



Grenada



Editors Letter

I am proud to present you with the first issue of CREUTAIR: Scottish history through the queer lens. I have been fascinated by Scottish history since I was a child. On school holidays, I would visit Edinburgh Castle, scale the grand halls and be engulfed in the stories of romantic tragedy, rebellion and oppression. Now as a queer man, I can relate to these experiences personally. I grew up queer in the Scottish Highlands which often felt isolating both physically and emotionally. I often felt I had to suppress my identity in order to fit in and CREUTAIR has allowed me to explore these fond childhood memories and create a world that knows no boundaries. To create a queer vision of history that reflects the world I live in today and the people around me. I am proud to have worked with so many talented creatives on this issue and I hope you will feel the amount of love that has gone into the words and fashion imagery. CREUTAIR has become a love letter to my younger self and a celebration of all the things I felt I had to suppress as a teenager.

In creating this issue, I have taken into account the devastating impact of British colonialism on the LGBTQ+ community. This is apparent on a global scale, with half of the 71 countries around the world in which same sexual relations are illegal, half being former British colonies. Another example of this is the 1533 Buggery Act which declared that the 'detestable and abominable Vice of Buggery committed with mankind or beast' be punishable by death which stuck around for hundreds of years at a major human cost. All these things considered I think using history as inspiration takes back the power for queer people and turns something negative into a positive. I decided to take these stories from history and reimagine them to fit my own queer narrative. Queer people have been prominent throughout history, particularly in the British Monarchy, but this is not something which is taught about in schools nor is it common knowledge.

I dedicate this first issue to my Aunt Ailsa who passed away last year. Thank you for teaching me hard work, dedication, and the meaning of family. You are missed every day.

Douglas Miller



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Chapter I

All is Queer



in Love
and War



PARC









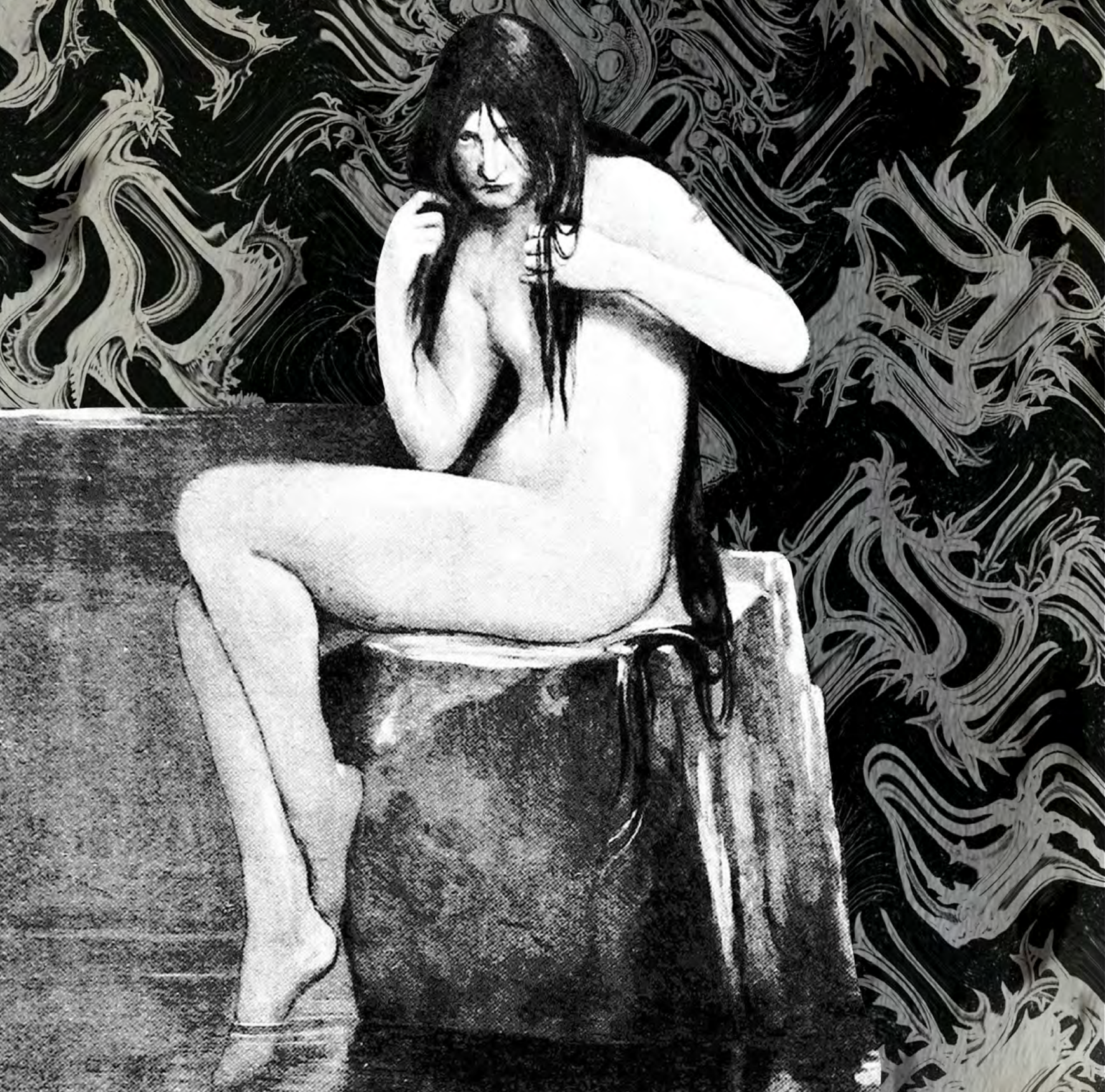
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SELKIE



SALTY

The Younger selkie emerged from the water to see the Elder sat naked and waiting on the beach. The Elder's human skin was flushed and glowing, having only just shed her true form which lay rubbery and lifeless on the shoreline. Sand clung to her legs and buttocks where she sat, although it did not seem to bother her. As the Younger approached, she moved near to watch as the Elder dug in amongst the sand to retrieve a piece of silver metal and a small paper cylinder. She was amazed as she observed her senior flick the metal open, produce a flame and light the other object. 'What's that?' the Younger asked as she sat, curiosity taking hold.

'This,' she held the small cylinder in front of her face, pausing to admire it. 'Is a cigarette. And it's your introduction to them,' she said, throwing her thumb back over her shoulder towards the land spilling out behind her. 'Fillin themselves wi shite because it feels good – and ye ken wit? It absolutely does,' she finished, taking a long drag and blowing grey smoke out in front of her, a new shade amongst the sky and the sea.

Waves lapped gently against the shore – in the distance, darker grey shapes could be seen jumping out of the water, white splashes bursting around them. 'Fuckin show offs,' the Elder remarked, smirking as she drew another drag of her cigarette. 'Ah assume yer here because ye wanty learn about the humans.'

The Younger nodded, noting the hints of grey trickling through the Elder's hair. Despite this, it was still strikingly golden against their surroundings. 'Ah knew one eh them – a long time ago now,' she continued. 'A woman. She came tae the beach often and ah would watch from the water as she let her shoulders out from under her dress tae bask in

the sun, sat tae read.' She sighed, finishing the last of her cigarette and stubbing it out in the sand.

'She's the most beautiful thing av ever laid eyes on.'

The Younger wondered just how beautiful this woman could have been, considering the beauty which she had known in the sea for her entire life. She noted the sadness which had overcome her companion's entire composure; dimming her glow as if subdued by the landscape.

'If she was so beautiful –'

'Dinnae mistake me, hen. She was the most beautiful.'

'Okay... if this human's beauty was so sheer and pure, why don't you know her still?'

'Because eh a man,' the Elder spat. 'We loved each other, ye know. After watchin her for so many days, she eventually caught me devolv'in into one eh them as ah came oot the water. She knew exactly wit ah was and she never judged. At first, we were just pals – but the fact she never flinched fae ma body was noted, tae say the least. Ah risked it aw by telling her about oor way of life. Ma own Elders would never huv cared if ah got wi one eh them, but they'd never let it go if they knew she knew exactly wit a wis. The hing is tho, ah trusted her.'

'In return, she told me aw about how they live. The wankers huv started tae exploit the land and the sea for all their worth. Because it suits them. Because it's easy. We're better than them, yeno. We respect the sea around us, and it respects us back. Anyway, soon after we became intimate. We loved each other oan the beach, out in the open. Ah even let her swim wi me in ma seal form – she didnae care, adoring me regardless. It wis undoubtedly the most av ever felt for someone. It felt as if ma heart doubled in size whenever ah laid gaze upon her.'





The Younger noticed that small drops of water were now welling from the Elder's eyes, falling down her face. She was both confused and amazed.

'I've never seen that happen before – is this normal for them? Are you alright?' she laid a hand on her Elder's leg, who promptly swatted it away.

'Spare me your sympathy, hen. You've no been allowed to indulge in your human form long enough to feel sadness as one eh them. They're tears. This is wit happens,' she said, gesturing across her entire face. 'Hold oot yer tongue.'

The Elder allowed one of the drops of water to roll onto her fingertip and moved it to the Younger's outstretched tongue.

'Tell me wit it tastes like.'

'It's like... ' The Younger was overwhelmed. 'Like home – like the sea.'

'That's right, like the sea.'

'I want to know how a man got in between the two of you.'

'Nosey bitch!' the Elder laughed through her tears. 'Ah was naïve at first, but when push came tae shove we could never be together.'

'Because of what we are?'

'Naw, because of what we are up here.'

'I don't understand,' the Younger responded, frowning.

'Wits there no tae understand?'

'You, me... her... we're no different; we look the same, feel the same - taste the same,' she moved her hand upward toward the Elder's face and again allowed herself to indulge

in the saline taste of tears.

The Younger could see the Elder's mind working as if to prepare a snarky remark, but in the end she simply sighed. 'It's because we're lassies, women, females. Ah was exactly the same as her and that's why we couldnae be together. Here, only men and women can be one or it's frowned upon. In the end she got a better, safer option. It shattered me.'

The Elder got up and walked toward the sea, standing facing the horizon before turning back to the Younger. 'Ah'll tell you suhin, hen. There are billions of living creatures in there,' she gestured behind her. 'And probably billions oot there in their world too. They weren't ready for the kind eh love and desire she and I had back then, but maybe they will be soon.' She smiled, tears still falling down her face. 'Because there's so many of us, ah truly believe that there's so many different types eh love in this world – but never the same love twice.' She turned, leaving the Younger on the sand and walked into the sea; her salt tears mingling with the familiar salt water as the Elder returned home, engulfed by protection from the human world.



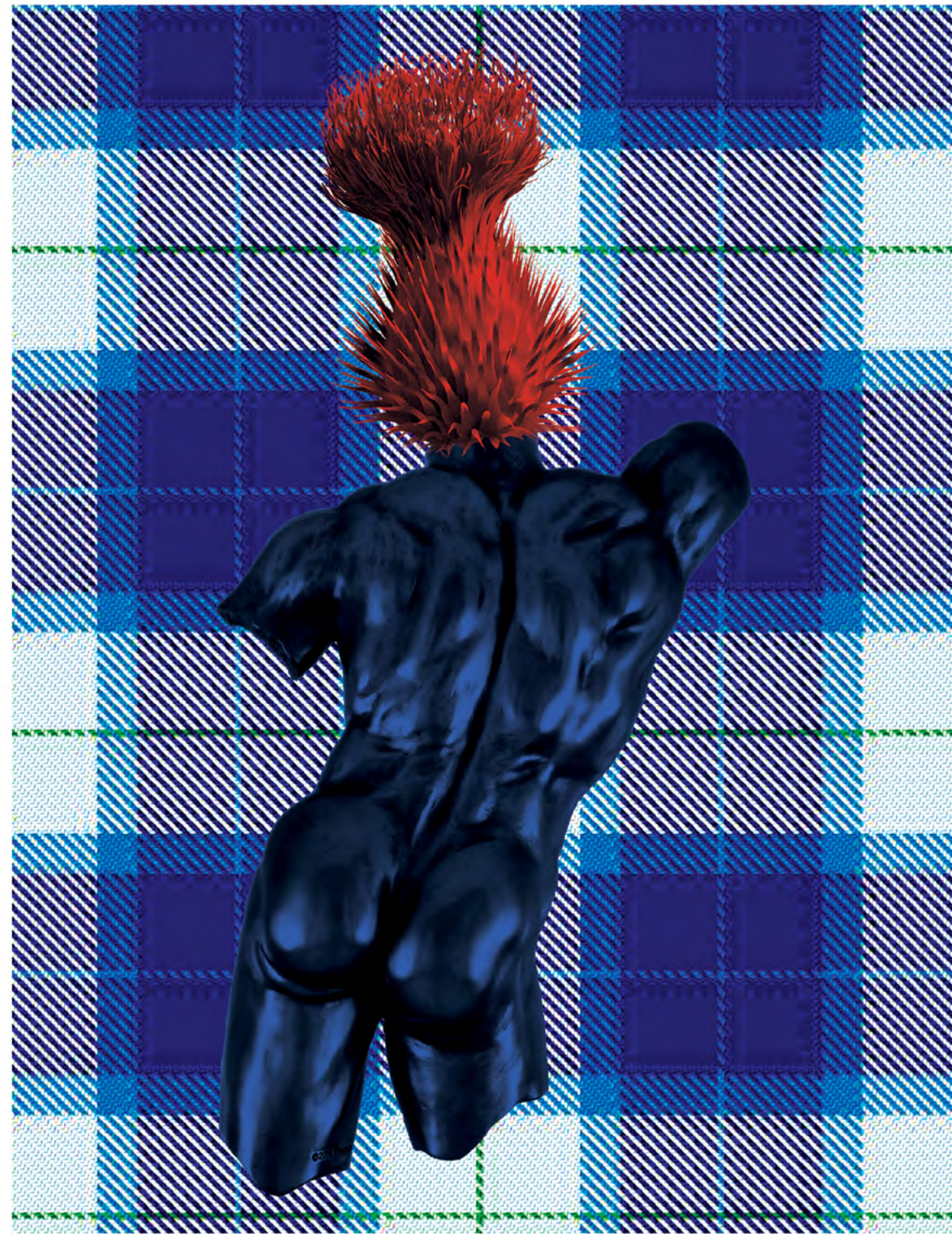


BRAVEHEART I

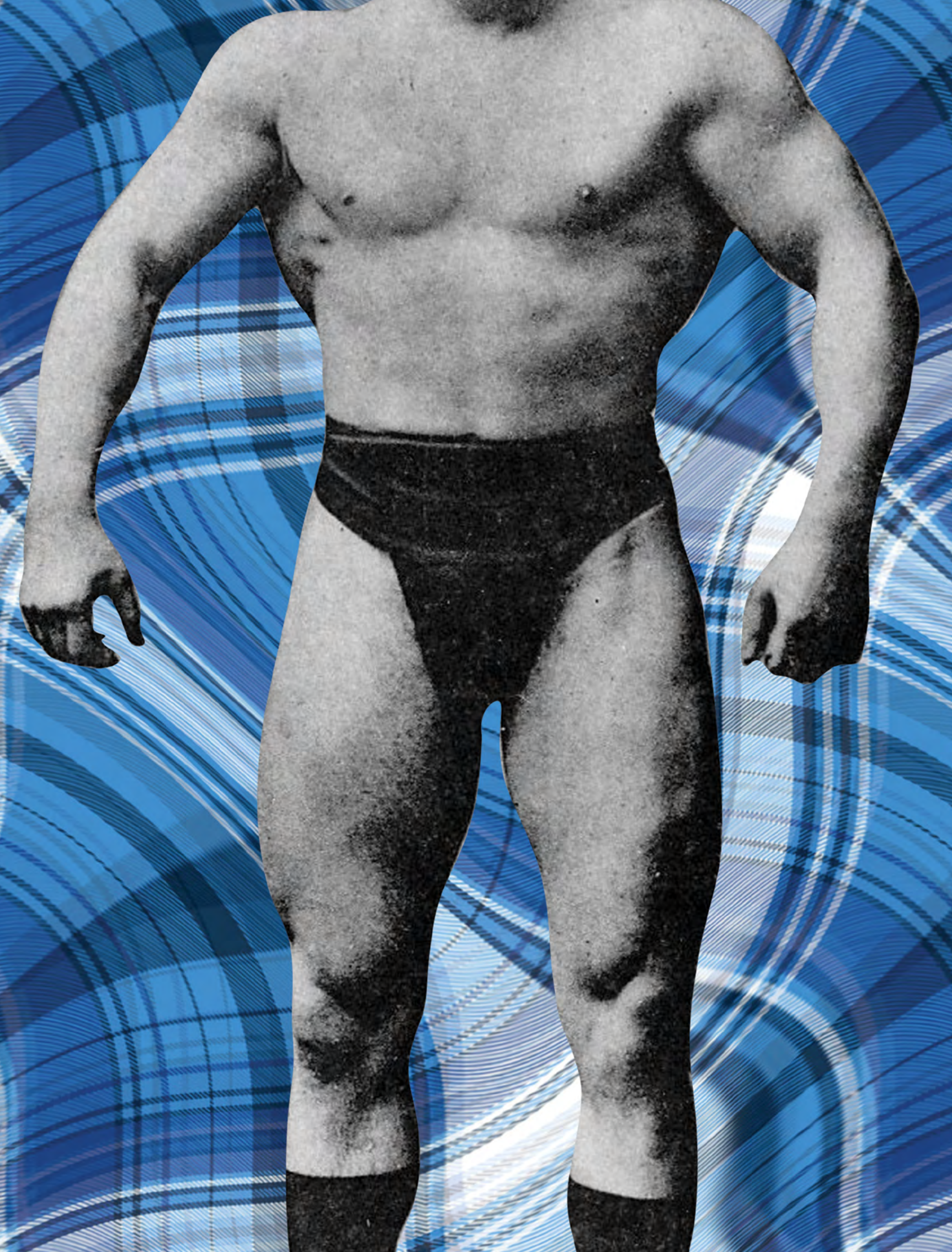








Freedom
is a noble
thing



STRONGMAN

The 6ft, blue-eyed, blonde haired John O' Groats strongman who is breaking boundaries for the LGBTQ+ community and beyond.

I stand at Thurso train station on a bitter cold morning after a sluggish 4-hour train journey with nothing more than a rucksack and a weak 3G signal. I had lived in the Highlands for most of my life, but this was first time I have travelled as far as John O' Groats; a small village which sits at the north tip of Scotland and the hometown of Kevin Macgregor.

When I first learned of Kevin, I was fascinated by him. An openly queer man living on what seems like the edge of the world, far away from what most of us know as civilisation. Not only was Kevin openly queer, he was training to become a "Strongman". Not the chiselled Love Island type, the rugged Viking-like type that picks up monstrously heavy objects like cars and tractor wheels.

As he approaches, I underestimate his size - he is Thor-like, holding a small Jack Russel which weirdly reminds me of some sort of

"Legally Blonde" chihuahua in handbag moment. I realise then that Kevin and I hail from very different worlds. He leans in for a handshake, and my hand becomes lost inside his brawny grasp. His palms are understandably rough and although his handshake is firm but not too firm, I can't help but think how easy it would be for my bones to crumble under his grip. Although his accent is strong, his voice is soft. He speaks quietly and I can sense a shyness about him, something I did not expect.

On the drive to Kevin's training ground, I ask him about growing up here. "It not that bad you know, it's nice and quiet and good cause you know everyone. It wasn't too bad really. Better than a city." I question him on this, wondering how I could ever live up here. "I'm a country guy and I lived in Leeds for a year and the city is good cause it's more social and there are more

things to do but I think overall I prefer the country."

Kevin has won John O Groats Strongest Man for the past three years and plans to go even further. He started lifting after he spent three weeks in a psychiatric hospital in 2012 due to problems with mental health and drink and drugs. "I had a few bad years mentally... and then I was on medication and in bad shape physically, so I wasn't able to help myself. It wasn't till I was healthy and clean that I was able to get stronger."

I ask Kevin what it was like for him coming out as a gay. I am surprised when he says he is bisexual, "in my opinion that makes it more awkward because it's not clear cut." Kevin came out a year ago publicly. "It was obviously very hard to do Jesus...fucking hell it was one of the hardest things I've ever done." He laughs as he tells me he left his phone at his Granny's for 3 days after publicly coming

out on Facebook. “Once time passes it’s weird how a weight is lifted off your shoulders. It’s been over a year since and you realise how stupid you were.”

We arrive at the shed where he spends his time training. It’s a decent size but neglected-looking, akin to something you would pass on the side of the road. As we enter into the junkyard of chaos filled with a mixture of industrial gym equipment and old barrels, logs and tyres, another Jack Russell runs toward us. He picks both of them up and we sit in the corner of the room on two old armchairs. He has his two companions on both sides, acting as guard dogs.

“My ambition is to be the world’s strongest man. That’s what I am dedicating my life to, even if it takes five or seven years. That’s my plan.” Kevin talks about the year he spent living in Leeds, training with Andy Bolton, one of the world’s strongest men. “I’m benefiting a lot now because of training-wise what I learnt, but it also saved my life cause there’s no way I would have been able to deal with my sexuality having not gone down there.”

I observe Kevin’s training session, and it is a spectacle. He transforms into a barbarian and roars as he lifts a wooden log high into the air, his face ruby red, sweat dripping onto the stone floor. As he drops

the log the whole room shakes, and I jump out of my seat, not expecting the force to ripple through the room. When asked about relationships, Kevin gives out a nervous laugh and pauses to think. “Right now, it’s always got to be a long-distance which is never easy. It’s lonely up here, fucking hell. You know cause I’m 28 now, it’s only natural to have a partner so it is hard aye. I’m lucky because I’ve got my purpose and I know what I’m here to do. I’m working towards that but the one thing I am missing is a companion.”

As darkness closes in, Kevin drives me to catch the last train back, the first part of my two-day long return to Newcastle. I spend my 4-hour journey reflecting on our brief encounter. I feel grateful to have had an insight into Kevin’s life and hopeful that if someone like him can come out as queer, his story will inspire many more people who are living in fear. When I asked Kevin if he had anything to add at the end of the interview, it was the most striking thing he had said: “If I can come out as a strongman, then anyone can.”





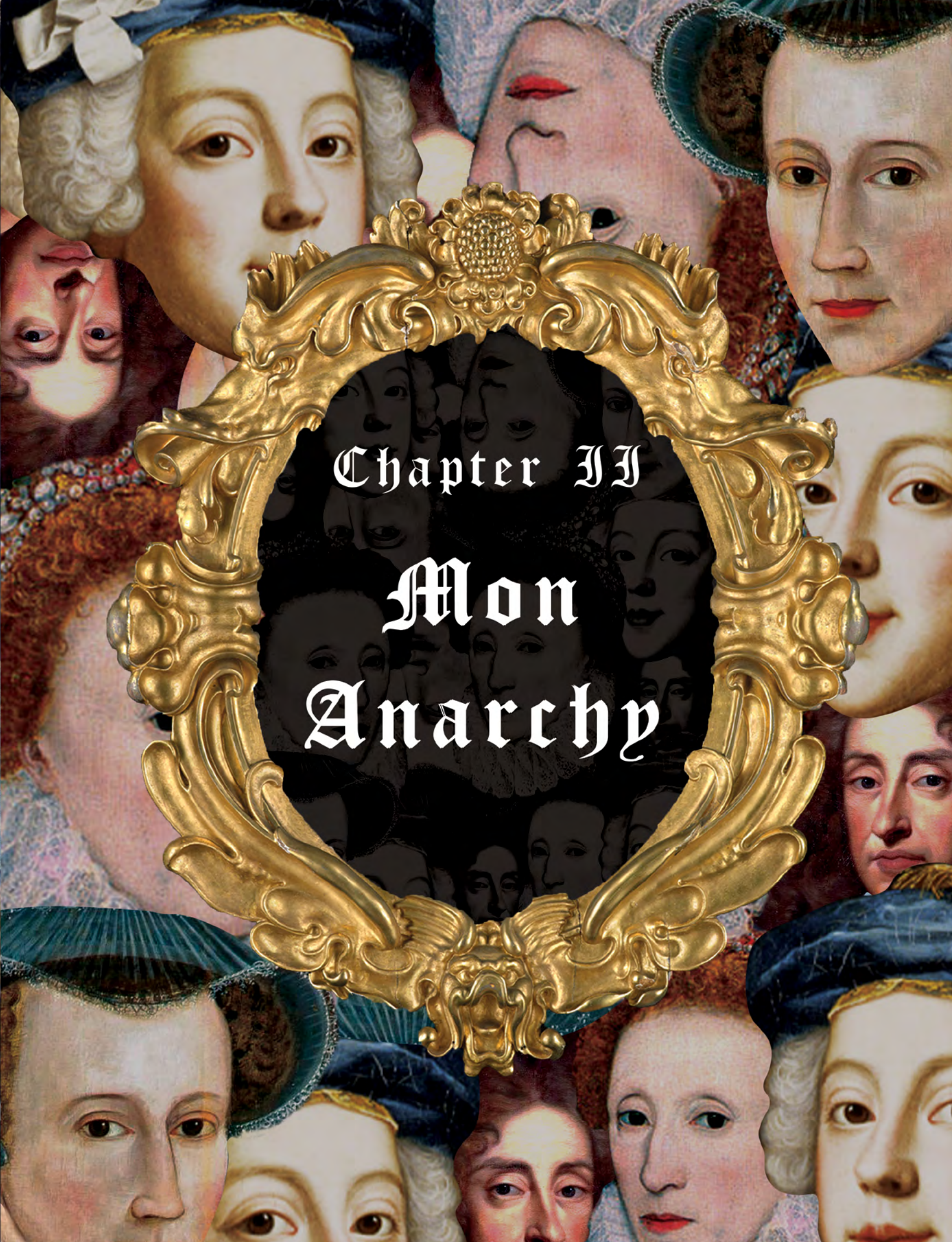
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Chapter III
Mon
Anarchy

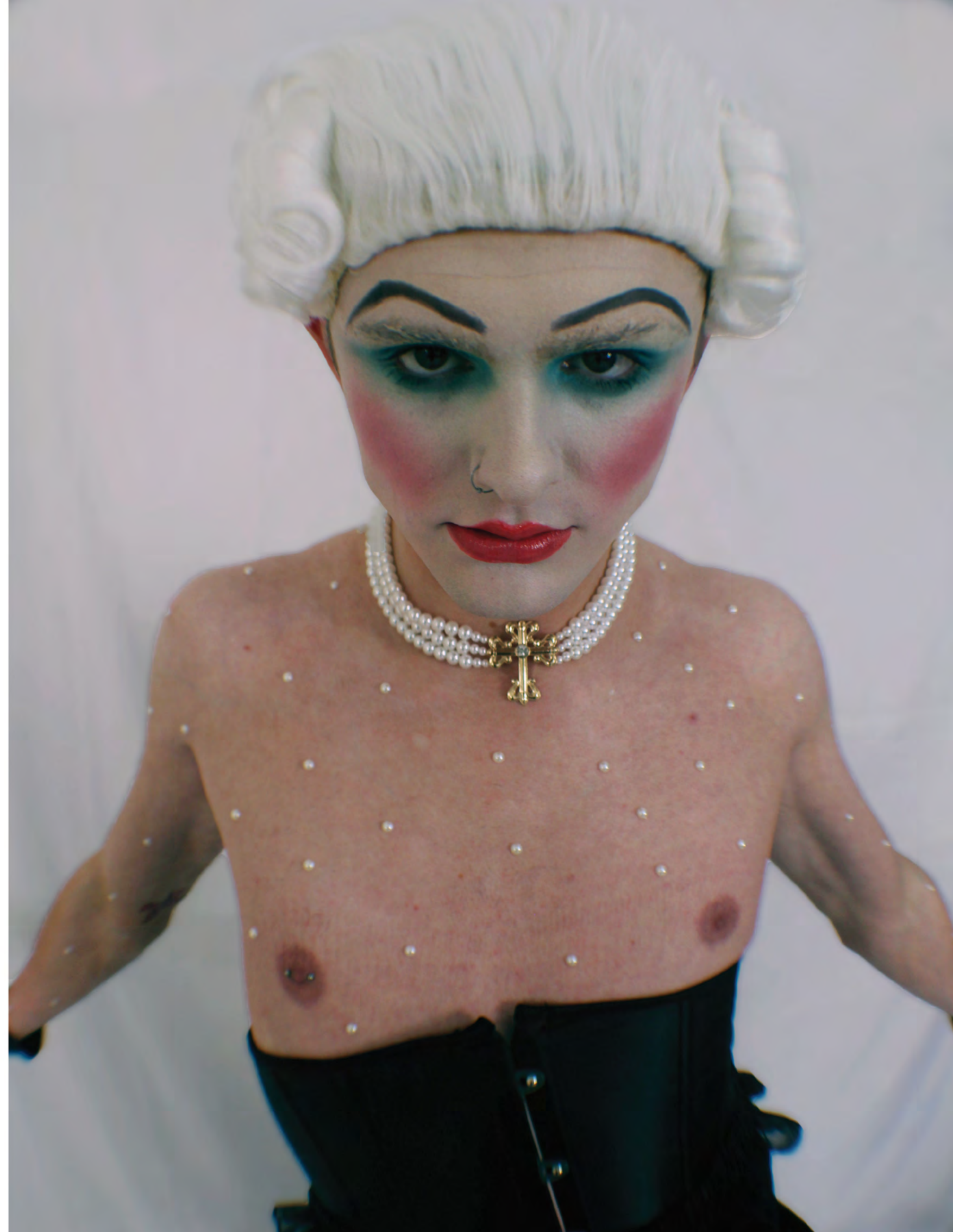


The Young Pretender











JAMES II







My dearest, James

*I send you love letters in the sand.
Gritty, porous boulders
Blown into the past for you*

To find you crowned in bloody subjugation

*The vicious, violent, villain
Asphyxiate our classrooms
Your flesh a distant waste
But your spirit ever demanding*

*I came to know you in murky waters
Pages swimming with silverfish and silence
Desks, chairs, and snuffed vibrancy
Your reign
My homework (it was due last Monday)*

*Yet you mean so much more than that,
A Broken King
With a Hidden Lover*

*History tends to blur and bleed.
When necessary,
There's Ink and Love and Passion
Or Fear and Death and Faggots*

James The VI and I... a fag... the wisest fool in Christendom

*Screaming bloody faggots
Ruling with a faggot's fist
Enticing,
The power to rule as a hidden faggot.*

-March 3rd, 2015.





DEAREST,
James
send you INK & BLOOD
love letters
in the sand
A FLESH
BROKEN
SCREAMING
BLOODY
FAGGOTS
MURDEROUS
PUNK AND THE
CONNECT
I'm sorry we aren't accepted THAT OUR STORIES WITH PUNK
HISTORY TENDS TO BLUR AND BLEED
SO CLOSE TO YOU
SO YOUNG
A MURDEROUS
MUST BE



DEAREST,
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I'm sorry we aren't accepted THAT OUR STORIES WITH PUNK
HISTORY TENDS TO BLUR AND BLEED
SO CLOSE TO YOU
SO YOUNG
A MURDEROUS
MUST BE

Dear James,

Apologies if this finds you late
It's been almost six years for me
Time is mine to consume
It falls away like sand through fingers...remember?

You see, those specks of sand have hardened
Now glass that tears its way through time
Ribbons of memory, cut into stunning red confetti
A celebration of your decomposition

I used to hold you close, so young
A teething queerness
No fear of repercussions
You were dead anyway

I'm sorry we aren't accepted
That our stories rise from filth and spunk
But you're an evil bastard, plain and simple
A murderous misogynist
A paranoid phantasm
Skulking around the corners of a prepubescent's mind

A monarch's disposition at the hands of a twenty-year-old
Seems entirely poetic
I wince at the power you once had over me, flesh and fetish
moulded by you
A tortured by fate queer

Yet power lies in the words that are perceived
By ink and blood, my will be done
The connection must be severed.

-April 8th, 2021.







Chanel O'Connor

She reigns supreme in the Cowgate scene and is the design mastermind behind the winning looks of RuPaul's Drag Race UK. Chanel O'Connor is the latest Scottish drag queen to take the world by storm.

"In my little head, all queer people know each other. We are all part of kingdoms, we are all part of scenes, and individual little groups. Some people know each other, some people love each other, some people hate each other, and you must go through life, trying to get along with everyone. Very much being the Princess Diana, being very much the.... maybe not the Mary Queen of Scots; she was kind of a troublemaker," says Edinburgh-based drag queen Chanel O'Connor. "I think we would get on great, but I wouldn't trust her."

I meet Chanel at a studio on Leith Docks in Edinburgh. She arrives in full drag with a large tartan granny bag in tow, holding a variety of her lavish garments. If you watched the second series of Ru Paul's Drag Race UK, then you will have seen O'Connor's work. A dressmaker by trade, Chanel designs all her own garments and works with the likes of Lawrence Chaney, the winner of the most recent season of Drag Race UK. "It was such a weird experience because it was a month's notice and I made 14 outfits. I'm glad I said yes let's do it because now, looking back, my life is totally different to what it was a year ago when I didn't have a penny. I'm meant to be this rich Austrian fucking royal bitch, when in fact I didn't have a pot to piss in and I barely had any money. Whereas now I am in a comfortable position in my life where I'm making decisions and

we are busy. I think it's very different when you work for yourself. You are your own boss and it's great."

Before Chanel there was Connor Macdonald, a queer boy who grew up on a tiny island on the west coast of Scotland. "I'm originally from the Isle of Bute and I was there up until I was 7. Funnily enough, I was booked as a headline for Bute Pride in the summer but sadly it didn't go ahead because of the pandemic." Chanel talks about her experience of growing up queer in rural Scotland. "Bute is perhaps not that progressive at first sight, but once you learn to accept yourself and kind of be who you are then people just have to get on with it."

Chanel started drag four years ago and since then she has become a well-known name in the Scottish queer scene. "I used to work with a theatre company, and it all started through theatre. My drag is very much performance. I'm a character-based drag queen so for me it's all about story lines, the plots, the plot twists, the connections with people, I'm constantly acting." Chanel talks about what inspires her drag. "For me it is the people I'm around - I am a party animal in the sense of I love to go out. I love to socialise. I love to talk to people, especially queer people. Honestly, Absolutely Fabulous is such an inspiration for me. It's running about busy, busy, busy, party, party, party. I am also inspired a lot

by vintage icons. Audrey Hepburn is one of them because she was a humanitarian and she was beautiful, she was graceful, but she was also a kind and caring soul. So, I consider myself the same beautiful, graceful individual that's kind of caring."

As we shoot, Chanel comes to life in front of the camera, her craftsmanship evident in the gowns she wears and the way they fit and elevate her style and presence. She throws fabric in the air and throws her head back and the shots perfectly capture her in all her glory - beautiful, powerful and comedic. She talks about her life before the pandemic. "I would do a 40 hour contract a week at an interior company, and I also had my own drag show. Then I'd probably do one or two extra drag nights a week, then I'd do a photoshoot with someone one Friday night or be hosting a club event in Glasgow. I was very busy and always running about and I loved it and miss it so much. I can't wait till that comes back into effect. I think as drag queens we are creatures, and we need that need attention, we need love, we need compassion."

Don't ask Chanel what the future holds - "Someone asked me recently what your five-year plan is, and I punched them in the throat. Very rude!" Because she doesn't know and doesn't like to plan too far ahead. "The future for me is a clouded one. It's proven in fact in my life, that life can be taken away from you





very suddenly and things can change. Flats flood, people pass, jobs change, relationships change, so you never know what's round the corner." For now Chanel wants to focus on an equal life balance on dress making and working with clients she wants to work with "because now I have the ability to pick and choose projects which is great."

When asked about drag race being on the horizon, Chanel talks about her inside experience of working with Lawrence and the amount of stress that being on the show can cause. "It's very much not for the faint hearted. I would do it as I think it would be a life changing experience and I think it would change the way your drag was perceived instead of it being local. I would love to be on, but I don't get my hopes up or get my heart too set into it. I think this pandemic has taught us that the future is not linear. It will go hills and valleys providing interest in life. Why go through life walking a straight and narrow path when you can go hills and valleys? And you remember the good times and the bad, and you also appreciate the good times and the bad. They create you as the human you are and make you this finite diamond crystal that's hardened because of such traumas and heartache, but you can accomplish and achieve anything."

Chanel talks about what being queer means to her. "Going through life as a queer person you make these connections with people. Some of them will be friends for years, others will be friends for life. You'll be lovers or whatever, and it's these things that build us into these people that we are today." Talking about the outside perspective of being queer, Chanel says "If you are looking through it from a heterosexual lens, you might not understand the connections that queer people have, connections that are thicker than blood. I know there are people in my life that I see as actual family that I would do absolutely anything for. I think that's a big part of queer life that people don't understand."

As the day wraps up and Chanel packs her couture-like garments back into her tartan granny bag, she talks about her responsibility as a public figure. "As a drag queen you need to know the building blocks of queer history before you go on stage because you are a legacy. You are representing people who have fought for you, so you need to know what's fucking going on. Cause someone's going to look at you, and someone's going to be inspired by you and you're going to be a role model for people. So that's why one must be on their best behaviour, and one must be nice to fucking everyone....or at least try."





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 This you be

A Tale Of Two Queens






Should this letter find ye lang after A've passed,
Please ken ma heart still loves ye, though it may huv beat its last,
Wae every gasp a hud inside the body lang since deid
Ken each breath wis meant fur you, each lungfu freely gied
Ken you wur wance the lassie that belanged under ma airm
A lassie that I'd fecht tae keep fae ony kind ae hairm,
wha held each moment tenderly wae a heart abuin them aw
An fur a time ye wur ma lassie, an a wis yers annaw

A cannae owerstate this, but A'll gie it a wee go,
A'll tell ye how ye mak me want tae live a lang life slow
A'll tell ye ae the way her heart made mine ken whit love is
A'll tell ye there's no life a want that doesnae contain us
There isnae only force abuin this earth that hus power left tae smite us
An if there's better aifter life, it's cause it'll reunite us

The light that shines ahint yer een,
The lips lies seldom rest atween
The heart A'll haud as lang as a hae breath
Come cruel cauld blade an smite ma neck, love kens nae death
This lassie's lassie will be fine,
A ken fine weel ye'll hae the time tae love anew
But mind, ma dear, when there wis us, an we, an me, an you.

Yours, Always,

Mary













Crestair