

QT 9





SEPTEMBER 23, 2022

WELCOME!

Happy Bi+ Visibility Day!

Flirt. Flirt? Flirt! What does it mean to look across a room at someone and catch their eye? How does it feel when you flirt? What does it look like?

In the queer community, flirting isn't always straightforward. We create spaces and symbols and aesthetics to communicate but those are often co-opted or misread. What do you do, to get flirty?

"Flirt" is issue no. 9 for QT and the official zine for the 6th annual Bi+ Arts Festival. This issue showcases 11 artists and writers who identify as bi, pan, fluid, queer, or otherwise non-monosexual.

-Pax Santos, Founding Editor

ABOUT THE ISSUE DESIGNER

This whimsical fantasy was designed by Bengali royalty Ayonti Mahreen Huq (AMH). Their art is available for viewing via @amhisamhitsuamh on Instagram.

“The reason we’re successful, darling? My overall charisma, of course.”

—Freddie Mercury

In times of crisis, maintaining community is vital. QT brings together our collective projects to create that sense of shared space. Queer Toronto Literary Magazine is a nonprofit dedicated to elevating and celebrating queer voices in Canada.

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.

Thank you to all the writers, poets, artists and makers for allowing QT and Bi+ Arts Festival to share your work with the world. Thank you to all the volunteers at QT and Bi+ Arts Festival, without whom neither organization could exist.

CONTENT

A Siren's Blade

Celina Lucarelli.....6

Yonge and College

Alana Boltwood.....12

Speak to Me

Kris Lodu.....14

Her love is Chaotic

Ayonti Mahreen Huq.....16

Untitled

Shrew.....19

Rainbow Vulva

Shine Maverick.....22

CONTENT

A limerick History of My Queer Flirtations

KL Dolson.....24

On love/A Body of love

Akaash.....27

Dizzying Heights

Anuja.....30

Dream \\ Glimpse \\ Whimsical Garden

Anastasia Meicholas.....34

“It Ain’t Over ‘Til the Pink lady Sings”

Allison Fradkin.....38

AUTHOR

Celina Lucarelli

TITLE

A Siren's Blade

MEDIUM

Fiction



A Siren's Blade

"Only if you swear to give me your eternal soul." I hold their eyes heavy, watch their face flicker as they take in the absurdity of what I've just said.

"What do you want it for?"

These are the ones that I like. They don't laugh at my request. No. They lean in because they have chaos laced into their soul. They are the unloved and unknown. Wanderwhisps, rootless, the ones who still dance at the edge of their daydreams and sometimes forget if they are breathing. They always find me.

I let smoke curl from my mouth and slowly take in the length of their body. Slicked curls whisper against their sun licked shoulders in the humidity of a wet summer in Toronto. An open shirt, cut jeans. Their being buzzing with the unfulfilled promise of excitement that snorting snow in June can bring. This one wants to be known, it will not take much.

"I want you to be safe, to be seen - I can give that to you."

They open their mouth to speak but no clever words come. Used to being the hunter, their lion's mane calling in people who wish to spin gold around their fingers. This darkness I am offering is unknown, and does anyone but the devil come asking for a soul? But still, their heart believes in magic. Haven't we been waiting to be called?

“Give me your hand.” And they do. I trace the long lines of their head, life, heart. “Here, this tells me you decide quickly, feel it in your body when yes is the answer. This line here,” my finger slides across their palm from the base of the thumb to their index finger, “tells me you’re more creative than rational - what do you do?”

“I work in film, I do special effects makeup.”

I notice now how perfect the sharp line of their eyeliner has been cut, applied with a blade, the golden haze that highlights the angle of their cheek and jaw.

“But you do something else as well, don’t you?”

“I mean...I paint faces sometimes, onto old photographs, but they’re just...”

“Do you think a piece of work can be considered art if you never show it to anyone? Or does it need to be seen in order to become real?”

“Does a tree make a sound as it falls if there’s no one to hear it?”

I smile “Very good. So then can the same be said of a soul? Let me have yours and I’ll make you immortal. A Mona Lisa.”

“Okay” they say, “I’ll bite.”

A golden apple in Eden flashes across my memory as the serpent within my ribs shifts excitedly. Her heart shaped head sewn pretty and red to my tongue.

I place their hand on my neck, where my pulse betrays my beating heart and lay my fingers against theirs. Meet their eyes, see they are afraid and breathless. The hair on the back of their neck raises, their ancient animal body remembering a threat their postmodern brain doesn't understand. I hold their gaze until the tattoo of our heartbeats sync, like an orchestra when they're caught up together in a symphony.

"Say to me 'I promise you my eternal soul.'"

"I promise you my eternal soul" they whisper.

I dig my nails into their neck just a little and they shiver "Again."

"I promise you my eternal soul."

I move into them so our lips are only a moment apart, "Once more."

"I promise you my eternal soul."

"Kiss me."

They lean in, I taste the spice of whatever fancy cocktail they were drinking mixed with the dead smoke of their last cigarette. These kisses, when I know there will be only one, are the sweetest. Like flowers that bloom at midnight and die before the sun rises.

"One day I'll call on you." I say as I turn and disappear back inside the party, losing myself in the crush of hot bodies sliding against one another. I didn't ask for their name. The empty space in them was too heavy. They want to fall in love and I don't have the time for

that this evening, on the shortest night of the year. It is the summer solstice. There is a reason why Pride happens at the same time as the ancient rituals of eros.

I see my love where she is most at home, up on top of something, dancing as the crowd around her throws their hands up in admiration. A thousand shades of purple lace escape into the air as she spins.

She sees me. We hunt differently. Her the center of attention, in the eye of the storm, under the bright lights of a false sun while I dance with shadows, slipping out of the dark to play the role of temptress, siren.

She comes over to me, sweat sweet and glittered across her skin.

Reaches out and dances me into her arms so she can press her lips against my ear.

"This crowd is wild. I missed this chaos energy so much!" She yells over the din.

"You're the bar star tonight girl." I respond. She turns and presses against me, reaches her arms behind her to wrap my neck and drops to ground with the beat of the music. Slowly comes back up - begging with her body for all my attention, all of everyone's attention. Then her lips are back at my ear.

"Where have you been?"

"Outside."

“You did the ‘let me steal your soul’ thing didn’t you?” I lean my head back and look into her eyes. I love that only to her, I’m not a mystery.

“Are we bringing them home?” she asks genuinely.

“No.”

She kisses me.

“Back into the fray then.” She dances away. Off to find something or someone to get back on top of. The trust between us is sacred, the unboundless love it cradles, free.

A shiver trips along my spine, masc eyes on me. I flow deep into the music carrying my body like water through energy. Let the heavy vibration of the bass carve my shape into the curve of a blade I will beg him to cut his hand against. I turn perfectly toward his face and shift.

I know the fates are smiling as they twist together our two lives for the first time in eternity, now forever bound. Quantum entanglement theory. I slip through sound toward him. There are stars cut into the brim of his hat, so that light falls across his shoulders in their shape. I fall forward into the midnight sky of his being. Violent, violet and velvet blue. Blue like the marrow of a flame. I feel my body tune itself to his and know, this one is also made from darkness. This time I will be the one to give away my soul.

AUTHOR

Alana Boltwood

TITLE

Yonge and College

MEDIUM

Poetry

BIO

IG: @AlanaBoltwood

Yonge and College

The drug mart
A place to forget
The frigid dark bluster
And buy cocoa butter,
A magazine selling Authentic

The drug mart
A place to forget
It's past midnight and
I've left the cabaret
Left the divas and drama kings
In their nylons and chains

I came to party, queer
To sing *Freedom* from the lonesome
But "friends" did not appear
Hide in the stall, scroll the phone

Feel. Know. Not forget.
Black Lives Matter!
Cheers are anger, glitter is rage.
Indigiqueer in lingerie
sprays the pipeline of hypocrisy
over the bloodied red stage.

Can our fury find power together?

ARTIST

Kris Lodu

TITLE

Speak to Me

MEDIUM

Visual Art

BIO

Kris Lodu (They/Them) is a queer visual artist based in Toronto who works with acrylic/gauche paint and digital art. Their art focuses on the human form in its many representations and explores themes of vulnerability, identity, gender, and sexuality as they relate to self-image. One of the main purposes of their art is to create a warm and inviting community where people can see themselves represented. Kris Lodu is represented by SweetPea Gallery Vancouver.



KRIS LODU 2022

ARTIST

Ayonti Mahreen Huq

TITLE

Her Love is Chaotic

MEDIUM

Digital Illustration

BIO

Ayonti Mahreen Huq is a Bangladeshi artist currently based in Toronto.

\\IG: @amhisamhitsamh





ARTIST

Shrew

TITLE

Untitled

MEDIUM

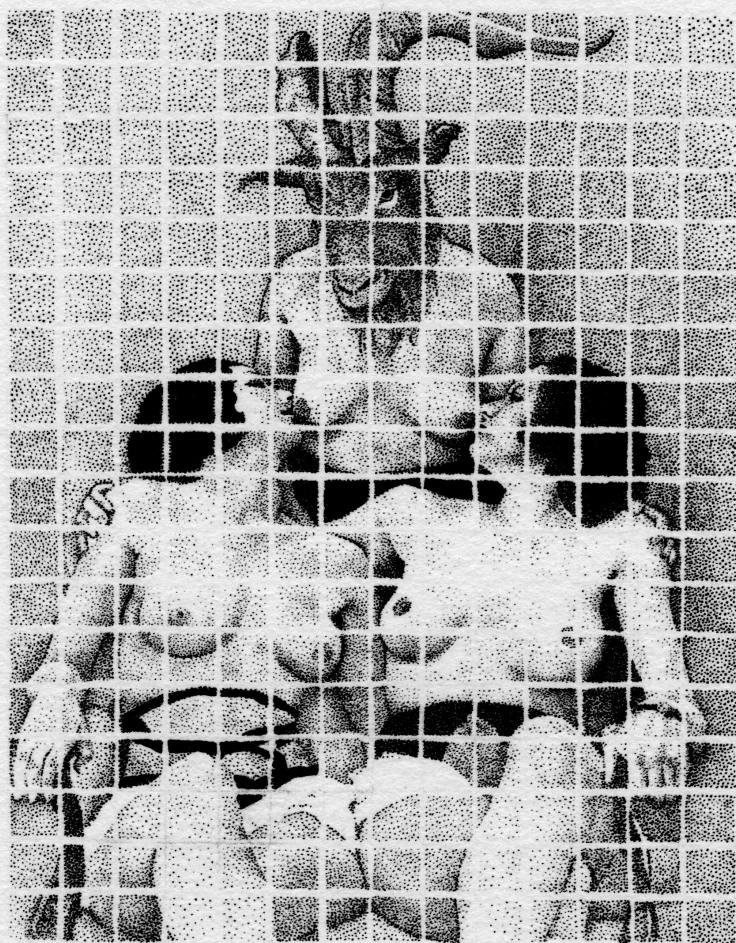
Pen and Ink

BIO

Shrew Drew is an artist based in Tkronto. They utilize pen and ink to create work that is reflective of their expressions on sexuality and sensual nature but also life and repression under late stage neo-capitalism.

They are currently pursuing both activism and tattoo work in Tkronto.

\\ IG: @dismalswampshrew





ARTIST

Shine Maverick

TITLE

Rainbow Vulva

MEDIUM

Beadwork

BIO

Shine Maverick is a QTPOC artist who creates art & beadwork that honours, affirms & celebrates queerness & gender diversity.

\\ IG: @shinemaverickbeads



AUTHOR

KL Dolson

TITLE

A Limerick History of My Queer
Flirtations

MEDIUM

Poetry

BIO

KL is an AFAB non-binary bi-romantic
demi-sexual living in the Conservative
backwater of Brantford, ON after nine
years of living and working in the even
more conservative South Korea. They
are excited for the opportunity to explore
and celebrate their Queer past, present,
and future through literary expression.

\\ IG: @kristydolson71

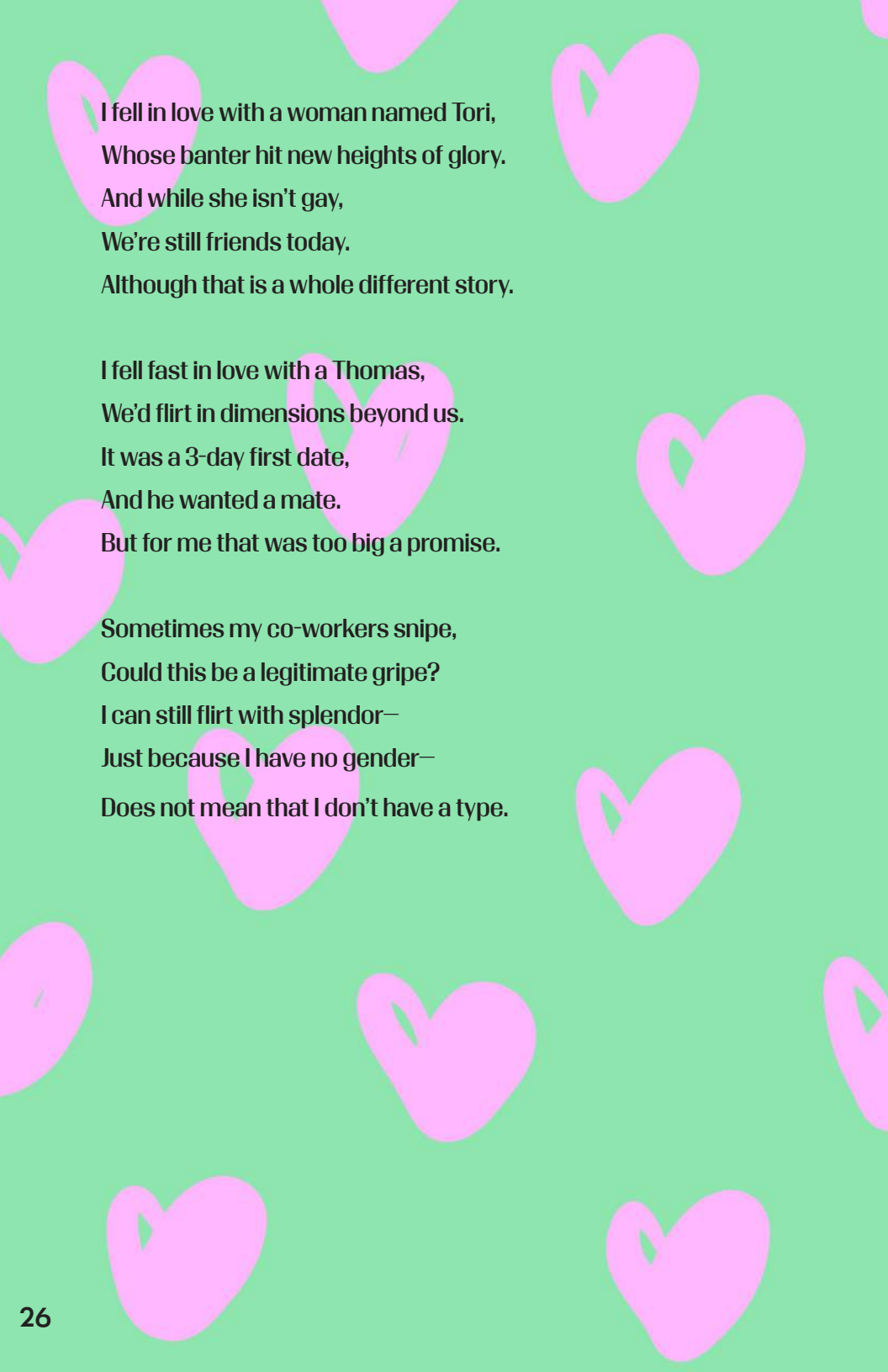
A Limerick History of My Queer Flirtations

There once was a girl named Casey,
Together we'd get rather spacey.
She was a bit of a prude,
I didn't want to be rude.
So I went off to find someone racy.

I once pulled my head from the noose,
Of a boy who admitted abuse.
We flirted at work,
But he was a jerk.
Some people you just have to lose.

There once was a girl named Heather,
Who liked to bind me in leather.
She had one little date,
BOOM: married, gone straight.
And I floated away like a feather.

For Relja I changed my whole world,
Into his insatiable ego I curled.
A phenomenal flirt,
But to him I was dirt.
Only with time has my torn heart unfurled.

The background of the entire page is a solid light pink color, decorated with numerous darker pink hearts of various sizes scattered across the surface.

I fell in love with a woman named Tori,
Whose banter hit new heights of glory.
And while she isn't gay,
We're still friends today.
Although that is a whole different story.

I fell fast in love with a Thomas,
We'd flirt in dimensions beyond us.
It was a 3-day first date,
And he wanted a mate.
But for me that was too big a promise.

Sometimes my co-workers snipe,
Could this be a legitimate gripe?
I can still flirt with splendor—
Just because I have no gender—
Does not mean that I don't have a type.

ARTIST/AUTHOR

Akaash

TITLE

On Love/A Body of Love

MEDIUM

Poetry and Painting

BIO

IG: @akaashidesigns & @akaashi_.studio

“On Love/A Body of Love” is written towards myself at a time when I felt especially vulnerable about my body. Attached is also a picture, a painting in watercolor, acrylic paint and felt-marker on A4, which I made shortly after writing “On Love/A Body of Love”.

Today I have acknowledged that I am a body of love, so much to give and so much to receive and that I am better off disregarding my fears, in the face of the immense amount of love that is there to be shared.

ON LOVE/A BODY OF LOVE

In the eternal search of love

I wake up to realise

It is me

I am love

I roam about curiously

On this planet's surface

I have roamed the great skies beyond

Looking for something that passes away

Except in me

I am love

My body is love

My soul is love

My feelings are love



AUTHOR

Anuja

TITLE

Dizzying Heights

MEDIUM

Flash Fiction

BIO

Anuja Varghese (www.anujavarghese.com) is a QWOC Pushcart-nominated writer based in Hamilton, ON. Her work appears in Hobart, The Malahat Review, The Fiddlehead, Plenitude Magazine, and others. Her short story collection *Chrysalis*, is forthcoming (spring 2023, House of Anansi) and she is currently at work on a debut novel.

\\ IG:@anuja_v

Dizzying Heights

The six of them sit at the back of the school bus, their bodies and backpacks together taking up the last four seats. They are all long hair and long limbs and lip gloss and laughing. They wear identical cut-offs, frayed at the thigh, and the air conditioning broke down somewhere around Whitby, so when they shift in their seats, I can still see the outline of where sweat-damp skin left an imprint in the vinyl. I watch them without turning my head, from the corner of my eye, from the corner of my seat, one sandaled foot poking out from my long skirt, dangling in the aisle, daring to be seen.

A boy swings over my outstretched foot, eyes on the six. He is making a video for his YouTube channel. He kneels in the aisle between them, phone outstretched, and they all lean in and down and towards him. I wonder briefly what it might be like if he knelt next to me, gave me that grin, saw in me something worth sharing with his 5,000 followers. I could catch his eye as he saunters back to his seat, make a joke, make him laugh. But I look down instead, not ready to find out if I am someone he could notice.

The bus pulls up in front of the CN Tower and the harried teachers herd us off in pairs, doing a headcount before we file into the entrance. Somehow, I feel less of an outsider here, in this crowd of tourists where everyone is speaking a different language and I am not the only one wearing a hijab, than I do at home. I look at the pictures surrounding us of the Toronto skyline from the top of the Tower. My stomach turns as we enter the elevator in small groups. I don't like heights.

The teachers release us onto the observation deck and the class scatters. Some press their noses to the windows; those more

adventurous lie down on the glass floor. The air feels thin. My chest feels tight. I find sliding doors and suddenly, I am outside, on a concrete balcony, behind wire mesh. There's hardly any view from here, but that suits me just fine. I find a bench and sit and I can almost pretend I am back on solid ground.

"What are you doing out here?"

I turn at the voice and the heat that floods my skin is not from the end-of-June sun. She is one of the six, the second Emma among them. The first Emma has a louder voice, a wider smile. Second Emma seems softer around the edges. "Nothing," I reply.

"You can't see anything from here."

"I know. I sort of, you know, don't really like heights."

She sits down beside me and her bare leg touches mine, through my skirt. I shift to the left by a fraction of an inch in case this is accidental, but her leg moves with mine, the contact so casual, but also, I realize, intentional. "Yeah, I don't get what the big deal is about this place either." She tosses her hair over a freckled shoulder and when I look without looking, I see the pulse at the base of her neck, collarbone, cleavage. She pulls out a tube of lip gloss and applies it, then offers it to me. "Want some?"

I take it, put on too much, hand it back, hope my hand isn't shaking. "Thanks."

She studies my mirrorless handiwork and smiles. "We never hang out," she says. She reaches out and runs the pad of her thumb along the edge of my bottom lip. "We could though. Sometime. If you want to." I don't know what is happening, but at the same time, in my body, I know.

I want to be wittier, sexier; to flirt back like the main character in a high school rom-com, but all I can do is nod, manage to mutter, “That could be cool.”

The boy with the phone ducks his head out the door and calls her name. “Text me,” she says, and then she is gone. Alone, I have to close my eyes and force myself to breathe. But it’s not the height anymore. This time, it is the thought that my lips and hers now taste the same that has left me dizzy.

ARTIST

Anastasia Meicholas

TITLE

Dream \\ Glimpse \\ Whimsical Garden

MEDIUM

Painting

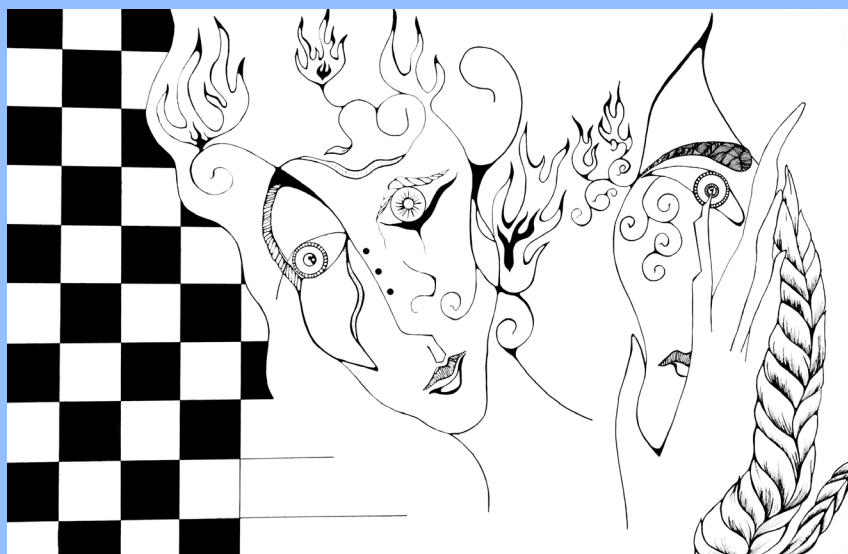
BIO

Growing up in the Bahamas was very difficult and restrictive. I don't limit myself to one medium, one style or a single process. The pieces I create are drawn from inspiration, experiences and lessons learned, sprinkled with influences from the land of my birth. If anyone looks at my work and pauses long enough to be stirred in some way, to wonder, to question, to simply feel... then I have succeeded in my work.



Дream (40» x 40»)

Acrylic on standard canvas panel



Glimpse (40» x 30»)

Acrylic on gallery canvas panel



Whimsical Garden (24» x 36»)
Acrylic on gallery canvas panel

AUTHOR

Allison Fradkin

TITLE

“It Ain’t Over ‘Til the Pink Lady Sings”

MEDIUM

Stage Play

BIO

Allison Fradkin (she/her/hers) has a gay old time applying her Women’s & Gender Studies education to the creation of satirically scintillating plays that (sur)pass the Bechdel Test and enlist their characters in a caricature of the idiocies and intricacies of insidious isms. Fradkin is a frequent visitor to Canada, specifically Toronto, home of her favourite program, *Degrassi*; and Prince Edward Island, home of carrot-top-of-the-line literary heroine Anne of Green Gables. An enthusiast of inclusivity, Fradkin freelances for Toronto’s sister city, Chicago, as Literary Manager of Violet Surprise Theatre, curating new works by queer women, trans folx, and non-binary folx.

“It Ain’t Over ‘Til the Pink Lady Sings”

CHARACTERS

MARVA

mid-late teens (stage age)

female-identifying

open ethnicity

FRANCINE

mid-late teens (stage age)

female-identifying

open ethnicity

WINIFRED

mid-late teens (stage age)

female-identifying

open ethnicity

SETTING

The stage, on which is a bare-bones fifties-style bedroom set.

TIME

Night, now.

NOTE

The tone, pacing, and delivery of dialogue is reminiscent of the zippy, zesty screwball comedies of the 1930s and 40s.

At rise, MARVA and FRANCINE are onstage, reflecting on the rehearsal they've just had for the pajama party scene in Grease.

MARVA: "I really flipped over the *gay* cashmere sweater"? Did I seriously sing that?

FRANCINE: It's about time you knew the score. But hey, I get it, Marva—you're not only fresh out the closet; you're also fresh off the book.

MARVA: Thank you. And I was perfectly content to continue, which I would have been able to do if you all hadn't proceeded to bust a gut—and my chops—about my little...malaprop.

FRANCINE: Technically, we were delayed by your little serenade. Rehearsal stopped cold because you have the hots for the titular Freddy in "Freddy, My Love."

MARVA: Cut the gas, Francine. Winifred doesn't even go by Freddy.

FRANCINE: But you really did a number on *her*, didn't you? When I'm waiting in the wings, I have a clear view of the onstage goings-on. And you, Marva, were going on and on about Freddy, your love, crooning and swooning and mooning all over her. It was gutsy, yet putzy. Humiliating, yet exhilarating. All in all, a perfect way to convey the affection with which you are filled. You could flirt with all the guise—

MARVA: Exactly, Francine. Unlike Rizzo, my character Marty flirts with all the guys—

FRANCINE: Not guys, Marva. Guise. Jeez, do I have to spell it out for you? Okay, yes, I do. G-u-i-s-e, as in “the guise of thespianism.” If I were you, I'd do something a little more outrageous, courageous, advantageous. (*bounds onto the makeshift bed and starts singing*) Look at me, I'm Sandra Dee / Lousy with affinity / For my best friend / She is *the* living end / Wish she'd be my steady

MARVA: Okay, you've made your point: you were miscast as Sandy; you'd be boffo as Rizzo.

FRANCINE: Why be a Pink Lady when you can be a leading lady? Which is why you need to follow my lead before someone slightly less subtle swoops in and sweeps Winifred off her tootsies. A girl like her is cruisin' for a schmoozin', what with that positively peachy personality, that pair of passion pit-perfect lips. She don't need no ciggie-butt to be smokin' hot.

MARVA: Yep, she's the ginchiest. Anyone would be kookie not to have a crush on her. Wait, are you...

FRANCINE: Kookie?

MARVA: A threat?

FRANCINE: Of course I'm not a threat, Marva. This is musical theatre. I'm a triple threat.

MARVA: But I thought you were...you know.

FRANCINE: Hey, just because I am a scintillating synthesis of TinkerBell, the Fairy Godmother, and Glinda the Good Witch does not mean that I am straighter than a magic wand.

MARVA: You're getting your musicals mixed up.

FRANCINE: (*sotto voce*) More like I'm getting them fixed up. (*audibly*) You know that lyric in your solo, about someday being held in Freddy's arms? Well, I am angling for an ultra clutch. Now, since we're still in rehearsals, it may not be five to places, but it is most definitely ten to one that you had better act on your feelings before the curtain closes on your chances. As my alter ego Doris Day would say: Whatever will be will be...mine.

MARVA: (*sotto voce*) You'd better alter your ego, Miss Sandra Dethroned. (*audibly*) You said you saw me crooning and swooning and mooning all over her. Did you happen to see her doing any or all of the above in a...mutual manner?

FRANCINE: Are you asking Francine your friend or Francine your romantic rival?

MARVA: That depends. Is doubling allowed?

FRANCINE: Absolutely. As Norma Desmond declared, "I can play any role."

MARVA: Wish I knew which role Winifred wants to play: Freddy, *my* love—or yours. Wonder what she's doing now.

FRANCINE: She's in the dressing room getting fitted for her Frenchy wig, remember? Can you believe that Winifred of all people is doing a rendition of a beautician? Bet she can't wait to doff that coif.

MARVA: You should have seen her at slumber parties when we were kids. She would play ice cream parlour, pizza parlour; she would even play tattoo parlour. But she would never play beauty parlour.

FRANCINE: Winifred balks at blow dryers.

MARVA: Cringes at curling irons.

FRANCINE: And hates the heck out of hairspray.

WINIFRED enters.

WINIFRED: Are you kidding? I am severely smitten with Hairspray! Marv and I first saw it in seventh grade, and the very next day I went out and bought saddle shoes just like Little Inez was wearing. Then I returned them because they looked too much like pandas and I was afraid I was committing animal cruelty. I know, I know: the wacker the berry... Speaking of which, my Frenchy wig really razzes my berries. Unreal, right? 'Cause normally I don't do 'dos. But since it's already flipped out, there's no point in me flipping out too. Plus, it's just plain nifty. If Rita Moreno, Dorothy Dandridge, and Little Orphan Annie put their heads together, they'd get mine. Hey, did you hear—we might be doing Annie next fall. Too bad I'm too old to play her.

FRANCINE: It's not just the age, Winifred. It's the aesthetics. What I mean is Little Orphan Annie would have to grow out of her ugly duckling stage—no, she'd have to deliver a good hard knock to its homely heinie—before she could have the privilege of being played

by you.

MARVA: I played Annie once. And not just any Annie. Annie Oakley. I was a real pistol. In fact, my performance was... Well, you had to be there.

WINIFRED: I was there, silly.

FRANCINE: It is pretty silly of her to think that just because she played some sexy sharpshooter in a show, she somehow has a shot with you, isn't it?

WINIFRED: A shot?

MARVA: Yeah, a shot, like of Novocain, like the demented dentist refuses to give Seymour in Little Shop of Horrors. Now that's a show we should do.

FRANCINE: Yeah, and you could call the principal character, the unprincipled plant, Freddy II. If you're A-OK with that sobriquet, Winifred?

WINIFRED: I don't know why, but I'm beginning to experience more curiosity than all the cats in Cats combined.

FRANCINE: If memory serves me correctly, the friends-to-girlfriends scenario has been done before. Plus, you couldn't possibly prefer a real-life ingénue slash dreamgirl next door to an honest-to-goodness prima donna who makes Motormouth Maybelle's colossal confidence seem supremely undersized, could you?

MARVA: If we could start anew, I wouldn't hesitate.

FRANCINE: Oh, yes, you would. You are habitually hesitant, Marva. And BTW, FYI, that lyric you just quoted is from the song "Tears on

My Pillow," which is from the screen adaptation of Grease, not the stage show, making it entirely incompatible with this conversation. Yet another reason why the queers on your pillow remain singular, not to mention single.

MARVA: You know what, Francine? This little love triangle—

WINIFRED: (*delighted*) I'm in a love triangle?

FRANCINE: Don't flatter yourself. That's my job, although it would be marvelous if Marva could lighten my load a little. Unfortunately, instead of being somewhere over the rainbow with you, she's somewhere that's green with envy by herself.

MARVA: Did you ever think that maybe it's hopeless for *you* to be so devoted, Francine? You want to talk compatibility? Okay. (*indicating Winifred and herself*) We go together like Eva Perón and Patti LuPone. (*indicating Winifred and Francine*) You go together like Lina Lamont and Lena Horne.

FRANCINE: Ugh, finally, you're picking up your LGBT-cues. Now, let's see if fools will rush in where teen angels fear to tread. (*In slow motion, as if anticipating an interruption, Francine leans in to kiss Winifred. Marva hesitates, as is her habit, to interrupt them.*) Uh, Marva, could you make like good news and travel a little faster, please?

WINIFRED: Yeah, Marva, before she plants one on me, if you could plant yourself between us like the vamp on a saddle shoe, that would be just ducky, thanks.

Marva attempts the blocking she's just been given.

FRANCINE: Solid! Listen, I'm sorry-not-sorry to tell you this, but, Marva, I am not your romantic rival. I am your matchmaker, a fact I'll bet you never knew, as evidenced by your acute obtuseness.

MARVA: How was I supposed to know you were putting me on?

WINIFRED: Is this because the performing arts department is putting on Fiddler on the Roof in the spring and you've got a yen to play Yente?

FRANCINE: I'm sure we can all agree that I am much better suited for that part than I am for the part of your love interest, Winifred. As it turns out, I *can't* play any role, nor do I want to. Have neither of you noticed that I've been casting an eyeball at the catty, bratty Patty and another eyeball at the keen, unseen Eugene? Of course you haven't. Because the two of you have been too busy being helplessly devoted to each other since freshman year—and probably prior to that.

WINIFRED: Better helpless than Marva-less...I guess.

FRANCINE: Ooh, that gives me an idea. Next semester's Scene Study class will unofficially be known as *Francine Study*. Well, you must admit my performance was unmatched. As a result, that word no longer applies to you guys. Hopefully. Um, you *are* relieved, not peeved, that I deceived you, right?

WINIFRED: Well, like Oliver!, the narrative of any good musical requires a twist. This must be ours.

MARVA: And who wants to be in a love triangle, anyway? Love triangles are so square.

FRANCINE: In other words, you'll thank me later. I mean it. I expect an avalanche of appreciation for this...activation ASAP. Preferably tomorrow. It's only a gay away. Oh, and remember, girls: a relationship is not a hairdryer, so don't blow it.

Francine makes a grand exit.

WINIFRED: I like her. Oh, but not like *that*.

MARVA: Ditto. Um...yeah, I'm not really sure what to say. I feel like I've gone up on my lines, you know? I've got that majorly jittery feeling I always get right before an audition. But I've also got that ever-so-slightly snooty one I always get right before the cast list is posted.

WINIFRED: Are you hoping for the role of...Pink Lady friend?

MARVA: Only if there's the possibility of an extension. My heart is set on more than just a "showmance."

WINIFRED: Oh, I can pretty much promise you an extension. Do you have any idea how many times I've stood in front of the mirror practicing my "I Have a Dreamgirl" speech? I'd say, "Hey, Marv, I get a kick out of you," and you'd say, "Aw, that's sweet, Winifred, and I get a sidekick out of you." I was so sure that after you came out, you'd finally come on—to me. But alas, you did not. You better shape up, 'cause I don't need a man.

MARVA: I am in ship-shape, okay? Relationship-shape. Did *you* take any initiative?

WINIFRED: No, because I was afraid that if our relationship didn't work out, our friendship would go kablooey.

MARVA: Kablooey? Phooey. Ugh, I think I accidentally aced Francine Study. Anyway, um, I know that being a couple won't be a cakewalk or anything, but if I'm going to go singin' in the rainbow that I prefer dolls to guys, I won't be all wet if I do it as a duet.

WINIFRED: So instead of being all boo'd up, we'll be all dolled up?

MARVA: Sounds swell, Freddy, my...

WINIFRED: You can say it.

MARVA: I can call you Freddy or I can call you...my love?

WINIFRED: That all depends on your answer to Frenchy's all-important question: Was it love at first sight?

MARVA: We met in first grade, so...no. But once I started noticing girls, you were the first girl I noticed, so...yeah. Yeah, it was love at first sight. What about you? With me?

WINIFRED: I have almost always marveled at you too, Marva.

MARVA: Then I guess all that's left for us to do is to lace up our saddle shoes until we're tying a knot they never can sever.

WINIFRED: Want me to pair said shoes with my *gay* cashmere sweater? I totally have one, you know—ROY G BIV stripes wrapped around my foam-free domes and upper arms. Which reminds me: next time we play tattoo parlor, I'm drawing my name on your bicep—and vice versa.

MARVA: Is that a prerequisite for holding me in your arms someday?

WINIFRED: Holding is for amateurs, Marva. Someday, we will be closer than the pooch on a poodle skirt.

MARVA: Really? Wow. My stomach is all twisted up like a balloon animal just thinking about it. Heck, if I were a milk bottle, you could knock me over with a—softball.

WINIFRED: LOL, but also SOL. That carnival scene is from the screen adaptation of Grease, not the stage show. Plus, neither of those references is even relevant, so everything involved in this conversation is woefully incompatible.

MARVA: Except us.

WINIFRED: Obviously. Now that we've got that squared away...

MARVA: Yes?

WINIFRED: Now we make our true love vow.

Francine enters.

FRANCINE: I can practically see your hearts fluttering like jazz hands. *(Marva and Winifred regard her with a blend of gratitude and attitude.)* What? Like I told Marva, when I'm waiting in the wings, I have a queer view of the onstage goings-on. And when it comes to the friends-to-girlfriends scenario, it's clear that the two of you have got it going on. Carry on. *(sings, to the tune of the song from Grease, as she exits)* They'll always be together...

WINIFRED: Well? Shall we act upon our matchmaker's mandate?

MARVA: Freddy...

WINIFRED: ...steady...

MARVA and WINIFRED: ...go!

Marva and Winifred share an absurdly adorable, im-peck-ably innocent, foot-popping inaugural smooch—by blowing each other a kiss.

FRANCINE: *(from offstage)* What part of “don't blow it” did you not comprehend? Ugh! Let's run it again!

Curtain.



QT

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 LGBTQ2SIA+ 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 individuals make for ourselves and for each other. We accept poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, book reviews, personal essays, reflections, memoirs, as well as artwork, drawings, comics, photographs, collages, and other visual media.



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