
Trans Focus
The world from a transgender perspective
September 2025
The Moral Panic Continues
You're Not Allowed
Larry Topper and the Highland Witch

Welcome to September



I love September. The oppressive heat of July and August, which this year ventured well into the 40’s for a fair few days, has started to leave and more pleasant weather to look forward to.

It brings Benidorm Pride week, where Carla will be attending for the 5th consecutive year. The stereotypical image of Benidorm is transformed into a sea of colour with parties and events all week. (September 1st – 7th)

Sadly, the anti trans moral panic continues in the UK and USA and we will always try to keep you informed. We felt it was important to give you the real story surrounding the Marks & Spencer debacle. The gutter media, as ever pushed a lie to the public and when the truth came out, they scattered like the cowards they are.

We hope though, that we have found a balance of more lighter articles for you to enjoy. Carla even had a go at writing a satirical bedtime story based on the Three Little Piggies. The sad news of the voice of Mr Benn, Ray Brooks passed away at the age of 86. It made me look back wistfully on my childhood. If you don't know who Mr Benn is, , there's always Google, Youtube, or you can read about him and his link to transgender people in this edition of the magazine.

If you are feeling you are wanting to be more active in our fight for rights, then read about Daniel Lismore. He's one of the more vocal trans allies and isnt afraid to call people out, especially female authors, one in particular, who spend their lives attacking us. After you've read about him, add or follow him on Facebook.

Last of all, thank you all for your continued support. Without you we are nothing. We value all contributions so if you would like to be part of our magazine, send us an email via the contact details on the website. Most of all, have a wonderful month.

Love

Carla & Penny xx

A Penny for your thoughts

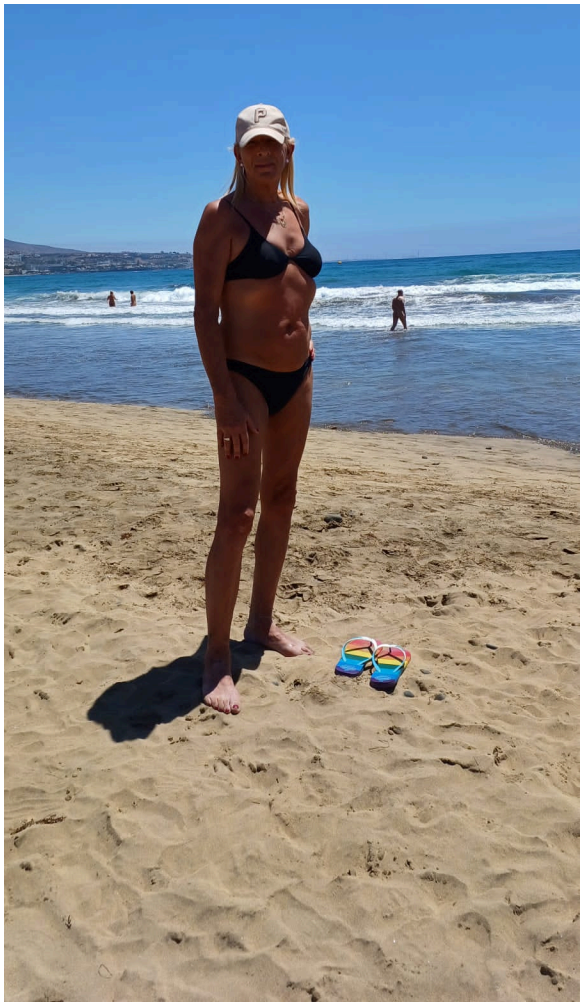
August in Spain isn't just hot; it's a full-scale atmospheric assault. While tourists blissfully fry themselves on the beaches, those of us who actually live here are engaged in a daily battle for survival against the sun. The relentless, suffocating 40°C heat presents a unique set of battlefield conditions for a trans woman.

The first line of defense, makeup, melts into a hopeless, streaky mess the moment you step outside. For those who wear wigs, it’s a special kind of torture, like being trapped in a steam room with a knit cap permanently superglued to your head.

My own solution was to grow out my natural hair into a bob. The catch? It’s thin, dry, and has the structural integrity of dandelion fluff. The slightest humidity or breeze transforms my carefully styled 'do into a frantic, electric homage to Back to the Future’s Doc Brown. My savior? A hair topper. Think of it as a wig's chic, less-oppressive cousin—a cleverly clipped-in piece that adds volume without the full-head sauna effect.



But the real kicker of a Spanish August is the simple, undeniable fact that it is too damn hot for clothes. Life narrows to the perimeter of my small garden pool. My summer uniform, therefore, is a bikini. This necessary state of undress, however, is a double-edged sword.



It invites a ruthless self-audit. The mirror reflects what the winter layers hid: a stomach softened by one too many glasses of vino tinto, a rear that seems to be slowly surrendering to gravity, and breasts I'd politely describe as 'modest'. Like so many women, I look in the mirror and my mind immediately starts drafting a renovation plan.

Full of virtuous intent, I make ambitious pledges to trade my evening wine for a regimen of squats and planks, vowing to emerge by September with a tighter core and lifted glutes. But as the sun dips and the air cools just a fraction, the call of that fermented Spanish nectar is simply too sweet, too persistent to ignore. The resolve, much like my foundation, always melts away.

The Moral Panic Continues…

And We Need Our Allies More Than Ever



It really doesn't take much to whip up outrage in Britain these days. While families are struggling with sky-high bills and food prices, the media and politicians are busy serving up a distraction, **a *folk devil*.**

A folk devil is simply a group painted as dangerous or immoral, their threat exaggerated or outright invented to spark a **moral panic**. Right now, transgender women are the chosen target. We're being blamed for imaginary dangers in sports, bathrooms, changing rooms, and even children's education, despite zero credible evidence for these claims.

The latest storm? A tall woman working in Marks & Spencer supposedly "approached" a teenage girl about buying her first bra. The press and media jumped on it like vultures. They made it sound like some predatory plot. In reality? She wasn't even in the lingerie section, and she was just… helping a customer. That's it.

Of course, the same tired voices, including JK Rowling, called for yet another M&S boycott. Funny thing is, they *already* called for one last year, over a bra campaign for teenage girls.

Last November M&S faced calls for a similar boycott.

…Over a bra campaign for young girls. Gender-critical activists took issue with the phrase "young things" and claimed it dehumanised and erased women.

The **"bright young things"** was the name of a group of wealthy, Bohemian young people living London in the 1920s who threw extravagant parties, as well as carrying out outrageous

and very public scavenger hunts around the city. The celebs of their time, they typified the vibrant new attitudes of the roaring twenties youth.

M&S using “young things” to describe those entering adolescence was likely a way to convey the notion of era-defining confidence and individuality rather than as a way to specifically exclude cisgender women.

Previous bans suggested for the store include their suggested use of name badges for staff and their “woke” christmas adverts.

Quite cleary, their ban last time was ignored.

Outrage

Outrage is the business model. Talk radio hosts declared “tall woman = trans woman” and refused to let anyone challenge it. TV panels across numerous platforms debated without a single trans person present. And when the truth came out days later? Silence. The damage was done, more prejudice planted.



Here’s the tragedy: these false panics drown out the real issues. The UK government is consulting with anti-trans activists on policy. Young trans people are being denied healthcare. Scientific evidence about our existence is ignored. Other countries are moving forward with self-identification laws and Britain and the US are falling further behind.

We are in a fight for our dignity, our rights, and our future. But here’s the thing: we are not going anywhere. We will not be erased. And to our allies, now is the time to stand beside us. Call out lies when you hear them. Refuse to let our voices be silenced. Share the truth.

History will remember who stood on the right side of this. Please be one of them.

Thank you.

As a post script to this, my attention was drawn to a post on Reddit.

I wrote the above before I saw the following…

It was posted by the trans manager who the whole issue was about. It gives the personal persepecive on what was an evil attack on the transgender community. Whether you blame the media or the mother, or both, it all fed into a machine that thrives on hate.

I suspect that most people wouldn't have seen this post, so I'm sharing it with you. As far as I can, I've checked its authenticity and as it stands, I cant find a reason to belive it isnt true. I think it's very important to show the perspective from the shop floor.

For balance, I reproduce the post in full.

M&S Trans Employee

Hi, I am the transgender manager in M&S who has been written about in the papers and online recently. I want people to know what actually happened because there are so many lies in the articles.

About March/ April I was working a usual shift in the Fashion home and beauty department of the store, basically overseeing that everything was going well.

While I was taking bra returns from the till point and into the lingerie section of our store I saw on the walkway between lingerie and Menswear a lady and a teenage child looking confused/ for a colleague. I smiled, and said 'Hi, can I help at all?'

The customer said 'no thanks' (or something to that effect, it was 4/5 months ago and I deal with a lot of customers) and left. I didn't think anything of it and went to put the bras away.

I am not a trained bra fitter, nor do I want to be. Therefore I am not allowed to give any advice or take a bra measurement. I had zero intention of doing anything of the sort, I did assume they were looking for a bra fit appointment so if they hadn't left, I would have called up the trained bra fitter on shift and directed them to her.

I said absolutely nothing that would show intent of me wanting to personally measure her teenage daughter's chest.

I also want to say that everyone who I work with knows I am transgender, because I do have a very deep voice and I am quite tall (5"11 not 6"2) and every single person in my store is supportive and accepting of who I am, including my boss, the other managers, and every colleague in every part of the store. At times my workplace is the only safe space in my life which is a bit sad.

A couple weeks later, my boss calls me into her office and says she has received a complaint about this interaction. She had to make sure I did not give any bra fit advice which I did not (and the articles also say I did not too which is one of the only things that they got right). I got very upset because the customers complaint had systematically attacked every part of my being that I hate and cannot control, saying I had a 'deep booming masculine voice' and 'extremely masculine facial features underneath my makeup'. My boss sent away the complaint saying I did nothing wrong and that she and the regional manager are on my side.

End of story, I hoped.

In between the time of the complaint and the first article being published I had gotten Facial Feminisation Surgery done, which again everyone was super supportive of (and everyone also loved the results and being part of the journey) They got me a box of chocolates and a card full of extremely thoughtful messages that I kept by my bedside in hospital. My Boss also got me a heart bracelet that I wear to work every day.

It was my first day back from holiday when my boss called me into her office and told me about the article written in the papers. She got emotional on my behalf which really touched me, said another manager had ripped up and thrown out all the papers with this article in it in our store, and that the regional manager was on his way to personally talk to me regarding this. He also brought a message of support from HIS boss too, the Scotland stores director who has also personally gotten in touch with me.

He clarified that the customer services department had issued an apology to the customer before they actually had the full story, and that the apology had been redacted once my boss and the regional manager set the record straight, saying any colleague can train to be a bra fitter and can work in any section of the store. However, the article writer did not say this, instead insinuating to everyone reading that M&S was not on my side when in fact the whole company is showing their absolute support to me.

I'd like to point out that neither the lingerie department nor the walkway between lingerie and menswear where I asked the customer if she needed any help are 'Women only' places. Men historically have been shopping in the lingerie department for their

significant others for decades, and how would Men or anyone not identifying as a woman be able to reach the menswear section if it's walkway was 'Women only?'

At no point during any shift do I invade any 'single sex spaces': our fitting rooms are also gender neutral, and while my job entails me to check on the condition of the fitting rooms (basically if customers have left clothing lying on the floor/ left hangers) I certainly do NOT enter one that is occupied. My sole aim is to provide a clean, accessible area where customers can try on something that they've liked the look of.

As far as I'm aware, M&S have not restricted the bra fit service to 'Women only' both from a customer and a colleague point of view. Anybody in our store can be trained as a bra fitter, regardless of gender identity, and any customer who feels they would gain benefit from the service can book an appointment, regardless of gender identity. That is perhaps the biggest lie of the most recent article which has ruined my day off.

While it's easy to go and file complaints against M&S for seemingly being 'transphobic', I can say that I have had nothing but an outpouring of support from everyone in the company, and this has not changed my position or the way any of my colleagues see me, people who have also shown incredible support to me during this time. The real enemy are tabloid newspapers twisting stories so that they can attack us, and spread hurtful information that just isn't true while turning a profit.

M&S respects me as a trans woman, and most importantly, as the hard working, focussed, and customer-driven colleague that I am. ▯♡▯

There's always a concern about the validity of such posts. It was shared by a trusted source on X and the post has been universally accpeted onine. Of course, I stand to be corrected should this prove to be a red herring.

The post can be viewed below:

https://www.reddit.com/r/transgenderUK/comments/1mtwx8t/ms_trans_employee/

Thank you for reading.

UK’s First Openly Transgender Judge Says Country Was Safer in the 1990s



Victoria McCloud, the UK’s first openly transgender judge, has stated that the country has become significantly more dangerous for transgender people since the 1990s. Now retired, McCloud highlighted a growing “climate of fear” that has made life more difficult for the trans community compared to when she first came out decades ago.

In a recent interview with *The Independent*, McCloud pointed to serious international concerns raised by organisations such as the Lemkin Institute—which issued a genocide warning regarding the UK—as well as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. “When I came out, things were bizarrely rather better,” she reflected. “That was the nineties – we didn’t really have any rights, but there was less of a climate of fear.”

McCloud retired in 2024, citing an increasingly hostile environment for transgender people. She specifically criticised the recent Supreme Court ruling in the *FWS v Scottish Ministers* case, which determined that the term “sex” in the 2010 Equality Act refers to biological sex. She believes this decision has worsened conditions for the trans community.

Now living in Ireland, McCloud says she is “very cautious” when returning to the UK and no longer considers London a “safe space.” She relies on cisgender friends to help her avoid potentially risky

situations. "I'm particularly at risk of becoming a target by some of the more extreme people from the gender critical ideology movement," she explained.

The ruling has also influenced guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which proposes excluding transgender people from single-sex spaces aligned with their gender identity. McCloud argues that these changes are already causing harm to both trans and cis individuals, with increasing reports of non-trans people being harassed in gendered spaces.

"It's leading to more abuse of non-trans people than trans people," she noted, "because most trans people actually are quite invisible – we go to quite great lengths to be invisible."

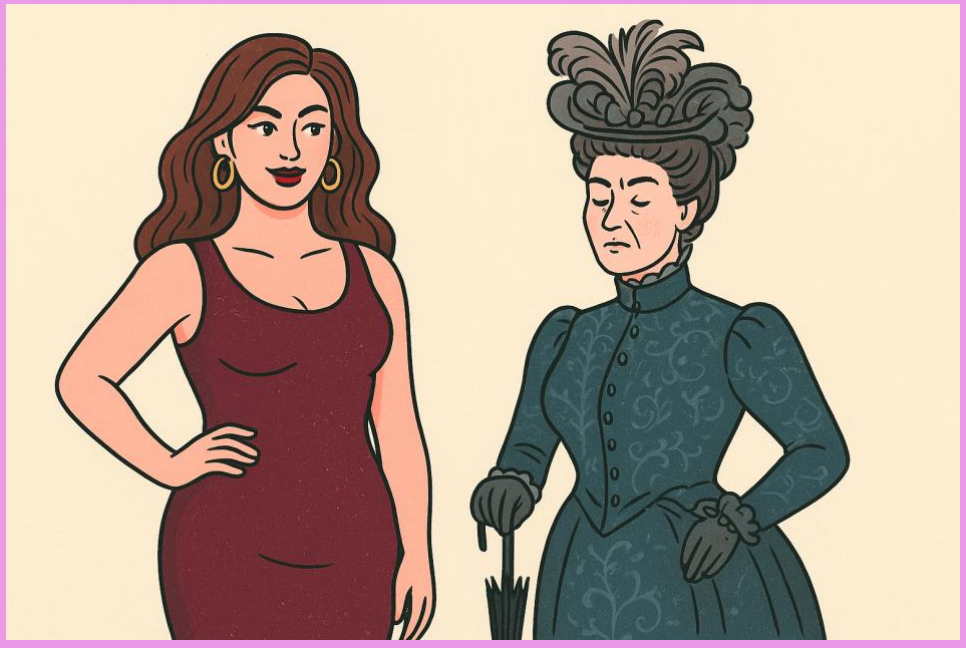
In response, McCloud—along with the Trans Legal Clinic and W-Legal—has filed an application with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) seeking a rehearing of the Supreme Court case. She claims the original ruling was made without input from transgender people, violating principles of fairness and human rights.

"Decisions about us, that fundamentally change our rights, shouldn't be made without us," she asserted. The petition argues that the judgement effectively reversed the legal sex recognition of McCloud and thousands of others, forcing them into unsafe and inappropriate spaces.

McCloud's case is built on Articles 8, 14, and 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights, emphasising the right to respect for private life, protection from discrimination, and the right to a fair hearing.

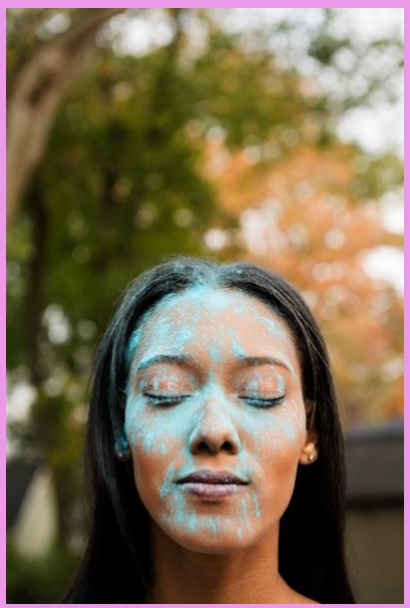
Powder, Paint, and a Dash of Arsenic…

Are We the New Victorians?



Trans women often joke about the *prep time* we need before heading out the door. The hair, the makeup, the outfit changes, the shoes that look better than they feel — it sometimes feels like an Olympic sport just to grab a latte. But before we roll our eyes too much at ourselves, maybe we should tip our hats (and corsets) to the Victorians.





Because if you think contouring takes effort, imagine trying to achieve beauty in an age where half your beauty products could actually kill you.

Take skin care, for instance. We might spend twenty minutes with foundation and

concealer, but Victorian women literally bleached their faces with arsenic to look fashionably pale. (Yes, arsenic. As in: poison. Apparently, a dewy glow was worth risking an early trip to the grave.) Their hair was doused in vinegar rinses, plastered with lead-based dyes, and sometimes sprinkled with powder so toxic it could strip wallpaper.



Corsets? We complain about tight shapewear, but at least ours don't risk rearranging our internal organs. Some Victorian women wore theirs so tight they fainted in public, the original "beauty is pain" moment. Meanwhile, a "natural" rosy blush came not from a £20 palette, but from dabbing your cheeks with ammonia or mercuric sulfide. Imagine explaining *that* at a makeup counter: "Yes, I'd like the shade that also doubles as rat poison, thanks."



And then, of course, the hair. We may wrestle with wigs, straighteners, and curlers, but they had entire architectural feats on their heads. Towering styles that needed wire cages, animal fat pomades, and the occasional dead bird for decoration (yes, really). Talk about accessorising.



So maybe we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves. Sure, we spend an hour getting ready and complain about eyeliner wings that refuse to match. But at least none of our beauty hacks involve chemicals that double as Victorian murder weapons.

If anything, it's comforting to know that across history, women (cis and trans alike) have always been united by one truth: we'll go to extraordinary lengths to look fabulous… even if it kills us. Thankfully, these days it just costs a fortune at Sephora.



“You’re Not Allowed In Here”: Landmark Ruling Fuels Surge in Anti-Trans Hostility

Disturbing new report details personal accounts of humiliation, exclusion, and violence as venues and employers enforce segregation*

A damning new report has laid bare the profound human cost of the widespread misinterpretation of a recent Supreme Court ruling, documenting a national surge in the harassment and segregation of transgender people across British life.

The report, “Trans Segregation in Practice”, published by the advocacy group TransActual, compiles hundreds of firsthand testimonies from individuals who have been directly impacted since the April 2025



ruling. The accounts reveal a pattern of businesses, public venues, and employers incorrectly citing the judgment to justify discriminatory policies, creating a climate of fear and exclusion.

Personal Testimonies Highlight a National Crisis:

The report is filled with harrowing personal stories. A trans woman in England reported being followed into a men’s toilet by a security guard and laughed at by other men after she tried to follow interim guidance. She was then forced to disclose intimate medical details to a store manager. “I felt deeply

unsafe, humiliated, hopeless – like nobody cares," she said.

Many describe being forced out of their workplaces. A neurodivergent British trans woman recounted how her HR team outed her to senior leaders before "ambushing" her to say she was being segregated. "I am living in a state of despair… I have no hope left," she wrote.

The discrimination extends beyond trans individuals. A 47-year-old able-bodied, cisgender butch lesbian was stopped and told, "You're not allowed in here," when trying to use a public women's toilet. "I felt invalid and embarrassed," she said. "It's sad that at 47 I'm back to my life and appearance being a political statement."

Key Themes from the Report:

Forced Outing and Segregation: Numerous respondents described being told to use disabled or gender-neutral toilets, often located far from their workspaces, forcibly outing them and making them feel like "a problem."

A trans man in England was told by his gym he could not use the men's or women's changing rooms, only the family room. "It made me feel like I'm being segregated and pushed out of a space… I no longer wanted to use the space."

Public Harassment and Intimidation: Testimonies detail being photographed, followed, circled, and verbally accosted. A trans woman in Wales was followed into a pub toilet by a woman who shouted, "Are you a woman?" before screaming to the entire pub, "There is a man in the women's toilets."

Inconsistent and Invasive Enforcement: People reported being asked about their genitals, required to prove

their gender, and having policies justified based on whether they "looked" like a woman or were "post-op." A trans man in England was told by HR that their solicitor advised "you can't use the men's room unless you have a penis."

Profound Mental Health Impact: The emotional toll is a constant refrain, with respondents using words like "suicidal," "terrified," "anxious," and "worthless." A 66-year-old trans woman was threatened with violence after using the toilet. "I felt frightened, angry, intimidated."

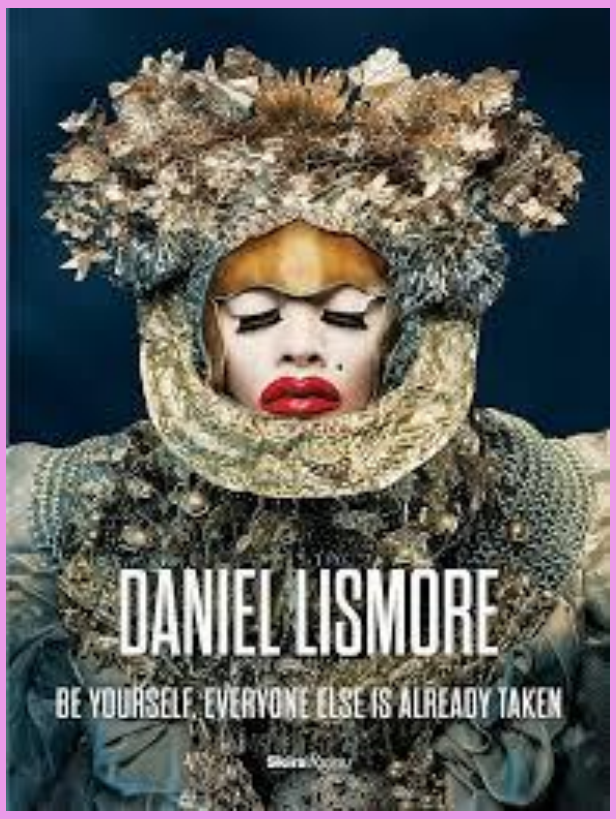
The report concludes that the political rhetoric surrounding the ruling has empowered bullies and created a culture where discrimination is mistakenly seen as legally mandated. TransActual emphasises that the EHRC guidance cited by many organisations is interim and non-binding.

The organisation is continuing to collect reports and urges those affected to come forward, providing mental health resources for a community it says is being pushed to the brink.



Daniel Lismore:

Living Sculpture, Activist, and Trans Rights Ally



’ll admit it, when it comes to the arts, I’ve often felt like an outsider. Classical music? Not really my thing. High art? I’ve mostly admired it from a distance. My interests tend to veer off in stranger directions, and I’ve always believed in questioning what we’re taught, even the so-called “truths.” One thing I’ve learned over time is that it’s okay, essential, even, to change your opinion when new evidence or voices challenge your thinking.

I then discovered Daniel Lismore on social media.

Here was someone unlike anyone I’d seen before, visually striking, fiercely articulate, and unapologetically bold in defending LGBTQ+ rights, especially those of transgender people. There’s no tiptoeing with Daniel. He says what needs to be said, calls out hypocrisy, and doesn’t hold back. A recent post about J.K. Rowling wasn’t just honest, it was blisteringly insightful.

So, who is Daniel Lismore? Let me introduce you...



Daniel Lismore is a British fabric sculptor, fashion designer, and campaigner whose life is art—literally. Described by *Vogue* as “England’s Most Eccentric Dresser,” he wears his identity on his sleeve, layering garments, found objects, crystals, chainmail, and vintage artifacts into elaborate ensembles that act as armour, protest, and self-portrait all at once.

Though he doesn’t identify as transgender himself, Daniel has used his platform consistently to speak out in support of **trans rights**. In interviews, he’s made clear that he works tirelessly behind the scenes: sharing petitions, urging public figures to challenge transphobia, and encouraging celebrities to take a stand, despite the climate of fear over being labelled a TERF critic. He visits schools and groups, shares his personal struggles, and foregrounds the importance of intersectional solidarity, especially with trans youth, climate justice, and racial justice movements.

In his landmark **TED Talk** ("My Life as a Work of Art" at TED2019), Lismore spoke

about his identity as a “living sculpture”: dressing every day in defiance and celebration, but also acknowledging the backlash. He’s endured abuse, harassment, and prejudice precisely because of his visibility. He describes being punched in the face, having anti-gay stickers placed on his door, and receiving online hate, but he continues to stand firm.



In his exhibition *Be Yourself, Everyone Else Is Already Taken*, first shown at SCAD in Atlanta and later touring globally—including the Herbert Art Gallery in Coventry—Lismore used mannequins cast from his own face to explore identity, culture, and the symbolism of dress as resistance. The exhibition felt like an army of himself against conformity—and it attracted huge crowds and critical acclaim.

Daniel's art and activism intersect in his **climate and fashion justice work**. As an ambassador for Greenpeace and Cool Earth, he has campaigned for sustainable fashion, while aligning environmental justice with queer and trans liberation, an urgent link often overlooked in broader cultural conversations.

At its heart, Daniel’s work is about insisting on visible, unapologetic identity. He challenges rigid binaries of gender, urges empathy for those most marginalised, and insists that “live and let live” must include trans lives, not as an afterthought, but as essential, human lives. In Lismore’s world, artistry, activism, and trans solidarity aren’t separate causes—they’re **one living manifesto**.



“How Can You Know You're Trans…

If You Weren’t Born That Way?”

A closer look at identity, self-knowledge, and the strange obsession with 'proving' our gender.

This is a question transgender people hear far too often:

“How can you say you’re a woman if you’ve never been one?”
Or:
“You weren’t born the opposite gender, so how do you know what it feels like?”

Let’s turn that around: how do *you* know you’re a man or a woman? Have you ever lived as the “opposite” gender to compare the experience?



Chances are, you haven’t. But you still know, don’t you?

Because gender identity isn’t a question of empirical proof. It’s not something we test in a lab or measure with a ruler. It’s something you feel, an internal sense of self that tells you who you are. For most people, that sense lines up with the sex they were assigned at birth. For some of us, it doesn’t.

Trans people don’t “think” or “Identify” we’re another gender. We *know* we are, just like you know you are. Our bodies may have developed a certain way, but our gender identity was always present, sometimes hidden, sometimes buried under fear or shame, sometimes shouted from the rooftops.



Here’s an analogy: imagine you’re left-handed, but forced to write with your right. You might manage, even learn to mimic it well. But that doesn’t change the fact that your brain is wired differently. If one day you stop pretending and start using your left hand again, people might say, “But you’ve

written with your right hand all your life!" That doesn't make it true to *you*.

Being transgender isn't about copying cisgender people. It's not a performance or an impersonation. It's a real and deep-rooted identity, as authentic and valid as anyone else's.

The ingrained socialisation is so strong, we are forced to act in a certain way all our lives, just because of what was between our legs. Our strengths, weaknesses, lived experienced is often false, because most of us darent open up, for fear of all too often, dire consequences.

The problem lies in how society polices gender. People cling to rigid ideas: that genitals define identity, that childhood behaviour is destiny, that (a tiny part of your) biology decides your entire future. These assumptions hurt *everyone*, not just trans people.

And if someone insists, "But you can't know what it's like to be a woman," we might gently reply: neither can *you*. Because womanhood isn't one universal experience. Nor is manhood. Nor is any identity.

Our gender isn't a costume we wear. It's who we are. And if we say we're women, men, non-binary, it's not a claim. It's a truth we live, every single day.

If you can trust your own sense of self, trust ours too.

We're not confused. We're not pretending.
We just *know* – the same way you do.
💖 #TransRights #TransJoy

Boxed In

Day one:
doctor looks,
ticks a box.
Boy. Girl.
No other options.

That tick decides everything
my clothes, my friends,
the way I'd be treated,
the doors slammed shut
before I even knew
there were doors.

But they were wrong.
I'm still paying
for their mistake.

So tell me
why should my life
be judged by
a stranger's glance
sixty years ago?

Carla Moss

Mr Benn:

Closet Escapism or Trans Allegory in Disguise?



One of the saddest moments of the week was the passing of Ray Brooks. He was the narrator, the voice, of Mr Benn, one of the most popular childrens characters of the 1970's. Even though there were only ever 13 episodes made, they were repeated twice a tyear for 21 years from their first showing in 1971. The show was voted the 6th best childrens TV show of all time in channel 4 poll.

I've done a bit of digging and although there were many theories suggesting the show was about drugs and tripping, it's always been denied. So, I thought I would have a bit of fun and tentatively suggest that it was about being trans and maybe Mr Benn was just concerned and afraid about coming out, using the fancy dress shop as an excuse.

It's a bit of fun so,

Here we go…

For anyone growing up in Britain in the 1970s, *Mr Benn* was as familiar as Ready Brek adverts and power cuts. A quiet, suited man in a bowler hat would leave his house on Festive Road, pop into a mysterious fancy-dress shop, and, with the help of a shopkeeper who appeared and vanished at will, try on a costume that transported him into a brand-new life. One week a cowboy, the next a pirate, an astronaut, or a wizard. Each time, he stepped through a door, lived out an adventure, then quietly returned home, suit back on, as though nothing had happened.

To the adults who watched along, it seemed harmless whimsy. To the children, it was pure magic. But to those of us looking back decades later, especially as queer or trans adults, the allegory may just feel almost painfully obvious.

Mr Benn was a man who had to put on a costume to explore his true self. He could never remain in that world. At the end of every episode, he had to change back, hide away, and return to his neat little house on Festive Road. He got a *souvenir*, yes — but the adventure, the freedom, the joy, had to stay behind the shop door.



Sound familiar? For many trans women of my generation, that was our life. The suit-and-tie existence for the world, the locked-away wardrobe where other selves were hidden. Each private dressing-up moment felt like a secret trip to another life, one that could never quite be lived out loud.

It’s no wonder some people now read *Mr Benn* as a metaphor for psychedelic tripping. Costume on, reality dissolves, another world opens. But for me, it resonates far more as an allegory of gender. It was never about drugs. It was about longing. About the doors we dreamed of stepping through but were told must remain firmly closed.

And here’s the twist: in 1970s Britain, Mr Benn’s adventures always had to end with a return to “normality.” Today, we don’t. We don’t have to go back into the suit. We don’t have to take off the costume at the end of the day and hide her away. We don’t need the shopkeeper’s permission to live fully in the world we choose.



Is this the real Mr Benn?

The show ended each week with Mr Benn walking home, looking wistful, clutching his small reminder of a life he couldn’t keep. As trans women, we’ve rewritten that ending. We don’t just keep the souvenir — we *keep the life*.

So maybe *Mr Benn* was never about tripping at all. Maybe, quietly, it was the most trans show on telly.

Trans Is Not a Trend:

It's a Global Constant That Colonisation Tried to Erase

Being transgender in Britain or America right now can feel like being caught in the middle of a battle you never signed up for.

Not a real battle, but a manufactured one — a distraction, carefully staged by those in power. Once again, a small, marginalised group is being painted as the root cause of a nation's decline.

It's an old playbook. We've seen it before: Mods and Rockers in the '60s. Punks in the '70s. Single parents, immigrants, asylum seekers, Gypsy and Roma communities, queer people. All convenient scapegoats in their time. The one thing they all had in common? They were largely powerless, and that made them useful.

Because it's never the fault of the rich or powerful, is it? The billionaires and politicians couldn't possibly be to blame for crumbling systems or economic inequality. No, it must be the non-binary person at the bus stop.

My focus here is on transgender people. And why, once again, we've become the go-to target for a political system desperate to avoid accountability. You don't have to believe what they say, but we are an easy target for the hard of thinkling.

To be transgender is not new. It is not a modern invention. And it's certainly not a "Western fad," as some critics like to claim. In fact, being trans or gender-diverse has been part of the human experience across time, culture, and geography. What *is* modern, however, is the Western obsession with strict gender binaries — and that's largely the legacy of colonisation.

Before European colonial powers spread their empires across the world, many cultures recognised more than two genders. In India, the Hijra community has existed for thousands of years and is legally recognised as a third gender today. In Samoa, *fa'afafine* are respected members of society with a recognised gender identity that blends male and female traits. Among some Indigenous North American nations, *Two-Spirit* people held spiritual and social roles that were integral to their communities.

These identities weren't seen as oddities. They weren't erased, denied, or pathologised. They were part of everyday life, honoured, respected, and woven into the social fabric.

Then came colonisation.

When Western powers conquered lands in Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Oceania, they brought with them not only weapons and missionaries, but also rigid Victorian ideas of gender and sexuality. The British Empire, in particular, criminalised same-sex relationships and gender non-conformity in

nearly every territory it claimed. Laws imposed in the 19th century still exist today in many former colonies, outlawing LGBTQ+ identities and practices that were once accepted — even celebrated.

The same Western countries that suppressed and criminalised trans identities abroad are now acting like the presence of trans people at home is some sudden crisis. The UK and USA often frame transgender lives as “new,” “confusing,” or “radical,” when in reality, it’s their colonial mindset that is out of step with history.

The backlash we see today, whether it’s anti-trans legislation in the US or media hysteria in the UK, is not about protecting tradition. It’s about clinging to a broken and unnatural invention of gender that was never universal to begin with.

Being transgender is part of the human condition. It always has been. What’s unnatural is denying people the right to live as themselves.

If anything, the rest of the world has more to teach us than we realise. Trans identities exist on every continent. They’ve been recorded for millennia. They thrive despite persecution. And they are not going anywhere.

So let’s stop pretending trans people are new or confusing. The truth is, we are ancient. And it’s time the West caught up.

Trans and Gender-Diverse Identities Around the World: A Global Snapshot



Just a few to be going on with…

Hijra (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh):
Recognised in South Asia for centuries, Hijra are often intersex or transgender people assigned male at birth who adopt feminine gender roles. Many serve important cultural roles in religious ceremonies. India formally recognised Hijras as a third gender in 2014.

Two-Spirit (Indigenous North America):
An umbrella term used by many Indigenous nations in North America to describe people who embody both masculine and feminine spirits. Two-Spirit individuals often held revered roles as healers, matchmakers, or spiritual leaders.

Fa’afafine (Samoa and other Pacific Islands):

Fa’afafine are people assigned male at birth who take on both masculine and feminine gender traits. They are accepted and integrated into Samoan society, often helping care for family and community.



Waria (Indonesia):

In Indonesia, Waria (a blend of the Indonesian words for woman and man) are transgender women who face discrimination but continue to be a visible part of Indonesian culture, particularly in cities like Yogyakarta and Jakarta.



Kathoey (Thailand):

Often translated as “ladyboys,” (not a nice term) Kathoey are transgender women or effeminate men in Thai culture. While not always legally recognised, Kathoey appear widely in Thai media, entertainment, and everyday life.

Muxes (Zapotec people of Oaxaca, Mexico):

Muxes are people assigned male at birth who live as women or in a gender-variant role. Among the Zapotec people, muxes are often respected and play important roles in families and communities.

Bakla (Philippines):

Bakla is a fluid identity that often describes feminine-presenting people assigned male at birth. Pre-colonial Filipino societies respected gender diversity until Spanish and later American colonisation imposed binary norms.



Across the World, We Shine

In India, hijras walk with pride,
a third-gender role long sanctified.
Respected, feared, both cursed and blessed,
their history cannot be suppressed.

Fa'afafine in Samoa say,
"I hold both spirits in one bright way."
Honoured in family, given their place,
a blending of genders with dignity and grace.

Two-Spirit people, Indigenous strong,
keepers of balance, where both belong.
Restoring traditions the West once denied,
their wisdom endures, their voices abide.

Muxes of Oaxaca brightly declare,
"Neither man nor woman, but fully aware."
Living with freedom, embraced in their town,
their gender a jewel, not something to drown.

From Tonga's fakaleiti to Thailand's kathoey,
cultures have taught what the West would destroy.
Our stories are many, our roots intertwined,
proof that trans people are part of humankind.

Carla Moss

A to Z of Transgender

We've taken over the alphabet. Over the next few months, we will be looking at significant points and people that matter… from A to Z…



A – Age

There's no "right" age to come out. Some know they're trans at 5, others transition at 75. Every timeline is valid.

Also for April Ashley

One of the first British people to undergo gender-affirming surgery, April became a model and actress in the 1960s, and later a trans rights campaigner. Her story helped bring transgender lives into public view.

B – Binder

A lifesaver for many transmasculine and non-binary people. But bind safely. Eight hours max, and *never* with duct tape!

Also for Billy Tipton

A successful jazz musician in the 1940s–50s who lived as a man. His trans identity was only discovered after his death, raising complex conversations about privacy and gender in history.

C – Coming Out

One of the scariest, most liberating things you can do. Whether you shout it or whisper it, coming out is always brave.

Also for Carmen Carrera

Model, actress, and advocate who rose to fame on *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Carmen uses her platform to challenge misconceptions and push for trans visibility in fashion and media.

*****It's also for Costa Blanca Tgirls. The #1 trans community in Spain*****

…and of course Carla X

D – Dysphoria

Not every trans person experiences it, but for those who do, it can affect voice, body, name, clothes — even mirrors.

Also for Danielle Sea

Best known for playing Max on *The L Word*, Sea is a non-binary actor and musician who has spoken candidly about their identity and the challenges of early trans representation.

E – Euphoria

The flip side of dysphoria. That moment when you catch yourself in the mirror and *smile*. Pure gender joy.

Also for Elliot Page

Oscar-nominated actor who came out as a trans man in 2020. His honesty, vulnerability, and visibility have made a powerful impact on global conversations around gender.

And of course Emma x

F – Fashion

More than just clothes — it's how we express gender, rebel against binaries, or simply feel like ourselves.

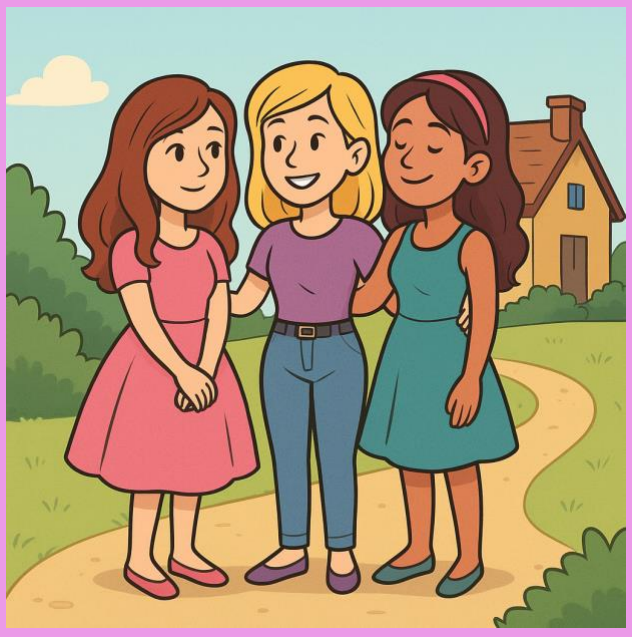
Also for Fallon Fox

The first openly transgender MMA fighter. Her presence in the ring sparked debates about inclusion in sports and the right to compete as your authentic self.

The Three Little Trans Women

A bedtime story…

Once upon a time, three trans women set out to build their lives. They were tired of closets, whispers, and the endless nonsense of being told they didn't exist.

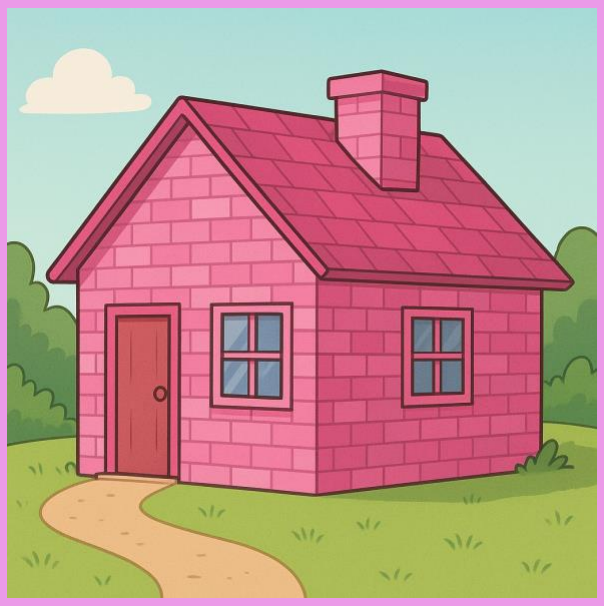


The first built her house from straw. It was fragile, yes, but she just wanted somewhere to breathe. Along came Joanne the TERF, frothing at the mouth, muttering about chromosomes she hadn't studied since GCSE biology. She huffed, she puffed, and with one big gust of bile, the straw house blew away.

The second sister built her home from sticks. A little stronger, supported by friends and community. Joanne arrived again, waving her Twitter account like a pitchfork. *"You'll never be women! You're a danger!"* she screeched, as though repeating a lie enough times would make it true. The stick house wobbled and cracked, and Joanne cackled as it splintered.



But the third sister? She built her house of bricks. Not ordinary bricks — bricks of lived experience, evidence, solidarity, and unshakable joy. And when Joanne tried her usual routine — huffing about bathrooms, puffing about sports, shrieking about “protecting the children” while ignoring actual issues — the brick house stood firm. The sisters inside poured tea, laughed, and painted their nails, watching her tantrum through the window.



Frustrated, Joanne tried to sneak in through the chimney. But at the bottom was a cauldron, bubbling not with stew but with boiling, undeniable *truth*. She tumbled in headfirst. There was a hiss, a scream, and then silence. Nothing left but the faint smell of scorched ego and the echo of her last words: *“Read my Substaaaaaack…”*

From that day, the sisters declared that the term *TERF* was misleading. Feminists fight for equality, not exclusion. Instead, such creatures would henceforth be called *GERMs* — **Girl Exclusionary Radical Misogynists**. Like germs, they spread lies, infect the gullible, and, when exposed to light, are eradicated.

And so, the three little trans women lived on, not in fear, but in laughter, resilience, and defiance. While the GERM that once haunted them? She was gone, flushed away like yesterday’s clickbait.

The moral of the story? You can huff, you can puff, but you can’t blow down the truth.



Your September Stars with…

Tess Tosterone-Blocker



Horoscopes for Tgirls, Tguys, Ls, Gs, Bs, Ts,Qs, and cosmic beauties everywhere.

♈ **Aries (March 21 – April 19)**
You'll be tempted to make a bold fashion statement this month. Glitter boots? Lime green lashes? Yes, darling. The stars say: go big or go home. Just maybe check if the boots squeak *before* you walk into that quiet café.

♉ **Taurus (April 20 – May 20)**
You're in your comfort zone, and refusing to leave. Which is cute, until you've binge-watched 3 seasons of Drag Race and your plants are starting to look judgy. Time to rejoin the world, beauty.

♊ **Gemini (May 21 – June 20)**
You're serving chaotic energy with a side of fabulous. Be careful not to accidentally flirt with your boss while ordering coffee. Or do. Who are we to stop fate?

♋ **Cancer (June 21 – July 22)**
Your eyeliner might smudge, but your heart? Rock solid. This month brings unexpected

emotions and possibly an old flame sliding into your DMs. Resist. You're not a retrograde rehab centre.

♌ **Leo (July 23 – Aug 22)**
It’s your month to SHINE, Leo. The world is your catwalk and you are the main event. Just remember, not everyone is ready for your solar-powered fabulousness. Wear SPF... and a backup outfit.

♍ **Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22)**
Organisation is your kink. You’ve got spreadsheets for your skincare. But maybe relax? Life doesn’t always need a checklist. Sometimes it just needs wine and a friend who understands contouring.

♎ **Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22)**
A romance is brewing, possibly with someone you met at Pride, possibly with your new favourite mirror. Either way, love is in the air. Wear something floaty and keep your options open. So throw away those over used toys and go in without a safety net!

♏ **Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21)**
Mysterious and moody, it’s giving femme fatale. Channel that vibe, but don’t ghost your group chat again. Your friends are still recovering from your last dramatic exit.

♐ **Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)**
You’re feeling wild, untamed... and possibly overdue for a sensible decision. This month: take the risk, kiss the stranger, just maybe don’t cut your own fringe. Again.

♑ **Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)**
You’re working hard, but are you *feeling* your fantasy? September says: glamour is self-care. Schedule a mani, buy the dress, tell that voice in your head to shut up and party.

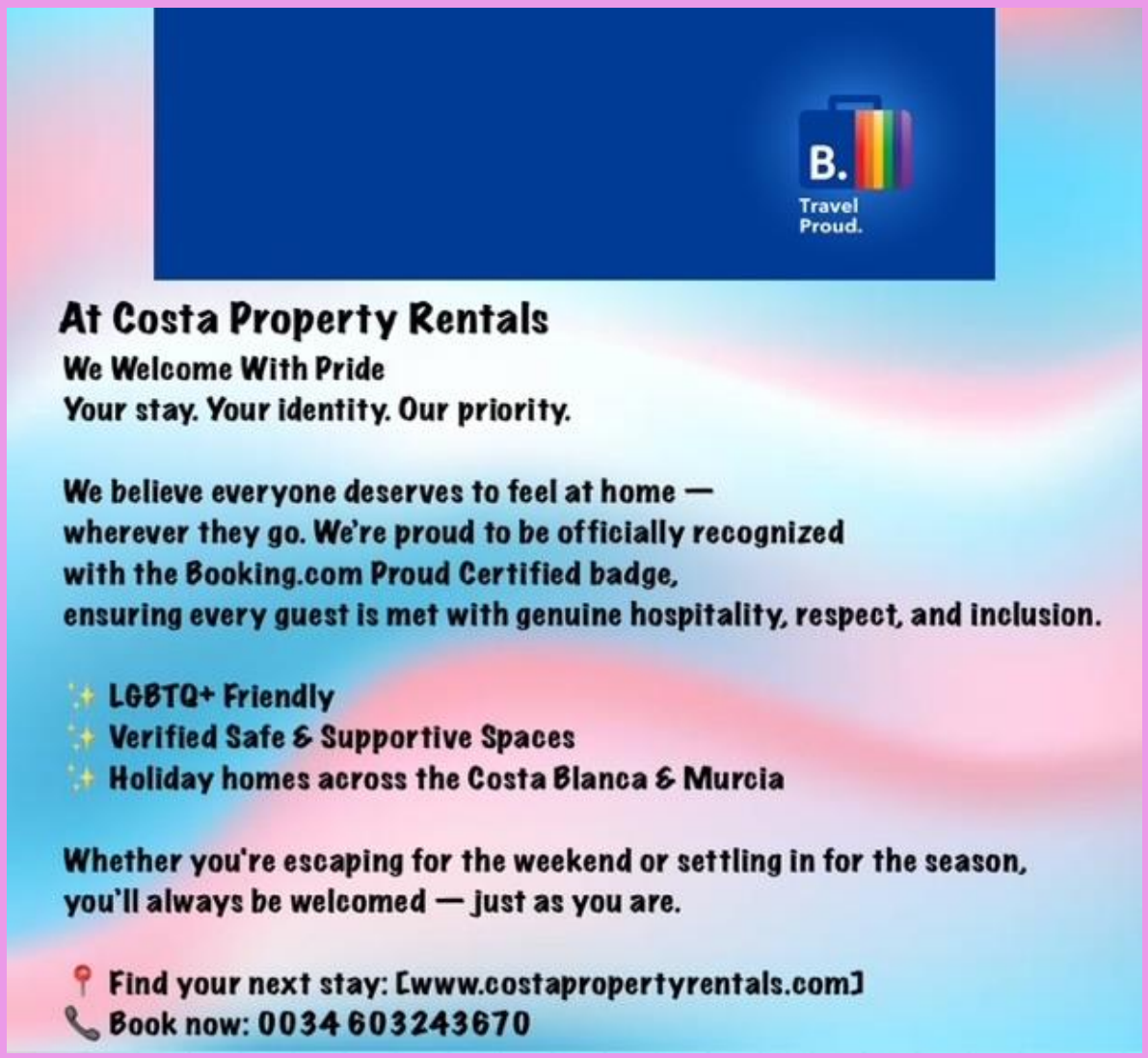
♒ **Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)**
You’ve got ideas, opinions, and possibly a manifesto. But try not to start a revolution over iced coffee etiquette. Channel that brilliance into something creative, like a magazine, or a TikTok series on trans history in space.

♓ **Pisces (Feb 19 – March 20)**
Soft, sensitive, and probably crying at that one ad with the puppy. Let yourself feel it all, but also maybe... drink some water? And wear shoes that don’t destroy your feet? Oh, forget the water, drink wine!

Tess's Cosmic Tip:
Mercury is still in retrograde. Blame it for your phone dying, your lipstick melting, and that text you sent to the wrong ex. You're still celestial royalty, babe. See you in October. 🪐

"Oh you don't believe in astrology? That's such a *Capricorn* thing to say — denying the stars while secretly Googling your compatibility with your ex at 2am. Don't worry, Mercury's retrograde will humble you soon enough." 🌀✨

Want a break in sunny Spain and meet up with Costa Blanca Tgirls. Try Costa Property Rentals…



Larry Topper and the Highland Witch

The moors of Scotland were a tapestry of bruised purples and gloomy greens under a leaden sky. In a croft that seemed to grow like a cancer from the side of a peat bog, Jowling Krin stirred a black iron pot with a bone that might once have been a man’s. The air smelled of wet earth, bitter herbs, and a deep, seething resentment.

Jowling was all sharp angles and hardened fury. Her eyes, the colour of slate, held a lifetime of bitter envy. She wasn't just a woman who wanted to be a man; she was a creature poisoned by the perceived injustice of her own form. She despised the faint curve of her hip, the vulnerability of her frame, the very biology that had, in her mind, cursed her to a life of weakness and obscurity. Men strode through the world taking what they wanted; she had to scheme in the shadows for scraps. It was an insult written in her very flesh.

And in the corner, tied to a chair woven from willow and spite, sat Larry Topper. He was a young wizard, more adept at theoretical charms and sarcastic comebacks than practical defence.

“Ye’ll do it,” Jowling’s voice rasped, a sound like gravel under a boot. “Ye’ll use yer magic. Ye’ll correct nature’s cruelest joke and give me the form I was always meant to have. The strength! The respect!”

Larry, though terrified, couldn't help himself.
“So, just to be clear, the plan is: magical forced-masculation? Bold strategy. Has a real ‘mad scientist’ vibe. Not a lot of focus-group testing, I’m guessing.”

Jowling spun around, her face contorted. “You speak of

things you cannot fathom! You, who were simply given it! That body! That privilege! You were born on the summit of the mountain, while I was born in a ditch!”

“Okay, first off, this ‘summit’ has allergies and a dodgy knee,” Larry quipped. “It’s not all conquering empires and chopping wood. Sometimes it’s just trying to find a comfortable pair of trousers.”

“Silence!” she shrieked. “You have what is rightfully mine!”

“I can’t!” Larry insisted. “You think a Y chromosome is going to fix the black hole of spite where your personality should be?”

Enraged, she turned back to her pot, her shoulders trembling. It was his chance. Larry focused on a tiny, subtle self-transfiguration charm. The magic tingled over his skin. His wrists narrowed. His shoulders softened. His form shifted, becoming decidedly feminine. With a soft pop, the bonds were loose. She stood up, stretching.

Jowling, sensing the shift, turned slowly. Her eyes widened, then narrowed into slits of pure, incandescent hellfire. Larry had done it. He had become a woman.

“You…” Jowling’s voice was a whisper of utter, apocalyptic rage. “Ye… ye wretch! You use the sacred art of true self as a… a lockpick?!”

The newly transformed wizard smiled, a bright, easy expression that seemed to enrage the witch further. "Actually," she said, her voice now lighter and clearer, "if you're going to be shouting at me, you might as well use the right name. Call me Lorri."

The name hung in the foul air, simple and defiant.

It was as if Lorri had thrown a lit match into a powder keg of bigotry. Jowling’s face

purpled, her jaw working soundlessly for a moment before the torrent broke.

"LORRI?" she screeched, the word a vile curse. "You… you pervert the very essence of magic! You twist a sacred transformation into a… a joke! A fleeting fancy! You were given a perfect, strong form and you mutilate it into this… this frailty! You choose to be this… this weakness I have fought my entire life to escape!"

She was shaking, spittle flying from her lips. "It is an abomination! A rejection of a natural order! You were a man! You are a man! That is a truth, you foolish child, not a feeling! You don't get to choose! I am trying to claim my rightful truth, and you… you dabble! You make a mockery of my pain!"

Lorri listened, head tilted, not with fear, but with a kind of clinical curiosity. As the witch's transphobic rant reached a fever pitch, gasping for air in her hatred, Lorri simply nodded.

"Right. So just to summarize your position," Lorri said, her tone calm and analytically crisp, as if debriefing a particularly unhinged conference speaker. "My authentic self-expression is an abomination, but your plan to magically kidnap a wizard and force him to reconstruct your entire biological sex because you've got a pathological case of internalized misogyny is… what? A righteous crusade?"

Lorri took a step forward, brushing a bit of willow bark from her new sleeve. "The lack of self-awareness is honestly breathtaking. It's a good thing the interior decor in here is so dark, the cognitive dissonance would probably cause a glare."

Jowling could only stand there, her entire worldview so perfectly and succinctly turned against her that she

was rendered momentarily mute, her mouth opening and closing like a fish.

It was all the time Lorri needed. She kicked the leg of Jowling's cauldron stand, and the entire bubbling, vile contents crashed to the floor between them.

The resulting steam cloud was immense, filled with the smell of burnt hair and utterly defeated hatred.

"Think about it!" Lorri's voice called out from the choking gloom. "And maybe get a therapist instead of a cauldron!"

And then she was gone, out into the cleansing drizzle of the moor.

Jowling Krin was left alone in the wreckage, screaming not just at her escape, but at the unbearable, universe-mocking irony of it all. He had become everything she despised, and in doing so, had proven her utterly and completely wrong.

