they will find it
study it carefully with carbon dating,
eyes furrowed against microscopic lenses

a clear geologic stratum
deep time boundary line
perfectly preserved evidence
of the flood lines you left
across the soil of my soul



Molotov

by **David Phillips**

Poem

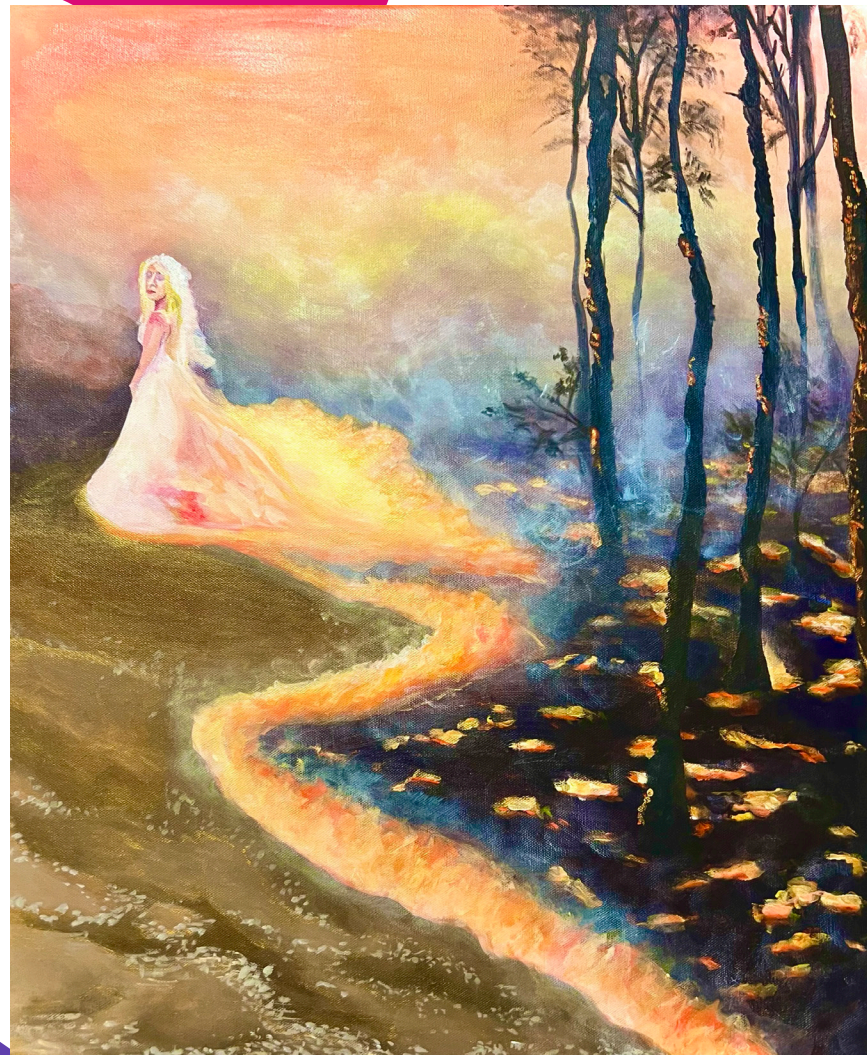
David Phillips. Writer, thinker, islander.

A spark of lustrous abandon
A patent disregard
In the blush
You press gentle to my cheek
Tendered giddy
The burning flush
Drenched by a taste of
Scolding lips—
We palpitate
On the soft deft clutched
Hand in yours—
Ignition in bated
Hushes against the neck
Ragged gasps in
Shafts light on
Salted backs

The TOWER

by Sarah Reive

Painting



Sarah Reive explores the theme of seeking refuge in one's environment, in relationship, and in oneself. She uses a vibrant colour palette to celebrate the intimate, joyful details of everyday life. Through her art, she leans into moments of connection, comfort, and the softness that sustains us.

Unarchiving DESIRE

by Jade Crimson Rose Da Costa

Poem

Jade Crimson Rose Da Costa (they/them/she/her) is a gender nonbinary queer woman of colour; community organizer; scholar; educator; and creative writer across Central Southern Ontario with emergent horizons in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. To learn more about their work, visit: <https://www.jadecrimson.com>.

Flirting terrifies me.

It used to be fun, a way to seem charming and alluring, coy and interesting—sexy, even. It was a pathway towards a dream, a roadmap of desires, a portal for teenage fantasy. It was the reason I spent hours at my living room computer writing slash fan fiction, crafting love stories of boys I wanted, and boys I wanted to be; of finding ways to rewrite my sexuality and bring queer worlds into being.

I used to flirt with fire,
with the desire to love,
and be loved differently.

But that was before.

Before the assaults. Before the cat calls and the crushing weight of puberty. Before I could translate my childhood trauma into anxiety and self loathing. Before the depression; the dissociation; the psychotherapy. Before a brown bottle made me feel giddy and I had trouble sleeping. Before I understood why movies about tortured children resonated with me. Before I learned about what rape actually means and that friend zoning isn't a real cartography but a tool of white supremacy.

It was before my body stopped knowing me;
before it was deprived of oxygen and robbed of gasoline.

Flirting used to be a wish,
Before it became a promise,
Before it became a threat.

Now I don't flirt at all.
Or if I do, it's with trepidation.

The last time it happened it was on accident,
and I'm not even sure it was flirting.

A friend of mine asked to "top me." Not sexually. Not physically. But metaphorically. We were working on a project together and they were asking to take charge. It was usually me who did that. I blushed. I don't know why.

But I do know why.

For hadn't I always wanted to be topped?

Not dominated. Not raped. Not obliterated. Not taken down a peg. But taken care of. Guided. Mentored. Made someone else's responsibility. Let my desire become their sole priority.

"You're blushing," they gushed. I blushed harder.

I mentioned it to them later, casually, under the guise of reconceptualizing flirting and polygamy, pondering out loud what love and friendship would look like if we shifted them beyond that bounds of sexuality; beyond the relationship norms of cis-heteropatriarchy; beyond material definitions of wanting.

My friend recalled the memory sweetly, agreeing that friends can be lovers, *because what does "lovers" actually mean? Why is everything mediated through sex and cuddling?* (My words, not theirs).

I do that a lot. Couch my feelings in theory. I'm doing it right now. Unironically.

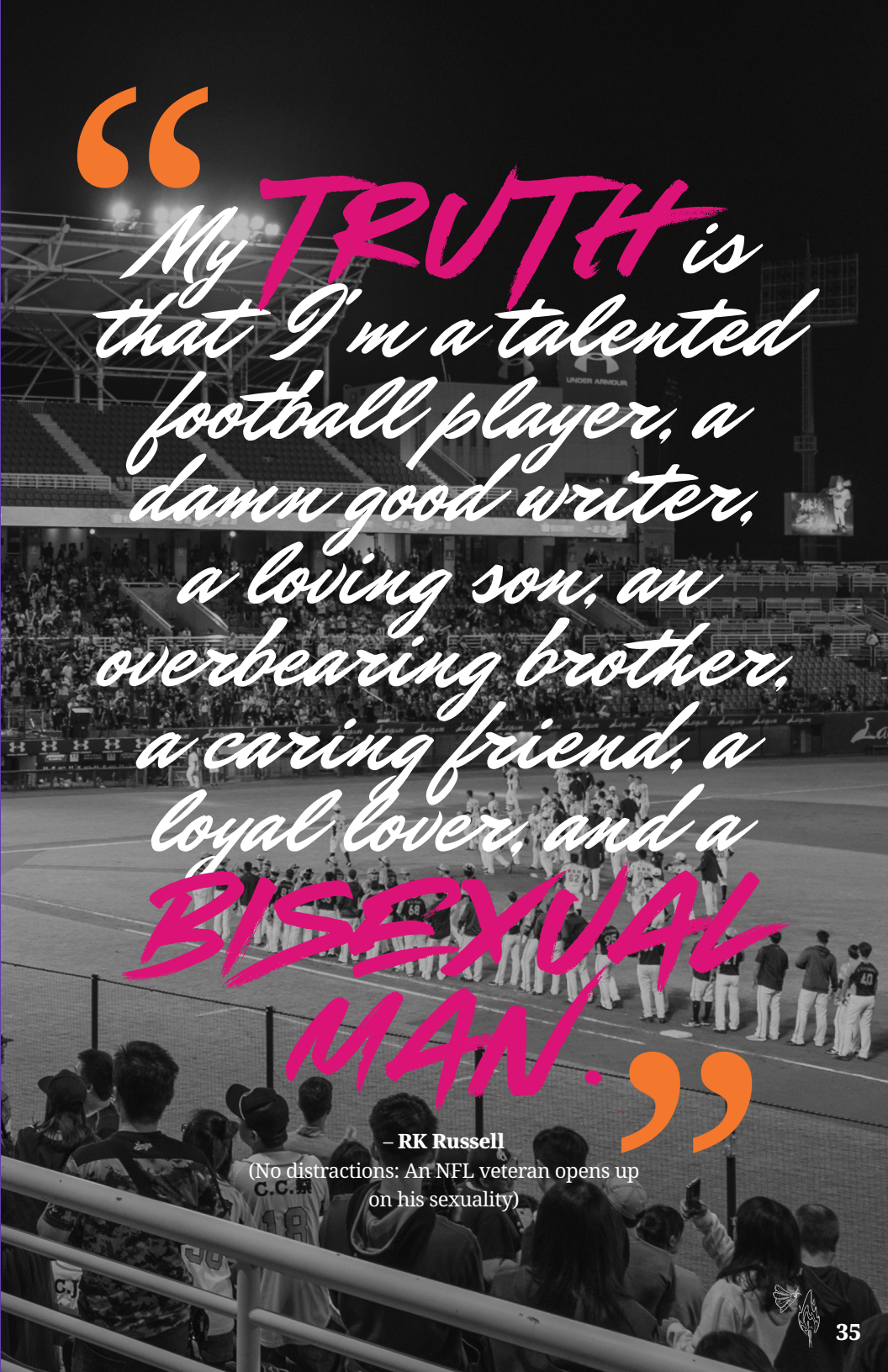
I wonder, maybe, if what I was trying to express was the feeling of flirting with fire, and if that was what my friend and I had been doing the day they'd asked to top me. It felt like it. I was hot and bothered. Literally. My face was red, my body concerned, utterly unstilled by the moment. But not in a bad way. I felt scared but safe. I trusted my friend, and it felt good to be noticed; to be seen as someone with a body and awkward feelings; to make clear my naked vulnerability. My oxygen and gasoline.

Maybe it felt like flirting because they didn't want anything from me. Maybe it felt like flirting because I didn't want anything from me.

And maybe that was the fire.

Not the promise of something to come, but the remembering of something lost; the embrace of a forgotten wish, the allure of a nostalgic dream.

Another queer world in the making.



“My **TRUTH** is that I'm a talented football player, a damn good writer, a loving son, an overbearing brother, a caring friend, a loyal lover, and a **BISEXUAL MAN.**”

– RK Russell

(No distractions: An NFL veteran opens up on his sexuality)

seduce the SILENCE

by **Vanida Lim**

Dance

Vanida is a freelance graphic designer based in Toronto who has a love for solo traveling. When she's not a digital nomad remote-working globally, she enjoys indulging in any other form of creative self-expression and design. // IG: @VanidaLim

video narration:

“Hi, my name is Vanida. I'm a graphic designer. Self-expression is really important to me, whether that's through art, design, tattoos, makeup, fashion, or most importantly — dance.

I'm not a professional dancer by any means. I do it for fun as a hobby and a workout. Heels class is my favourite because it challenges how I move — physically and mentally. There's a version of me that only shows up when I dance: *she's flirty, she's sassy, she's confident.*

If you saw me in real life in a crowded room, I'd probably come across as quiet and introverted. I don't drink alcohol, I rarely go to parties, but when I dance? *Who is this diva?*

A lot of people (especially dates) have told me they couldn't tell if I liked them at first because I never make eye contact. I'm so bad at it! I can be awkward, even avoidant. But in dance? I don't know why it's different. Heels dance is hardcore *flirting*. There's no words. I become expressive in ways I can't explain. Through movement, musicality, and lyrics — I say things I'd never say out loud.

Oh, I'm fully aware of my outfit choices in class. I dress depending on the song or my mood, so some days I'll look like a tomboy and other days it's sex appeal — cunty and all.

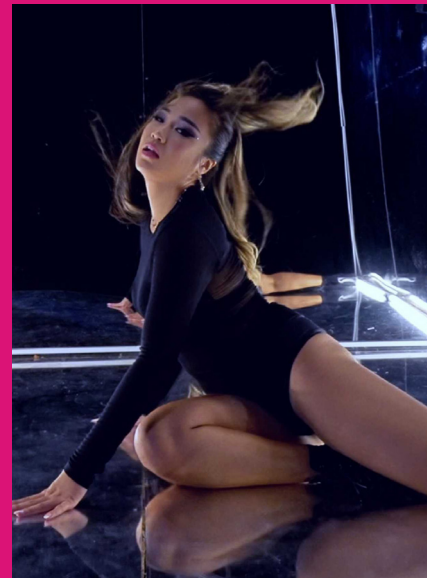
I'm in my thirties by the way. The more my outfits or movements make straight people uncomfortable, the more I love it.

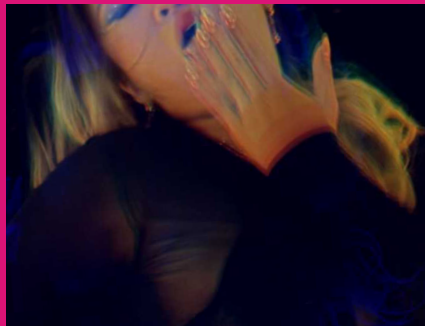
I'm grateful I get to travel all around the world and pack my heels with me. I try to regularly go to studio drop-in classes. Toronto's dance scene is pretty big! There's beginner to advanced levels, heels to hip hop styles like salsa, house, and more. The dance teachers are amazing and work hard.

Dance is therapeutic. You shut the world out for an hour to have fun and sweat. In heels class, I get to dance in a room full of supportive, hot, badass women. Like c'mon, how lucky am I?! Sometimes the song selected is slow and sensual... sometimes it's bad bitch energy. Either way, it's a vibe.

Whatever it is, it's never just steps. When I dance, I stop asking permission. I take up space. I seduce the silence. I'm not performing for anyone besides myself. *I'm just flirting with fire.* ”

dance video frame selects:





watch full video:

<https://youtu.be/EH255OFoxms?si=JLk-7YYWYhPASihs>



credits:

Choreographer & Video Editing:

Rose Harris

www.roseharris.ca

IG: @rose.harris1

Videographer:

Phil Kim

IG: @kimfilms

Song:

"Don't Stop" by GoGo Morrow

Studio:

Moonlight Film Studio, Toronto



about

QT

QUEER TORONTO
LITERARY MAGAZINE

Queer Toronto Literary Magazine is a non-profit dedicated to elevating and celebrating queer voices in Canada. QT was started in response to the criminal shortage of Canadian queer literary magazines. There are so many queer artists out there! And in times of crisis, maintaining community and connection is vital.

QT brings together our collective projects to create that sense of shared space. QT celebrates the art queer people make for ourselves and for each other.

www.gtmag.ca
@qtlitmag

about



The Bi+ Arts Festival is an annual celebration of bisexual/ bi+ visibility, culture and history. We seek to connect bi+ audiences and artists/ authors, to challenge bi-erasure and biphobia in the arts, and to create safe spaces for learning, imagination, and creative expression.

@biartsfestival

Thank you to all the volunteers at QT and Bi+ Arts Festival, without whom neither organization could exist.

credits

magazine design & art direction

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