Trans Focus

The World from a Transgender Perspective

December 2025



Surviving Christmas

From Athens with Love

Welcome To December

Here we are again, it's Christmas already. Where did the year go? As I type, we are planning our Christmas activities. There's our annual LGBTQ+ party, which promises to be better than ever this year with some new friends coming with us for the first time.

As ever, I'm looking forward to Santa emptying his sack at the end of my bed. Maybe some new perfume, something glittery to wear or something dry to drink?

For the record, Christmas has not been banned. Seems the same people every year spread the same rubbish; despite the fact we have had adverts for Christmas since mid October; Christmas lights ready to go and Christmas songs played for weeks now. You've even been able to buy mince pies for weeks… with the use by date before Christmas Day. Still, it'll soon be easter and the same people will be complaining that Easter has been banned.

It's been a hard year in many ways. While some countries are moving forward with trans rights, my birth country and a few others seem to be going backwards. With advancing years usually comes progression but sad to say the UK is regressing. I give thanks that Spain is in general, positive towards LGBTQ+ people and I hope that we see positivity soon.

This month we dedicate the magazine to Christmas as we always do with the occasional nod to normal life.

Important at this time of year to think about those of us who are struggling. Those who may be lonely or struggling to gain acceptance from their families and those who were once closest to them. Our guide to surviving and hopefully enjoying Christmas is hopefully of some help.

It's fun to look at things from a different perspective, so we look at queer Santa, the 12 days of transmas, and a look back to a trans Christmas of the 70s. Don't forget our Christmas song quiz - with a difference.

Be sure to check out Emma's tale to Athens and back, where she meets up with a new friend with sequels over the next few months, and we conclude our A to Z of trans which includes some very influential people.

To all our readers, we wish you the happiest of Christmases and a healthy and prosperous new year.

Love Carla & Penny xx



A Trans Woman's Guide to Surviving Christmas: Compassion, Boundaries & Coping

For many trans women, Christmas can be a bittersweet season. While the world sparkles with lights and celebration, the holidays often amplify family tensions, gender dysphoria, loneliness, and the emotional labour of "performing" for others. But you deserve joy, peace, and authenticity, no matter what the season throws at you. Here's a practical, heartfelt guide to help you through it.

1. Set Boundaries Before You Arrive

Boundaries aren't barriers - they're self-protection.
If you know certain relatives struggle with names, pronouns, or your transition, decide what you *will* and *won't* tolerate. Always a risk, but people need to move forward with you. Before any get-together, try sending a gentle but firm message:

"I'm excited to see everyone. Please use my correct name and pronouns. It really helps me feel respected and comfortable."

If someone repeatedly crosses that line, it's OK to step out of the room, take a walk, or end the visit early. You don't owe anyone unlimited emotional labour for the sake of "festive harmony." Don't be told or inferred that it's your issue. It isnt, it's theirs.

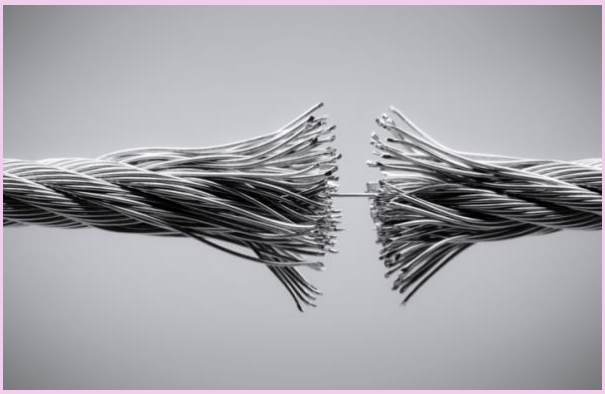


2. Prepare Emotional Check-Ins

The holidays can trigger old wounds and expectations. Plan regular emotional check-ins with yourself:

- **How am I feeling right now?**
- **What do I need?**
- **Is this situation draining me or supporting me?**

Give yourself permission to retreat for a few minutes. Deep breathing in the bathroom, a walk around the block, or a quick grounding exercise. Sometimes the smallest pause can reset your whole day.



3. Build Your Chosen Family into the Season

Chosen family matters more than ever at Christmas.
Schedule video chats, group chats, or meet-ups with the people who affirm you. Create your own rituals: a trans friends' Christmas Eve drink, a queer film night, or a sparkly outfit photoshoot.

These connections can be lifesavers in a season that often prioritises biological family above all else.



4. Acknowledge Loneliness—Don’t Judge Yourself for It

Loneliness hits harder at Christmas because the world insists everyone else is having a perfect, love-filled holiday. Spoiler: they aren’t.

If you’re spending the holidays alone or feeling isolated:

- Make a cosy plan for the day: movies, food you love, comfy clothes.
- Join online trans or LGBTQ+ Christmas events. There are many safe, supportive spaces.
- Write yourself a compassion letter reminding you of your strength and progress.

Remember: solitude is not failure.



5. Manage Dysphoria with Kindness, Not Punishment

Whether you’re early in transition, stealth, or years on, dysphoria can spike around relatives or old family environments. Try practical support:

- Wear clothing that makes you feel safe and grounded.
- Bring comfort items: jewellery, makeup, perfume, or a favourite scarf.
- If misgendered, breathe before reacting. Correct gently, firmly, or not at all depending on your energy.

Your womanhood is not up for debate just because the turkey is.



6. Set a Post-Holiday Recovery Plan

When it's all over, give yourself decompression time. Have something to look forward to:

- A spa day
- A meet-up with queer friends
- A long bath and your favourite music
- Journaling to release stress

Resetting is part of surviving.



Above All: You Deserve Peace

Christmas can be complicated, but you are not alone, and your identity is valid every single day of the year. Your job this season is simple: protect your wellbeing, find pockets of joy, and remember that your authenticity is a gift—one worth celebrating.



Santa Claus:
The Ultimate Gender-Bender?

For someone so universally adored, Santa Claus has always been a bit… queer-coded. Think about it. Here is a man who lives outside the constraints of society, wears flamboyant outfits, surrounds himself with glitter and crafts, and spends his year preparing theatrical entrances. If that isn't peak drag energy, what is?



Santa's iconic red suit alone is a study in camp. A floor-length coat trimmed with fur, accessorised with a huge belt, boots made for stomping, and a hat that could double as a drag queen's Christmas-number reveal? Please. This isn't "masculine." It's pure festive fabulousness. And let's not even start on his waistline. Santa refuses to conform to the body standards men are told to chase. Instead, he's joyfully rotund, indulgent, and entirely unashamed, a radical act in a world obsessed with shrinking itself.

Folklorists like to talk about "liminal figures," people who exist at the edges of society and bend the rules of gender and identity. Santa—half-myth, half-fashion-icon, fits the bill perfectly. Traditionally masculine? Hardly. He moves through domestic spaces delivering gifts, commands an army of craftspeople, and spends his downtime sewing toys and baking biscuits with Mrs Claus. In modern terms, he's a bearded, bejewelled queer elder who refuses to pick a lane.



Santa, or is it Santana…

Even the Santa mythos feels drag-adjacent. The transformation! The persona! The exaggerated mannerisms! The dramatic entrances via chimney! Santa Claus is giving full panto dame, a performance larger than life, built on glitter, smoke, and holiday fantasy. It's RuPaul's Christmas Special meets ancient folklore.

And let's not ignore that Santa has had many genders across history. In some traditions, it was women who delivered gifts. In others, the role flipped depending on region, tribe, or story. The idea that Santa must be eternally male is a modern invention, and a pretty boring one at that. Queer readings of Santa simply reclaim what folklore has always done: reshaped stories to reflect the lives of the people telling them.

So yes, Santa is a gender-bender. A camp, cosy, softly subversive icon who defies rigid binaries and reminds us that joy, generosity, and glamour belong to everyone.

And frankly? Christmas has always been queerer for it.

The Survival Trade: Why So Many Transgender Women Turn to Sex Work

We often frame career paths as choices made from passion or skill. But for many marginalised people, "choice" is a luxury. The path into sex work is often less a turning and more a funnel, shaped by walls of exclusion that leave few alternatives.



The most powerful force driving this trend is one that remains largely invisible to the general public: pervasive employment discrimination. Imagine walking into an interview, your qualifications impeccable, only to see the interviewer’s demeanor shift when they realise the person before them doesn’t match the name on their ID. For transgender applicants, this is a common reality.

Studies consistently show that transgender people face alarmingly high rates of hiring bias. Their applications are dismissed, their identities questioned, and their presence feared to be a "disruption" in the workplace. Even for those who do secure a job, the work environment can be a minefield of misgendering, harassment, and hostility, making long-term employment unsustainable. In many countries, legal protections are flimsy or non-existent, leaving them with little recourse.

This discrimination creates a direct pipeline into economic

precarity. When you are systematically shut out of traditional employment, how do you pay rent? Buy food? Survive?



Compounding this is the high cost of medical transition. Gender-affirming care,from hormone therapy to surgeries, is not a luxury; for many, it is medically necessary and life-saving. Yet, these procedures can be prohibitively expensive, and insurance coverage has historically been a battle. The financial pressure is immense, and sex work can appear as one of the few avenues to earn the significant funds required in a reasonable timeframe.

For transgender youth, the equation is even more dire. A staggering number are rejected by their families, thrust into homelessness with no safety net. In this crisis, survival sex work becomes a immediate, if dangerous, solution to the most basic of human needs: shelter and food.

The world of sex work is fraught with peril, particularly for transgender women, who face shockingly high rates of violence and murder, often targeting transgender women of color. Yet, within this hazardous space, some find a twisted form of what is denied to them elsewhere: autonomy.

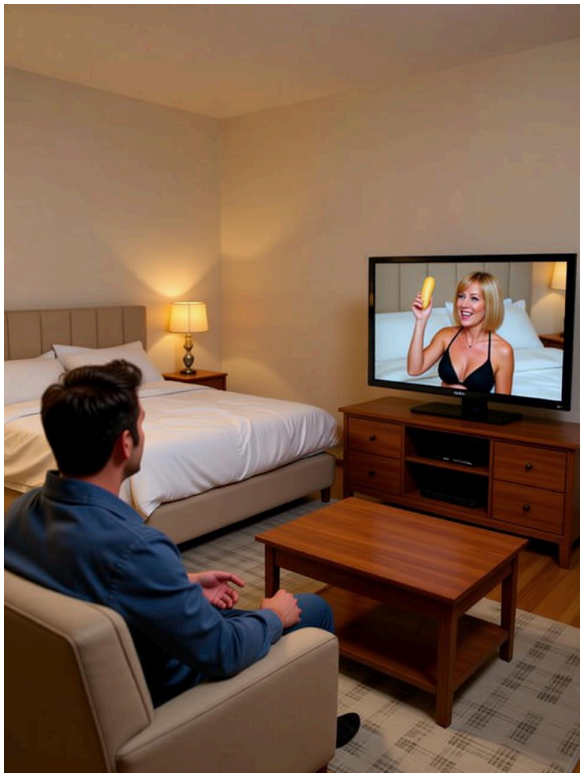
In a society that consistently denies their identity, the sex industry can be a realm where their womanhood is explicitly validated, even if transactionally. It can offer a degree of control over their time and body that a

hostile, traditional workplace with a bigoted manager does not. This is not to romanticise the work it is to highlight the profound deprivation that makes even this fraught autonomy seem preferable.

It is a critical mistake to believe that most transgender women are sex workers. The vast majority are not. But the visibility of those who are has created a damaging and pervasive stereotype that further harms the entire community.

The truth is, the presence of transgender women in the sex industry is a symptom. It is a symptom of a society that shuts doors at every turn, the door to a job, the door to safe housing, the door to healthcare, and often, the door to their own families.

The solution, therefore, does not lie in policing individuals, but in dismantling the barriers. It requires robust anti-discrimination laws, universal access to healthcare, inclusive workplace policies, and a cultural shift toward acceptance. It demands that we stop asking, "Why do they choose this?" and start asking, "What have we, as a society, failed to provide that this becomes the only option?"



Until then, under the glow of the neon lights, the survival trade will continue, not as a choice, but as a testament to resilience in the face of exclusion.

FROM ATHENS WITH LOVE

Part I –
People gotta move

I love the Greek people. Greeks are not only usually nice to foreigners, but they are also genuinely interested in them. A drink in a local bar often leads to an extensive exchange of knowledge about each other's living areas, customs, food, traditions, and so on. You quickly come into contact with Greeks, and they strike me as honest and spontaneous.



My education has given me knowledge of and interest in classical Greece. As the cradle of democracy, the country played a pioneering role in the establishment of today's parliamentary democracies. It must be hard for the Greeks to see how democracy is under attack or even being completely dismantled in many countries. Of course, the democratic system is far from ideal. The extent of democracy's shortcomings cannot be better illustrated than by Sir Winston Churchill's famous statement, with which I wholeheartedly agree: ‘The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter’. But I would immediately add another quote from him:

‘Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others that have been tried throughout history.’



I am sitting with my Greek trans friend Dimitria on the terrace of our small Airbnb flat in a suburb of Athens. The sun is shining and a few dozen metres away, a group of construction workers are arguing. As I listen to them and try to pick out the few Greek words I know, I have to laugh at one of the things I've learned in Athens, namely that as a Dutch person, I consistently misplace all the accents in Greek words. The football club is called Olympiakós and the Greek peninsula is called Pelopónnesos and not Peloponnésos as Dutch people tend to say.



Dimitria is smoking. Camels, the brand I used to smoke. That is back when I still smoked, because I haven't touched a cigarette in decades. My entire family died of lung cancer. You rarely get a better incentive to quit in your life. I can't imagine that I actually did this myself; I can barely stand the smell of Camel cigarettes. Dimitria is painting her toenails. With her legs crossed and dressed entirely in black, she looks like a demure Greek widow.



Appearances can be deceiving. We met by pure chance. A while ago, I was on holiday in Athens with my eldest daughter. I have an account on Tinder. I get to see potential dates within a 100-kilometre radius of where I live. But for Tinder, my place of residence suddenly seemed to have become Athens, so my chat list was suddenly full of Dimitris, Giorgos, Orestis and Vangelisses. On the Saturday evening I left Athens, there was also a sweet message from someone called Dimitria: ‘Have a lovely weekend, sweetheart!’



I decided that there was no point in responding to messages from Greeks when you live thousands of kilometres away in Europe. When I got back to Spain, I wanted to say goodbye to my Greek admirers by removing them from my chat list. But when I got to Dimitria's message, I hesitated. It didn't say anything about meeting up or how much she liked my pictures or other boring Tinder nonsense. No, just ‘have a nice weekend’. Actually, I thought that was very nice. I decided to thank her for the message anyway.

My thank you was answered. And I responded to that answer. And before you know it, you're in a lively conversation with someone on the other side of the Mediterranean. Which was exactly what I had decided not to do.

What I definitely hadn't planned to do was fly to Athens again. My previous trip, only a few weeks ago,had been a disaster, partly due to a general strike in Greece, which forced me to spend the night at Barcelona airport. But my contact with Dimitria was special. We were similar in many ways and had a lot in common. And in the end, you do become curious about the person behind the messages. I may not be a

keen traveller, but I am spontaneous. And I believe that sometimes you just have to do things instead of thinking about them for weeks. So here I am. Back in Athens.
As I watch Dimitria paint her toenails bright red, I think about the things she has told me since my arrival. She has just started a new job as a helpdesk employee at an internet provider. She earns little more than the minimum wage. And that is not much in Greece, about 800 euros. Few people earn more than the minimum wage. In addition to my previously mentioned love for the Greek people, a deep respect has also developed over the past few days. I don't understand how people in this country can survive.



In 2009, the euro crisis arose in Europe. The countries around the Mediterranean played a special role in this crisis with their high budget deficits. Greece came out of it as the worst affected. The country was saved from financial ruin by the EU, but at an alarming price. The population has had to pay that price in the form of cuts to wages, pensions, subsidies and other income, through the highest VAT in the entire European Union, through a completely stripped-down government that had no money left for anything. Through a huge tax burden. And through a price level for daily necessities that is comparable to that of, for example, the Netherlands. But there, the minimum wages are twice as high as in this country. Anyone who looks on the internet will read that the euro crisis in Greece lasted until 2018. Nothing could be further from the truth. To this day, ordinary Greeks are still paying for their “rescue” by the EU.
When I went to the supermarket here for the first time yesterday, I was shocked. Prices are at least 50% higher than in Spain. A bottle of simple wine, €9. Six Mars ice creams, €12. 250 grams of minced meat, €5. An average home in Athens easily costs €750. That's your minimum wage gone. How do the Greeks pay for their water, electricity (one of the most expensive in Europe), taxes and groceries? Who can afford having children in Greece? Who can still go on holiday?
You hardly ever hear the average Greek complain. Yes, the prices are insanely high for a country with this standard of living. But for many, it remains just an observation. Sometimes there are wistful references to the days of the drachma. But most people understand that a return to the drachma would not solve their problems. So the Greeks plod on, day by day, trying to get through another month.

Emma
-To be continued-

Unpacking the Relationship Between Crossdressing and Transgender Identity

The common cultural narrative that often frames crossdressing as a direct "gateway" to a transgender identity is an oversimplification that fails to capture the complex and varied nature of gender expression and identity. A closer examination reveals that while the two concepts are frequently conflated, they stem from fundamentally different aspects of a person's experience. The relationship is not one of cause and effect, but rather one of potential exploration and self-discovery.

The central argument for distinguishing between the two lies in the difference between gender expression and gender identity.

Crossdressing is an act of gender expression. It involves adopting the clothing, accessories, and mannerisms typically associated with another gender. For the vast majority of people who crossdress, this is a matter of personal comfort, artistic performance (as in drag), sexual expression, or simple preference, and it does not conflict with their cisgender identity. A cisgender man who wears dresses, for instance, may still identify firmly and completely as a man. The clothing is a form of expression, not an indicator of his core self.



Being Transgender, however, is rooted in gender identity. This is

a person's deep, internal, and persistent sense of their own gender. For transgender and non-binary individuals, the sex they were assigned at birth does not align with this internal identity. Therefore, changing their wardrobe and appearance is an act of gender affirmation, a necessary step to make their external presentation congruent with their internal reality. It is not a temporary act or a "costume" but an integral part of living authentically.



While they are distinct for many, crossdressing can play a pivotal role in the journey of some transgender people. It can function as a critical, initial phase of exploration, particularly for individuals in environments where transgender topics are taboo or misunderstood.

In this context, crossdressing becomes a private, safe laboratory for self-inquiry. An individual might start by experimenting with clothing and experience a powerful sense of "rightness" or "euphoria" that goes beyond mere enjoyment of the fabric. This feeling can be the first clue that their questioning runs deeper than style or hobby. The act allows them to "try on" a different gender role, even momentarily, and can help bring underlying and previously unarticulated feelings of gender dysphoria (the distress of misalignment) to the surface. What might begin as curiosity can evolve into a profound realisation that the clothing is a symbol of a

more fundamental truth about their identity.

The human experience of gender is not a binary path but a broad spectrum. To label crossdressing as a definitive gateway is to ignore the diversity of human experience. For a significant portion of the population, crossdressing is the destination itself, a fulfilling and stable form of expression. For others, it is indeed a signpost on a longer road toward realising a transgender or non-binary identity.



The emphasis on self-determination and the freedom to explore without preconceived labels. The journey is unique to each individual, and the role of society is to provide a supportive environment where people can understand their own expression and identity without pressure or predetermined scripts.

Alternative Christmas Quiz

Can you work out these well known christmas songs, rewritten with alternative synonyms…



1. **Returning via Carriage to the Place I Dwell for Midwinter**
2. **Command the Brass Battalion to Halt**
3. **At the Moment a Tiny Mortal Emerges**
4. **Merry Season: Hostilities Formally Abandoned**
5. **Praise the Celestial Powers for This Frost-Tide**
6. **The Pocket-Sized Patron of Yuletide Mariners**
7. **Oscillating Beneath the Illuminated Conifer**
8. **Realm of Chilled Enchantment**
9. **Let the Shortest-Day Ceremonial Gongs Resound**
10. **Behold: The Pinnacle of All Annual Enchantments**
11. **A Narrative Forged from Hoarfrost and Memory**
12. **My Wish: Eternal Repetition of the Midwinter Festival**
13. **A Voyager of the Void Descends Earthward**
14. **I Place My Trust in the Ancient Giver of Snow-Season Gifts**
15. **Within Dulcet Exultation**

Answers following A to Z of Transgender at the end of this magazine.

Back When…

This is a series looking at events in LGBTQ past. Key moments and people who made a difference to our lives, one way or another.

We start off with Christmas - of course we do…

Queer Christmas: The LGBTQ+ History Hidden Beneath the Tinsel

Christmas is usually framed as a season of tradition — cosy firesides, family gatherings, the familiar rituals of food, music and togetherness. But look a little closer and you'll find that Christmas has long been a surprisingly *queer* time of year. From drag balls to early trans resistance, from pantomime dames to chosen-family dinners, LGBTQ+ people have been shaping, and reshaping the festive season for centuries.

Here are some of the most powerful, joyful and often forgotten moments where LGBTQ+ history and Christmas intersect.

Victorian Defiance: The 1874 Christmas Day Trans Riots

Yes, trans people have always been around. One of the earliest known trans-related events in British history happened not at Pride, not in Soho, but on **Christmas Day, 1874**, in Wakefield. A drag ball, that was reported as attended by "men in women's clothing" was raided by police, triggering what newspapers called a "riot."

These individuals, very likely early trans women or gender-nonconforming people, were dragged into court. But instead of bowing their heads in shame, they did something astonishing for the era: they **defended their clothing choices**, saying it made them feel "more like themselves."

In the middle of Victorian moral panic, on the most respectable day of the year, these individuals expressed gender identity with bravery that echoes forward more than 150 years.

Christmas Drag Balls: 1920s–1950s Queer Joy

Throughout the early 20th century, cities like London, Paris, New York and Berlin hosted **legendary Christmas drag balls**. Why Christmas? Because the season already involved costumes, fancy dress, and masquerade.

Queer and trans communities used Christmas as a loophole, an opportunity to gather, dance, and express gender in ways forbidden during the rest of the year. Police often turned a blind eye, knowing what these events were, but also recognising that Christmas offered social cover.

These balls were essential early spaces of queer community, celebration and survival.



A Christmas Drag Ball

Stonewall’s Christmas Tradition: Chosen Family Before the Uprising

Before the Stonewall uprising of 1969 made history, the Stonewall Inn was known for something softer: **its Christmas Eve gatherings**.

Trans women, drag queens, gay men, and others rejected by their families would crowd into the bar for one simple reason — it was somewhere they could belong.

These chosen-family Christmases helped create the bonds of solidarity that later fuelled the protests. In many ways, Christmas comfort paved the way for LGBTQ+ resistance.



Trans Day of Remembrance: A Seasonal Reminder

Christmas is also the time of year when the LGBTQ+ world reflects on one of its most profound losses.

In late November 1998, **Rita Hester**, a Black trans woman, was murdered in Boston. Her vigil, held just days later, sparked what became **Trans Day of Remembrance**, now marked annually near the Christmas period.

Every year as families gather, trans communities remember those who never got the acceptance and safety they deserved. The timing, so close to the festive season, is a poignant reminder of how many trans people still spend Christmas without support.

TV Drag at Christmas: Early Queer Representation

Long before RuPaul glamorised drag for global audiences, Christmas television in the UK and US gave drag performers unexpected visibility.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, Christmas specials often featured drag acts, labelled as “variety comedy” or “pantomime humour.” Viewers thought they were tuning in for festive fun, but for young LGBTQ+ people, these appearances were **early glimpses of gender play and self-expression** on mainstream TV.

Pantomime Dames: Britain’s Longest-Running Drag Tradition

No exploration of queer Christmas would be complete without **pantomime dames**, the most mainstream form of drag in British culture — and a staple of the Christmas theatre season.

These exaggerated, camp, flamboyant characters have been part of British festive entertainment for nearly **300 years**. They are drag before drag had a name, beloved even by audiences who would later claim drag story hours were dangerous.

For generations, the panto dame has shown children and adults alike that gender can be fun, theatrical, and delightfully bendy.



Chosen Family Christmases: Queer Resilience

Beginning during the AIDS crisis and continuing today, many LGBTQ+ people celebrate Christmas with **chosen family**, the friends and community members who offer the acceptance biological families sometimes don't.

These gatherings became lifelines: places of safety, warmth, humour and care. They remain, for many trans and queer people, the heart of Christmas.

A Queerer Christmas Than We Realise

From Victorian trans rebels to modern drag performers, from Stonewall celebrations to chosen-family dinners, Christmas has always been queerer than it looks on the surface.

It's a season built around costumes, transformation, storytelling, performance, and belonging — all things LGBTQ+ people have embraced for generations.

So this year, when you see the sparkle, the drag of panto, the camp excess of festive fashion, and the quiet warmth of chosen families gathering, remember:

We have always been here.
Christmas has always had a queer heart.



It Was Not Witches

Introduction

Fia Forrsström is a spiritual songwriter from Sweden.



Fia Forsström's haunting words — *"It was not witches who burned. It was women."* — stayed with me long after I first read them.
Her poem reminds us that fear of women's power, knowledge, and freedom has echoed across centuries, through witch hunts, through moral panics, through every attempt to control women's bodies and voices.

As a transgender woman, I feel the heat of those same flames.
They burn now in different forms: in online abuse, in political debates that question our existence, in the cold violence of rejection and exclusion.
Yet every trans woman, every queer soul, every person who dares to live authentically, carries the spirit of those who would not be silenced.

I have taken the liberty of adapting Fia's powerful words into a poem refelcting the lives of transgender women. Women whose very existence is being erased in the name of bigotry and all too often, religion.

This poem is for them,
for the women who burned,

for the trans women who still do,
and for all of us who continue to rise from the ashes.

It Was Not Witches

It was not witches who burned.
It was women.
And those who *might* have been.
Those who spoke too freely,
loved too boldly,
wore colour when the world wanted grey.
Those with intuition as insight,
or simply refused to kneel.

They called it heresy.
They called it sin.
But it was only power
a woman's power
that frightened them.

And centuries later,
the flames still flicker.
Not on the stake, but in the headlines,
in the hate-filled,
in the hands clutching draconian bathroom laws
and purity pledges.
Now, it is trans women they call witches.
It is queer bodies they cast as devils,
non-binary souls they try to drown
in doubt and legislation.

Still, we rise,
painted, glittered, unrepentant,
carrying the code of every woman

who ever burned for being herself.
We are their rebellion reborn,
their unfinished sentences,
their laughter returned to the world.

It was not witches who burned.
It was women.
And now it is us,
women of every body, every shape,
every history rewritten and reclaimed
who gather by the embers
and say *never again.*

We remember them
when we speak our names aloud,
when we walk the streets at night unafraid,
when we choose life,
again and again and again.

It was not witches who burned.
It was women.
And still,
we rise from the flame.
sacred, haunted, yet free.

Carla Moss



The Twelve Christmas Days…

Of Transition



(to the tune of "The Twelve Days of Christmas")

On the first day of transition, my true self gave to me,
A wig that looked *sensational* on me.

On the second day of transition, my true self gave to me,
Two stylish heels,

OK, you know the rest. Save me repeating the words over and over…

On the third day of transition, my true self gave to me,
Three contour sticks,

On the fourth day of transition, my true self gave to me,
Four friends supporting,

On the fifth day of transition, my true self gave to me,
♫ *Five name-change forms!* ♫

On the sixth day of transition, my true self gave to me,
Six nails a-glitter,

On the seventh day of transition, my true self gave to me,
Seven skirts a-swirling,

On the eighth day of transition, my true self gave to me,
Eight bras a-fitting,

On the ninth day of transition, my true self gave to me,
Nine hormones working,

On the tenth day of transition, my true self gave to me,
Ten glares ignored now,

On the eleventh day of transition, my true self gave to me,
Eleven selfies smiling,

On the twelfth day of transition, my true self gave to me,
Twelve dreams fulfilled now,
Eleven selfies smiling,
Ten glares ignored now,
Nine hormones working,
Eight bras a-fitting,
Seven skirts a-swirling,
Six nails a-glitter,
Five name-change forms!
Four friends supporting,
Three contour sticks,
Two stylish heels,
And a wig that looks *perfect* on me! ♫



"Stop the Cavalry"

Jona Lewie's "Stop the Cavalry," has always been my favourite song of this season, often mistaken for a simple Christmas novelty song, is a stark anti-war anthem that highlights the class character of conflict and the alienation of the working-class soldier.

The narrator is not a general or a politician, but a common soldier, “a member of the Royal Artillery" embedded in the brutal, freezing conditions of the front line. His famous plea, "Can you stop the cavalry? I have had enough," is a direct cry of proletarian exhaustion. He is not a willing patriot but a conscripted worker, a pawn in a war fought for interests that are not his own.

The song masterfully contrasts the experiences of different classes during wartime. While the soldier freezes in a trench, dreaming of a "blue-army uniform" (a symbol of a peacetime, civilian life, perhaps even a postal worker), he sarcastically observes the home front. The "folks at home" who "celebrate" and the "Christmas parties" of the wealthy and powerful continue unabated. The line "Send a crate of ale to the boys in the trench" is a biting critique of the empty, sentimental patriotism offered by the ruling class in place of material support or genuine peace.



The central socialist critique lies in the identity of the "Prince of

Peace." The narrator questions, "But the man who's working says it's not part of his job / Oh, I say it is!" This is a direct challenge to the state and the capitalist class ("the man who's working" the levers of power). The soldier argues that achieving peace is the fundamental job of those in charge, yet they persistently fail, perpetuating wars that protect markets, resources, and imperial dominance at the cost of working-class lives.



The song's climax, with its relentless military drumbeat and the repeated, desperate question "Can you stop the cavalry?", embodies the grinding, dehumanising machinery of war from which the worker cannot escape. He is not a hero embracing his duty; he is a trapped individual whose labour and life are being expended for a cause that benefits a different class.

From a workers' view, "Stop the Cavalry" is a protest song. It exposes war as a tool of the ruling class, portrays the soldier as a dissenting member of the international working class, and condemns the hypocrisy of a system that asks workers to die for a peace it has no intention of delivering. It is not a request, but a demand for the cessation of a conflict that serves only the interests of capital.

Noel’s Story

Another one of our readers has been kind enough to share their story with us.

My name is Noel, pronounced like Noelle. For most of my life, I was a commercial driver, covering 46 states and logging over 750,000 miles. But the journey I want to share with you is the one that happened off the road.

I was born in 1970 and raised by my maternal grandparents, whose cruelty defined my childhood. I left home at eighteen, only to face a relentless series of setbacks: multiple failed marriages, countless betrayals, terrible car accidents, and even being caught on fire twice. The deepest pain came from losing my two daughters to parental alienation; I haven't seen them in over eight years.

After my wife at the time left and turned my children against me, I fell into a state of profound despair. For eleven years, I was quasi-vegetative, trapped inside my own body. But then, I made a choice. I fought for three grueling years to recover, forcing my mind and body back to life whether they wanted to or not.

Yet, I soon found myself in another terrible relationship, living in a small country village on the verge of suicide. It was there, at my lowest point, that I found the woman of my dreams. I truly believe she saved my life. For over five years now, she has given me a purpose, and a love filled with compassion and understanding that I never knew was possible.



I remember the night I arrived in Manila after an eighteen-hour flight. I was exhausted, but buzzing with a new energy. Being in Southeast Asia opened my eyes

to a different way of seeing the world. Learning about their broader understanding of gender—male, female, ladyboy, and tomboy—showed me possibilities and options I never knew I had back in the United States.



That revelation set me on my current path. For the past four years, I have been openly transitioning and have been aggressively pursuing my gender-affirming goals. This journey has taken me through several states and, sadly, has made me a target for predatory men who see transgender people as existing only for sexual servitude.

But I have persevered. I have now found a sanctuary city where I will be able to complete my medical procedures in 2026.

I share my story in the hope that it makes sense to someone out there. If it helps just one person step back from the edge, find the strength to face their demons, and overcome the obstacles before them to achieve inner peace, then sharing it will have been worth it.



If you have a story you would like to share, send it to us transgenderfocus@gmail.com

The Queerest Time of the Year: Hidden LGBTQ+ Threads in Christmas History

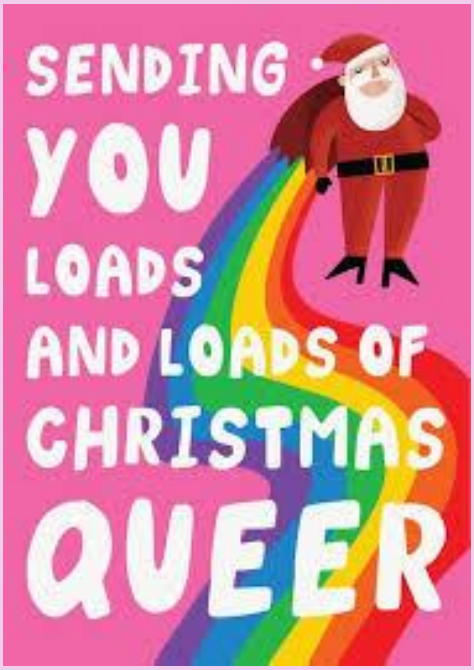
Christmas is often painted as a hyper-traditional, family-first, heteronormative holiday, but scratch the tinsel and there's a surprisingly queer shimmer underneath. Throughout history, LGBTQ+ people have found ways to weave themselves into festive traditions, celebrations, and stories, even when society tried to push them to the margins. Christmas, it turns out, has always had room for rebels, dreamers, and gender-benders.



Let's start with the obvious candidate: **Santa Claus**, the world's jolliest rule-breaker. While modern culture insists on a bearded man in a red suit, the Santa figure hasn't always been male. In early European traditions, women often delivered gifts; in others, young girls dressed in white, like *Saint Lucy* in Scandinavia were the gift-bringers. Folklore was never rigid about gender, and the Victorian Santa we know today is a relatively new invention. The drag energy in Santa's theatrical entrances, flamboyant outfits, and exaggerated persona? That's not an accident, it's baked into the character's mythos.

Then we have the **drag and cross-gender traditions** woven into Christmas for centuries. British pantomime, a winter staple since the 18th century, has always been gloriously gender-fluid. The *Pantomime Dame*, a man in outlandish, oversized dresses has been a festive icon for generations, while the *principal boy* was traditionally played by a young woman in tight boots and breeches. Families might not have called it queer culture, but they were cheering for gender play every Boxing Day.

Christmas has also served as an unlikely safe space for LGBTQ+ people historically. In the 20th century, when queer gatherings were often pushed underground, the holidays created pockets of freedom. Bars in major cities held "orphan Christmases," welcoming LGBTQ+ people estranged from their families. Drag performers hosted Christmas cabarets, providing joy when acceptance was scarce. In New York, Fire Island's chosen-family Christmas celebrations became legendary—campy, defiant, and utterly queer.



Religious figures, too, have unexpected links. Saint Sebastian, depicted in art during the Renaissance as an angelic, sensuous youth became a coded gay icon, his imagery often used in Christmas church displays. Even *Saint Nicholas*himself, historically, was a protector of the vulnerable, outsiders, and those living at the edges of society, roles LGBTQ+ people have long identified with.

Christmas stories evolve with the people who tell them. So when queer communities read Santa as camp, or embrace drag at panto, or carve out chosen-family celebrations, they're not rewriting Christmas, they're continuing its tradition of reinvention.



Christmas has never been as straight as it looks. And thank goodness for that.

What It Was Like to Be a Trans Child at Christmas in the 70s, 80s and 90s

For many trans children growing up in the UK during the 1970s, 80s and 90s, the feeling of “being different” arrived long before we had the words to describe it. Back then, there was no language in schoolbooks, no representation on television, no internet forums whispering, *You’re not alone*. There was only a quiet ache, a longing we carried without understanding, buried beneath the jingles of Saturday morning cartoons and the rustle of Christmas catalogues.



Just look at the size of that Roses tin!

In the 1970s, childhood was all corduroy trousers, Tuff shoes, hand-knitted jumpers and the rigid segregation of “girls’ things” and “boys’ things.” Woolworths shelves overflowed with Sindy dolls, prams, and tea sets on one side; Action Men, Scalextric tracks, and Hornby trains on the other. Trans children learned early to hover at the edge of the “wrong” aisle, pretending to browse something acceptable while stealing glances at what they truly wanted. The feeling of wanting the Sindy doll instead of the Action Man was powerful, confusing, and often shame-soaked.



The frighteningly dangerous advent crown we were encouraged to make as children.

As a child of the 70s, I dared cross the line, only when people Weren’t looking. Christmas Day I couldn’t. Not only did Father Christmas play along with rigid gender stereotypes, he seemed to enforce them. One year he did succumb though. But that was when I realised he wasn’t who I thought he was. That year I got a typewriter. On balance, a lot more female as a gift than male. When I took it into school on the first day of the new term, in January. It was mainly girls who rushed to try it out while the boys indulged football games and army figures.



The make and model of my typewriter

Christmas visits to family and friends were done in best clothes. When the girls dressed up, it always seemed so much more special to me. I could have worn last years jeans and t-shirt and no one would have noticed compared to the eye catching and sparkling flamboyance of the new dress, hair band and shoes.

The 1980s brought brighter colours and bigger restrictions. Girls sparkled in ra-ra skirts, jelly shoes, and those magical Princess Diana dresses from the Argos catalogue; boys were pushed into Adidas tracksuits, football kits, and ill-fitting blazers. Many trans children felt torn between the world they were dressed for and the world their hearts lived in. Toys like My Little Pony, Care Bears, Cabbage Patch Kids and Polly Pocket became forbidden treasures, often admired from a distance while being handed Transformers, Star Wars figures, or a battered BMX bike instead. Section 28 arrived and wrapped everything in silence, a silence that told us not only that our feelings were odd, but that they were unspeakable.

By the 1990s, culture had shifted a little, but not enough. The Spice Girls shouted “Girl Power,” yet school corridors still punished anyone who didn’t fit neatly into boy/girl expectations. Boys were expected to wear baggy jeans and Kappa jackets; girls wore scrunchies, velvet chokers and sparkly body glitter. Many trans teens hid their true selves behind the glow of a Game Boy or the safety of their CD Walkman, secretly wishing they could wear the Tammy Girl dresses or the cool crop tops from New Look.

And yet, through all three decades, one truth ran constant: even without words, we *knew* ourselves. We survived on imagination, on longing, on stolen moments with a doll, an item of clothing, a dream. Today’s trans children have language, community, and visibility, gifts many of us never had. It’s being tested though by transphobic governments who seek to abuse trans children by denying them their rights. But our stories, back then still matter, because we lived through a time when being trans was a quiet, private miracle, carried inside a child who had no idea that others felt the same.



A to Z of Transgender



Part 4

Completing our A to Z of transgender. This month we are T to Z

T – Teddy Quinlivan

Model who came out as transgender after walking for brands like Chanel. Teddy uses her platform to call for acceptance and celebrate trans beauty.



Also for Toilets

Still a battleground. Trans people just want to pee in peace. That's not radical — it's human. It's bigots that make toilets a battleground. They've used toilets throughout history to spread their hate. Toilets are ours just as much as theirs. They want their own toilets, then let them build some.

U – Ulrika Westerlund

Swedish politician and LGBTQ+ activist who has worked tirelessly to advance trans rights in Europe and helped shape inclusive policy across borders.



Also for Unicorn

A cheeky symbol of queerness and gender magic. Because sometimes we are mythical, sparkly beings.

V – Valentine Ackland

A British poet whose gender identity was often misunderstood. Valentine's life raises timeless questions about gender fluidity and self-expression before the language even existed.



Also for Voice

Some change theirs, some don't. It can be one of the hardest parts of transition, especially when the world is listening. We are unique and our voices are part of that.

W – Wendy Carlos

Trailblazing composer and electronic music pioneer. Known for the *Clockwork Orange* soundtrack and her work with Moog synthesizers, she transitioned in the 1970s.



Also for Workplaces

Can be empowering or exhausting. Inclusion matters — from HR policies to pronoun pins to actual support.

X – Xander Keig

Social worker and trans man who advocates for veterans, mental health, and masculinity beyond stereotypes. A powerful voice for inclusion and intersectionality.



Also for X Marker

Some countries now allow "X" on passports and documents for non-binary folks. It's a small letter with big impact. Come on UK, bring yourselves into the 21st century.

Y – Yance Ford

Emmy-winning filmmaker and the first openly trans man nominated for an Academy Award (*Strong Island*). His work explores justice, race, and personal identity.



Also for Youth

Trans kids exist — and deserve safety, love, and the freedom to explore who they are without fear.

Z – Zoey Luna

A young Latina trans actress who has starred in *The Craft: Legacy* and other films. Zoey represents a new generation of trans talent on screen and in advocacy.



Also for Ze/Zir

Just some of the many gender-neutral pronouns people use. Not weird, just part of someone's truth.

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Christmas Quiz answers

1. Driving home For Christmas (Chris Rea)
2. Stop the cavalry (Jona Lewie)
3. When a child is born (Johnny Mathis)
4. Happy Xmas war is over (John Lennon)
5. Thank god it's Christmas (Queen)
6. Little Saint Nick (Beach Boys)
7. Rocking around the Christmas tree (Brenda Lee)
8. Winter wonderland (Tony Bennett amongst many others)
9. Ring out solstice bells (Jethro Tull)
10. It's the most wonderful time of the year (Andy Williams)
11. A winters tale (David Essex)
12. I wish it could be Christmas everyday (Wizzard)
13. A spaceman came travelling (Chris De Burgh)
14. I believe in Father Christmas (Greg Lake)
15. In Dulci Júbilo (Mike Oldfield)