

FOREVER WITH PRIDE



1st July 2026
Issue 56

Words From The Editor

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PersianLGBT



سازمان حمایت از همجنسگرایان ایرانی مقیم بریتانیا

The organisation aims to bring the Newly arrived, Asylum Seekers and Refugees LGBT members of community together to develop welcoming safe place environment for its members here in the UK.



Visibility Changes Lives: Why Community Matters More Than Ever

Eight years ago, I arrived in St Helens and quickly fell in love with the town.

What I saw wasn't just a place; I saw people.

I saw community spirit, resilience, opportunity and individuals who genuinely cared about making a difference.

From local businesses and community groups to volunteers and residents, there was a sense that people wanted to come together and create something positive.



Miguel Doforo

What started as community projects and initiatives grew into a lifelong commitment to creating opportunities for others.

Over the years, I have been fortunate to work across youth engagement, education, performing arts, community development, radio, equality, diversity and inclusion, and event management.



Along the way, I have founded and supported a number of organisations and initiatives dedicated to helping people feel seen, heard and valued.

At the heart of everything I do is one simple belief:

Visibility changes lives.

When people feel visible, they feel included.

When they feel included, they feel valued.
When they feel valued, they are far more likely to thrive.

This belief has shaped much of my work through We Are MD, I Am Me Collective CIC, St Helens Pride, KCC Live and a range of community-based projects across the Liverpool City Region.

Whether it is supporting young people who have struggled in mainstream education, creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ communities, helping community groups access funding and sustainability support, or giving local people a platform through community radio, the goal is always the same: creating opportunities and strengthening communities.

One of the greatest privileges of my work has been witnessing the impact that happens when people come together.

I have seen young people develop confidence they never thought possible. I have watched volunteers become leaders.

I have seen businesses, community groups and residents unite around a shared vision.

These moments remind me that positive change is possible when we work together.

Of course, communities face challenges.

We live in a time when division can often feel louder than unity. Social media can sometimes amplify differences rather than common ground.

Yet despite these challenges, I remain optimistic.



Every week I meet people who are quietly making a difference.

People giving their time, skills and energy to support others.

People choosing kindness over conflict.
People building bridges rather than walls.

Those are the stories that deserve to be told.

Recently, we launched Visibility in St Helens, a movement focused on celebrating people, places, organisations and initiatives that make our communities stronger.

The aim is simple: to shine a light on the positive stories happening every day across our borough and to encourage more people to get involved.

Alongside this, I continue to support organisations through speaking engagements, consultancy, community engagement projects and strategic development work.

I am passionate about helping community organisations, charities, CICs and

businesses grow their impact while remaining true to their purpose.

As someone who has spent much of my life in community work, I have learned that success is rarely about one individual. It is about relationships.

It is about collaboration. It is about people choosing to support one another.

The future I want to see is one where every person feels they belong.

A future where diversity is celebrated, opportunities are accessible, and communities work together to overcome challenges.



I believe that future is possible.

After all, some of the most powerful things we can offer each other cost nothing at all: kindness, compassion, understanding and hope.

And if there is one thing I have learned throughout my journey, it is this: When people are visible, they become empowered.

When communities are connected, they become stronger.

And when we work together, anything is possible.



#KeepSteppin Thanks Miguel Doforo Founder and Creative Director

BLAKE RAVE

Home Music Bookings Merch Tour Press

FOR THE LOVERS & THE DREAMERS

Passionate LGBT Artist
Crafting Soft Rock Music

I am Blake Rave, an artist passionate about crafting soulful music that resonates deeply with audiences across the globe. With over 8 years in the industry, my journey has been defined by heartfelt compositions and meaningful lyrics that touch hearts and provoke thought. I have played to a diverse audience throughout the UK and USA.

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How To Become A Social Media Influencer

Expanded Edition

Click or Tap
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By Oliver Finnly

The View from Both Sides: What Transition Taught Me About Authenticity, Community, and Strength

By Mac Scotty McGregor



When I was five years old, I would often give myself a boy's name when playing with other children.

I didn't have the language to explain why. In fact, the word transgender wasn't part of the public conversation yet.

Growing up in a small Southern Baptist community in the American South, I had never met an openly transgender person.

I had never seen one on television. I had no examples to follow and no framework to understand what I was experiencing.

What I did know was that when the other kids called me by the boy's name I had chosen for myself, something felt right.

There was a sense of ease, recognition, and belonging that I couldn't explain.

When they didn't, something felt off. At five years old, I didn't have the words for gender identity.

I simply knew that one version of me felt more authentic than the other.

Looking back now, I can see that my journey was never about becoming someone new. It was about finding the courage to become who I had always been.

That journey eventually led me to transition and begin living openly as the man I had known myself to be since childhood.

Yet transition taught me something even bigger than gender; it taught me about authenticity.

As a transgender man, I have had the unique experience of living on both sides of the gender divide.

I have experienced the expectations placed on girls and women, and the often-unspoken rules imposed on boys and men.

I have witnessed firsthand how gender socialization shapes the way we move through the world, influences our relationships, and impacts our sense of belonging.

Perhaps most importantly, I have seen how limiting those expectations can be for everyone.

Another profound influence in my life came through martial arts.

I began training as a child and have now spent more than fifty years studying and teaching martial arts.

While many people think martial arts are primarily about fighting, some of the most important lessons I learned had nothing to do with punches or kicks.

Martial arts taught me discipline, resilience, and self-awareness, but they also taught me about community.

For many of us, the dojo became a chosen family, a place where people encouraged one another, challenged one another, and celebrated each other's growth.

I learned that true strength is not measured by how much power we have over others, but by how we use our gifts in service to others.

Those lessons shaped not only the teacher I became, but the person I became.

Throughout my life, whether teaching martial arts, mentoring young people, advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusion, or working with organizations on issues of gender and belonging, I have carried those lessons with me.

My work as a speaker, gender educator, and founder of Positive Masculinity has always been rooted in a simple belief: when people feel safe enough to be authentic, individuals, relationships, and communities all become stronger.

That commitment to community was deeply honored when I received the GSBA Community Leader of the Year Award in 2026.

While I was grateful for the recognition, I viewed it less as an individual achievement and more as a reflection of the countless people who have invested in me and allowed me to invest in them. None of us becomes who we are alone.

My experiences as a transgender man and educator inspired me to write my first

award-winning book, *Positive Masculinity Now*, which explores healthier and more inclusive ways of understanding strength and masculinity.

My newest book, *Centered & Strong: Be the Calm in the Storm*, draws upon more than five decades of martial arts training to help readers cultivate resilience, awareness, and calm in everyday life.

At sixty-one, I have come to appreciate that authenticity is not a destination we reach once and for all.



It is a lifelong practice. It requires courage, curiosity, and a willingness to keep growing. The older I get, the more I understand that becoming ourselves is never truly finished.

Pride Month reminds us that authenticity is both deeply personal and profoundly communal.

Every time we choose to live more honestly, we create a little more space for someone else to do the same.

Every time we challenge limiting assumptions about gender, identity, or belonging, we help build communities where more people can thrive.

My hope is that readers take away this simple truth: it is never too late to become more fully yourself. Whether you are questioning, transitioning, advocating, learning, or simply trying to understand yourself more deeply, your journey matters.

After all, the goal was never to become someone else.

The goal was always to become more fully ourselves, and to help create a world where others can do the same.



Positive Masculinity Now



Positive Masculinity Now



Positive Masculinity Now

Bitchin' Boutique

CURVACEOUS VINTAGE AND ALTERNATIVE APPAREL

Bitchin' Boutique was established in 2016 by Lisa, its birth sparked by a love of Hell Bunny and the disappointment at the lack of plus size items available on the High Street.



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Dad Business

The Business of Being Dad



Logan Blackburn-Issitt

I knew I was different before I had the words for it. As a kid, I had a fact tucked away in the quietest part of me: I would grow up to be a man. I didn't think 'transition'. Just that I would, and that would be that.

My first puberty hit me like a ton of bricks.

I knew that when I grew up I would have my own family, and in that family I would be Dad.

I came out as gay at 16. I thought that maybe I wasn't male after all, maybe I just preferred women. I tried so fucking hard to be a woman.

Every version of woman I could think of: ultra-femme with skirts and make-up, tomboy with a short back and sides.

It didn't matter. I loved being in women-only spaces because I was one of the most masculine there.

But I knew I didn't really belong.

I was very good at keeping my secret. I'd had a lifetime of practice.

I told a drunk older friend once that I was trans.

She was lovely about it. I told a gay youth worker who said I just had masculine energy, like her. I told long-term partners. They said "not really though."

So when I met a woman I knew I wanted to be with forever, even though that scared the crap out of me, I didn't tell her.

We decided to start a family. She fell pregnant. One day, driving in the car, just chatting, she asked what I wanted the baby to call me.

I said "Logan, that's my name". Then I said something like "or Daddy, if I'm truly honest." But as if it was a joke.

Time stood still.

She said: "Do you mean that?"



I had to choose between potentially losing my beautiful little family before it had even really started, and the chance to actually be me.

I said "yeah, I do."

And then she changed all our lives for the better. She said "we can do that, if that's something you really want." She loved me enough to stay while I transitioned. Loves me still, seventeen years later

She came with me to the GP. My mum came to my first gender clinic appointment at Charing Cross. My dad drove me to Brighton and back for my top surgery.

My entire family accepted me without flinching. Wholeheartedly, immediately, completely. I know how rare that is and I have never taken it for granted.

I am loved. The first birthday after I came out, every card was masculine. Boyfriend. Son. Brother. Uncle. Grandson. Son-in-law.

That love gives me the strength to be visible. The world is full of anti-trans noise and there are trans people out there who believe there is no happiness in this life for them.

But there is. We're here, in every country, every culture, just living our lives. Changing minds one person at a time.

A year after I transitioned, I became a dad for the first time. I want you to sit with that for a moment, because I still do sometimes.

The thing I had wanted in the most hidden part of myself, the thing I had quietly grieved in increments for over a decade: it happened.

I was standing in a delivery room, holding a tiny little person and I was her Daddy.

We now have six children. Our family is loud, complicated, and beautiful. Several of my kids are autistic.

Some have complex medical needs. They've grown up asking perfectly ordinary questions about why I'm built the way I am.



I answer honestly, they nod, and we move on to arguing about what's for tea. That's it. That's the whole thing.

I am not a trans parent navigating a fragile existence. I am just a dad, inside a life that teenaged me would have wept with relief to see.

That's why I built Dad Business. It's my blog about my real family life, written from the inside, without the polish or the pretence. It's for anyone who was told, implicitly or explicitly, that a life like this wasn't available to them.

I am living proof that it is.

Somewhere out there is a version of me at sixteen, carrying a dream they don't yet believe they're allowed to have.

This one's for them.

dadbusiness.co.uk



Dad Business.UK



Dad Business.UK



Dad Business.UK



Dad Business.UK

THE HAUNTING OF PHILIP TREMAINE

The Cornish Coast Has Never Been So Frightening

By Robin .S Goodfellow

LIFEGUARD

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Forever with Pride

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Every ticket supports the free e-magazine
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JUST BE ME – THE MUSICAL

Creator & Co-Writer: Dave Benson

Co-Writer: Jayne Buchanan

With over 30 years in theatre, television and entertainment across the US, Europe and throughout the UK, Dave Benson puts it perfectly: “Many shows are just glitter — this show has its glitter in confetti-size chunks, but it also has its heart.”

That is the very soul of Just Be Me, shaped alongside co-writer Jayne Buchanan into a story rooted in real life and universal truth.



Following COVID-19, Dave spent two transformative years living in a beach hut in Fethiye, Turkey.

There he met a young man working the summer tourist season — a gifted Kurdish Muslim, who out of deep respect and for his own safety, we call Melih.

Slowly a genuine, trusting friendship grew, until Melih felt safe enough to open up: he revealed he was gay, and as a Kurdish Muslim man already looked down upon by many, he faced double prejudice — living in constant fear and unable to be himself openly, especially back in his home village.

Dave knew life was hard for him, but never realised just how much real danger he faced simply for wanting to live honestly.



Together Dave and Jayne turned this experience into something everyone can recognise.

They also drew inspiration from The Beach Girls — brought vividly to life on stage by our co-writer Jayne Buchanan, Victoria Roberts known from BBC One's All Together Now, and Janet Royal, wife of much-loved comedian Steve Royal, alongside our much-loved trio Karen, Sharon and Lisa: funny, slightly cheeky, but utterly real.

They too felt society's heavy pressure to conform — turning to new teeth, cosmetic tweaks and surgery just to fit what the world demands, yet never truly feeling happy or at peace in their own skin.

It reveals a universal truth: none of us are fully safe from judgment — for our weight, how we look, how we behave, who we love, our disabilities, right down to the colour of our skin.

Whether you hide who you are to survive, or change how you look just to be accepted, the struggle is shared by us all.



Set in Blackpool — Britain's favourite seaside resort, overlooked by the iconic Blackpool Tower — Just Be Me was chosen as the official opening production marking the 20th Anniversary of Blackpool Pride, premiering to standing ovations and glowing reviews at the Central Pier Showbar.

What makes this production so special is its unique approach: a perfect mix of seasoned professionals and people from the local community.

Far more than just casting — we teach them to sing, act and record in professional studios, building their skills, confidence and self-belief every step of the way.



Joining the cast is Mark Stuart-Wood — known to many from Britain's Got Talent and one half of the much-loved LGBTQ-friendly duo Bosom Buddies.

Mark brings his wealth of stage experience and deep empathy to the story, saying: "Being part of Just Be Me is an honour.

As Bosom Buddies, we have always used our performances to spread joy and acceptance.

This musical goes deeper — it shows the struggles many face across different cultures, but celebrates the courage it takes to be true to yourself.

It carries one simple, powerful promise: Just Be Me — Just Be You. I can't wait to bring it to audiences across Manchester and beyond."



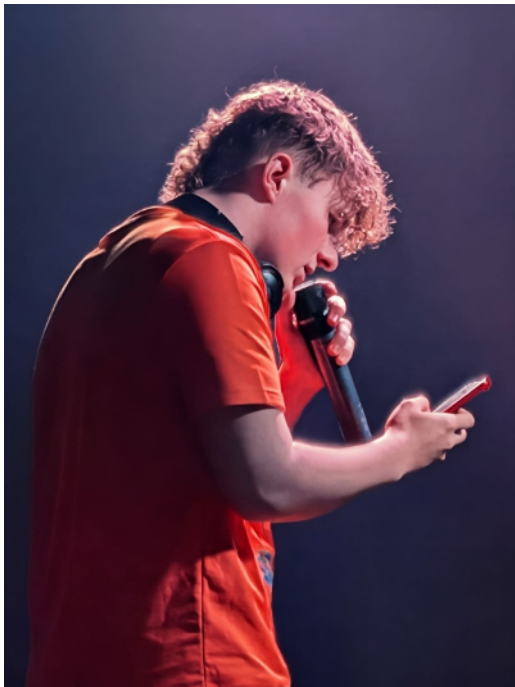
Following this triumphant launch, the future is bright: we have been invited back to Blackpool for Pride Month 2027, confirmed for a prestigious Manchester venue, and planning a full tour across the UK for 2027–2028.

WE ARE LOOKING FOR NEW TALENT

As we expand, we warmly invite singers, dancers and performers from all backgrounds and ethnicities to join our company.

Successful applicants will appear not only in Blackpool but also across Greater Manchester, with the exciting potential to join the full national tour.

We want our cast to truly reflect the diversity of our region — every voice and experience is valued, helping us tell this story of unity and belonging in the most authentic way possible.

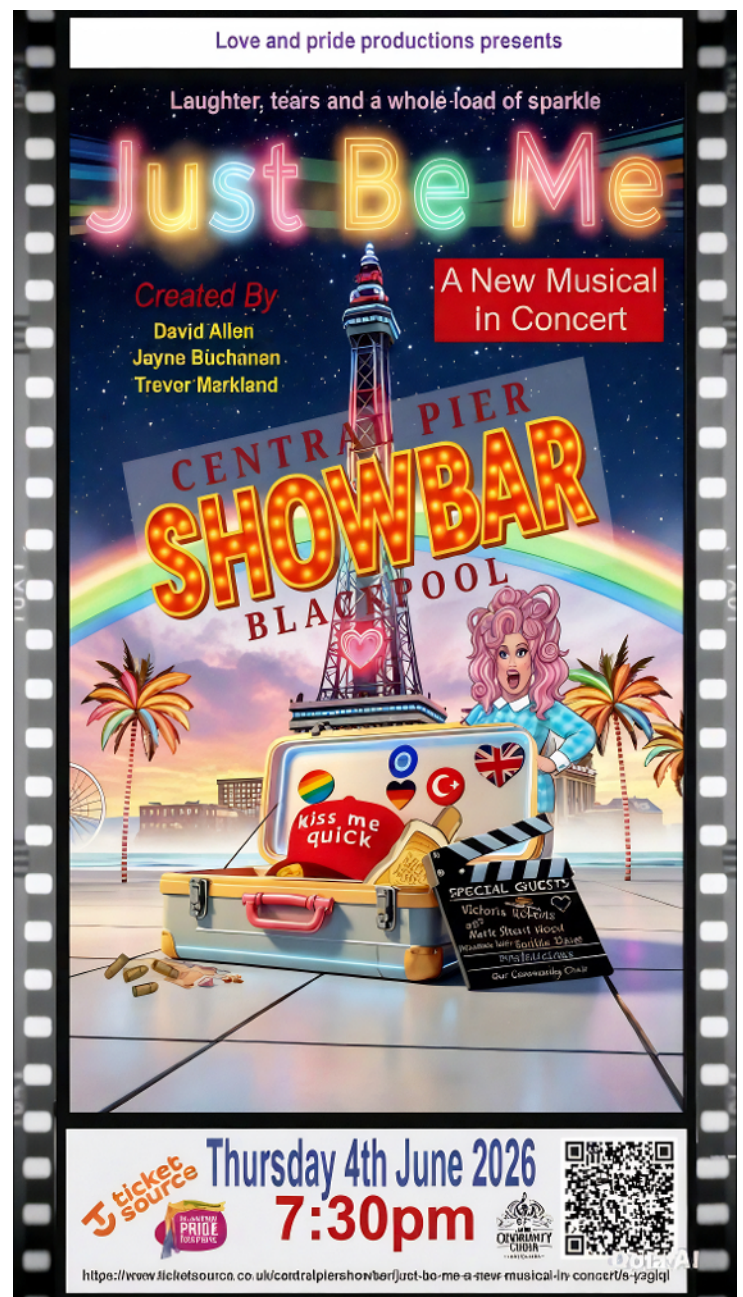


Dave and our co-writer Jayne's mission is clear. Jayne adds: "This message is not just for us — it belongs to everyone.

Maybe this story will help somebody feel less alone, more brave, and know they are worthy just as they are.

Help us bring this honest, vital story to theatres near you.

Yes, you can make a donation, yes, you can support us through sponsorship — but most of all, you can stand with us by joining us on social media and sharing our story far and wide."



Carry this promise everywhere:
"Just Be Me Just Be You™ "

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Just Be Me



Just Be Me



Forever with Pride

Official Playlist



Click or Tap To Play



New Tracks Add All The Time!

Voices of Courage, Community, and Hope Beyond Borders

By Aby

LGBTQI+ refugees' leader and representative in South Sudan.



Across East Africa, thousands of LGBTQI+ people are living at the intersection of multiple crises.

They are fleeing persecution, violence, criminalization, family rejection, and social exclusion while searching for safety, dignity, and the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

For many, displacement does not bring an end to hardship. Instead, it marks the beginning of a new struggle for survival.

As a transgender refugee and community advocate representing more than 400 LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers living in Gorom Refugee Settlement Camp in South Sudan, I witness these realities every day.

Behind every statistic is a person with dreams, talents, relationships, and hopes for the future.

Yet too often, LGBTQI+ refugees remain invisible within humanitarian responses and absent from conversations about refugee protection.

This article is an invitation to look beyond headlines and stereotypes and to stand in genuine solidarity with LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers across East Africa.

A Journey Marked by Displacement

Many LGBTQI+ refugees in East Africa come from countries where same-sex relationships are criminalized, where gender diversity is stigmatized, and where violence against LGBTQI+ people often goes unpunished.

Some have been forced from their homes after being outed by family members.

Others have survived mob attacks, arbitrary arrests, blackmail, sexual violence, or threats from community members and authorities.

Many leave everything behind in search of safety.



However, crossing a border does not automatically guarantee protection.

Within refugee settlements and urban refugee communities, LGBTQI+ people frequently face continued discrimination, harassment, and exclusion.

Some are denied housing. Others are targeted because of their appearance or identity.

Many struggle to access healthcare, employment opportunities, and basic humanitarian support.

For transgender refugees, these challenges can be particularly severe.

Gender identity often makes people more visible and therefore more vulnerable to violence, stigma, and social isolation.



Surviving Against the Odds

Life inside refugee settlements is often shaped by uncertainty.

Food insecurity remains a daily concern for many LGBTQI+ refugees. Access to clean drinking water can be limited.

Shelter conditions are frequently inadequate, particularly during harsh weather.

Healthcare services may be difficult to access, especially for those requiring HIV treatment, gender-affirming care, trauma counselling, or specialized medical support.

Many community members live with the long-term psychological impacts of displacement and persecution.

Depression, anxiety, trauma, and feelings of hopelessness are common experiences among people who have endured years of rejection and instability.

Within our community, some of the most vulnerable individuals include children and youth who have been separated from family support systems, people living with HIV, transgender individuals, survivors of violence, and those with disabilities or chronic health conditions.

These are not isolated cases. They are part of a broader pattern affecting LGBTQI+ displaced communities throughout the region.

Yet despite these hardships, LGBTQI+ refugees continue to demonstrate extraordinary resilience.

The Strength of Community

One of the most powerful lessons I have learned is that community can become a lifeline.

In places where resources are scarce and systems often fall short, LGBTQI+ refugees have created networks of mutual support.

We share food when someone is hungry.

We accompany one another to medical appointments. We provide emotional support during crises. We organize peer groups, informal counselling, advocacy initiatives, and emergency response efforts.

Many refugee-led organizations operate with little or no funding, yet they continue supporting vulnerable people every day.

This work is rarely visible to the outside world. It happens quietly through acts of care, solidarity, and collective survival.

Community leadership among LGBTQI+ refugees is not only about responding to emergencies.

It is also about creating hope, empowering others, and ensuring that displaced people have a voice in decisions affecting their lives.

Why International Solidarity Matters

Too often, discussions about refugees focus solely on vulnerability.

While acknowledging hardship is important, it is equally important to recognize the agency, leadership, and resilience of LGBTQI+ refugees themselves.

What many communities need is not charity alone.

We need solidarity.

Solidarity means listening to LGBTQI+ refugees and valuing their expertise about their own lives.

It means supporting refugee-led initiatives and advocating for inclusive humanitarian responses.

It means challenging anti-LGBTQI+ discrimination wherever it occurs.

International LGBTQ+ communities have an important role to play.

Advocacy can help influence governments, humanitarian agencies, and international institutions to improve protection mechanisms for LGBTQI+ refugees.

Awareness-raising can help combat harmful stereotypes and increase public understanding of displacement realities.



Humanitarian support can provide access to food, healthcare, shelter, education, and mental health services.

Refugee sponsorship programs and pathways to resettlement can offer life-saving opportunities for those facing ongoing danger.

Most importantly, solidarity reminds displaced LGBTQI+ people that they are not alone.

From Sympathy to Action many readers may wonder what they can do.

The answer begins with moving beyond sympathy.

Sympathy acknowledges suffering. Solidarity helps change conditions.

You can support organizations working directly with LGBTQI+ refugees. You can amplify refugee voices and stories.

You can advocate for fair asylum policies and refugee protection programs.

You can support initiatives focused on mental health, HIV care, housing, education, and emergency assistance.

You can also challenge misinformation and prejudice within your own communities.

Small actions, when multiplied across thousands of people, can create meaningful change

A Future Built on Hope

Despite the challenges facing LGBTQI+ refugees across East Africa, hope remains remarkably strong.

I see hope in young people who continue pursuing education despite enormous obstacles.

I see hope in transgender individuals who refuse to hide their identities.

I see hope in community members caring for one another during difficult times.

I see hope in allies and advocates around the world who choose solidarity over indifference.

Every act of support sends a powerful message: that LGBTQI+ refugees deserve safety, dignity, and opportunity.

Our community does not seek pity. We seek recognition of our humanity and our right to live free from violence, discrimination, and fear.

When LGBTQ+ communities stand together across borders, we demonstrate that liberation is not limited by geography.

We remind one another that our struggles are interconnected and that our futures are stronger when built collectively.

Standing in solidarity with LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers is not simply an act of compassion.

It is a commitment to justice, equality, and human dignity.

And in a world that often tries to divide us, that commitment has never been more important.

For donation to LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers living in a refugee resettlement camp



Donation



Website

Stop feeling stressed or anxious and start feeling calm and grounded.



My name is Rachel Sewell and I'm a New Vision Therapy (NVT) Practitioner based in Runcorn, Cheshire

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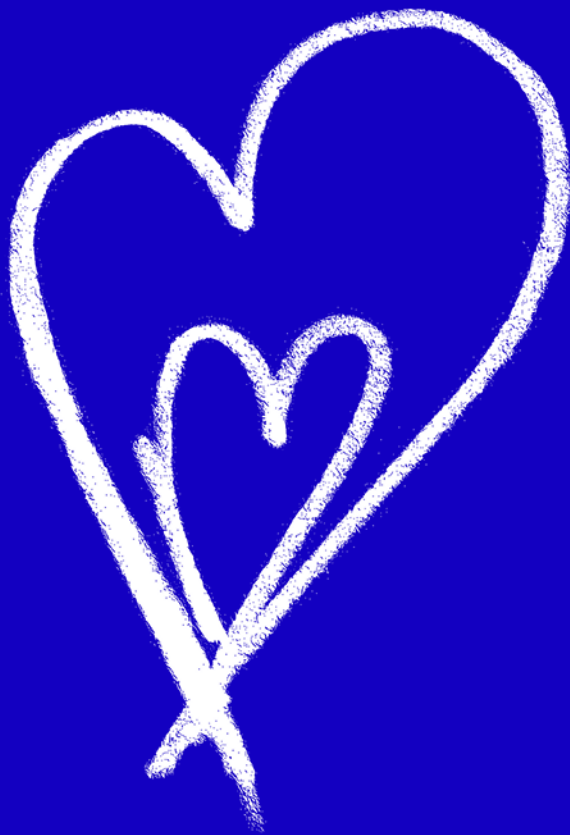


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Tales of the Second City

Misadventures on Birmingham's Gay Scene

Tales of the Second City – Misadventures on Birmingham's Gay Scene Public Elf Warning

Once a year, the south Birmingham suburb of Kings Heath comes over all queer and becomes a Queen for the day.

Queens Heath Pride started as a joke by comedian and local resident, Joe Lycett, and has evolved into a community-loved annual spectacular, complete with parade, performances, and passion.

We thoroughly enjoyed last year's compact and perfectly formed Pride... until our encounter with a plump elf in a purple ballgown.

We'd stopped to chat to a mate, Darren, when a young woman, exuding contrived kookiness in a pair of elf ears and fairy wings, latched onto us.

She gave a wane smile and exclaimed, 'I do like my older gays.'

Interesting opening gambit.

'We are so lucky to still have you,' she continued, 'because so many of you are gone.'

Looks were exchanged.

Hackles up.

'Do you mean because of HIV?' I asked. 'Are

you saying you are pleased that we haven't died of AIDS?'

This mental elf case smiled sweetly.

'I'm sorry,' announced Darren, aghast, 'but what part of this conversation do you think is appropriate or complimentary? You have randomly come up to us in the street to praise us for being old and not dead.'

'Oh, have I put my foot in it?' she asked, the smile faltering on her cherubic face.

We remained cordial, wished her a happy Pride, then sent the patronising pixie on her way.

'I've just thought of the perfect retort,' declared Darren, in a moment of delayed inspiration. 'I should have told her, "I do like my fat friends. So many of you have died of heart disease or diabetes".'

The timely arrival of Ruru, glowing from a week in Greece, dispelled all thoughts of 'Mavis Cruet the Fairy'.

Gaeties resumed.

Forty minutes later, I was outside the Hare and Hounds pub.

Ru had gone inside to buy a round of drinks.

Suddenly, the tedious girl with the elf ears appeared at my shoulder and tried to engage in conversation again.

'We met earlier,' I informed her. 'It didn't go well.'

Not to be deterred, she launched into, 'I do like my older gays.'

Having none of it, I held up one finger and snapped, 'Fuck off!'

'Oh... but I only...'

'No, you are not doing this again! Turn around and FUCK RIGHT OFF!!!'

She scampered away, whimpering, just as Ru emerged from the pub clucking three pints.

He glanced up from the precariously balanced drinks in bewilderment, knowing nothing of our previous encounter.

'Errrrrm, What just happened?'

We didn't see her again

Rumour has it she is still running.

Who just approaches three middle aged (Yes, middle aged!!!) gay men to say they are proud of them for still being alive? What I assumed this misguided ally intended as compassionate, came across as blunt, condescending, and wholly inappropriate.

Does this woman purposefully patrol Pride events with the sole agenda of insulting revellers, like some online hater surfing the internet for posts to bomb with negative comments?

Was this elf nothing more than a troll?

Hear it first hand from the secondcity @ www.talesofthesecondcity.com



Robin .S. Goodfellow



Book One



Book Two



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&



Robin .S. Goodfellow



BIGRED CURTAIN



ROBIN .S. GOODFELLOW



BIGRED CURTAIN

Performing Arts



 Big news from Big Red Curtain!

We're thrilled to announce our exciting collaboration with author Robin .S. Goodfellow to bring his haunting short story, *The Mortician's Apprentice*, to life as an immersive theatrical experience.

Our talented young performers will be working alongside Robin to transform this chilling tale of the paranormal, supernatural, and the occult into an unforgettable live production.

This unique partnership celebrates Goodfellow's contemporary storytelling and our combined Yorkshire creativity with the next generation of performing arts talent helping to bring the first of many chilling stories to life!

Further performance details will be announced soon — watch this space!



bigredcurtain.uk

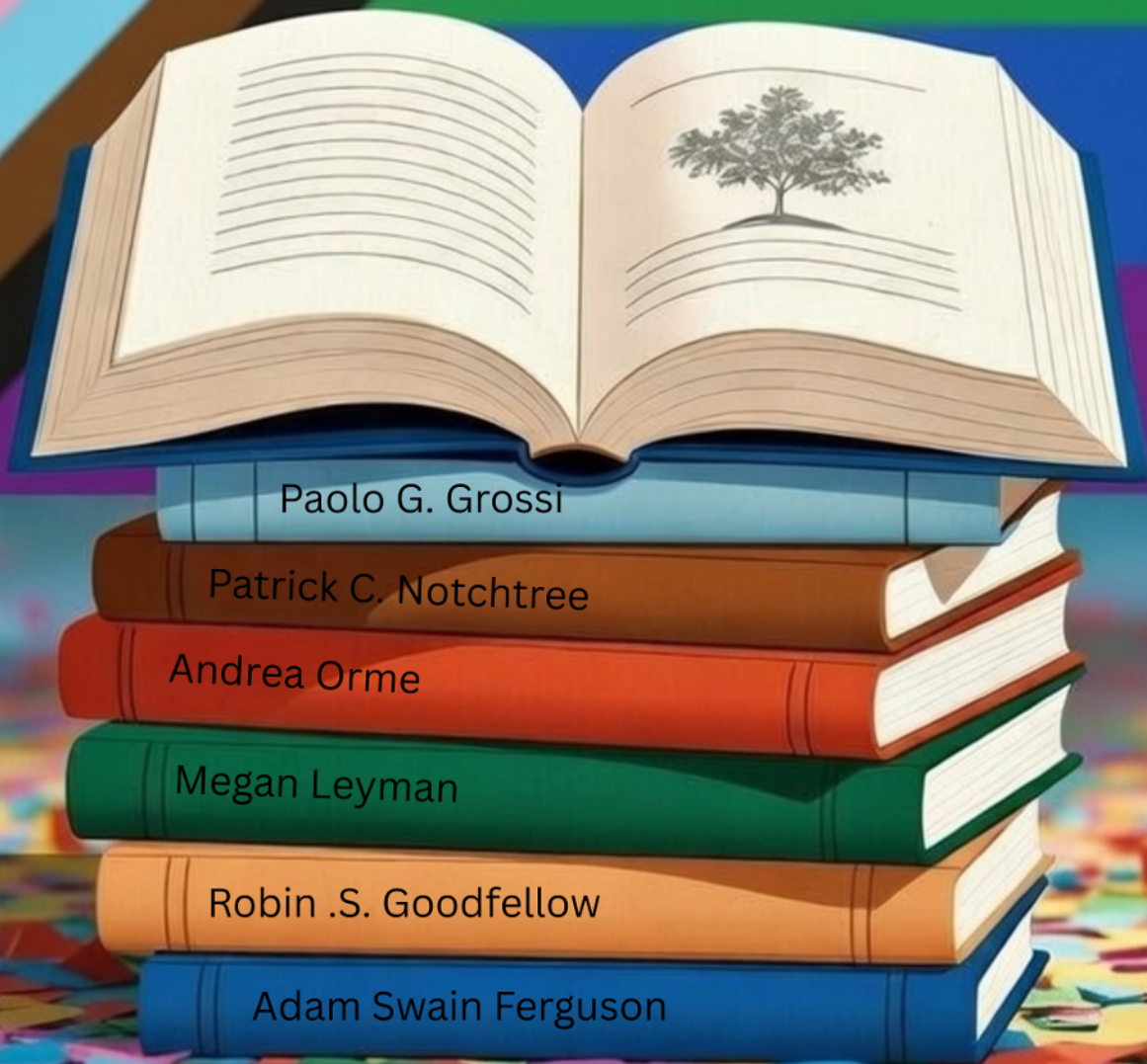


robingoodfellow.uk



Queer Authors

BOOK CLUB



A Reading List for
the Rainbow Revolution
www.foreverwithpride.com



Connection, Creativity and Community

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

— Margaret Mead

On the beautiful but often misunderstood Isle of Sheppey, people who care deeply about their community are coming together to create positive change.

Across the island, individuals and organisations are finding new ways to connect, support one another, and build a stronger, more inclusive future.

This is the story of one such collaboration: a partnership between Sheppey LGBTQ+ Club, local health and wellbeing charity Sheppey Matters, and queer street artist Vision OX11.

Sheppey LGBTQ+ Club was founded by intrepid local resident Harry Peeke, with support from the award-winning charity Sheppey Matters.

Having grown up on the island, Harry understood the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ young people living in rural and geographically isolated communities.

For many queer young people, finding others with shared experiences can be difficult.

Feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and invisibility are often compounded by a lack of dedicated spaces where they can feel safe, supported, and accepted.

Recognising this need, Harry set out to create something that he could see was

missing: a welcoming space

where LGBTQIA+ young people could meet, socialise, and be themselves without fear of judgement.

Since its launch, the club has hosted regular weekly drop-in sessions alongside special events, providing opportunities for friendship, mutual support, and personal growth.



Harry has also become an outspoken advocate, sharing his own experiences of coming out and navigating identity within a smaller community, helping others feel less alone in their own journeys.

At the same time, street artist Vision OX11 was on a transformational journey of their own.

Having lived on Sheppey for twenty years, Vision realised they had become increasingly isolated, cut off from the community around them.

Seeking to reconnect, they reached out to several local organisations, including

Sheppey Matters, looking for ways to use their creative

skills in service to the community.



In early conversations, Vision spoke candidly about how their own experiences as a queer person had contributed to periods of isolation and loneliness.

They reflected on growing up during the era of Section 28 and the lasting impact that legislation had on visibility, self-expression, and feelings of belonging.

They also shared concerns about today's increasingly polarised social and political climate, particularly the way trans people are subjected to hostility, misinformation, and exclusion.

These conversations revealed a shared mission.

Both Vision and Harry understood the importance of visibility, representation, and creating spaces where people can explore who they are without fear.

Recognising these common goals, Sheppey Matters brought them together.

The result has been a developing programme of creative drop-in sessions designed to provide a welcoming and affirming environment for LGBTQIA+ young people and their allies.

Participants can explore badge-making, sticker design, zine creation, and other forms of creative expression while connecting with friends and meeting new people.

Importantly, these sessions are about much more than art.

They offer opportunities for conversation, friendship, confidence-building, and community.

Some people come to make something creative, others simply come for a chat and a cup of tea.

Whatever brings them through the door, they are met with acceptance and support.

Vision is on hand throughout the sessions to share creative skills, offer encouragement, and help participants develop projects of their own.

The emphasis is not on artistic ability but on self-expression, collaboration, and creating a sense of belonging.

In a world where negative headlines can often dominate discussions around LGBTQIA+ lives, this partnership offers a powerful reminder that positive change frequently begins at a local level.



It starts when people listen to one another, recognise shared experiences, and choose to act.

This collaboration between Sheppey LGBTQ+ Club, Sheppey Matters, and Vision OX11 demonstrates what can happen when creativity, compassion, and community come together.

By creating safe spaces for connection and self-expression, they are helping to ensure

that the next generation of queer young people on the Isle of Sheppey knows they are seen, valued, and not alone.

Sometimes changing the world doesn't begin with grand gestures. Sometimes it begins with a conversation, a creative idea, an open door and a community willing to come together.

Social media links.

Sheppey LGBTQ+ Club



Sheppey LGBTQPlus Club

VisionOX11



VisionOX11

Sheppey Matters



sheppeymatters.org.uk



Sheppey Matters



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THE TREMAINE TRILOGY

by

Robin .S. Goodfellow



A trilogy spanning three generations all
with one thing in common

The Dead Won't Leave Them Alone!

robingoodfellow.uk



July 2026

Sponsored By

**Gay Gardeners UK, Plants, Seeds and
surplus Exchange Group**

Here I am for the third month in a row starting off with the warm weather! It really is challenging in the garden if you have a south facing garden as I have in the front. Already they are running adverts asking us to conserve water.

If these hot times are going to be a feature of our weather for years to come as the experts keep saying then we will have to change what we grow in south facing areas.

My Wisteria just soaks up the sun no matter how hot it gets which is just amazing but it is one of the few plants that does.

My Alliums lost all their leaves due to the heat so I might not get such good flowers next year.

I've added some Sedums to attract the butterflies in autumn but have tried to give them a bit of shade as they are just made of water.

My Lavender has done great so they can obviously tolerate the heat.

However, Acers for example will get scorched badly in the intense sun so be careful what you plant.

Ponds can suffer in this hot weather as algae will quickly form if not kept in check as will blanket weed so watch out for them and either add treatments or fish out the weed as quickly as you can.

The fish might need more oxygen as warm water loses it to the air so an additional aerator might be a good investment to keep your fish happy.

I leave my greenhouse door open night and day to help regulate the temperature better.

If tomatoes get too much sun their leaves curly and they can scorch and you can get sun scald on the tomatoes which is a dark

green patch on the top.



Top left – Large tomatoes on a truss like these will need supporting to stop the stem breaking as these can easily weigh a pound each.

Top right after fuchsia flowers finish they leave a pod like this. If you want to try and grow some from seed harvest the pods when they are nearly black before the birds get them.

If you're growing peppers they need water but don't like their feet wet so make sure the compost and container can freely drain. Any ponds in hot weather will attract the birds which is a bonus especially if you have a gentle waterfall. It can be a lifesaver for the little birds.

I know I mention it a fair bit but as water is a precious resource it's even more important to add a thick layer of mulch to your plants to help conserve water loss.

As far as the lawn is concerned, raise the height at which you cut it as this helps the grass rather than cutting it short and it scorches.

Fuchsias also prefer dappled shade rather than the full intense sun so try and keep them out of the full power of afternoon sun.

Most bedding plants will last longer if they have a bit of sun protection but things like Impatiens will suffer even if they get plenty of water as they are very soft stemmed plants.

Feed plants once a week – you can use one of those that you can add to the hosepipe as you water which is quicker and easier than using a watering can but they are more expensive as far as the liquid feed is concerned.

I guess you pay for the convenience.

Decking and fences can fade severely in full sun so coat with a good stain or protective finish.

It will help protect the wood in winter as well so it's a good idea to do if you haven't already.

Dead head your roses to promote new flowers and remove the heads and stems if lilies, alliums and iris's once they gone brown as this means the goodness has gone back into the plant for next year and they look tidier with the old flowering stems assigned to the compost bin.

You can get little pumps to use with your water butts which makes life easier than a watering can and make sure you're catching any of those sudden showers to top it back up again.

Keeping a top on the butt will stop the light getting to the water and so stop algae forming and turning it green.

Equally it will stop mosquitos making it their home and filling it full of larvae only to hatch and come and bite you!

- Plant of the Month -

One plant I haven't mentioned so far is the Dahlia – they love the sun as they are native to Mexico.

As any growers will know though they have soft stems and can easily wilt so they need a lot of water in hot weather but they will repay with fantastic colourful displays.

Cutting for the vase actually promotes new flowers so don't be afraid to treat them as cut flowers.



Top left – two colours in one flower and you can get this from a lot of the dahlias and they really are worth the effort of growing. Large varieties will need staking and some people use a large net to support stems and flowers.

Top right a beautiful wine-red variety with the morning dew and lots of new flower buds showing ready to add to the dramatic and bright display.

They come in a huge range of single and mixed colours and will flower right up until the first frost.

They are later to start with but carry-on long past some other flowering plants in your borders.

Stay out of the intense sun and work in the garden first thing in the morning or in the

evening when it's far less intense and much more pleasant to be around your wonderful plants!

Be careful out there, you don't want scorched assets or wilted ones for that matter!

Stay safe in this summer heat

THE HAUNTING OF PHILIP TREMAINE

The Cornish Coast Has Never Been So Frightening

By Robin .S Goodfellow



SOME STRANGE ATTRACTION

Some songs take years to write; others flow out like a river. Beautiful Disaster was two years of lived experience, written in about 20 minutes.

I wrote it about a relationship that began like a scene from a romance film. We met in Soho, and from the moment we started talking, it felt like we were destined to be together. Within days, we were inseparable. Looking back, there were warning signs almost immediately. I remember thinking he looked like trouble, but he was incredibly charming, funny, and effortlessly handsome. It's amazing how quickly chemistry can drown out your intuition.

The chorus describes our relationship as "some strange attraction, a chemical reaction, the perfect culmination to the perfect storm." That's exactly how it felt. There was an undeniable pull between us, but underneath it all, cracks were already beginning to form. As time went on, I found myself drawn into a world I never expected to be part of. The deeper I got, the harder it became to imagine walking away. Part of me hoped I could save him, and part of me was simply afraid of what might happen if I left.

We built a life together, talked about a future, and even planned to enter into a civil partnership. But eventually, the storm I'd ignored from the beginning caught up with us. That's where the hurricane imagery in the song came from. Sometimes you're standing in the eye of the storm, convinced everything is calm, without realizing the chaos has been surrounding you all along.

As a gay man, I think many of us know what it's like to mistake intensity for compatibility. We can move quickly because finding someone who truly understands us feels rare and exciting. Sometimes that means overlooking the quiet voice telling us something isn't right.

He taught me things about myself that I'll always carry with me, helped me find my feet in London, and ultimately inspired much of this album.

Beautiful Disaster is about recognizing how easy it is to confuse passion with permanence and learning that sometimes the people who change us the most are the ones we're ultimately meant to leave behind.





When Pride Became a Mirror

The community itself meant very little to me. When a march passed, I did not understand it. I did not yet know I was looking at a mirror.

The change did not come from the crowd, or the flags, or anything outside me.

It came the day I finally understood the things that live in my own nature.



Karim Maida

And understood that I was no longer simply living with them. I was happy to. Glad, even.

That was the moment my Pride began. Not a parade. A quiet yes, said inwardly, to the whole of who I am.

I know I am not only a gay man.

It is one part of a much larger life. It is an important part, and the life I have built around it has made it even more important still.

The more I come to know myself, the more curious about myself I become. And so, for me, Pride has never been an event. It is an inner process. It begins, always, on the inside.

You cannot truly express what you have not first allowed yourself to feel.

I have met people who feel it deeply and cannot show it at all.

They live in cities, countries, cultures that would punish them for it. Their Pride is lived underground, in private rooms and in whispers.

And it is no smaller for being hidden. They have understood, perhaps better than any of us, that the real thing was always within.

In my case, I have chosen not to keep that feeling to myself. I have carried it to places the celebration usually forgets.



I brought the Unicorns to a small town called Cammarata in southern Italy, to stand with it through the very first Pride in its history.

I promoted a very special Pride in Cyprus, held in the middle of the buffer zone, on an island still divided.

And of course, the great celebrations too: Berlin, Amsterdam, Mexico City, Madrid, Ibiza and Barcelona. Every year, over and over, as often as I can, I march.



Click or Tap To Watch Video

I march for myself first. For the pride I have slowly grown in who I am, in my gayness, in the community I would defend with my life.

We are the most beautiful gift this existence has to offer.

But I do not only march for myself. I march for the ones who cannot. For those whose country or condition will not let them set foot in the street.

I march for my own family, who do not yet understand what it means to belong to this community, and do not yet truly know the son they have.

I march for the elders, alone in remote places or held back by illness, who marched for us long before it was safe and cannot march now.



I march for the new generations. For the children still to come, whose world I want to be kinder than mine was.

I march for the young ones still learning their own uniqueness, still finding their shape, still afraid.

I march for the trans community, who walk one of the hardest roads in our whole ainbow, through a darkness deeper than any I have known.

I march for all the women of our community, and especially for our lesbians, for the friendships we share, and because they too endure a hostile world, just as we do.

I march for those who sell their bodies to survive, and would not choose it if the world had left them another way.

I march for those lost in addiction of any kind, still reaching, in the dark, for the light.

And I march for my unicorns. To show them the path.

That a community is something you give to, not only something you take from. That you give, and keep giving, and keep giving still.

I have many reasons to march. But every one of them begins in the same place. Inside.

In that first private act of acknowledgement, where you recognise who you are, and then ask the better question.

Not what can I take from this, but what can I give.

So this Pride season, to whoever is reading this, I invite you to feel that first.

Everything else, the flag included, follows from it.

Happy Pride, everyone,

Karim Maida



The Golden Unicorns



Text



The Golden Unicorn



Karim Maida





Jack Kent is the Founder/CEO of Crew Force Solutions LTD, a UK labour and crew support company built on professionalism, reliability and people-first values.



Jack Kent

Jack launched Crew Force Solutions on 1st March 2025 after recognising a clear need within the events, construction, marquee, trackway, gym installation and specialist labour sectors for a crew supplier that could combine strong operational standards with a genuinely human approach.

The company provides skilled and general crew, crew managers, stage builders, plant operators, installers, event stewards, SIA security personnel, carpenters, electricians and wider site support across the UK.

For Jack, Crew Force Solutions is more than a labour provider. It is a business built around trust, flexibility and strong working relationships.

The company supports clients with build-ups, strip-outs, installations, event operations, logistics and temporary site labour, offering tailored crew solutions that help projects run smoothly from start to finish.

Whether supporting a major event, a marquee installation, a commercial build or a specialist fit-out, Jack's focus is always on providing dependable people who arrive prepared, work hard and represent both Crew Force Solutions and its clients with pride.





He believes that being open about who you are in business matters, particularly in industries that have traditionally been very male dominated.

Through Crew Force Solutions, Jack wants to show that professionalism and inclusivity go hand in hand, and that LGBTQ+ representation has a place in every sector including events, labour, logistics and construction support.

Jack is also proud to have an amazing business partner, Fozia, alongside him on the journey. Her support, insight and commitment have been an important part of building Crew Force Solutions into a company with strong foundations, clear values and ambitious plans for growth.

As a gay business owner, Jack is passionate about visibility, inclusion and creating a company culture where people feel respected and valued.



Crew Force Solutions is especially proud to support Pride events. Last year, the company worked with both East Coast Pride and Scunthorpe Pride, providing crew support for their event set-up and derig.

Jack and the team are pleased to be working with both Prides again this year, continuing to play a small but meaningful part in helping these important community events come to life.

For the crew, Pride events are always a highlight of the calendar, and they often love being part of them as much as anyone attending!

Away from the day-to-day demands of running a growing business, Jack is also a proud dog dad to Cooper, his much-loved French Bulldog, who brings plenty of personality, humour and grounding to his life.



That personal side matters to Jack, because he believes business should still feel human. Behind every booking, quote, site visit and crew deployment are real people, real pressures and real relationships — something he keeps at the centre of how Crew Force Solutions operates.

Jack's journey into business has been shaped by determination, resilience and a strong belief in doing things properly.

Having also experienced significant personal health challenges, including a kidney transplant in 2012, Jack brings a deep sense of perspective to his work.

He understands the importance of reliability, opportunity and surrounding yourself with good people — values that now sit at the heart of Crew Force Solutions.

Since launching, Crew Force Solutions has continued to grow by focusing on quality, communication and long-term client relationships.

Jack's approach is friendly but firm: protect standards, deliver what is promised and treat people fairly.

He is particularly focused on supporting sectors such as marquee installations, event labour, trackways, gym installations and other fast-moving environments where strong crews make all the difference.

Readers can engage with Jack and Crew Force Solutions by connecting online, following the company's journey and getting in touch for labour, crew or project support.

Whether you are an event organiser, contractor, supplier, venue, installation company, Pride organiser or someone

looking to collaborate with an LGBTQ+ friendly business, Jack welcomes conversations with people and organisations who value reliability, inclusion and high standards.



Crew Force Solutions LTD is proud to be professional, dependable and LGBTQ+ friendly — built by people, powered by people and committed to helping every project succeed.

Contact details:

Here is how you can contact Jack at Crew Force Solutions:

Phone 020 3355 0513

 jack@crewforcesolutions.com

 www.crewforcesolutions.com

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Standing in Solidarity with LGBTQI+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers in East Africa

Voices of Courage, Community, and Hope Beyond Borders

By Aby

LGBTQI+ refugees' leader and representative in South Sudan.

Across East Africa, thousands of LGBTQI+ people are living at the intersection of multiple crises. They are fleeing persecution, violence, criminalization, family rejection, and social exclusion while searching for safety, dignity, and the opportunity to rebuild their lives. For many, displacement does not bring an end to hardship. Instead, it marks the beginning of a new struggle for survival.

As a transgender refugee and community advocate representing more than 400 LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers living in Gorom Refugee Settlement Camp in South Sudan, I witness these realities every day.

Behind every statistic is a person with dreams, talents, relationships, and hopes for the future. Yet too often, LGBTQI+ refugees remain invisible within humanitarian responses and absent from conversations about refugee protection.

This article is an invitation to look beyond headlines and stereotypes and to stand in genuine solidarity with LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers across East Africa.

A Journey Marked by Displacement

Many LGBTQI+ refugees in East Africa come from countries where same-sex relationships are criminalized, where gender diversity is stigmatized, and where violence against LGBTQI+ people often goes unpunished.

Some have been forced from their homes after being outed by family members. Others have survived mob attacks, arbitrary arrests, blackmail, sexual violence, or threats from community members and authorities. Many leave everything behind in search of safety.

However, crossing a border does not automatically guarantee protection.

Within refugee settlements and urban refugee communities, LGBTQI+ people frequently face continued discrimination, harassment, and exclusion. Some are denied housing. Others are targeted because of their appearance or identity. Many struggle to access healthcare, employment opportunities, and basic humanitarian support.

For transgender refugees, these challenges can be particularly severe. Gender identity often makes people more visible and therefore more vulnerable to violence, stigma, and social isolation.

Surviving Against the Odds

Life inside refugee settlements is often shaped by uncertainty.

Food insecurity remains a daily concern for many LGBTQI+ refugees. Access to clean drinking water can be limited. Shelter conditions are frequently inadequate, particularly during harsh weather. Healthcare services may be difficult to access, especially for those requiring HIV treatment, gender-affirming care, trauma counselling, or specialized medical support.

Many community members live with the long-term psychological impacts of displacement and persecution. Depression, anxiety, trauma, and feelings of hopelessness are common experiences among people who have endured years of rejection and instability.

Within our community, some of the most vulnerable individuals include children and youth who have been separated from family support systems, people living with HIV, transgender individuals, survivors of violence, and those with disabilities or chronic health conditions.

These are not isolated cases. They are part of a broader pattern affecting LGBTQI+ displaced communities throughout the region.

Yet despite these hardships, LGBTQI+ refugees continue to demonstrate extraordinary resilience.

The Strength of Community

One of the most powerful lessons I have learned is that community can become a lifeline.

In places where resources are scarce and systems often fall short, LGBTQI+ refugees have created networks of mutual support.

We share food when someone is hungry. We accompany one another to medical appointments. We provide emotional support during crises. We organize peer groups, informal counselling, advocacy initiatives, and emergency response efforts.

Many refugee-led organizations operate with little or no funding, yet they continue supporting vulnerable people every day.

This work is rarely visible to the outside world. It happens quietly through acts of care, solidarity, and collective survival.

Community leadership among LGBTQI+ refugees is not only about responding to emergencies. It is also about creating hope, empowering others, and ensuring that displaced people have a voice in decisions affecting their lives.

Why International Solidarity Matters

Too often, discussions about refugees focus solely on vulnerability. While acknowledging hardship is important, it is equally important to recognize the agency, leadership, and resilience of LGBTQI+ refugees themselves.

What many communities need is not charity alone. We need solidarity.

Solidarity means listening to LGBTQI+ refugees and valuing their expertise about their own lives. It means supporting refugee-led initiatives and advocating for inclusive humanitarian responses. It means challenging anti-LGBTQI+ discrimination wherever it occurs.

International LGBTQ+ communities have an important role to play.

Advocacy can help influence governments, humanitarian agencies, and international institutions to improve protection mechanisms for LGBTQI+ refugees. Awareness-raising can help combat harmful stereotypes and increase public understanding of displacement realities.

Humanitarian support can provide access to food, healthcare, shelter, education, and mental health services. Refugee sponsorship programs and pathways to resettlement can offer life-saving opportunities for those facing ongoing danger.

Most importantly, solidarity reminds displaced LGBTQI+ people that they are not alone.

From Sympathy to Action

Many readers may wonder what they can do.

The answer begins with moving beyond sympathy.

Sympathy acknowledges suffering. Solidarity helps change conditions.

You can support organizations working directly with LGBTQI+ refugees. You can amplify refugee voices and stories.

You can advocate for fair asylum policies and refugee protection programs.

You can support initiatives focused on mental health, HIV care, housing, education, and emergency assistance.

You can also challenge misinformation and prejudice within your own communities.

Small actions, when multiplied across thousands of people, can create meaningful change.

A Future Built on Hope

Despite the challenges facing LGBTQI+ refugees across East Africa, hope remains remarkably strong.

I see hope in young people who continue pursuing education despite enormous obstacles. I see hope in transgender individuals who refuse to hide their identities. I see hope in community members caring for one another during difficult times. I see hope in allies and advocates around the world who choose solidarity over indifference.

Every act of support sends a powerful message: that LGBTQI+ refugees deserve safety, dignity, and opportunity.

Our community does not seek pity. We seek recognition of our humanity and our right to live free from violence, discrimination, and fear.

When LGBTQ+ communities stand together across borders, we demonstrate that liberation is not limited by geography. We remind one another that our struggles are interconnected and that our futures are stronger when built collectively.

Standing in solidarity with LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers is not simply an act of compassion. It is a commitment to justice, equality, and human dignity.

And in a world that often tries to divide us, that commitment has never been more important.

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Written by Adam Swain Ferguson
Illustrated by Veronica Stanley-Hooper



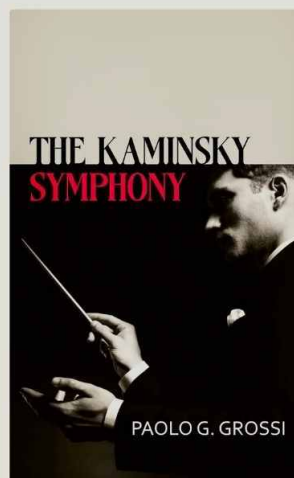
Spectrum Books

Pride in books



The Kaminsky Symphony

By Paolo G. Grossi



Milan, 1913. Maestro Mandelli di Castagnino is resident conductor at La Scala, having taken over from the legendary Toscanini.

Barely in his mid-thirties, he is revered by the Milanese public and fêted by the city's high society. But once the baton is down, and after another soirée in his honour organised by his sycophantic agent, he returns to an empty home, surrounded only by his servants.

Disenchanted and longing to leave his secret life behind, he accepts a post as resident chief conductor at the Odessa Opera House, causing consternation among his family and admirers.

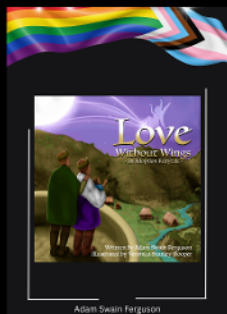
After an eventful journey by land and sea, he settles in the elegant coastal city, improving the performance of the orchestra and winning the approval and friendship of the locals.

He also finds love, but the continent is about to sleepwalk into the carnage of a futile war and Imperial Russia is on the cusp of being rocked by the October Revolution.

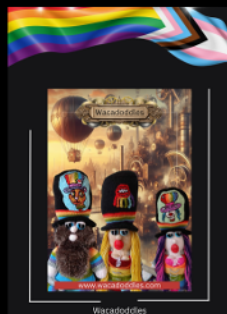
Undeterred by the unfolding catastrophe and wanting to protect his beloved from the savagery of the civil war, he is confronted with a desperate choice.

Out 6th December 2025

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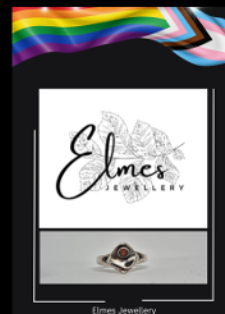
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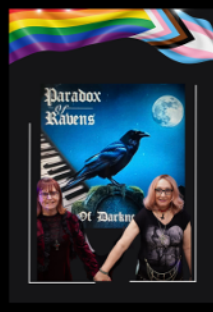
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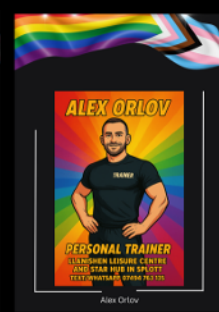
Paradox Ravens



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Alex Orlov



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The organisation aims to bring the Newly arrived, Asylum Seekers and Refugees LGBT members of community together to develop welcoming safe place environment for its members here in the UK.

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