

Write, Rewrite:

a play highlighting how the fanfiction format and community

help cultivate confidence in queer young adults

By

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This thesis is dedicated to my fellow members of the LGBTQ+ community, past, present, and future. May the world never extinguish the flame and light you bring to the table.

## Acknowledgments

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## ABSTRACT

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This undergraduate honors thesis is an exploration of fan fiction and its connection to the queer community. I look at the recent history of treatment towards queer people, especially from religious zealots. Additionally, I investigate how the communities that flock around fan fiction are beneficial to anyone who joins, offering critical feedback and advice to writers on how to strengthen their stories. To illustrate the adaptability and interchanging nature of fanfiction, I wrote a one-act play titled *Write, Rewrite* and held a reader's theatre style performance on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Finally, I received feedback from the audience and actors regarding the work.

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: *Age Demographic of Fanfiction Readers*

## **Introduction:**

The LGBTQ+ community is a prominent part of our society. The number of people who identify as queer has remained stagnant over the years at 7.2% (Jones). According to the 2020 Census Bureau's report, 24.6% of the LGBTQ+ respondents were between the ages of 18-24 (Anderson). The levels of discrimination present throughout generations is taxing, and many queer individuals continue to face discrimination. In 2023 alone, over 120 anti-LGBT bills have been passed nationwide, restricting the rights of queer individuals (*American Civil Liberties Union*). The level of discrimination is upsetting. Psychologist Jeffrey Arnett calls the ages of 18-29 "emerging adulthood." One of the prominent five features of emerging adulthood includes "identity," the period when a person figures out who they are and what they want ("Emerging Adults: The in-between Age."). One-fourth of the LGBTQ+ community is in their developmental phase of identity. Compared to another group actively facing discrimination, people with disabilities, it is clear to see how many more of the queer community are in their emerging adulthood phase. In 2018, 6% of people aged 18-34 had a physical or mental impairment (*USA Facts*). There are more people in the developmental emerging adult phase who are a part of the queer community than most other marginalized communities. With the new anti-LGBTQ+ laws, people are told their lives are illegal. Hearing such comments can hurt one's sense of identity. Without identifying oneself, a person will never feel comfortable and safe in one's skin. It is important to foster a safe space for people to find their identity.

To escape from an unaccepting society, many turn to literature and fiction. However, the queer community is not well represented within popular media when compared to the heterosexual community. Sometimes, it is demonized. An example involves the ending of the television show *Supernatural* in which, during the finale when one male character professes his love for another, he is banished to hell. While one example is not representative of society as a whole, the popularity of *Supernatural* makes the impact of the ending more influential. The lack of proper representation, especially in mainstream media, leads to more doubt and insecurity.

With the almost universal lack of representation and the rise of anti-LGBTQ+ laws, many members of the community have started authoring fanfiction. Fanfiction takes a preexisting story and creates an alternative storyline and universe than that of the source material. Writers will rewrite popular pieces of literature, setting stories during different periods to tell the story they want to tell, whether it involves cowboys in modern day or vampires in space. Oftentimes in fanfiction, the author rewrites the story with an alternate relationship between characters. An example could involve Romeo and Juliet, except Romeo ends up with Mercutio. Writers can make it so two male characters end up together instead of the male and female. For many, this form of fanfiction is a way for them to feel more accepted. They read familiar characters from pop culture who are written as queer characters and can finally feel represented. These fan-created stories live on the internet through popular websites; one of the most popular of which is called *Archive of Our Own*, or colloquially called AO3. The title is a homage to the emotional importance of fanfiction. It is an archive of fiction belonging to the people who read and write it.

For this thesis, I wanted to write a play covering fanfiction. Theatre is an adaptive artform. Unlike a movie or television show, theatrical interpretations can change with the time of the play's production. I wanted the story to be set in no specific time or location, showing the strong staying power of queer misrepresentation. Homophobia has existed for decades and will proceed from this point forward. I wanted a form of telling a story that is adaptable and relatable no matter the time.

This project is important to me because I am an avid supporter and member of the LGBTQ+ community, and I am also a supporter of fanfiction and believe it is a viable tool for writers and creativity. This project branches the two sections of my psyche, combining playwriting and advocacy. I hope that no matter how the play is experienced, whether it be through a staged reading, full production, or reader's theatre, people will walk away with a new understanding of a community they may not have known too much about before.

While debating ideas for my thesis, one thing was clear: I wanted to write about fanfiction. Over time I narrowed my idea to the benefits of fanfiction for three specific communities, but I only decided to focus on one of them. I chose to cover the queer community. As a bisexual woman, this idea is near and dear to my heart. Growing up, I turned to reading and writing fanfiction to help my anxiety. Additionally, reading fanfiction helped me become more comfortable with my sexuality. Even as an adult, I read fanfiction for a sense of peace. It is a tool not just for children and teenagers; it is useful for adults too. Additionally, fanfiction does not exclusively help queer people or people with anxiety. It can help readers understand more about how people think and act. It can be a glance into different lives that readers may not experience. It helps create

more of a sense of empathy towards people with diverse backgrounds. Overall, fanfiction is a tool for growth and acceptance that people of any age can benefit from.

Write, Rewrite

A One-Act Play celebrating fanfiction by Vanessa Jarman

CHARACTERS:

DAISY BECKETT 18, Bisexual. She/Her  
HAROLD BECKETT 40s, Daisy's father. He/Him  
JENNIFER BECKETT 40s, Daisy's mother. She/Her.  
MRS. ERVING 60s, guidance counselor. She/Her.  
SAGE HARTMAN 20, bisexual. They/Them.  
BRICK 19. He/Him  
KALDOR VISEAUX 50s. He/Him  
AVA VISEAUX 20. She/Her  
ERIN 19. English club member. She/Her  
GENNI MANIZAN 19, lesbian. She/They.  
MARK FLANNIGAN Late 20s. He/Him  
MIRANDA STOUT 40s. She/Her  
PASTOR CHARLES 40s He/Him

The following roles may be double-cast: BRICK/MARK  
FLANNIGAN/MR. ERVING and MRS. BECKETT/MIRANDA STOUT/MRS.  
ERVING.

Events in this story are based on combinations and  
dramatized versions of events and experiences that LGBTQ+  
people have faced. Any similarities to one specific event,  
location, or any real-life person are coincidental.

Location and time are purposefully left ambiguous. It is up  
to the interpretation of the director. Minor changes may be  
made to the script to reflect the setting of the  
production.

Scene 1  
AT RISE:

The living room of the Beckett household. DAISY, HAROLD, AND JENNIFER are sitting around each other, waiting for someone to speak.

DAISY  
Mom, dad... I'm bisexual

HAROLD  
What?

DAISY  
I like women, and men, and-

HAROLD  
Am I hearing you right? You are one of those gay girls-

JENNIFER  
Harold...

HAROLD  
I need you to stay out of it.  
I don't care if you're an adult now. No daughter of mine will be gay, Daisy. You better wise up and make a better decision.

DAISY  
This is not a choice, Dad. I was born like this.

HAROLD  
No, it IS a choice. An active sin against the bible/

DAISY  
/Oh here we go with the Bible again...

HAROLD cont.  
And I will NOT have a faggot as a daughter.

JENNIFER  
Harold, maybe we should hear her out?

HAROLD

Jennifer, I need you to stay out of this. This is a conversation between a man and his child. You have no place in this conversation.

DAISY

This isn't a conversation; it's a screaming match!

HAROLD

Well forgive me for screaming when my daughter is committing a dysfunctional form of idolatry!

DAISY

Now you are saying I'm worshiping some other god? This is ridiculous. I'm done.

HAROLD

You will not speak to your father like that, young lady. Remember who is paying for your education. Your "creative writing" degree.

DAISY

You are no father of mine. I can pay for what I want to study all by myself. I'm leaving... Harold.

DAISY exits

## Scene 2

MRS. ERVING'S office. A few weeks later. MRS. ERVING and DAISY are sitting at MRS. ERVING'S desk.

MRS. ERVING

Ms. Beckett... Why did you wait so long to look for aid?

DAISY

Well... my parents were going to help but things haven't been the best with them. "Go to state school, it's cheap." Yet I'm still struggling to pay for it. I was on the phone with my mom the other day and she's trying to convince my dad that they should still support me... and I don't know why I'm telling you all this. I'm sorry, Mrs. Erving

MRS. ERVING

Ahem... anyways. You are a candidate for quite a few scholarships from the school.

DAISY

Great! I can apply for them, yes?

MRS. ERVING

Ms. Beckett, slow down. And why are you shaking so much?

DAISY

Sorry, Mrs. Erving. I'm just really nervous about paying for school.

MRS. ERVING

I understand that, but I need you to understand this. As a freshman, your chances of getting a scholarship are slim compared to the upperclassmen.

DAISY

How can I better my chances?

MRS. ERVING

Ms. Beckett.

DAISY

... sorry...

MRS. ERVING

One of the best ways to make you stand out in applications is to join in some extracurricular activities. Do you play any sports?

DAISY

No...

MRS. ERVING

Marching Band?

DAISY

I can't play any instruments...

MRS. ERVING

Ok. Ms. Beckett. The school has a few clubs. They just started adding clubs a few years ago, so the pickings are slim, but they could work as an after school activity. Here.

MRS. ERVING hands DAISY a flyer.

They are having a club fair tomorrow. Seeing that you're an English major, you might enjoy the writing club. Since you waited a little longer than normal, you'll only have a few weeks to submit the application.

### Scene 3

The college club fair. DAISY is wearing a shirt representing LGBTQ+ pride. DAISY is walking through the club fair.

DAISY

Five clubs? That's it?? What kind of college has so few clubs? God, this is gonna be tough. Science club, oh god no. Theatre club... I'm not much of a thespian. Marvel club??

DAISY walks up to a group of boys at a table with a sign that says, "MARVEL AT MARVEL."

Ok Daisy. Just walk up to them and ask them to join their club.

(stuttering) hi there. I'm Daisy.

BRICK

I'm sorry, did you say something? All I heard was (mock stutter).

DAISY

Ahem. I would like to join your club.

BRICK

You want to join us? Marvel at Marvel?

DAISY

Yes.

The boys all laugh

BRICK

I'm sorry I need a minute. That's quite a joke miss. Now scram.

DAISY

I wasn't joking.

BRICK

Yeah sure sweetheart. I bet the only things you know about Marvel are how hot the male characters are.

DAISY

That's not the-

BRICK

Let's have a test then. If you pass, you can be in the club, ok?

(condescending) Who plays Iron Man?

DAISY

Um... Robert Downey Jr.-

BRICK

Oh well that one is an easy one. Anyone knows that one. How about this one? Can you name the chronological order in which each of the heroes join the avengers? And don't try to confuse it with DC.

DAISY

Captain America...,

BRICK

(he makes a buzzer noise) WRONG! You're such a fake nerd. Lame ass girl pretending to like Marvel. I bet you're just desperate to get some.

DAISY

No I just want to join-

BRICK

No no enough with you. God, women these days...

DAISY

... hey! I-it's not because of that...

BRICK and the others  
ignore her and she walks  
away.

Ok... not a good start.. But it's fine. It is ok. What about that writing club Mrs. Erving mentioned?

(from a distance)

PASTOR CHARLES

I am here today as the representative of the Church of Christ. I have noticed increasingly more children wearing these rainbows and claiming to support a "lifestyle." I am here to tell you that this is no more than supporting a sin!/ Rainbows were made by Christ for the beauty of nature, not to support this sick agenda.

DAISY

/Oh my god.

AVA

Um, excuse you?? Did you just use the lord's name in vain?

DAISY

Uhh...

AVA

Oh... oh... OH! I see. You are a supporter of sin! You freak!

At this point, some of the people listening to Pastor Charles have turned to look at Daisy and Ava, pointing and laughing.

You are committing a hate crime against me and my beliefs by spreading your nasty, sinner lifestyle. Trying to sway me and my brothers and sisters. Disgusting.

Many of the people in the crowd join AVA and start to bully DAISY.

DAISY

I... I didn't choose...

AVA

And I bet murderers didn't choose to kill another child of God? Or pedophiles didn't choose to-

SAGE

Oh Ava... lay off her for fuck's sake!

SAGE HARTMAN, clearly badass in nature, appears. Smug as shit, but proud.

AVA

Oh if it isn't the spice girl herself! Finally decided to admit you're just a woman with a mental disorder.

SAGE

Hahahahah. That one sure never gets old. No, I am here because you are hurting one of my friends.

DAISY

But... I don't know you...

SAGE

You do now. And you're being attacked by HATEFUL people who have nothing better to do than stick their noses into OTHER PEOPLE'S business and pretend it's only to "save them from sin." News flash, assholes! "Love thy Neighbor" includes us queer bitches too, so suck it and fuck off!

AVA, PASTOR CHARLES, and the CROWD exit.

Yeah, man I hate those fuckers. Sage. Junior.

DAISY

Daisy... Freshman.

SAGE

Ooo freshie. No wonder why they leeches on you.

DAISY

Yeah. Them and the mean guys at the Marvel Club.

SAGE

(gags) Brick? He literally has less brain cells than a banana.

DAISY

Sexist asshole.

SAGE

You really want to join a club?

DAISY

Well, it would better my odds at getting scholarships.

SAGE

Well then I have the perfect club for you. With no sexist weirdos.

DAISY

Okay...

SAGE

Fanfiction!

#### Scene 4

Three days later. KALDOR'S classroom. KALDOR and DAISY are sitting across from each other.

KALDOR

Miss Beckett, you do understand the assignment for this class, right?

DAISY

Um... yes sir. Writing an origi-

KALDOR

An original story. Key word - original. Miss Beckett, this story is far from original.

DAISY

I'm sorry?

KALDOR

This is not an original story! This "Black Widow" is a character who exists already. You did not create her.

DAISY

I.. understand that sir, but the assignment only said to write an original story, no specifications about the characters.

KALDOR

You must understand that is not what I meant with this assignment.

DAISY

But Hanna mentioned writing a story involving Tom Sawyer. He's a character that exists.

KALDOR

That is different, Miss Beckett. Tom Sawyer is a serious character from classic literature.

DAISY

But they are both made by others...

KALDOR

*Classic literature*, Miss Beckett. You're an English major, correct?

DAISY

Yes, sir...

KALDOR

You may want to rethink your choice.

DAISY

I'm sorry?

KALDOR

English is a serious topic and you appear to struggle with serious writing.

DAISY

But all writing does not have to be serious!

KALDOR

I will not continue to have this discussion, Miss Beckett. You have three days to rewrite your story with an original character—no childish fantasies. And may I suggest making the lead more masculine. Readers might enjoy it more if *he* is the one who ends up with the *girl* at the end.

DAISY

... Yes professor.

DAISY exits KALDOR's classroom. Transition to the hallway. There are mutters from fellow students about what KALDOR said about her story. DAISY shoves her story in her bag and attempts to run.

Yo Daisy! Wait up!

SAGE

Oh hi, Sage.

DAISY

What are you doing in like five minutes?

SAGE

Um... I guess nothing-

DAISY

Well you've got something now!

SAGE

What are you talkin-

DAISY

SAGE grabs DAISY by the wrist and pulls her away. The scene transitions into another classroom

SAGE

Welcome to the safest place for writers of all backgrounds. Queer, person of color, or just an ally? You are welcome in this judgment-free zone. Here, take a pamphlet.

SAGE, without making eye contact, shoves a pamphlet at DAISY.

DAISY

Is this?

SAGE

Yes, it is. I realized I never told you what time the club meets so I figured I'd just help you along. It's what friends do

DAISY

I...

SAGE

Hey everyone! This is Daisy!

A chorus of fellow fan  
fiction fans greet  
DAISY.

DAISY

No... no. Kaldor said this was dumb

SAGE

*Kaldork* doesn't know his head from his ass. You're safe here.

DAISY

No! I... I'm going... somewhere else. I can go to a different club.

SAGE

Daisy, come on. Be serious.

DAISY

I AM being serious. I have already been laughed at and bullied for being bisexual. I can't give them another thing to laugh at. And maybe... maybe he's right; Kaldor. I need to focus on serious writing and not childish fantasies.

SAGE

It sounds like you're saying our writing is not serious.

DAISY

I.. uh.

SAGE

This is very serious writing. What, just because we write about superheroes or wizards, we should not be taken seriously?

DAISY

I mean when you think about it, it is sorta ridiculous for a twenty year old to write about some random character on a children's show.

SAGE

You're being ridiculous.

DAISY

No I'm not!

Everyone my whole life has told me that my writing was dumb. That I need to focus on more serious writing, Kaldor included! I want to stay as low flying as I can, and if that means adjusting my writing to be more serious, then so be it. Because serious writing sells, not stories about other people.

SAGE

Wow. You know what, Daisy? Just leave. I'm not having this discussion anymore. Our club is not just for writing fanfiction; We also give constructive criticism and brainstorm. So if you'd rather enjoy your time with some uppity wannabe authors at the English writing club, then go for it.

DAISY

...Fine

She exits.

## Scene 5

A classroom. A meeting for the English Writing Club.

AVA

Good afternoon, brothers and sisters. Welcome to today's meeting. Remember, cellphones and other pieces of technology should be shut off. They are merely distractions to our discussion. In other news, we are so excited to welcome some new members to our glorious group. Please welcome Wesley Perkins, Sarah-Leigh Patton, and Daisy Beckett.

DAISY sits there in  
silence as her gaze meets  
AVA'S.

Now initiates, as you are aware from the informational package, each of you will present a piece of literature for us to read. We will collect them, go through the titles, and make them available for reading by putting them in the Literature Binder.

AVA holds up a big bedazzled binder.

C'mon! Hand em over!

DAISY is searching through her bag to find the copy she printed for this meeting. She hands it to AVA.

AVA

Awesome job. Now why don't we go through all of the titles, yes?  
"Legends of the Wild Stone" by SL Patton. How very mysterious!  
"Heart to Heart" by Wes Perkins. A romance story? I love it! And this last one seems to be an assignment. (chuckles)  
Well, I don't know how you intend on being an author if you can't even get a passing grade on a Beginner Creative Writing paper.

DAISY

Wait, no that's the wrong copy. I have a different story in my bag.

AVA

Wait, I've yet to get to the best part! "Good story, however, come up with original characters and stop using ones made up by others." You plagiarized?

DAISY

Please, just let me give you-

AVA

Oh... OH this is about a movie character! This is ludicrous! This isn't real writing, Daisy. This is just dumb, childish fantasies!

DAISY

That's exactly what he said..

AVA

Oh honey... Are you talking about Professor Kaldor... my dad? You better listen to him! This stuff is garbage. Look everyone! Listen to how dumb these sections are!

AVA calls the rest of the club over so they can read the story. They begin to laugh.

ERIN

Oh my gosh, Ava! This girl 'black widow' ends up with another girl named Kira.

AVA

Wait wait wait... what?

ERIN

It has two women ending up together.

AVA

Oh my gosh, I knew I recognized you from somewhere, Daisy. You're that faggot from the club fair. Get out of here, sinner.

A chorus of the club members agree. They continue to throw insults and mockery at her. DAISY runs from the room.

## Scene 6

DAISY'S dorm room.

DAISY

An original story... an original story... fuuuuuuuuuuuck whyisthissodifficult?!

DAISY holds her laptop and begins to speak as if the laptop is talking to her.

LAPTOP/DAISY

"It's not that hard, Daisy! Just write what you feel!"

DAISY

That's easy to say. It's always "write from your heart" or "connect with your writing." I am already connected to my writing!

LAPTOP/DAISY

"Just look at it from a different angle."

DAISY

I've been trying! It's not that easy to look at it- oh my god I'm going crazy and talking to myself.

KALDOR (Off-Stage)

You may want to rethink your choice

DAISY

What the hell was that?

KALDOR (Off-Stage)

Your writing isn't serious. Are you cut out to be an English major?

DAISY

Oh my god, I'm getting crazier.

SAGE (Off-Stage)

You are welcome in this judgment free zone.

KALDOR enters. A figment  
of DAISY'S imagination.

KALDOR

Writing needs to be about new characters

SAGE enters. Also, a  
figment of DAISY'S  
imagination.

SAGE

Writing is free and open to interpretation

KALDOR

It should be cohesive and tell a single story

SAGE

Make characters you love do cool things

DAISY

Oh my god, will both of you shut up?!

DAISY explodes, knocking over her backpack, papers flying on the floor. KALDOR and SAGE exit. A pause, as DAISY realizes she has been alone the entire time.

Jesus Christ.

DAISY picks up the assorted papers and finds the pamphlet from the fanfiction club.

Welcoming... accepting... oh fuck it.

### Scene 7

A classroom. Fanfiction Club meeting.

SAGE

Hey fuckers! Who is ready for this meeting to start? Okay but seriously, today we are reading Farrah's piece and giving feedback.

DAISY enters.

Well, well, well, look what the cat dragged in? Are you here for the meeting, Daisy?

DAISY

Um... not exactly...

SAGE

Okay well why are you here then? As you can see, we are partaking in our childish writing.

DAISY

I...

SAGE

Yeah, and you don't want any part in it, I remember.

DAISY

I need help!

SAGE

Oh really? The dog comes back with her tail between her legs.

DAISY

I'm serious. Please

SAGE

Why would I... or any of us for that matter help you? You insulted our club and hobby. And yet you want *us* to help *you*?

DAISY

Look, I'm sorry that I was mean to all of you-

SAGE

Oh no, it wasn't just mean. It was despicable. It was rude. It was bullying. You know that thing Ava and her little gang of christians were doing to you? Just go to the english writing club.

DAISY

I CAN'T

(a moment. This is the first time the timid girl has yelled, probably in her life. The room is silent until DAISY breaks it again)

I... I got laughed out of there. I didn't realize Ava was in charge of it.

SAGE

Ava's in charge now? Holy shit.

DAISY

Yeah... I didn't realize that until I walked into the room and handed my piece in. Well... it was the wrong piece. It kinda messed it all up...

SAGE

I... fine ok I can't be too mad, I guess.

DAISY

Really?

SAGE

Maybe... It'll be some time before I can fully trust you but you need help so I guess I will help. Tell me what you need help with.

DAISY

I need to rewrite my story to be about a character who does not already exist in the media and potentially make the characters not gay because Kaldor seemed really adamant that the lesbian story is part of the problem. I can't come up with ways to fix it because a lot of the story hinges on the fact that she is Black Widow and also that they are both women because of the homophobia that is present throughout their lives, so I have been having a tough time changing it into a straight story and really need the help... And it's due in six hours.

SAGE

Woah... uh ok. That's a lot. I really don't know if that's possible.

DAISY

Oh.. yeah I completely understand..

GENNI, from the back of the room, stands up.

GENNI

Do you have a copy with you?

DAISY

Yeah

GENNI

And you said you have six hours?

DAISY

Yeah

GENNI turns to address the others.

GENNI

Well, gang. It seems like we've got some reading to do. Everyone! Let's have Daisy read as quickly as she can out loud then all of us will take a page and leave a max of three comments. That way Daisy can rewrite her story. Daisy.. Will you start us off?

DAISY

Um ok.

"Natasha always picked the moments when she spoke with careful consideration but found herself at a loss for words for the first time in her entire existence."

Dialogue fades out

### Scene 8

The fanfiction club, a few hours later. DAISY, SAGE, and GENNI are in a group huddled over Daisy's laptop.

DAISY

I think this sounds really good. Dare to say.. I even like it. I hope Kaldor will too.

GENNI

All you need to do is press send. Just send him the copy.

DAISY

I...

SAGE

Oh my god, Daisy. I'll just do it.

SAGE presses a button on DAISY'S computer.

DAISY

Oh my god.

SAGE

There you go! Resubmitted.

GENNI

And you have an hour to spare!

SAGE

See, you did it!

DAISY

No no I can't take all of the credit. You guys helped me so much. Thank you. Thank you so much.

SAGE

Don't thank me - Genni was the one who convinced me it was a good idea.

DAISY

Thank you, Genni.

DAISY gives GENNI a hug.

GENNI

Hey, it's no big deal. I've been in your shoes before. Thinking this whole thing was dumb. But then when I came out to my friends, they dropped me like I was nothing. Then I found this place... and I found my family.

SAGE

Really makes you think about what you said earlier, you know...

DAISY

I'm really sorry, guys. I-I was listening to what everyone else said... especially Kaldor

GENNI

It happens to the best of us. Come on. Let bygones be bygones.

Side note... I am STARVING! Let's go get food.

GENNI shoos DAISY and SAGE offstage, following behind them.

## Scene 9

MRS. ERVING'S office

MRS. ERVING

(not looking up from her computer) Hi Daisy. Back *again* to see if you were chosen for the scholarship.

DAISY

I... yes I wanted to see again.

MRS. ERVING

Well, I received the results for each student today. I was going to send them out after lunch, but since you are here, we can go through it.

DAISY

Oh my god. Oh my god. Please.

MRS. ERVING

A... B... Barber, Barnett, Bead, ah! Beckett

DAISY

Well? WELL?

MRS. ERVING

Mrs. Beckett, you really need to work on your patience.

DAISY

Sorry

MRS. ERVING

"We regret to inform you that we cannot offer... any scholarships to you at this point"

DAISY

Oh.  
Shit.

### Scene 10

The fanfiction club. DAISY, GENNI, SAGE and other members are sitting on their computers, focusing. A chorus of notifications go off at the same time.

DAISY

"A short story contest?"

SAGE is still locking  
eyes with her laptop.

SAGE

Yeah... it's this contest the University holds every year. It's some partnership they have with Harper Collins, I don't know.

DAISY

Wait... Harper Collins??

SAGE

Someone from the English club always wins and I know Ava has had her eyes on it for the past two years.

DAISY

Why should that matter?

SAGE

Because you will end up being the laughing stock of the competition. The english club always parades around the campus making fun of all the losers. They'll post signs all over campus with pictures of you with the word "LOSER" in red marker. Ava is the worst of them all. Even though she hasn't won yet, her pompous ass always pulls the "it's ok. We can't all be winners" card. Then she will get it back to your professor, who calls you out as a writer in front of everyone and makes you never want to write again because of this goddamn English club and their stupid posh ways.

...

I entered freshman year and lost..

DAISY

Woah. How have they not been reported for pulling shit like that?

SAGE

Money keeps people quiet, maybe? Beats me. I tried to bring it to someone's attention but no one ever got back to me.

DAISY

I doubt they will do that again...

GENNI

That English writing club is ruthless.

DAISY

But I need to enter... they're giving away scholarship money and I need that to keep studying what I love.

SAGE

I feel like if there is anyone crazy enough to try and enter against the english club, it's you, Daisy

DAISY

Then I better get to work. How long do I have?

SAGE

Three weeks.

DAISY

Fuck, at least that's more time than I had to fix my story for Kaldor. I argue that my story was less of an 80 and more of a 90, but it's Kaldor's class, after all. It's better than the 0 I got beforehand.

GENNI

You're really gonna enter this contest?

DAISY

Yes. I have spent the beginning half of the semester afraid of people like Ava. I shouldn't be afraid, especially when I have a supportive club beside me.

SAGE

That's quite a different opinion than earlier in the semester.

DAISY

Sage, Genni, everyone really. I really am sorry for how I treated you all. You have welcomed me into your arms, even after I hurt you. You are all amazing.

A chorus of ad-libbed responses along the lines of "I love you Daisy" "You're so cool" "We learn from our mistakes"

GENNI

Whatcha gonna write about?

DAISY

I'm... not sure. I was wondering if I could develop my story from Creative Writing. Black Widow means a lot to me. She was one of my first awakenings.

GENNI

Same, girl.

SAGE

They don't bat an eye at fanfiction.

GENNI

Yeah, maybe you need to beat Ava at her own game. Write something she would write, but add your own personal flair.

DAISY

That's a great idea!

GENNI

Now you only have three weeks so... GET TO IT!

Transition. A montage. People are talking over one another. There is no coherent sense of what is going on. Occasionally, pieces of dialogue are highlighted through the murmurs.

GENNI

I think the plot would be better if she went to the ice cream parlor instead.

SAGE

I don't know. The love interest seems kinda "one sided"

DAISY

I have no clue what to do with this character.

GENNI

Just write it. You can always edit it later.

DAISY

Just write.

SAGE

Just write.

Everyone else starts repeating "Just Write" over and over until Daisy interrupts them by yelling.

DAISY

IT'S DONE! And only in a week. 5,000 words in three days. Holy. Shit.

GENNI

You did it. Now, it's time to edit.

DAISY

Can you guys be my proofreaders?

SAGE

Daisy, I think you're on your own with this one.

DAISY

Wait, what?

SAGE

Bad news time. I have been trying my best to avoid it but... the school is shutting down the club.

DAISY

What??

GENNI

No!

SAGE

A letter appeared in my inbox today from the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts.  
"With the heavy recommendation of Professor Kaldor, we are bringing an end to your club. Members of the English club claim it conflicts with their activities."  
It's bullshit.

DAISY

How do we conflict with the English club?? We don't even interact with them?

SAGE

Well I heard that Ava found out about you entering the contest and I guess she decided she was threatened by it and got "daddy" involved.

GENNI

Oh my god

DAISY

But but, won't you guys still be able to help me?

SAGE

I need to stay in a club for my scholarship, so I am off to find, or make, a club that I'd enjoy.

DAISY

Genni?

GENNI

Well... without the club, I can pick up more hours at work and I kinda need the money for my mom.

DAISY

Anyone else?

Other members list  
reasons why they can't  
help.

Oh my god, I'm screwed.

### Scene 11

DAISY'S dorm room.

DAISY is at her computer.  
She is typing away.  
Eventually, she sets up a  
camera and begins  
recording.

DAISY

Hi friends! This is MaybeDaisy coming at you live with the first video of my series that coincides with the blog I'm starting. Because what am I going to do with my free time now? Now a little about me. I am an English major and I am navigating through college for the first time. I have this story due in a week and I'm hoping I could get some help proofreading it? My fanfiction club got disbanded by some homophobes so I am S-O-L, you know? Anyway, I'm going to post the story here and if you get a chance to read it and have any critiques, please leave them in the comments. I could really use the help.

DAISY takes down the  
camera and types away.

### Scene 12

Three days later. KALDOR'S classroom.

KALDOR

Your creative non-fiction stories are due next Friday by 11:59 pm.

A beep. DAISY looks at her phone.

They need to be a minimum of five FULL pages. One sentence on the last page does NOT count as a page. Minimum of 1,250 words.

Two beeps. DAISY looks at her phone again. She fiddles with it and sighs in content, as she thinks she silenced the phone.

Ahem- anyway. Remember that there are a few examples posted online for you to go over. And with that class is ov-

Three beeps.

Next class, PLEASE silence cell phones?!

DAISY

Sorry, professor.

DAISY steps out of the room to check her phone.

DAISY

Holy shit. A thousand views?

SAGE

Hey nerd. Woah. Why do you look like you've seen a ghost?

DAISY

I- I posted a video and started a blog about my writing looking for help and well... it's gotten like a thousand views or something.

SAGE

Fuck. You're like famous or something.

DAISY

I should let Genni know.

SAGE

Genni huh? You seem to be getting close to her...

DAISY

What? No, no it's nothing. We're just friends.

SAGE

Someone's defensive...

DAISY

I'M NOT! - (quietly) I'm not being defensive.

SAGE

Uh huh. Well, if it means *anything* to you, she thinks you're cute.

SAGE exits.

DAISY

Wait wait, what?! You can't just say that and leave!

DAISY chases after SAGE.

### Scene 13

The School Auditorium. GENNI, DAISY, and SAGE are sitting next to each other.

GENNI

Are you ready?

DAISY

As ready as I'll ever be.

GENNI

I'm proud of you.

GENNI grabs DAISY'S hand

DAISY

Thank you, Genni...  
Sage, are you okay?

SAGE

Yeah, yeah. I'm good. Just not ready for the backlash is all.

DAISY

Well, it's not like they can come after the club or anything.

SAGE

Oooo (laughing) too soon... too soon

GENNI

It's about to start.

KALDOR

Ladies and gentlemen. I was asked to present the winner of the 46th Annual "Write, Rewrite," contest, sponsored by Harper-Collins! There were over three hundred entries and it took our judges plenty of time to deliberate. Now, to announce the runner up.

The runner up of this year's competition is... Daisy Beckett.

Applause scatters through the crowd. DAISY and GENNI are shell shocked. DAISY walks up to accept her award from Kaldor.

Wonderful job, Daisy. Now onto the winner for this year's competition. (towards Ava) This person dedicated many hours of hard work and perseverance towards their story. That person is... Sage... Hartman.

Murmurs throughout the crowd as GENNI and DAISY look towards SAGE. SAGE is stunned.

Daisy

Sage! Go up there!

Sage

I... wow ok.

SAGE walks up and gets her award from KALDOR.

AVA

What? No! I was supposed to win! This is *my* competition!  
Where are the judges?!

KALDOR

Ava... please stop this madness.

AVA

No I am not stopping until I get what I deserve!

SAGE

Mr. Kaldor... I've got this. (To Ava) Ava. I know losing  
sucks. However, it's ok. We can't all be winners.

AVA

Oh you bitch!

SAGE

Oh Ava! The lord wouldn't like you swearing...

AVA leaps towards SAGE,  
who dodges her. KALDOR  
comes and grabs AVA to  
pull her away. AVA huffs  
and walks off with  
KALDOR.

DAISY

Sage! That was badass!

GENNI

Yeah seriously! Also when did you decide to enter?

SAGE

Well, I wanted to make sure Ava got a run for her money. The  
more stories, the less chance she had of winning, right?

DAISY

Well, congrats Sage.

SAGE

I'm sorry that means you didn't win the scholarship. If I  
could give it to you I would in a heart-

DAISY

Sage! It's ok! I'm thinking of dropping to part time and  
working so I can pay for it. I'll figure out a way.

MARK

Hi, Daisy Beckett? My name is Mark Flannigan from Harper Collins. I was one of the judges of the entries for the competition. I wanted to come up and speak to you personally.

My opinion is that your story was my favorite. It was dynamic and intriguing. I can really tell you are passionate about writing.

DAISY

Oh my goodness, thank you so much!

MARK

Now onto why I came over here to talk to you. I want you to submit your story through our publisher and I will put in a good word. My good words tend to always help stories get published. I think it would be great for you!

DAISY

What?

MARK

That's right, Daisy! I want your story published. You'll just have to change some of the characters since we can't use characters protected by copyright, so If you can just send me an edited copy to my email - here's my card - then we can get the process started!

MARK exits.

GENNI

Holy shit.

SAGE

What the fuck?

DAISY

OH MY GOD!!

The three of them hug and cheer.

DAISY

This is insane

GENNI

Well, you better get to editing that story.

DAISY

I- I don't know if I can manage to do that.

SAGE

Daisy! This is your big chance to make a name for yourself. You should!

DAISY

It's the principle of it. I had to change how much of my writing to appease Kaldor, and yet I still have to change more?

GENNI

Listen, Daisy. I think it would be a great idea just to do this for one novel. Make it big, you know? Then write for passion.

SAGE

I agree with Genni. Write to pay the bills then write for passion.

DAISY

I do need to pay for school.

SAGE

Daisy, I'm sorry I stole the win from you... I know you really needed the money, but I just really wanted to beat Ava.

DAISY

Sage, it's ok. You deserve the win. Maybe rewriting and publishing my novel can help pay for school. Or maybe my blog will pick up? I'll figure it out. You deserve that win.

SAGE

Thanks, loser.

DAISY

Okay, hotshot, don't get too cocky now.

GENNI

By the way, Daisy, I've wanted to tell you for a little while now. There is something that has been on my mind for a long time now and I just needed the courage to ask you/

DAISY

/Will you go out with me?

GENNI

I just didn't want to ruin our-  
Wait, what?

SAGE

(sing-songy) Called it

DAISY

I like you, Genni Manizan. I want to go out on a date with  
you.

SAGE

Look at you. Meek and mild Daisy making the first move.

DAISY

Oh Sage. Will you quit it?

SAGE

Oh don't mind me. Just eating my popcorn and enjoying the  
show.

GENNI

Yes, Daisy. I will go out with you.

DAISY and GENNI embrace.

SAGE

I love me some lesbianism.

#### Scene 14

Four Years Later. The set of DBF News. MIRANDA and DAISY are  
sitting together.

MIRANDA

This is Miranda Stout with DBF News. Today for our Two  
O'Clock edition of "Five Minutes of Fame" we have Daisy  
Beckett-Manizan, young upstart author of the new novel  
"Lights that Blind Us." Tell us, Daisy, how did you do it?

DAISY

Well Miranda. Not only does it help that I've been studying  
English for the past few years, but I've had some help along  
the way.

I began as a fanfiction writer in the fanfiction club at my college. Once the club was shut down, I turned towards documenting my experiences online. The college I went to wasn't the most... accepting of queer individuals, so I needed to find my outlet somewhere else. The community I have fostered has helped me learn more about writing and what people like to read about. I was able to support my schooling through the money I made off of the first novel I published, the blog and video series.

MIRANDA

How wonderful! Have you graduated yet?

DAISY

Graduation was last week. Summa Cum Laude! And with no debt.

MIRANDA

That is amazing! Is there anyone specific in your life that you want to thank!

DAISY

Well, I want to thank one of my best friends, Sage Hartman. They were the first person I met on campus who accepted me and welcomed me into their arms. Also they were the president of the fanfiction club. Furthermore I want to thank my wife, Genni. She has been my rock and love for the past four years. We actually got married a few months ago. She graduated two years ago and is now pursuing her Master's in Psychology and plans on going for her Doctorate after that. She's truly amazing.

MIRANDA

I love to hear that! Well everyone, that concludes our "Five Minutes of Fame" interview with Daisy Beckett-Manizan. Check out her new book "Lights that Blind Us" available at bookstores all over the country. Additionally, Mrs. Beckett-Manizan will be doing a book signing at 5pm right next door at Pen and Ink Book Store! Feel free to stop by!

There is a sound  
indicating the broadcast  
has stopped.

DAISY

Thank you so much Mrs. Stout. This has been an honor.

MIRANDA

Likewise! I have been following your blog for a while. I'm a huge Black Widow fan and the post you made on the story you wrote about her is one of my favorites.

DAISY

I'm glad you enjoyed it! My professor at the time didn't.

GENNI

Daisy!

GENNI runs up and hugs  
DAISY.

DAISY

Hi babe!

GENNI

I TOLD YOU not to mention me during your interview!

DAISY

I couldn't help it. You're just so amazing.

SAGE

Whattup bitches?

DAISY

Sage?! I thought you couldn't make it?

SAGE

Well, I got some help from a little birdie whose name sounds very similar to "Penny".

MRS. BECKETT

Daisy Lynn?

DAISY turns to the voice  
she hears.

DAISY

... Mom?

MRS. BECKETT

Hi sweetie.

DAISY

Mom! Oh my god!

They embrace

I've missed you so much. It's so good to actually see you again.

MRS. BECKETT

I know, baby. I missed you too. I'm sorry that I haven't visited. I should have stood up to your father. I knew what he was saying was wrong. I was just afraid

DAISY

Mom, it's ok. I forgive you.

They embrace again

MR. BECKETT

Ahem.

DAISY lifts her head from the embrace and locks eyes with MR. BECKETT. She seems uncomfortable.

Hello, Daisy. I wanted to come and support you.

MRS. BECKETT

Harold.

MR. BECKETT

I was just really dumb and arrogant and close minded. I let my prejudices prevent me from loving and supporting my daughter, my flesh and blood. Thou shalt love thy neighbor/as thyself

DAISY

/as thyself

MR. BECKETT

Your mother told me so much about what I put you through. I'm so sorry. She showed me your blog posts and videos talking about how you didn't feel like you had a place in the world. How you weren't sure if you needed to drop out of college because of how dumb I was.

DAISY

Wait, you watched my videos? How did you find them? I never told mom about them.

MRS. BECKETT

Well, yes of course. I came across them randomly one day. That's the only takeaway from the conversation? Really?

DAISY

Sorry, I guess I just got a bit confused. Why are you coming to me now?

MR. BECKETT

Honestly, I don't know. I saw the advertisement that you were in town so I decided to find you and apologize. Daisy, you are my pride and joy, my daughter. You are the best thing that has ever happened to me, other than your mother, of course.

MRS. BECKETT

Harold. Tell her all of the truth. You owe her that much.

MR. BECKETT

Yes, darling.

I almost died about a month ago. I had a heart attack and needed surgery. Being in that hospital room really made me think "God what am I doing with my life? Is this how I want to die? Calling my daughter something offensive over something she cannot control? You haven't even met her wife! She probably never wants to see you again! Is that how you want to die?"

It was a lot of thinking... I'm just really sorry, pumpernickel.

DAISY

DAISY begins to sniffle.

... Dad

DAISY and MR. BECKETT embrace.

SAGE

Hey, you gonna introduce us?

DAISY

Oh my god yes I am so sorry. Mom, dad, this is Sage. They are my number one best friend. Helped me through everything.

MRS. BECKETT

Wonderful to meet you.

MR. BECKETT

Thank you for being there for her, Sage.

SAGE

(flabbergasted) oh yeah, uh, no problem.

DAISY

And Genni. My wife.

GENNI

Hi.

MRS. BECKETT

You are very beautiful.

MR. BECKETT steps up  
towards GENNI, slightly  
intimidating Genni. He  
looks her in the eyes.

MR. BECKETT

Thank you for loving my daughter when I didn't.

They hug.

SAGE

Alright, please stop the sappiness! I don't have many tears  
left in me.

DAISY

You dork.

DAISY playfully punches  
SAGE.

Now... who wants some food before the signing?!

They all cheer.

END OF PLAY

## **Part One: The History of Fanfiction**

### **18<sup>th</sup> Century: Gulliver's Travels**

When many people think of fanfiction, the stories of the past forty years come to mind. From books and movies such as *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games*, to video games such as the *Super Smash Bros. Series* and *The Legend of Zelda*. One popular website for fanfiction, *Archive of Our Own*, commonly referred to as AO3, has a plethora of categories (“Fandoms”). However, fanfiction dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the publication of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. Hundreds of fan authored works followed the release of the story, often more sexually explicit than the source material (Chamberlain). One example is a series of poems by Alexander Pope which focuses on Gulliver’s wife, who is not mentioned a lot in the original work (Chamberlain). The craze of fan authored works did not cease after *Gulliver’s Travels*. Samuel Richardson’s novel *Pamela* sparked many pieces of work including *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews* (Chamberlain).

### **20<sup>th</sup> Century: Fanmags, Fanzines, and Doujinshi Manga**

The next key event to the growth and history of fanfiction is the invention and circulation of fanmags and fanzines. Fanmags were the precursor to fanzines, originating in the 1930s with the science fiction fandom (“Zine”). Fanmags transitioned towards fanzines in 1940 (“Zine”). Fanzines, a portmanteau of “fan” and “magazines” are small,

self-published books created by popular media enthusiasts (Woodcock). They often contained fanfiction, original art, and erotica/pornographic material (Woodcock). Fanmags and fanzines were the first well known medium of mainstream fanfiction. Some people sold their fanzines, though authors had to be wary to avoid copyright laws. Fanzines had a Japanese counterpart known as Doujinshi Manga; manga created starring pre-characters from other authors (“Doujinshi Manga”). Throughout the 20th century, fanfiction was circulating throughout the population. It is not a medium that was created with the birth of the internet, but rather with the birth of enthusiasts. Fanfiction was born from a love of literature and media, fans making and creating stories surrounding their favorite stories.

### **21st Century: Archive of Our Own and Wattpad**

The creation of the internet helped foster millions of writers and continues to aid in the growth of fanfiction. One of the most popular websites for fanfiction circulation is Archive of Our Own, (AO3). AO3 was created in 2009 by the non-profit Organization for Transformative Works for the fans and by the fans, a way to preserve their work in an archive (“Announcing Open Beta!”). The website is still in operation today, claiming that as of 2024 they have more than 64,060 fandoms (a group of fans of a particular piece of fiction, author, etc.), 6,846,000 users on the platform, and 12,680,000 pieces published (Archive of Our Own). Another popular website fostering the growth of fanfiction in the 21st century is Wattpad.com. Founded in 2006, Wattpad was cofounded by Allen Lau and Ivan Yuen (Wattpad: Building the World’s...). Wattpad has the unique ability of

bridging the gap between readers and writers, fostering a community beneficial to amateur writers as well as established writers such as Margaret Atwood and Paul Coelho (Wattpad: Building the World's...). The format of Wattpad allowed distinctive features that were lacking from Archive of Our Own. Their community features allowed writers to network with other writers, often partaking in a peer-review, you-read-mine-and-I'll-read-yours, style of feedback (Romano). Another unique aspect of Wattpad is the use of multimedia storytelling. Oftentimes, authors would include a dream "cast" of actors to play different characters, giving the reader a sense of who they were picturing when they were creating the story (Romano). Additionally, some authors would pick theme songs or make playlists that coincided with their stories (Romano). Wattpad has been a popular website for fanfiction, even having a section in the search engine specifically for fanfiction (Romano). Overall, both websites had parts in the growth and modernization of fanfiction within the 21st century and the birth of the internet.

## **Part Two: Queer Community**

### **Acceptance in Society**

It is no secret that the queer society has not also been accepted by society. Same-sex marriage has only been legal for nine years, many religious organizations still look down upon queer individuals, and conversion camps still exist to try and "turn" queer kids into straight kids. To better understand the mindset of a religious person upset with homosexuality, I turned towards the Christian Post. While not every Christian is

homophobic, many of the people who are the most outspoken against queer society tend to belong to some denomination of Christianity. In the article by John Piper, many quotes include the use of the Bible to disprove the acceptance of queer individuals (Piper). The interview continues to attribute homosexual attraction as a dysfunctional form of idolatry and brokenness that one must overcome if they wish to live a more God-appointed life (Piper). Piper uses the English Standard Version of the Bible; one quote from 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is as follows: “[N]either the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (ESV Bible, 1 Cor. 6: 9-10). This version of the Bible was published in 2001 and is one of many that include products of mistranslation. The term “homosexual” was first included in the Bible in 1946, after it was first translated into English (Barceló). Some results of my research state the translators of the Bible recognized their mistake in 1959, yet the damage had already begun (Barceló). The version that the first English Bible was translated from was a German Bible. In the German version, there is a word "knabenschänder" meaning "molester of boys" (Oxford). Looking more into the subject, Oxford found that the word “homosexual” was not included in the German translation until 1983 (Oxford). This concept is strange, considering Germany is the country which created the word “homosexual” in 1862 (Oxford). If the intention of the Bible were to include homosexuality as a sin, the original German version would include the word for homosexual. Not every Christian is homophobic and not every person is Christian. However, Christianity, as of 2022, Christianity is the most popular religion with 31.6% of the population identifying as a Christian (Dyvik). With religious texts sporting

homophobic sentiments, it is clear as to why many queer people did not and continue not to feel safe and accepted in society.

### **Representation in Media**

While many forms of media today feature queer representation, oftentimes queer readers and writers turn to fanfiction, especially during the time of queer hostility. The media reflects the unaccepting society, showing more heteronormative, and oftentimes homophobic, content. Looking at older movies, there are some jokes that have aged poorly. In an interview with actor Seth Rogan, Rogan apologizes for homophobic jokes in earlier films, “I don’t want anyone to feel they are being laughed at. It’s funny looking at some movies we’ve made in the last [ten] years under the lens of new eras, new social consciousness” (Duffy). With movies released in the early 21st century containing clear homophobia, it is no wonder why queer safe fiction websites and slash fiction grew in popularity. Fanfiction is a source for queer writers to see themselves represented in media during a time where their existence was treated as a joke. Queer people empower themselves to no longer just be the punchline (Binstock). Once queer characters became more popular in media, they were modeled after stereotypes and were only side characters in heterocentric stories. There is a trope called the “Gay Best Friend,” where the straight, female lead has a witty and sarcastic gay male best friend. They are a source of comedic relief, filling out the secondary plot of the story. One example involves the television show Glee. The side character, Kurt Hummel was main character Rachel Berry’s “gay best friend,” following her around for most of the show (Rude). While the

tropes are not necessarily harmful, it is not accurate representation of queer stories in media. Media cannot give proper and well-deserved representation to the queer society by making queer characters only side characters overshadowed by the straight, main character.

### **Queer Fiction and Slash Fiction**

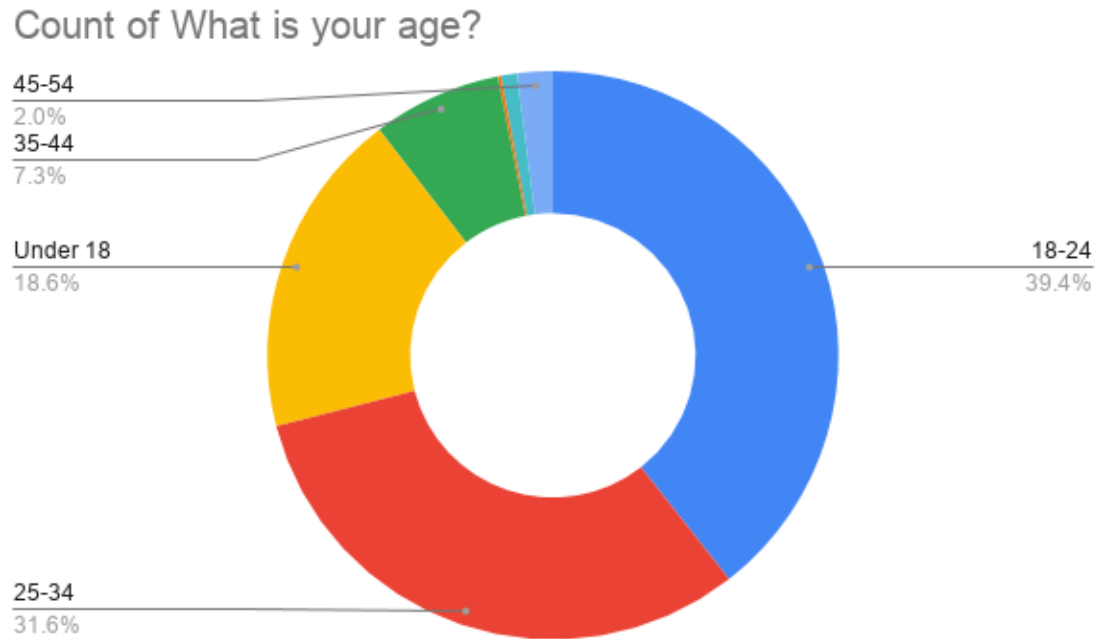
While there is no concrete evidence showing the exact demographic of fanfiction readers and writers, some of the popular works and pairings may give us an idea. Published in 2021 on AO3, *All the Young Dudes* is one of the more popular stories set in the world of *Harry Potter*. Starring the characters known as the “Marauders,” (Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, James Potter, and Peter Pettigrew) the story surrounds a fictional romance between Lupin and Black, something that does not exist in the original work (*All the Young Dudes*). The pairing between Lupin and Black is a popular queer pairing from the *Harry Potter* franchise, other than between the title character and his enemy, Draco Malfoy. Many fanfiction writers tend to create queer relationships within stories that have none. A popular form of fanfiction is Slashfiction, Slash for short, a form of story that focuses on interpersonal relationships and sexual attraction between characters of the same sex (Davies). It is conventionally known that the beginning of Slash came from the *Star Trek* franchise, particularly focusing on the pairing between Spock and Kirk (Davies). There are many fandoms which focus on heteronormative relationships that have been subject to many slash pieces. Some of the fandoms include *Supernatural* and *X-Men* (Davies). With the unacceptance of queer individuals and underrepresentation in

media, it is no wonder why the queer community turns towards creating their own stories, turning stories they love into stories they can feel represented in.

### **Part Three: Fanfiction Communities for Readers and Writers**

The communities that fanfiction websites foster give people who feel alone a semblance of understanding and community. In an unaccepting world, they can find a glimmer of hope. Writers can benefit from the same stuff that readers get: a semblance of community and acceptance, and a place to be yourself without judgment. Being an author on a fanfiction website also has unique benefits. There is the concept of mentoring, where fellow authors can help one other with sections they may be struggling with, like characterization or grammar (Campbell et al.) Readers can also provide feedback to authors from a non-writer perspective. In short, it is like a form of peer review. In an interview with select fanfiction writers, many of the authors believe that the fanfiction communities provide emotional support and an avenue to better their writing (Campbell et al.). Many fanfiction readers and writers tend to be young. A survey of fanfiction fans shows that approximately 39.4% of their readers were aged 18-25.

**Figure 1: Age Demographic of Fanfiction Readers**



With many of the reader in their “emerging adulthood” phase, it is important to foster a sense of identity (“Emerging Adults: The in-between Age.”) With the unacceptance of queer society, people in their development ages benefit from these fanfiction communities. It can help them find their sense of identity, something that may have been impossible due to society.

## **Part Four: Playwriting**

### **Chapter One: The Written Aspect**

#### **Growing an Idea**

Playwriting is not an easy task. I began as a novel writer and still find novel writing easier than playwriting. However, given the personal nature of the subject, I wanted to tell this story as a play. Fanfiction and homophobia are both topics that span over time. While my play is set in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the intention is that it can be retold in any period of time. I began with the idea of writing a play about different communities who benefit from fanfiction, including English language learners and those struggling with mental health disorders. I chose to focus on the queer community, as it is near and dear to my heart. When telling a friend of mine about my project, once it was near completion, she was in tears, stating “These are the stories that need to be told.” Queer representation in theatre is scarce. While Shakespearean times included men playing female roles, there was no true and intended queer representation on the stage (Garcia). A big goal for this play was to include some members of underrepresented communities. That is why I chose to make one of the main characters a non-binary character. I wanted to make sure that queer did not just mean sexuality. I wanted to make sure it included all forms of queer identity, as everyone deserves to feel represented in media. One important note about my play involves the use of a common slur towards the queer community. In the play, two homophobic characters use the word “faggot” towards the bisexual main

character. The decision to include this word is one that weighed heavily on my shoulders. Even though I am queer, I find it difficult to say this word. Despite its origins as an offensive and prerogative word for queer people, many members of the queer community are reclaiming the word for themselves (Vuolo). After heavy discussion and critical thinking, I chose to include the slur. It is present in the first scene of the play, emphasizing the setting of the world and the strict homophobia present. As a queer individual, I find it tough to write homophobic characters. I turned towards religious websites, using lines from interviews as inspiration for dialogue. One character, Harold Beckett, responds to his daughter's announcement of being bisexual as a "dysfunctional form of idolatry." The quote is taken straight from Piper's "Why is Homosexuality Wrong?" The quote from the website goes as follows: "So, implication: same-sex attraction is a dysfunctional form of idolatry."

### **Finishing the Idea**

Any person who creates art can attest that the hardest part of making art is finishing it. Many projects are started and left unfinished, never to be seen in the public eye. That is something I struggle with tenfold. Finishing this play and getting it to a point where I was happy with it was a struggle. I still find myself editing different scenes and pieces of dialogue. There are rarely moments when an artist looks at their work and thinks that it can no longer be improved. We always look at our pieces, whether they are novels, paintings, or novels, and think about what can be done to make it better. The important part of being a creative person is learning when to finish. Learning when it is

okay to put the bow on the project and ship it out for the world to see. It is a terrifying feeling because artists often agree that they feel as if they could do so much better. The main point is that the piece is finished. Sticking with a project from start to end is no easy task. Even if the project is not perfect, at the end of the day, any artist can find solace and achievement in finishing a project. I had to sit with myself and realize that I could no longer make edits to my play, as I had to be fine with what I had. I had to accept that it is what I had and that I had finished it.

## **Chapter Two: The Performance Aspect**

### **Casting**

Writing a play is one thing. Having the play performed is an entirely unique experience. The start of the process involves casting. I chose to not hold auditions, but instead to reach out to people I knew. The cast consisted of a mix of fellow students and family members. The casting of the show was important to me. I made sure the non-binary character was played by someone who is non-binary. I made sure the lesbian was played by a lesbian. This play was written for the queer community, and I feel that it would have been a disservice to cast queer characters with straight, heteronormative performers. I am not opposed to straight performers playing queer characters; however, since I was hand picking who I wanted in the performance, I wanted to be particular with casting choices.

## **Reading**

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the premiere reading of my original one-act play, *Write, Rewrite*, took place. With a cast of seven, plus one reading stage directions, I got to sit back and listen to my work for the first time. It was the first time I could hear the work without being involved. During our rehearsal, I had to read a few of the characters. The reading was an opportunity to hear my work. In all honesty, it was difficult yet cathartic. Difficult because it is hard putting new work out in public. Cathartic because the story was finally being told. The hardest part, premiering it to the world, was finally over. The wonderful cast put their all into the performance, bringing me to tears in a few of the scenes. It truly was a beautiful experience celebrating queer acceptance and fanfiction. It brought to light how fanfiction helps authors and fosters a community of growth.

## **Feedback**

The hardest part following releasing your work to the world is receiving feedback. I received feedback from some of my actors, noting that the scenes are fast paced and over as quickly as they began. Additionally, I held a talkback following the reading where I was asked questions about my characters and their motivations, and what I am already thinking about changing after watching the reading. I find this form of feedback like the communities that fanfiction websites foster. Readers and writers alike are uniting to help

the author improve their writing. I have received a plethora of feedback about how grateful people are for the stories being told. They are grateful to finally shine a light on an underrepresented community. If I were to walk away from this project making just one person feel represented and surer of themselves, then I would consider it a success. This play is not just to tell a story, it is to bring awareness and to represent the queer community. It is a message to the world about a community many people may not see.

### **Reflective Essay**

This experience is one that challenged me. I had planned to write a play about fanfiction. I wanted to show how the communities that fanfiction lovers foster and the content they write about can be helpful to people of many different backgrounds. I had originally narrowed it down to three different under-represented communities; queer people, English language learners, and people with mental health disorders. Last year, I made the difficult decision to change my major. While I changed my major to something I had more of a passion for, the stress of needing more classes and falling behind left me wondering if I could complete my thesis. I spoke with Dr. Albakry and she helped me move forward in the process. I continued to push forth through the program, wanting to see my commitment out until the end. I reflect on the work I have done and the accomplishments that I have achieved throughout the past year. I have researched and worked towards cultivating a creative project to showcase my findings. It is something to be proud of.

Last summer, I began working on my thesis. I narrowed down my topics and planned the path moving forward. One of the largest debates I had to solve early involved the storytelling format of the play. Originally, I wanted to write a series of vignettes, inspired by works such as *How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel. I knew I wanted to write a story about how fanfiction helped people, but it was still too broad of a topic. I ended up narrowing the topic even further, covering the queer community and how fanfiction benefits them. This topic is near and dear to my heart, as I grew up reading fanfiction. Additionally, reading fanfiction allowed me to read about stories I never saw on television. I would read stories about queer relationships, something that was not around me. Once I began questioning my sexuality, I turned towards the media I connected to growing up. Realizing that I read queer stories and felt that I could relate to them made me recognize how important these experiences are for young people. It is important to have representation in the media. Having representation allows people to feel comfortable in their skin and as if they are normal.

Writing a play on such a sensitive topic made me slightly nervous. I wanted to handle it with care and consideration. A lot of the references I used for the opposing forces in the play came from Christian websites. I did not want this play to come across as an anti-Christian play, but it is difficult when many of the sources come from religious backgrounds.

The addition of the slur against queer people (the 'f' slur) was a difficult choice to make. As the play was intended to be about celebrating queer people, I found it tough to include a word with such a difficult history. While many queer individuals have

reclaimed the term for themselves, it took a lot of convincing from fellow queer friends to include it in the play. It is an important part of the show that took a lot for me to include. If I were to do this project again, I would do it completely differently. While I am proud of my work, I have learned many lessons. I have learned tips and tricks for writing plays. Additionally, I would have handled the staged reading process very differently. The process this time was chaotic and all over the place. If I were to do this again, I would give myself more time between casting the show and the staged reading. The turnaround time made it difficult to meet with my actors and go over the play in depth. However, I am still proud of all the work I have done. I am proud of being an advocate of queer rights. I am happy that I can bring more representation to the world.

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