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A personal dissection of madness and faggotry

by Nicholas Gambin

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I had my first therapy appointment at 18, after coming out. After 4 years of dealing with the weight of this alone, I hoped that she would be able to fix some of the pieces that had been chipped and broken along the way. She made me realise my inner strength, my inner saboteur, and tried to show me that I wasn't alone in this world. It was finally time to come out of hiding and address all the skeletons in my closet.

The biggest thing I learnt was how perspective could reframe any anxious thinking. That the biggest hole can look like the smallest dot if you zoomed out far enough. If it won't matter in five years, don't spend more than 5 minutes worrying about it. Worrying about worrying is the most unproductive use of time and will still lead to nowhere. Separating the things in your control from those that aren't.

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I was always a very sensitive child. Always a lover, never a fighter. My father tried to tell me that if someone punched me, then I needed to punch back. But whenever the bullies hit me, with their words or their fists, I would run away with tears in my eyes. I was never going to be the popular child with loads of friends, just a wallflower left in the shadows to droop. But being invisible was better than getting picked on.

I was always an anxious child. Worrying about getting good grades. Worrying about pleasing my parents. Worrying about getting things wrong. Whatever I did, it was never enough and I could always do better. I was never the person who was bold or took risks or stepped outside of their comfort zone. My parents kept me safe in my own little protective bubble, but sooner or later, it eventually popped.

DecenDeD Deeper into the Darkness

I soon came to realisation that with therapy, you tend to walk in wanting to sort out one issue, but a couple of sessions later, you're deep in the trenches after unearthing an even bigger problem. I would stop, then come back, then stop, then come back. Like a yoyo that could never completely cut off the string.

It kept me tethered to this human plane. Having a soft place to land when things would inevitably come crashing down yet again. And they did, no matter how hard I tried to apply what I had learnt or stop myself from returning to old coping mechanisms that didn't serve me anymore.

It seemed like my mind wasn't something that could never be cured completely...

OPEN ME UP



I hate that I feel emotions so strongly and deeply. There's never a middle ground - it's either really high highs or really low lows. I wish that they came with an off switch because it would make it so much easier to navigate life. To not feel like you're constantly being weighed down by the rocks in your shoes.

Everyone says that I'm bubbly and bright but there's actually still a lot of sadness living inside me. To let yourself drown in the feelings and they pull you deeper into the depths of the water. I don't want to call or message or text or speak. I'm exhausted, so all I need is to be left alone. I just want to fall into a deep deep sleep, buried under by all my emotions.

There's something ugly and horrible that gnaws at my insides. Wanting to escape my body and leave me deserted, just a hollowed husk of a shell. Maybe if I let it come out, I'd finally stop feeling anything.

As much as I do my best to advocate for mental health, I'm still the world's biggest hypocrite when it comes to taking care of my own. Because it's easier to just sit and do nothing about it rather than getting up and making the effort to keep pushing forward.

And yet even when I'm at my lowest, there's still a small part of me that manages to dig through the dirt and let a small glimmer of light shine through. Just enough to make sure I remember that not all is lost, and to realise that...

All I can do is live my own version of madness, whatever that may look like.

PUT ME BACK TOGETHER AGAIN

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A personal dissection of faggotry and madness

by Nicholas Gambin

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Phase Two was from 16-18; the coming to terms with it.

By the time I entered Sixth Form, I knew that I liked boys, but I wasn't yet ready to share it with the world. I changed schools, desperate to leave the secondary school baggage behind me and become my own person. New people, new backgrounds, new friends. I found my own little pocket of queerdos who gave me the space to be myself without any judgement or ridicule.

Connor Franta released his coming out video on 8th December 2018. He couldn't push it away anymore, so he kept trying to look at himself in the mirror and say it. Until he finally did. After that video, I made myself a promise. That when I turned 18, I would find my own confidence to say those words out loud to the world.

Fags and Freaks will Forever be seen

When I think about my coming out journey, I split it up into two phases.

Phase One was from 14-16; the questioning. My first proper crush on an Irish boy with blue eyes, a dazzling smile, and a charming personality. Meeting him for the first time in drama class and feeling like somebody had jumpstarted my heart with power chords; it grew three sizes. I desperately tried to make him my friend, but he never wanted the closeness I did.

Kneeling down at Church and praying to my dead nanna. Asking to send any sort of sign to validate the feelings that I was holding inside. Why I preferred trading stickers with the girls instead of playing football with the boys. Confusion from all the bullies calling me gay, unsure whether it was real or just a result of their abuse.

OPEN ME UP

Crying in my mother's arms, I couldn't bring myself to say the words. But she already knew, way before I even did, so she said them for me and lifted the load from my shoulders. Knowing that I would always be her son, no matter who I loved. My father was less emotional but still loved me in his own special way.

There were no real surprises when I started telling people, and I took comfort in the knowledge that I had never really tried to hide who I was from the world outside. It was just another part of my personality that started becoming known to the world outside. No more living in fear.

Little did I know that coming out of the closet was only the beginning....

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Queer desire that lies in the possession of a body made for crop tops and tanks tops and mesh tops. Unreachable standards of beauty and aesthetics that make you invisible to everyone if you don't reach that level. The paradox of a community that preaches inclusivity and yet chooses who to exclude or put on a pedestal.

Interactions that just feel transactional. Connections that are short-lived and fleeting. The sole purpose of satisfying the instant gratification of carnal desire. People reduced to headless torsos and unsolicited appendages and preferential positions. Physically deep but emotionally shallow as people try to find themselves in the warm embrace of others.

Coming out was one thing, but unpacking years of internalised homophobia was a whole other beast. Trying to undo all the self-hatred and lack of self-confidence. Learning to be kinder to myself.

I've still got a long way to go in my queer journey. Still so inexperienced, still so naive, still so afraid of being mocked for the way I look or dress. I sometimes fear that it's already too late and I've fallen so far behind that no amount of catching up will ever be enough.

The scared 14-year-old boy looking for a sign will always remain inside me. But his strength and self-confidence have continued growing to push him forward. So rather than living for other people's views and judgements, the realisation is that...

All I can do is live my own version of faggotry, whatever that may look like.

PUT ME BACK TOGETHER AGAIN