

Rainbow Soup for the Queer Soul

A heartfelt collection
by and for the
LGBTQ+ community
and allies



Lavender Library Press
Book 1 of the Rainbow Soup Series

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the fearless hearts who live and love outside the lines, to the voices that have long been whispered but now roar.

With Lavender Library Press, this is our first step, a beginning marked by courage, creativity, and community.

May this collection be a beacon for all who seek to find themselves in words, and may it open doors for many more stories to bloom.

Here's to new chapters, bold journeys, and the power of sharing our truths. This is only the beginning.

PREFACE

Rainbow Soup for the Queer Soul was born from the desire to create a space, soft, spacious, and celebratory, where LGBTQ+ voices could be heard, felt, and honoured.

This book is the first in a series inspired by Chicken Soup for the Soul, but with a queer heart and a community-powered spirit.

Every poem in this volume was submitted by someone in the LGBTQ+ community or an ally, and all twenty-five were chosen with care. These are offerings of vulnerability, joy, pain, resistance, healing, and truth.

While this book is focused entirely on poetry, future volumes will include short stories, reflections, advice, and more. If this collection speaks to you, we hope you'll consider contributing to future books.

And because your voice matters just as much as those featured here, we've included a writing section at the end of the book - a space just for you. Whether you use it to reflect, express, or begin a piece you might one day submit, it's yours.

**We're so glad you're here.
Lavender Library Press**

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Thank you for opening this book. This collection came together through generous, courageous submissions from queer and allied voices across our communities. Every poem in these pages is an offering, a glimpse into a heart, a history, or a hope.

Rainbow Soup for the Queer Soul began with a simple dream: to create a space for LGBTQ+ people to share their truths, in all their raw, radiant, everyday power. This is the first bowl; may it nourish you.

But this is just the beginning.

We want to keep building this series, to gather more poems, more stories, more wisdom from across our beautiful, diverse community. If you have something to share, whether it's tender, messy, funny, angry, healing, or hopeful, we'd love to read it.

Your voice matters here.
With gratitude and pride,
Lavender Library Press

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

All poems in this collection were submitted by LGBTQ+ individuals and allies across the globe. Some have chosen to remain anonymous; others have shared their pen names and names with pride. Every voice is valid, and every poem in this book is a gift.

Always remember: Rainbow Soup for the Queer Soul is not about credentials. It is about community.

This book is made possible by those who were willing to write from the heart and share a piece of themselves. We are grateful for their vulnerability, their creativity, and their courage.

If you'd like to be part of future volumes, we welcome you, just as you are.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

FRONT MATTER

DEDICATION	2
PREFACE	3
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR	4
ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS	5

2

POEMS

LIST OF POEMS	7
POEMS	8-51

3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THANK YOU	52
LGBTQ+ RESOURCES	53
LGBTQ+ CREATIVE AND WRITING RESOURCES	54

4

YOUR TURN

WRITING PROMPTS	55-75
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LIST OF POEMS IN THIS BOOK

1. **To The Boy I'll Never Know** – by John Cyrus
2. **The First Time I Said It** – by Nicolah Bedford
3. **Becoming They** – by Anonymous
4. **Pronouns in the Mirror** – by a Tomboy
5. **The Wildflower Garden** – by a Wildflower Child
6. **My Mother Called It a Phase** - by Anonymous
7. **The Dance We Didn't Get** – by Anonymous
8. **The Closet**– by Anonymous
9. **Rainbow Rising** – by Anonymous
10. **My Ode to RuPaul** – by a Random Drag Queen
11. **First Light** - by Anonymous
12. **The Language of Us** - by a Lovely Lesbian
13. **Dear Younger Me**- by Anonymous
14. **The Swan in the Water** - by Anonymous
15. **Coffee in you Hoodie** – by an Atypical Lesbian
16. **He Had a Freckle on His Wrist** – by Anonymous
17. **The Closet Wasn't a Room, It Was a Mouth I Couldn't Shut**
- by Anonymous
18. **Hormones in the Fridge Door** – by Anonymous
19. **In the Gay Bar Bathroom** – by an Ally
20. **My Chosen Family** – by Anonymous
21. **A Pride Flag in a Conservative Town** - by a Queer in a Small
Town
22. **We Weren't Out, But We Were Real** - by Jennifer Shelley
23. **To the Girl Who May One Day Date My Daughter** - by
Diane Shephard
24. **Rainbow** - an acrostic poem- by Miss G.
25. **Rainbow** - by Anonymous

TO THE BOY I'LL NEVER KNOW

BY JOHN CYRUS

I joined the team to see you run,
To chase the sun the way you do.
Across the field, a golden blur,
While I stayed quiet, out of view.

I learned to laugh at locker jokes,
To pass the ball, to fake the grin,
To hide the way my heartbeat shook
Whenever you would lean and spin.

Your voice, a song I shouldn't know,
Too deep, too bright, too close, too far.
You slapped my back. You called me "bro."
But never guessed how soft you are.

I went to parties, drank too fast,
Pretended I was there for fun,
But every dance I didn't dance
Was waiting for just only one.

You smiled at girls with tilted heads,
The kind of charm I couldn't steal.
I laughed along but looked instead
For truths I wasn't meant to feel.

Sometimes I think you almost saw,
The way my eyes would linger there,
The way I froze when you undressed,
The silent heat beneath my stare.

But nothing broke. You never flinched,
And I kept playing through the pain.
A bruised heart taped beneath my ribs,
A love I couldn't name.

So here's my ode to summer skin,
To grass-stained dreams and secret light,
To fingers almost brushing mine
When twilight made the world feel right.

You'll never know. You're not supposed to.
That's just the rule for boys like me.
We learn to crave with quiet tongues,
And write our love in poetry.

THE FIRST TIME I SAID IT

BY NICOLAH BEDFORD

It wasn't thunder,
or a breaking glass,
or fireworks flaring through the ceiling,
just a whisper,
hoarse and scared,
like a candle flickering in a storm.

"I think I might be —"
I didn't finish.
Didn't need to.

The pause did all the work.
Your eyes didn't widen,
you didn't pull away,
just reached across the table,
and touched my hand
like you'd always known
and had just been waiting.

Outside, a car passed.
Inside, my chest opened
like a window cracked in spring.
Fresh air.
Real air.

No more rehearsals
in the mirror.

I went home lighter
than I'd ever been.

Not changed
but uncovered.

Still me.
More me.

BECOMING THEY

-ANONYMOUS

I stood in front of the mirror
like it owed me answers.
Fog on the glass,
questions in my chest
and a voice that didn't feel like mine
asking,
Who are you really, though?

I tried "she"
and it tasted like syrup on steel.
Too sweet, too sharp,
never mine.

Tried "he"
and it fit like shoes two sizes too small.
Sharp at the heel,
silent blisters by bedtime.

So I stood there
bathroom light buzzing,
heart drumming like it knew something I didn't
and I whispered:
they.
Just once.
Just to try it on.

Like a hoodie no one told me I was allowed to wear.
And damn.
It didn't feel like lightning.
Didn't split the sky.
But something...
clicked.

Like air filling lungs
that forgot how to breathe.
Like coming home to yourself
after sleeping on someone else's couch your whole life.

"They."
It felt like space.
Like fluid.
Like truth without apology.

So I started small.
Wrote it in the margins of notebooks.
Said it to my dog.
Typed it in group chats
then deleted it.
Then typed it again.

“Til one day
I said it out loud.
To a real person.
In a real room.
And they said:
“Cool.”

Just like that.
No parade.
No panic.
Just peace.

So yeah
I'm not one box,
not one word,
not a thing to be pinned down or defined.
I am breath.
I am motion.

I am a pronoun that dances.
I am they,
and I am me,
and mine.

PRONOUNS IN THE MIRROR

BY A TOMBOY

I don't wear skirts.
Never liked the way they make me feel
like a costume,
like I'm pretending to be someone's idea of "feminine."

Give me jeans with dirt on the knees.
Give me scuffed-up sneakers,
loose hoodies,
baseball caps pulled low.

That's me.
But the world?
It sees short hair
and calls me "sir" at the coffee shop.

Calls me "he" when I walk too fast
or speak too low.

They look at me
and decide
I must be a boy
trying to be a girl.

Or a girl
trying not to be a girl.

But I'm not trying.
I am.

I don't want to be a man.
I don't want to transition.
I don't need a new name
or a new body.

I just want this one
the way it is,
the way I wear it
to be enough.

I want to walk into a room
and not be corrected.
Not be questioned.
Not be a puzzle people try to solve
by changing my pronouns
without asking.

**Yes, I'm a girl.
A real one.**

**Even if I don't wear makeup
or smile when you tell me to.**

**I can be soft
and sharp
and loud
and real
without switching teams.**

**I look in the mirror
and I see her
the girl I've always been.**

**Not in curls or lipstick,
but in defiance.**

**In comfort.
In the set of my jaw
and the swing of my step.**

**She's here.
I'm her.
No correction needed.**

THE WILDFLOWER GARDEN

BY A WILDFLOWER CHILD

I've walked this garden through the years
a patch of wildflowers cracked in concrete,
roots tangled in the city's scars,
petals pushing past the weight of stone.

In the '70s, we were seeds in the dirt,
scattered by winds, unknown and unseen
fragile, fierce, reaching for a sliver of sun
in a world that wanted us hidden, quiet.

Storms came
raids, whispers, losses like frostbite
biting deep into blooms too tender, too young.

But still, we held fast,
our roots twisting deep into the earth of hope.
Through decades, we grew
a riot of colors, wild and unapologetic
our laughter the bees buzzing between blossoms,
our pride parades the summer sun warming the leaves.

We learned to bloom where we were planted,
to build chosen families like trellises,
lifting one another toward the light,
knowing the garden is never just one flower,
but a tangled, thriving, relentless whole.

Yes, some petals fell
too soon, too sharp the winds that took them,
but their fragrance lingers in the soil,
feeding the roots of those still growing,
their courage carried in every bloom.

This garden is our revolution
not neat rows or perfect symmetry,
but wild, sprawling, resilient,
a testament that joy is a stubborn weed
that refuses to be erased.

So come on
bring your colours, your wild heart,
plant yourself here with us,
dance in the sunlight,
let your voice be the rain that nourishes.

**Because queer joy is not just survival
it's the garden in full bloom,
untamed and unashamed,
rooted deep in love,
reaching skyward,
and lighting up the world.**

MY MOTHER CALLED IT A PHASE

BY ANONYMOUS

My mother said,
“It’s just a phase, beta.”

Like I was a season
a thunderstorm passing through her carefully planted garden.

She folded her worries into silk scarves,
pressed tradition tight around her fingers,
spoke softly of religion, honour, and pride
words heavy like the humid air in our old neighbourhood,
thick with history I tried to outrun.

At school, I learned new names for myself,
quietly painting my truth in colours she hadn’t seen before
colours too bright, too loud, too strange,
like neon lights flickering over our quiet street.

She asked why I dressed like that,
why I spoke differently,
why I refused the boy she hoped I’d marry.

I wanted to tell her
that love isn’t a recipe,
that my heart is not a meal to be served on her terms,
that I am not the daughter she imagined
but the one I am becoming.

But I held my tongue,
because love means survival,
and survival sometimes means waiting
for the storm to soften.

Years passed.
She saw me, bit by bit
not the daughter she dreamed of,
but the one who laughs too loud,
who loves fiercely,
who lives fully,
who refuses to hide.

And one day,
when I came home with a hand she didn’t expect,
her eyes didn’t freeze,
didn’t flicker with fear.

She said only,
“Is she kind to you?”
And I smiled,
because maybe phases
aren’t storms to weather
but seasons that change,
and in that change,
we grow.

THE DANCE WE DIDN'T GET

BY ANONYMOUS

The gym lights hung like stars too bright,
shining down on dresses and ties,
the music pulsing through polished floors,
while I stood in the shadows,
a quiet note in a song I couldn't sing.

You were across the room
smiling at someone else,
the one I wanted to hold,
but kept locked deep inside,
a secret buried under tight lips and silent prayers.

I watched your laughter
like it was a dance I'd never learn,
every step a memory
of what could've been,
a slow song that played just for us
but without us.

I practiced in my mirror,
spinning in dresses I never wore,
imagining your hand in mine,
the warmth I'd never feel
when the spotlight shone on everyone else.

And when the last slow song ended,
the crowd cheered,
but inside, I mourned
the dance we didn't get
the moments lost
to fear and silence,
to a love too quiet to be seen.

But maybe someday,
under different lights,
we'll find our rhythm,
and finally,
dance like no one's watching.

THE CLOSET

BY ANONYMOUS

I'm standing here
inside the closet.

Not the one with jackets, shoes, or forgotten Christmas lights
but the one with shadows thicker than midnight,
walls closing in like they know all my secrets
and don't care if I breathe or break.

It's not a room, it's a cage
no windows, no cracks for light,
just the heavy slam of silence
and the echo of every word I'm not allowed to say.

I hear them out there
laughter, music, the hum of lives lived loud and proud.

But I'm inside,
locked tight
in a space too small for dreams,
too dark for hope.

Every breath I take is a dare
a stolen thing,
like I'm sneaking air in a world that says I don't belong.

They call it a phase, a choice, a sin
like my truth is something to hide,
something shameful, broken, wrong.

But this closet—this prison—is not my truth.
It's the lie I've been forced to wear
like a cheap suit stitched from fear.

And I'm done.
I'm done shrinking.

Done silencing the parts of me that roar.
Done letting fear write the story of my life.

So watch me
I will open this door.
Break it down if I have to,
tear the walls with my bare hands,
until sunlight floods the space
where shadows once lived.

I will step out
unashamed, unafraid,
a storm breaking loose in a sky too long gray.
Because my truth is bigger than this closet.
Bigger than the whispers, the hate, the doubt.
Bigger than the fear that tried to cage me.
And when I walk out,
I'm not just free
I'm fire.
I'm light.
I am everything they said I couldn't be.
So let them listen.
Let them see.
Because the closet door swings open
and I'm coming alive.

RAINBOW RISING

BY ANONYMOUS

After every storm
when the sky breaks open,
and rain drips heavy from tired leaves,
when thunder shakes the bones of the earth,
there comes a silence,
a pause, a breath,
and then, a rainbow rises.

Not just colours painted on the sky
but a bridge of light spanning darkness and doubt,
a promise whispered from clouds to earth,
You survived.
You will rise again.

Red, like the fire that burns inside us
the fierce pulse of courage
that refuses to be quiet,
that shouts in the face of fear,
that bleeds and blooms with love.

Orange, warm as the glow of sunsets shared
the comfort found in chosen families,
the laughter in secret rooms,
the hands held tight when the world looks away.

Yellow, bright as the sun's bold smile
a beacon lighting paths through shadows,
the spark of joy that dances
in the eyes of those who dare to hope.

Green, the colour of growing
of healing wounds,
of roots digging deep beneath cold earth,
of resilience pushing toward the light
even when the ground feels heavy.

Blue, vast as the sky we reach for
the calm after storms,
the strength in quiet moments,
the depth of tears that cleanse and renew.

Purple, rich as twilight's embrace
the magic woven in every heart that beats
against the grain,
the pride that swells
when we say,
I am here. I am real.

**This is our spectrum
a tapestry spun from pain and joy,
from struggle and celebration,
from every whispered name
and every shouted truth.**

**We are not just colours
we are stories,
we are histories,
we are futures
written in light and shadow alike.**

**So lift your eyes
breathe in the rainbow's promise
let its colours flood your soul
and know this:**

**You are a rainbow rising
bright, bold, unbroken,
a fierce, beautiful defiance
against any storm that tries to silence you.**

**Rise,
shine,
and never forget
the sky holds you close,
and the world waits
for your light.**

MY ODE TO RUPAUL

BY A RANDOM DRAG QUEEN

O RuPaul,

You are more than the crown
more than the sequins that catch the light,
more than the heels that click like thunder
on the runway of our dreams.

You are the heartbeat of a revolution
a fierce love letter
penned in glitter and grace,
read aloud in every whispered prayer
from closets cracked open,
from souls learning to breathe free.

You taught us the power of transformation
that beneath the makeup and the wigs
lies a truth bold and unshakable:
to be ourselves is to be divine.

With every strut, every pose,
you shattered the glass ceilings
and the walls of shame built to keep us silent.

You made the stage a sanctuary
where misfits become monarchs,
where outsiders find family,
where laughter heals wounds
we thought would never mend.

In your words, “If you can’t love yourself, how in the hell you gonna love
somebody else?”
we found a mantra for survival,
a call to arms wrapped in kindness,
a reminder that love begins within,
that self-acceptance is the fiercest form of rebellion.

You lit a fire in the darkest rooms,
showing us how to sparkle even when the world tries to dim us.
You are the bridge between generations
connecting the past’s fight for freedom
to the future’s boundless hope.

O RuPaul,
your laughter is a balm,
your presence a beacon,
your legacy a rainbow arching across our skies.
Thank you for the courage to be loud,
the grace to be gentle,
the wisdom to be true.

In your glitter, we find our own light
in your story, we see our own strength.
You taught us to rise,
to shine,
to live fully and fiercely
to be queens and kings of our own beautiful, wild lives.
So here's to you,
the glamazon of hope,
the herald of pride,
the soul who made drag not just an art,
but a revolution of love.

FIRST LIGHT

BY ANONYMOUS

Your lips were the first dawn
soft spill of amber light
across the quiet hills of my skin,
warming valleys I hadn't known could ache.

We moved like tides
pull and pull,
the moon's quiet command
drawing us closer,
whispering secrets in waves that crashed
and melted beneath our breaths.

Your touch was a spark,
a flint against the dry kindling
of a heart long starved for fire,
and I burned
slow, fierce, unraveling
into the wild heat of new flame.

The world slipped away
a fading constellation,
while we spun in gravity's sweet orbit,
our bodies composing a secret language
of flame and shadow,
of breathless hymns sung
just beneath the skin.

In that moment
we were galaxies colliding,
stars igniting in wild explosion,
a universe made from whispers
and the taste of first light.

THE LANGUAGE OF US

BY A LOVELY LESBIAN

We lock eyes
a quiet conversation sparking between us,
electric and soft, like the first drop of rain
on thirsty earth.

Your gaze traces me like a secret map,
fingers painting fire along the lines of my skin,
and I feel the pulse
a rhythm older than words,
calling us closer.

The room shrinks
the air thickens, sweet with promise,
your breath a warm invitation
brushing against my neck,
a whispered question I'm eager to answer.

Hands explore like poetry
slow verses written in the curve of your waist,
the hollow behind your ear,
the swell of your collarbone
every touch a stanza of longing,
each sigh a punctuation of desire.

Your lips find my pulse,
soft as a secret,
and the world falls away
all that remains is the cadence of our bodies
learning the language of skin on skin.

Fingers dance down familiar paths,
lighting fires in places I thought forgotten
your touch a brushstroke of flame,
painting me whole in the heat of your hands.

Clothes fall away like petals,
each piece revealing more of the garden we tend,
where every glance is a promise,
every kiss a bloom unfolding in slow motion.

Our bodies speak in silence
a dance of flickering flames and soft breaths,
currents weaving us closer,
dragging us beneath the surface,
where the world softens,
and all that remains is this endless now.

Your hands are my compass,
guiding me through wild forests of sensation,
to the peak where breath and heartbeat collide
where we fall apart to become one,
a symphony of light and fire,
of surrender and soaring.

And as we collapse
tangled and trembling
your fingers trace the lines of my breath,
mapping every shiver, every sigh,
whispering promises against my skin.

Our hearts still racing,
we linger in the sacred quiet
fingertips lingering on curves and scars,
soft kisses pressed into the hollows of necks and shoulders,
an unspoken vow in every touch.

In this fragile afterglow,
we share more than bodies
we share fragments of soul,
threads weaving us closer,
binding us in a tender, fierce embrace.

And I know this love
this sacred language
is ours alone
spoken in every breath,
in every lingering touch,
in the quiet pulse of being fully seen,
fully known,
fully loved.

DEAR YOUNGER ME

BY ANONYMOUS

Dear Younger Me,
I see you sitting there
eyes wide with questions,
heart tangled in silence,
wondering if you'll ever be enough
in a world that's loud and unforgiving.

I want you to know
you are already more
than the fears that cage you,
more than the quiet tears you hide,
more than the names they try to pin on you.

You will stumble,
you will question,
you will ache
but oh, you will rise.

There is a fire inside you
bright and fierce and waiting
to light your path
when the nights feel endless,
when the mirror feels like a stranger.

Love yourself, even when it's hard.
Hold tight to your truth, even when it whispers soft.

You are a universe unfolding
full of stars, storms, and endless sky.
And when the world feels heavy,
remember this:
you are not alone.

You are loved,
you are fierce,
and you are absolutely enough.

So keep dreaming, keep fighting, keep being
because your story is just beginning,
and it's going to be beautiful.

THE SWAN IN THE WATER

BY ANONYMOUS

I remember the weight
the cruel words like stones,
hitting me cold, sinking deep,
the sideways glances sharp as broken glass,
cutting through the quiet air of empty hallways,
the loneliness stretching wide
like an endless gray sky
over a playground of shadows.

I folded myself small,
a paper boat tossed in a storm,
trying to disappear beneath the waves
hiding bruises no one saw,
silent screams that drowned in the noise.

But beneath the bruises and silence,
a swan waited
its feathers slick and trembling,
cold water lapping at its neck,
yearning to stretch wide
and break the surface
of the murky river I was forced to swim.

I bled
a river of pain carving through my skin.

I broke
shards of fear and doubt piercing my soul.

I got lost
adrift in a fog of shame and silence.

But then
one quiet morning,
the water stilled,
a golden light spilled over the horizon,
and I felt it
the fierce pulse beneath my ribs,
the wild call of wings unfolding.

I rose.

Slowly,
like the dawn spills colour across the sky,
like a whispered promise turning into a roar.

I grew
into a grace I never imagined,
a strength fierce and unyielding,
a beauty forged in storms survived.

I learned to cry
tears like rain washing away the dark,

to fight
heart pounding like thunder beneath calm skin,

to be who I am
even when the world tried to bend me,
because I was made to soar.

Now, when I look back,
I see the pain was the water
the fierce current
that taught my wings to fly,
and I...
I am unstoppable.

COFFEE IN YOUR HOODIE

BY AN ATYPICAL LESBIAN

The morning slips in slow,
soft as the curve of your breath
against my shoulder.

Golden light pools on the floor
like honey,
and I wear your hoodie
like a second skin
still warm from the night before,
still scented like you.

There's something holy
in the quiet between us
in the way your fingers
brush sleep from your eyes,
in the stretch of your smile
before you say my name.

I make coffee
in a kitchen that still echoes
with whispered yeses,
with breathless moans
and love spoken in fingertips.

You lean against the counter,
barefoot,
smirking at me
like I'm the best thing
to ever happen before 9 a.m.

No vows, no rings,
no audience to clap
just your laugh in my throat,
your mug in my hand,
your hoodie
holding me like a promise
you never had to speak aloud.

And maybe this
this ritual of warmth and waking
is more sacred
than any altar could ever hold.

HE HAD A FRECKLE ON HIS WRIST

BY ANONYMOUS

He had a freckle
just beneath the bend of his wrist
 small, like a secret
 the sun had left behind,
 like a punctuation mark
on the sentence that began it all.

I noticed it the first time
we sat close enough for silence
 to feel electric.

His sleeves were pushed up,
 his laughter careless,
 and I was already falling
into the soft gravity of him.

That freckle
I watched it move
when he reached for his mug,
when he brushed his hair back,
when he reached for me
 and didn't pull away.

We didn't call it anything at first.
It was glances that lingered too long,
 touches that said more
than either of us had learned how to say.

It was Friday nights that turned into
Saturday mornings with his legs tangled in mine,
 my breath catching
at how right it all felt.

He smiled like the world wasn't watching.
And maybe it wasn't.

Maybe in that small apartment
 with the peeling paint
 and secondhand pillows,
we had carved out something holy
 just for us.

He used to read aloud
from books I hadn't heard of,
 his voice warm and slow,
 his fingers drawing idle lines
on the back of my hand.

And always
that freckle.
That small, familiar star
guiding me back
when the world felt too loud.

We didn't just fall in love.
We built it.
Piece by piece.

With soup on cold nights,
and laundry days,
and the kind of laughter
you only share with someone
who's seen you cry.

Now, when he sleeps beside me,
his wrist draped across my chest,
I kiss that freckle
like it's the start of everything
because, in some quiet way,
it was.

THE CLOSET WASN'T A ROOM, IT WAS A MOUTH I COULDN'T SHUT

BY ANONYMOUS

The closet wasn't a room.
It was a mouth.
And not a gentle one.

It had teeth.
Rows of them
carved from church pews and locker room whispers,
molars made of Sunday shame,
canines dripping with fix yourself.

It bit down on my voice
every time it tried to rise.

It didn't echo.
It devoured.

Swallowed my laugh before it ever left my lips,
swallowed the softness in my walk,
the way my eyes lingered too long
on the wrong kind of beautiful.

It chewed up my joy
and spat it out as silence.

The closet didn't offer privacy.
It was surveillance dressed in drywall,
a mirror that only reflected what others expected to see.

It said:
Don't say that.
Don't sit like that.
Don't want what your bones ache for.

It was the air I breathed
thin and barbed,
catching in my throat
like the words I never said:
I like her.
I want her.
I am not wrong.

I lived inside that mouth.
Built a home in its belly.
Hung curtains made of caution.
Slept beneath a ceiling of should-nots,
my dreams leaking out
in colours I wasn't allowed to name.

And God
it was exhausting.

To wake up every morning
and unzip my soul
just to fit into someone else's version of me.

To bind joy like a wound,
to tuck truth under my tongue
and call that survival.

But even the hungriest mouth
can't hold everything forever.

And eventually,
it gagged on me.

Because I grew louder.

Because my chest kept beating
to a rhythm it couldn't erase.

Because love came to me
like a storm wrapped in sunlight
and when she touched me,

I cracked open like a hymn
finally sung aloud.

Because truth
is a wildfire with no leash.

And one day,
I let it burn.

I opened my mouth
before it could,
and what spilled out
wasn't apology.

It was ash and honey.
It was thunder and bloom.

**It was yes.
It was mine.
It was alive.**

The closet wasn't a room.

**It was a trap.
But I shattered the walls
with the echo of my own name.**

**And when it spit me out
raw, radiant,
reeking of freedom**

**I didn't crawl.
I rose.**

**And this voice?
It doesn't fit in closets anymore.**

It's too wide.

Too holy.

Too whole.

HORMONES IN THE FRIDGE DOOR

BY ANONYMOUS

They sit next to the almond milk
a tiny vial of becoming.
Tucked behind the ketchup,
between grocery lists and leftover takeout,
wrapped in foil like something sacred.

No spotlight.
No ceremony.

Just cool glass,
quiet mornings,
and the slow ritual
of coming home to myself.

Every Sunday, I line up the tools:
the alcohol swab,
the orange cap,
the needle gleaming like a promise.

My hands shake sometimes
not from fear,
but reverence.

Because this is holy.
This is sacred.
This is rebuilding.

The plunger draws back,
pulling liquid light into the barrel.

It's clear,
but it might as well be gold.

Because inside it is a version of me
that I once only dreamed of
voice deeper,
jaw stronger,
soul aligned.

I press the needle into skin
that once felt foreign,
and feel the shift
small,
like a tide turning,
like seeds splitting open beneath soil.

People talk about transformation
like it happens all at once
like a butterfly snaps into wings overnight.

But this?

This is slower.
Softer.
More honest.

This is knuckles learning new ways to crack.
This is the curve of my smile
feeling less like camouflage,
more like truth.

This is my mirror
blinking back at me
with recognition.

Every week, I grow
not into someone else
but deeper
into myself.

And still, it catches me off guard:
how such a small thing
a vial on the fridge door
can hold
this much
life.

IN THE GAY BAR BATHROOM

BY ANONYMOUS

It wasn't the club
not the pounding bass like a second heartbeat,
not the kaleidoscope lights slicing the smoke-filled air,
not the crowd,
a sea of shimmering bodies,
each one a constellation in a galaxy of freedom.

No,
the real magic was hidden
behind the cracked door of the women's bathroom,
where the fluorescent bulbs buzzed like whispered secrets,
where the tiles held the echoes of a thousand stolen truths.

I stepped in quiet,
a moth cloaked in nervous skin,
lipstick smeared like a tentative promise,
eyes flickering like candle flames in a draft.

And then,
“BABY! Strip that top off
you’re a wildfire wrapped in cotton,
too fierce to hide under fabric.”

A queen with lashes heavy as midnight,
grabbed my hand
like pulling me from shadow into spotlight
and adjusted my straps
as if weaving spells into my skin.

Another reached into her bag
a magician pulling out a silver safety pin
and stitched my broken heel back into dance,
while her words tumbled like jazz riffs,
teaching me the art of contour and survival,
the holy gospel of Vaseline on cracked winter skin.

Someone passed me a claw clip,
its plastic teeth like a crown made for a queen,
while another called me “gorgeous”
as if that was the only truth worth knowing.

We traded cheap perfume and secrets,
lovelies and laughter,
scars and mascara,
each one a thread weaving me into this tapestry
of belonging.

I watched a drag queen
her wig discarded like a fallen halo,
makeup smeared like battle scars
hold a crying baby gay in the corner stall,
her voice soft as moth wings:
“You are not too much.
You are not too strange.
You are exactly right.”

And something inside me cracked,
like a dam breaking under the weight of years,
like ribs expanding to cradle a heart finally free to beat loud.

That night,
I learned how to speak with my own breath
how to wear my name like a song,
how to roll my R's and my eyes
at every whisper that tried to shrink me.

I walked out of that bathroom
a woman painted in stall graffiti,
lip gloss like armor,
and love heavier than the world's judgment.

Since then,
when the world tries to silence me,
erase me,
flatten me
I remember those neon saints,
their voices a chorus lighting the dark,
teaching me that sisterhood
is the loudest prayer
in the longest line for the mirror.

MY CHOSEN FAMILY

BY ANONYMOUS

My family is not a bloodline
it's a wild tree I planted with trembling hands,
each branch a story stretched toward sunlight,
each leaf a whispered promise,
each root a secret buried deep in the soil of love.

There's the stubborn branch
knotted and scarred from storms,
bent but unbroken,
like my ride-or-die friend
who caught me when I was falling,
their laughter a steady wind
that held me upright through every thunderclap.

There's the leaf that dances on the edge of every breeze
a splash of vivid green against grey skies,
my friend who colours my world
when the horizon feels heavy and low,
their voice a melody
that turns sorrow into song.

Roots burrow deep, tangled beneath the earth
twisting through layers of memory and midnight talks,
drinking from the underground rivers
of shared secrets and silent understanding,
nourished by tears and gentle hands
that never let go.

Some branches stretch and sway with grace,
flexing with the seasons of change,
shedding old leaves with bittersweet grace
the friends who loved me enough
to set me free,
to watch me grow in the wild sunlight
beyond their reach.

There are blossoms, unexpected bursts of colour,
friends who arrived like spring rain after drought,
soft and sudden,
watering barren fields inside me,
reminding me that hope
is always waiting beneath the frost.

This tree is imperfect
its bark rough with scars,
its branches tangled in fierce embrace,
leaves fluttering with whispered stories,
roots humming with resilience.

I tend it every day,
watering it with kindness,
pruning away doubt and fear,
knowing that family is not given,
not born in flesh and blood alone
family is grown in wild gardens,
in the soil of chosen love,
where hearts take root
and bloom beyond all expectation.

A PRIDE FLAG IN A CONSERVATIVE TOWN BY A SMALL-TOWN QUEER

I hung it on the porch like wind chimes,
quiet, but clear.

A triangle of color against chipped white siding,
next to a hanging basket that never bloomed,
beneath the gutter the birds have claimed
for three summers now.

The flag was cheap
polyester, made to fade in the sun.

Its edges frayed by August,
but it caught the wind just right,
like it was breathing for me
on the days I forgot how.

I hammered it in
while the neighbour's dog barked,
and two teens on bikes passed
too fast to stare,
but not too fast to know.

Ms. Landry stopped waving.
The pastor's wife handed me a pamphlet
about "God's design."

The boy down the street started walking
on my side of the road.
He doesn't say hi,
but he looks less scared.

My uncle said, "Careful,
people talk around here."
I said, "Let them."
I'm done folding myself
to fit inside their comfort.

That week,
a bill passed two provinces over
banning trans kids from choosing their names.
A teacher was fired for saying "gay"
in a classroom with rainbow curtains.
A library burned down
because someone called a story hour
a threat.

They say it's not hate
just "concern."
Just "values."
Just "the law."

But I've lived long enough to know
when silence is a weapon
and when visibility is a wound
you wear like armour.

I didn't hang that flag
for decoration.

I hung it for the kid
still praying to wake up different.
For the teen
who paints rainbows on their nails
and scrubs them off before dinner.
For the adult
who came out at fifty-two
and still flinches at their reflection.

And maybe,
just maybe,
for me too.

It's still there.
Worn and weather-stained.
A little limp in the morning,
fierce in the evening light.

A quiet rebellion
on a porch
in a town
that doesn't say the word "queer"
unless it whispers.

WE WEREN'T OUT BUT WE WERE REAL

BY JENNIFER SHELLEY

I met you where the silence grows,
behind the bleachers, down the track.
Your laughter wore your father's coat,
your sadness zipped up at the back.

You called me “friend” when others asked,
but pressed your hand against my spine.
We spoke in glances, never names,
and touched like secrets kept in line.

You showed me stars I'd never seen,
your backyard map of other skies.
I wrote you poems on my phone
then read them only with my eyes.

We danced alone with earbuds in,
on rooftops where the town looked small.
I carved our hearts in notebook spines
then buried them beneath it all.

Our love was made of almosts, dear
half-finished notes, half-hidden clues.
A song we hummed beneath our breath,
a bruise we chose instead of truth.

The world we knew was tight with rules,
like dress codes, fathers, locker rooms.
So we became magicians then,
and made a life in borrowed rooms.

A stolen kiss, a passing touch,
a chapel hush when no one prayed.
We weren't the kind to make a vow
just kids who knew and stayed afraid.

You gave me keys you never used.
I kept them in a box of rings.
We never got to wear our names,
but we still built our little things.

One day you left; no grand goodbye,
just quiet shoes across the tile.
And though I never said it then,
you lived inside me all the while.

They say young love burns fast and dim,
like candles gasping in the breeze.
But I still feel you in my chest
like roots that grew beneath the freeze.

We weren't out; no pride parade,
no photos kissed in golden light.
But we were real, in breath and bone,
a flicker strong enough for night.

TO THE GIRL WHO MAY ONE DAY DATE MY DAUGHTER BY DIANE SHEPHARD

I see you.

You're twelve,
standing in front of your bedroom mirror
wondering if your reflection
means anything at all.

You're sixteen,
and saying you're "just close friends"
because closeness feels safer
than the truth.

Wherever you are,
hi.
I'm the mom.
The queer one.
The one with the cropped hair and soft eyes
and way too many enamel pins
on her denim jacket.

And one day, maybe,
you'll fall in love with my daughter.

And I want you to know:
you are safe here.
This is not a house where people flinch
when girls hold hands.
This is not a dinner table where silence
sits louder than love.

My daughter grew up
with a mother who kissed another woman
before school drop-offs.

She's seen tenderness in all its forms.
She knows love
isn't limited to
his and hers towels
or cookie-cutter vows
or "just wait till college."

So if you come here
with shaking hands and mascara smudged
because your mom
still calls it a phase
or your pastor
calls it a sin
or your classmates
call it attention-seeking,
breathe.

This house knows what it's like
to fight for joy with both hands.

I promise:
You won't have to explain yourself
before you're asked how your day went.

You won't have to shrink
so someone else can feel big.

You won't have to pretend
you're "just a friend."

Unless you want to.
And then we'll all play along
until you're ready
to let the light in.

If you break her heart,
I'll be the mom
with ice cream and tissues,
not a pitchfork.

But I will still think
she deserves galaxies.

If she breaks yours,
I'll tell her to apologize
with her whole chest.

And I'll still think
you deserve someone
who writes your name
like a sunrise.

**All I ask
is that you are kind.
And honest.**

**And brave enough to say the thing
before fear talks you out of it.
And if the world outside
ever makes you feel small,
this porch light stays on.
Even when it rains.**

RAINBOW AN ACROSTIC FOR THE QUEER SOUL BY MISS G.

R Remember the nights you folded yourself small into shadows, into silence, into shapes that didn't fit, but didn't scream.

A Anger came later.
A quiet boil under your ribs
as laws passed and strangers stared
and family said "just don't make it political."

I Inside you, though
A whole world bloomed.
Soft edges, sharp truths,
the colours no one taught you to name.

N Not all of us make it to light.
Some of us remain whispers
in yearbooks and inboxes,
held tight in the mouths of lovers
we never got to claim in public.

B But still, you walk.
Wearing joy like a protest.
Wearing grief like jewelry.
Wearing they/them like an anthem
in a world that still doesn't know how to listen.

O Over and over,
you choose yourself.
Even when it costs you
your church, your job,
your mother's voice on your birthday.

W We are not here by accident.
We are the storm and the clearing.
The soft kiss and the siren.
The unbroken lineage of those
who dared to shimmer
when they were told to disappear.

RAINBOW

BY ANONYMOUS

They say the rainbow is just light bending
a crack in the sky where storms and sunlight collide.

But this one?

This one carries stories bleeding through the prism
blood and fire and the ghosts of those who dared to dream.

Red is the pulse
not just life, but the riot in your veins,
the fury of being seen when the world tells you to hide.

Orange is the burn of healing
like scars that gleam in dusk light,
reminders that broken things still glow.

Yellow is the flicker of hope
a warning flare in the darkest night,
a sun that won't stop rising.

Green is the earth's breath
wild and stubborn, growing in concrete cracks,
proof that roots can break glass.

Blue is the depth
the quiet rage beneath calm waters,
the ocean where we learn to drown and swim.

Indigo is the shadow
the space where secrets gather,
the cloak we pull tight when the world's too loud.

Violet is the crown
the fire at the top of the mountain,
the fierce throne for souls who refuse to kneel.

This flag is not just colours
it is revolt and refuge,
a promise forged in light and shadow.

A spectrum stitched from the dust of dreams,
holding every voice that refuses to vanish.



Thank you for sharing this journey with us.

**Your support means the world to the
LGBTQ+ community and to every voice that
makes Rainbow Soup for the Queer Soul
possible.**

**If you have poems, stories, or reflections
you'd like to share in future volumes,
please get in touch:
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**Together, we create space for every story.
With love and pride,
Lavender Library Press**

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LGBTQ+ SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

Whether you're seeking support, community, or more stories like those in this book, these organizations and platforms are here to help. You're never alone.

- **Egale Canada**
 - Canada's national LGBTQ+ human rights organization
 - Website: egale.ca
 - Phone: 1-416-964-7887
- **The 519**
 - Toronto-based LGBTQ+ community centre offering health, wellness, and support programs
 - Website: the519.org
 - Phone: 1-416-392-6874
- **Crisis Services Canada**
 - National network offering 24/7 crisis support, including for LGBTQ+ folks
 - Website: crisiservicescanada.ca
 - Phone: 1-833-456-4566
- **Rainbow Health Ontario**
 - Providing health information and resources for LGBTQ+ people across Ontario
 - Website: rainbowhealthontario.ca
- **Queer Emergencies**
 - A peer-run crisis line and support network for queer folks in crisis
 - Website: queeremergencies.com
 - Phone: 1-888-688-4766 (Queer Emergencies Hotline)
- **Vancouver Pride Society**
 - Organizers of Vancouver Pride and LGBTQ+ community events
 - Website: vancouverpride.ca

LGBTQ+ CANADIAN CREATIVE & WRITING COMMUNITIES

- **Lambda Literary**
 - Supports LGBTQ+ writers and publishes queer literature globally, with many Canadian members
 - Website: lambdaliterary.org
- **Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives**
 - A treasure trove of queer Canadian history and culture
 - Website: clga.ca
- **Queer Writers Collective**
 - A community for LGBTQ+ authors and creatives in Canada
 - Website: queerwriterscollective.com

YOUR TURN

THE NEXT PAGES ARE FOR YOU AND YOUR VOICE

We created this book with the belief that every queer story matters, including yours.

If these poems stirred something in you, we invite you to write it down. Draw it out. Speak it loud. Whether it's a poem, a memory, a love letter, or a truth that's hard to name, there is space for you here.

We're already dreaming up the next volume of Rainbow Soup for the Queer Soul, and we want to hear from you.

 **Submit your work to:**
lavenderlibrarypress@outlook.com
Follow us: @lavenderlibrarypress on our socials

Stories heal. Sharing helps. Your voice could be the one someone else needs to hear.

Let's build the next bowl of rainbow soup together.

TO MY YOUNGER SELF

WHAT DID YOU NEED TO HEAR BACK THEN? WRITE IT NOW.

MY COMING OUT STORY

A LETTER, A POEM, OR A LIST OF MOMENTS.
LOUD OR QUIET — IT ALL COUNTS.

THE FIRST TIME I FELT SEEN

WHERE WERE YOU? WHO WAS THERE? WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE?

A LOVE LETTER TO QUEER JOY

CELEBRATE A MOMENT THAT FELT LIKE
FREEDOM, EUPHORIA, OR HOME.

THINGS I WANT TO SAY BUT HAVEN'T WRITE IT FOR SOMEONE. OR WRITE IT FOR YOU.

WHAT SAVED ME

A PERSON, A BOOK, A MOMENT, A FEELING — EXPLORE IT.

WHO I'M BECOMING

YOU'RE NEVER FINISHED GROWING.
WHAT ARE YOU GROWING INTO?

IF I COULD TELL THE WORLD ONE THING... WHAT WOULD IT BE?

A POEM I'VE BEEN AFRAID TO WRITE HERE'S YOUR PAGE.

MY QUEER LIFE

THERE'S NO RIGHT OR WRONG HERE , JUST YOUR TRUTH.

