



saVersaWice

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Make it Queer.

I'll openly admit: the winter isn't my best time of year. The cold, the dark days with the "traditional holidays" sandwiched in between, drag me down. I've had a long time to work through this, at 76 years old. Yet, here I am. In reality, living a long life has made me a newcomer to the world. I am old, and I am queer. Most of my peers have passed, with no family nearby and then somewhat estranged. I doubt I am unique. This time of year, the feeling of being alone always intensifies.

As a folk who has a different lived truth, I feel a need to make space to nourish and honor that difference. Being old isn't an illness but an opportunity to reengage and reinvent. It feels like a lot of work. The normal markers of a life worth living were never designed for us.

The trick for me is to manifest and remember that. Repeat it. Just as memories and expectations can weigh us down, so too thinking of how we persist in spite of historic hate and discrimination gives me purpose. I persist; you will persist. You and I have a purpose.

Celebrating life becomes about being with people like you and me. Just like the rest of the year, I get up and go to the gym, struggle not to "overeat," and jump into life.

I'm not one to dispense advice, so now I will. Don't break your routine; keep active. If your thing is to work a potluck, go to a queer church, Transform, or just gather with other queers. Don't overthink any of it—the crap that brings me down was never designed to support you, me, or any of us.

That's the Rx old Mother Goose prescribes. A note—there is no shame in calling a queer helpline, The Trevor Project: 866-488-7386. Getting some morning sun (touch grass) also helps! Love, make it Queer!



But the dog

I haven't hated my sister's boyfriend from day one. She introduced me to him telling me that he was kind and goofy and that she thought we would get along well. He and I planned a surprise birthday for her two months into them dating. He hurtled over a turnstile at the Clark St. subway station to jumpscare her on our way to an intimate little dinner in Koreatown, just the three of us. I found him vaguely unthreatening. He asked me what an "oncologist" was when I described my medical rotation; he was unpretentious. He made a quick comment about how my illness was a burden to my sister. My sister was in Florida when I was sick; I wasn't aware it had affected her. I didn't talk to him much after that; just a few odd Facebook messages. We never exchanged numbers. I moved from New York City to Cincinnati, and we fell out of touch.

Then came Thanksgiving. He came from New York with my sister, and I quickly soured on his goofiness. He did not seem to appreciate the way my family joked around, snapping at benign quips. I could not tolerate the way he played with our dog. He enjoyed scaring the dog and working him up. "Stop it!", I yelled at the boy, further upsetting the dog who was being threatened with a yuletide llama decoration the boy was puppeting around. He would pull my sister away during family events, demanding that she miss family time to go with him. Then came the pictures. He positioned the dog at odd angles and sent me pictures. I confided in my sister that I found this behavior to be an unsettling power play, and she immediately ceased contact between him and I. He did not come home for further holidays, and he removed me from his social media. Over the next few years, she mentioned him a few times. She told me when he moved out of state and they

started long distance. She told me that he has a great recipe for chili.

Fast forward seven years. My sister, the person I am closest to in the world, is in a serious relationship with a man I have been forbidden from speaking to ever since he sent me some unsavory dog pictures. I am wandering around a Half Price Books searching for a Christmas present for a virtual stranger who is now a part of my family. He is an artist. I sit amongst coffee table book prints, realizing that I don't know anything about what he refers to as his "raison d'être" or even if he finds it insulting when someone who doesn't understand his art tries to engage him on the topic. I select a vintage "Boggle" for \$6.99 off the game shelf and then, guilt-ridden, buy him a Visa gift card some weeks later.

He arrives. His demeanor has changed. He still smiles, but he does not try to control the room. He always makes sure that my sister's water bottle is full and cleans the smudges off her glasses at the dinner table. He doesn't drink anymore. He doesn't snap at my dad. He gives me a quick hug and tells me that it's good to see me. After dinner, he loads the dishwasher and goes upstairs to work, giving my sister time to be with her parents. He works throughout the holiday, joining us religiously for three square meals a day and profusely complimenting my mother's cooking. Through details in the stories my sister tells, it is clear that he has changed. He is supportive, hard-working, and careful. I consider my choices; destroying myself like Javert over a years old grudge or recognizing that people are complicated and change over time. I decide not to do anything about it. He's a fucking adult, and I will let it go when he apologizes for terrorizing the dog.

Interview with a Caregiver

Hello! What brings you joy, what makes you upset, and how are you feeling through the holidays?

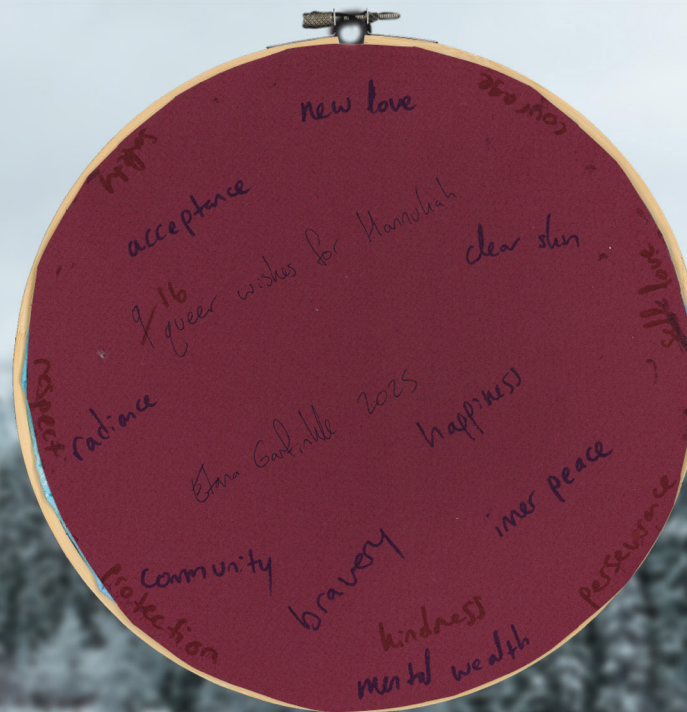
Unquestionably what brings me joy is my beautiful talented nonbinary kid! They are becoming such an interesting person with such varied interests. At the moment they are one of the leads in the school musical, they also had an Artworks internship this past summer where they helped paint an award-winning mural. They have won awards in math, science, and art and they're currently second in their class. Even if they weren't my kid I'd be impressed with them which is part of the reason I get so upset when people just want to write off trans and nonbinary kids as "confused" "weird" or "abnormal" or somehow inferior to "regular kids" (whatever regular means)

By any objective measure, my child is extraordinary I say that with pride as a parent for sure but also as a citizen who knows how much potential is laying dormant in people that some sectors of society think should be completely written off. At the root of all these laws that are targeting trans and nonbinary youth is the belief that kids like mine should not exist and therefore they should not be accommodated. WELL, THEY DO EXIST AND DESERVE EQUAL PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW! Also we do not know who these kids are going to grow up to be, they could be future academics (Joy Ladin), or Olympians (Kaitlyn Jenner), performing artists (Laverne Cox, Elliot Page, Indya Moore) one could cure cancer, the simple fact is trans people exist and have always existed and have contributed to society in a myriad of ways.

We need to nurture and support ALL of our children not only because its in their best interests but because it's in OUR best interests as a society.

As the holiday season ends, I think it's important that we still find reasons to be hopeful and grateful. As frustrated as current events often make me, I am so grateful to have family and community support. Spending time with them this holiday season made us realize how lucky we are to have one another and how difficult it is for those who are estranged from their families especially around LGBTQ+ issues. We have a niece that we adopted into our family. After she came out as trans she was disowned by her family of origin. She often thanks us for becoming her family, but no thanks are needed SHE was the blessing to US!

I hope everyone finds their blessings for the New Year!



Thoughts on the New Year

As we enter the new year, we are invited, almost commanded, to speak of renewal. We are urged to resolve, to turn, to believe that the mere motion of the calendar possesses moral force. Yet when the clock strikes midnight, nothing essential has shifted. The fear that has settled into my bones does not dissolve with the fireworks. It accompanies me into the new year as faithfully as my own shadow, present when my humanity is debated in the pulpits of government buildings, when I pause before entering a public restroom, when I sit across the table from the person I love and wonder which version of myself the world will permit tonight.

I have learned that intelligence is not protection. One may be the most diligent reader in the room, the most careful thinker, the most precise speaker, and still be dismissed, not for lack of reason, but for a failure of performance. To be trans is to discover, again and again, that seriousness is conditional. The argument is not weighed; the body is. The question is not what is said, but who dares to say it.

Over the past year, and as this new one begins, we have witnessed violence of a scale that resists tidy description. It arrives not only in acts that shock the conscience, but in the steady attrition of safety, of dignity, and of rest. I feel an exhaustion that is not merely personal but collective, as though it has been passed hand to hand. And yet, even in this fatigue, there is the work of showing up. There is the quiet labor of radical hospitality: offering a chair, a name spoken correctly, a space where someone may set down their armor for a moment and breathe.

It is often said that endurance is a solitary virtue. But trans life has taught me the opposite. Survival, in this year and in those before it, has never been an individual accomplishment. It has depended upon networks of care that exist largely out of sight: rides given, meals shared, warnings exchanged, joy preserved, and passed along. These forms of support do not make headlines, yet they are more durable than policy cycles and more persuasive than slogans.

The only way through this year, through what can feel like an unending assault on our right to exist, is together. Not together in sentiment alone, but in practice. By holding one another upright when standing becomes difficult. By insisting that joy, especially for trans people, is not frivolous but defiant. To laugh, to love, to imagine a future in such conditions is a political act.

As the year opens its uncertain door, we step forward collectively. We protect those who are here, we speak for those who are gone, and we make room for those still searching for language. We build community not because it comforts us, though it does, but because it is necessary. In standing side by side, visible to one another, we refuse the lie that we are alone, and in that refusal, we endure.

- Hayes Hiltenbeutel

Legal Resources for Trans Youth in Ohio
Equality Ohio is Ohio's statewide LBGTQ+ advocacy and legal aid organization. They offer a legal clinic that assists with consumer law, family law, civil rights, and administrative help. While their legal clinic is limited to those within 300% of the federal poverty level, they have copious resources for transgender rights. Their "Trans Know Your Rights" hub offers key information on legal name changes, gender marker changes, and remedies for housing and employment discrimination. Check out equalityohio.org to find their intake form, legal network, and transgender rights hub!

Did you know?

You must file a legal name change before you can change your name and gender marker on an Ohio driver's license. To legally change your name, you must apply with your County Probate Court. You must sign an affidavit that you have been a resident for at least 60 days. You do not have to state that the reason for the change is due to gender identity. Be sure to obtain a notarized copy of this affidavit and a certified copy of your birth certificate. This application can be found on the county clerk websites.

Upcoming Legal Events:

On December 1st, Transform will be hosting a legal clinic to assist transgender individuals with legal name and gender marker changes, and family law issues. Please join us.





**Learn more about the original
Vice Versa here.**