

The Book of Sainted Aunts

The Illustrated Portraits of
Mildly Martyred Sinners-Turned-Saints
Since Queerdom Come



Portrait of the Re-Resurrected Pope of the Supposed Sinners

For the ones who were forced to believe that prayers
would never be answered.

A prayer to the sainted aunts

O ordinary sainted aunts, ever-human in the outpouring of caring love, you are the elders we did not have in our fallen and straight-laced families. By praying to you we recognise the wondrous healing that comes through humble acts. You sainted aunts, often cursed, rejected and neglected — you formed us in your communities and for that we give praise and thanks.

Pause for a moment of silent contemplation.

Pray for us who are so lost; make use of our confusion, awaken us to the privileges we have, enable us to act with gentleness to ourselves and others.

Pause for a moment of quiet meditation.

Come to my assistance on days when the greatest struggle is getting out of bed, that I may believe in the transformative power of daily rituals. May my every breath remind me of the goodness that exists in these volatile times.

Pause for a moment of muted gratitude to the littlest of things.

Come to my assistance when I face [mention your concern], that the varied attitudes, skills and coping mechanisms you have embodied may find their ways of working in my specific circumstances.

Pause for a moment to share this concern with another kindred spirit.

I promise thee, O blessed sainted aunts, to be ever mindful of being within this world as part of the magnificently diverse chorus your legacies have sustained. I promise to do all in my power, through acts of radical hope that seems ridiculous to the world, to hold the space for miracles to happen.

Pause for a moment to contemplate the graced lives of the sainted aunts.



The exclamation of the lost and weary before queerdom come.

Prologue.

Queerdom came upon this world with a second flood.

Yes, the God of the Jews, the Gentiles, the born-again souls had promised,

I will not curse the ground any more... the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

But we did not need this abstract concept of a deity to curse the ground. Manmade demons were more than enough.

We were all in the same boat when the second flood came. It was a leaky sampan with holes in the bottom and so we were constantly bailing out water, flailing our hands in desperate prayer. Everyone was searching for absence, belief, choices, decisions, explanations, food, governments, hope, instincts, joy, kismet, laughter, manna, noise, omnipotence, possibilities, questions, rights, standards, truths, understanding, vulnerability, wokeness, xenia, yesses, zeal - the world could scarcely contain it all.

A complex world they said. It'll be fun they said.

And we had fun. Just not the kind of fun they expected us to have. We had keyboard warriors and in-the-streets riots. We had battles and wars over names and positions. We had so much to live for. So much to die for. So much to not die for.

And then ground zero happened. Not with a bang but with a whimper as everything fizzled out to a stop. Fizzled out in the steady gentle rains of prayers to the sainted aunts who made their steady ways throughout this world. For a thousand days and a thousand nights, the watering down of solid foundations gave us something new to work with.

A fluidness that was not the devastating apocalyptic uncertainty they had feared. It was a fluidness as unknowable but as wonderful as the seas that stirred explorers' hearts. Only this time, no conquerors and no captives. Only wanderers who relish the feel of well-worn ways that constantly change, that were always made for changing.

It happened so slowly that no one noticed.

It was the drowsy sleep that cured the weary.

It was a calming rest that allowed for work to be done.

It started as a trickle that watered down a wide canyon.

No one knows how it happened but it finally did pave the paths for our worlds to exist and queerdome did come at last.

None of our histories have adequately recorded a whole and honest account of how this queerdome came to pass. Perhaps it was always there.

In this book you will find the lives of the mildly martyred sinners-turned-saints, our most revered sainted aunts, since queerdom come. While we do not know what made queerdom come, we know that the queerdom is always working in mysterious ways.

In this year of our being since queerdom come, it is time to reflect on the past and the particular journeys we have made to arrive at these multitudinous states of existence.

Pre Queerdom	Post Queerdom
Truth with a capital T	truths with a lowercase t
Exclusive tribes	Inclusive and ever expanding networks
Capitalist drive	Care for others begins with the self
Straight and narrow pathways	Freedom to wander
Individualistic effort in restrictive systems	Collective spaces and communal efforts

This binary view of pre and post queerdom states is of course a sweepingly broad generalisation, and many parts of the world still follow a predominantly pre-queerdom way of life.

Martyrdom and stigmata are the usual prerequisites for being acknowledged as legitimate and canonised. In days past, these were also the following criteria:

- Two verifiable post-mortem miracles

Note: Canonization (sainthood) requires two miracles, whereas beatification (blessed) requires only one.

- Evidence of having led an exemplary life of goodness and virtue worthy of imitation, having died a heroic death (martyrdom), or having undergone a major conversion of heart where a previous immoral life is abandoned and replaced by one of outstanding holiness.

We no longer place such an emphasis on post-mortem miracles as the work that was done by the mildly-martyred saints has been widely accepted as leaving a legacy passed on through the lives they touched. These lives have also evolved into their own blessings to others. Rather than reducing these subsequent miracles as derivatives, we celebrate them.

Based on historical research on the remaining archives of religious institutions, major world religions had the same yearning for the supernaturally miraculous. The impossibility (based

on the old ways of understanding the laws of nature) of the miracle was a necessary condition for the divine to be recognised. This atavistic way of understanding divinity is quite alien to us now, but faith and doubt are challenges that still hold true for us today.

These sainted aunts were recognised post-queerdom-come with the revised criteria for canonisation:

1. We do not require sainted aunts to be dead. We very much prefer them alive and kicking some ass. Sometimes they prefer kicking the bucket before we start praying to them for help, but in those cases they are forgiven. We can be just a bit too much a lot of the time.
2. We do not require a sainted aunt to have lived a sinless life. No human lives a sinless life. We do not require a mostly sinless life either.
3. We do not require evidence of supernatural miracles because all miracles are part of nature.
4. We believe in the virtues of documenting the lives of the sainted aunts. The evidence of their lived existences in this world bring hope and comfort to us all.

Unlike the prayers to saints of the past, the prayers to sainted aunts insist on the promise of the persons praying to commit to action. In living our own versions of action, we embody the saintliness of the sainted aunts, bringing changes to our present times.

Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is when you will be called to become a sainted aunt.

Saint Comte of the Great Census
The Minor Saint of Science and Statistics

Saint Patience of the Mundane Microaggressions
The Minor Saint of Dying By a Thousand Tiny Cuts

Saint Martha of the Activists
The Minor Saint of Tedious Tasks

Saint Yaksha of Greenland
The Minor Saint of Ecocentric Narratives

Saint Takiwatanga of the Unnameable
The Minor Saint of Queer Nomenclature

Saint Kim of Margin Lane
The Minor Saint of Shifting Boundaries

Saint Zareen of the Public Square
The Minor Saint of Collective Spaces

Saint Vinaigrette of the Tossed Aside
The Minor Saint of Derelict Buildings

Saint Bob of Side Hustles
The Minor Saint of Workers in Capitalist Systems

Saint Chu Zuo Ci of Soup Kitchens
The Minor Saint of Ugly Foods and Discards

Saint Bhogayya of Pagan but Vegan
The Minor Saint of Charming Ironies

Saint Umm of the Permanently Exhausted
The Minor Saint of Self Care

Saint Lune of the Scattered Bibliotheque
The Minor Saint of Lost Archives



Saint Comte of the Great Census The Minor Saint of Science and Statistics

In the years before queerdom come, the people made false-truths and truth-falses. Saint Comte counted everything. Growing up in a strictly straight-laced religious household, Saint Comte was considered an academic savant destined for a bright future in ivory towers or the white elephants of modern science.

Disillusioned by the paper-churning and corporation funded nature of research, Saint Comte became a hermit in their university-funded accommodation. Meeting bare minimum requirements for their yearly contract as a rank-and-file tutor, Saint Comte began their journey by hacking into servers with a team of dedicated tech activists. They created an automated system of computer programmes that trawled through the far reaches of news, forums, declassified information, government statistics, non-governmental organisation reports, speeches, panel discussions, anything that gave an account of the way life had been, has been and will be lived.

This was exhausting, unenviable work. They led the justifications needed for rigorous research, and endured the fraught but interminable meetings over hypotheses and margins for error. In an era of decontextualized masses of data, Saint Comte gave of themselves to trawl through the ether of numbers to gather up the leads to the trails of stories that their contemporaries needed. Many of the current programmes we use today are open source innovations of Saint Comte's work. The programming

language Cheese-Chaser was a homage made by an anonymous programmer and is the current fonduection for the most recent advances in coding.

A Devotional Chant by Saint Comte for Times of Inertia

we boxed up the voices and left them

in storage

after the flurry of talking and transcriptions

there they gurgled and gagged

while we filled forms and checked boxes

verifying claims for the permit to represent

until we leafed past weeks months years

until the only thing still moving

erupted as stale farts from stale corpses

as we stumbled in their odour

that contained trace hints of a scandal

they live

as we fussed over scrabble boards

reordering the limited words

they work

as we stared in shock at their world

seeping into our firm foundations

they laugh

at virility turned sterile

from too much too little use

until I sat in the vapour of tea fumes

and learned to read puzzled shrugs

felt the way to gently nudge

stilled myself to be quiet in the corner

from there I watched their bodies clatter and clang

against each other

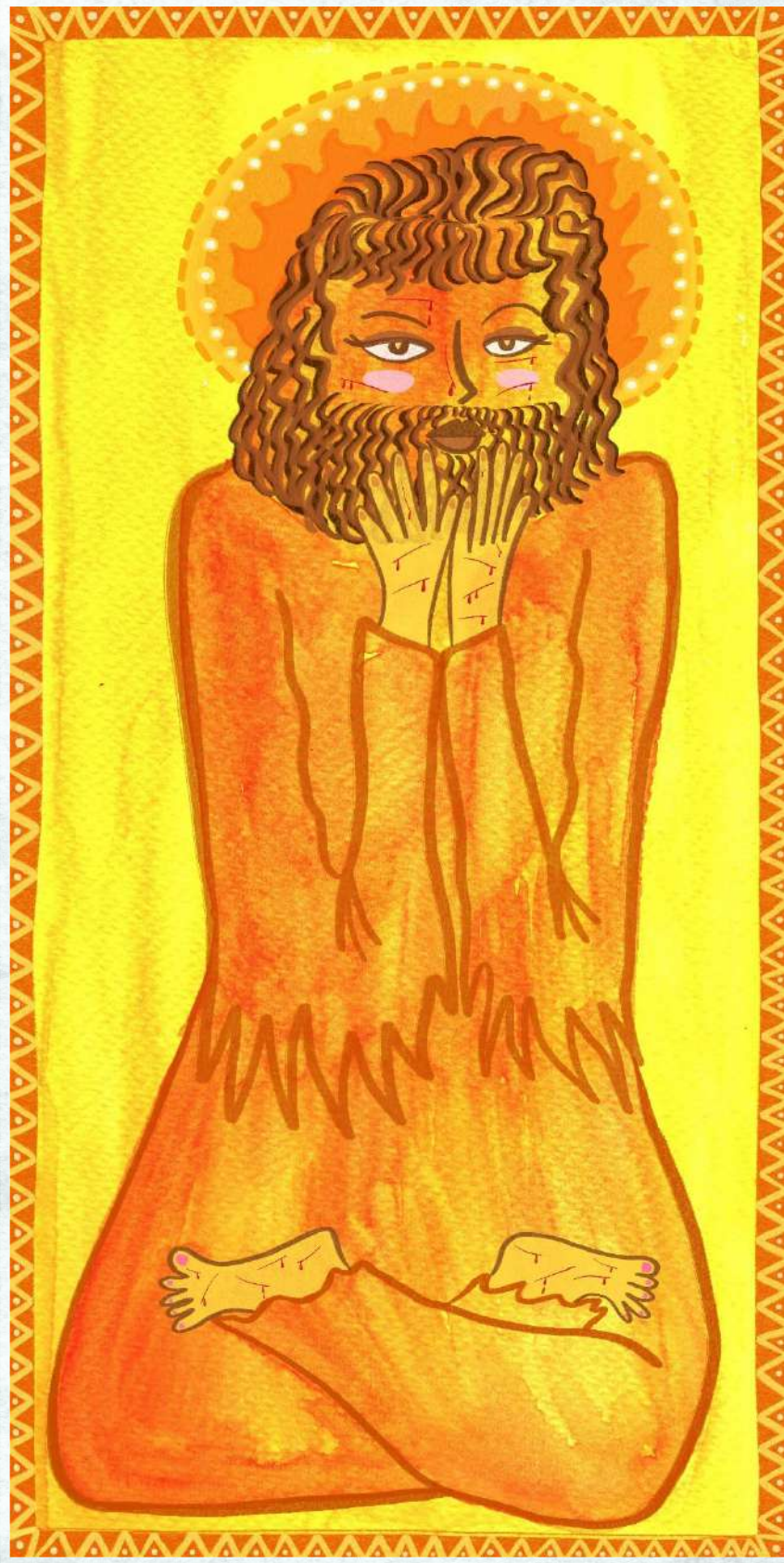
clearer

louder

stronger

ready to slice through the gravid fog of words
and still I saw them wait and watch
witnessing my hands paused at the keyboard
until they nodded

now.



Saint Patience of the Mundane Microaggressions
The Minor Saint of Dying By a Thousand Tiny Cuts

Saint Patience belonged to the old guard of the sainted aunts. Coming from a more archaic legacy of sufferance and prayerful deliberation over actions to pursue, Patience has been considered slow to act and a bit of a pushover. However, in recent years the history of Saint Patience has been revised following several powerful and verified accounts of his life and context. Patience worked throughout his life as a criminal lawyer, often representing hardened recidivist criminals and providing legal aid to queers persecuted by unjust laws.

While accustomed to the draining nature of this work, Patience struggled with the aftermath of these cases. Death threats, rape threats and abuse from all sides were often sent directly to Patience. But the real difficulty was with water cooler conversations and family dinners where microaggressions were what Patience referred to as: "the words that kill little parts of me". Systemic oppression was easier to call out, but microaggressions and the supposed ignorance of those who committed them was what Patience dedicated his life to addressing. Funding an open source compilation of the historical and contemporary implications of microaggressions, Patience worked anonymously online to lead a movement towards linguistic and context consciousness.

As one of the most medically notable test subjects for female to male gender affirming surgery, Patience underwent numerous operations and procedures that were unknown to all except the closest of confidants and partners. At his autopsy, it was discovered that many of the cuts made by surgeons never fully healed and there was an unwarranted amount of scar tissue for many incisions.

The Prayer of Saint Patience

Why do I continue to endure such pain? For what purpose do I keep suffering like this? Many years ago I wanted to travel to distant southern countries, crossing the wide seas and braving many dangers. I've now been mired in papers and cases for years. I've buried myself in this position without ever wanting to return to the identity I was raised to be, but still my female shadow follows me. Haven't I done enough? When I have gone this far, is there any need to go further?

Why do I suffer like this? What meaning is there in all this suffering? Or, let me put the question in another way: what meaning is there to this kind of life? Do I do this for others? But, what if all the humans in whom I believe the best are nothing more than an illusion? They have often turned against me. Then what do I do? Does true liberty really exist? Is freedom perhaps nonexistent? If, of course, freedom does exist, then there is some meaning after all in all this suffering and in this way of life to make it available to more than a pitiful few.

If freedom exists, then all my suffering and hardships to this day will have a meaning. But if freedom doesn't exist, then everything you've done has as little value as a speck of dust. But dust irritates, it tickles, it annoys, it will always work its way in to clog up a system that seems to be running cleanly and perfectly.

Dawn. The sky is growing light. This has been a long hard night for me. Did I come to any conclusions?

If freedom from suffering really does exist, then why does it permit all these daily atrocities that wear down the resolve of the strongest among us? With these hands I have seized my chance, made myself continue in my faith; and those times that I have reached my limit, I felt myself breaking. But in all this time freedom has never given a clear sign of power into our hands. Sprinkle a little hope on me. Give it to me to drink. Let me drink deeply of all this hope that will sustain me. Raise the winds and wield the thunder and save the lives of queers with this hope in a freedom beyond this current condition. Unless this happens, I will only endanger my own life and mind and spirit.

I do not believe the people who have hurt me are evil. I know that they come from different experiences and some are hurting too, there is in them much that should be attended to. But there are two reasons why I am tired: the first is that my dreams are too persistent in forcing themselves into my actions. Yes, far too persistent. I am unable to make them come true, am puzzled and do not know how to follow their call. When these dreams leave me alone, I feel less anxious. But there is still another reason that haunts me: that this place, no matter what lofty dreams I may have, seems unsuitable for queerdome. I pray these reasons for my tiredness will be proven wrong. I pray that my hope will be proven right. I pray that I will live to make it happen.



Saint Martha of the Activists The Minor Saint of Tedious Tasks

Saint Martha is probably the most queerly unorthodox of the sainted aunts. Befuddled by the myriad of intersectional positions that her fellows identified with, her slips and errors made her the untrustworthy outsider. Diligently making her way through tedious administrative tasks and cleaning up the literal messes made by her fellow activists, she began to be noticed for her sharp eye, consistent work and genuine smiles.

Showing up for the basics was the mantra she lived by. While she never became a spokesperson or prominent leader, many movements have referred to her steadfastness in duty as an inspiring exemplar.

Standard operating procedures for meetings, events, campaigns and followups have often relied on the work she began and kept minute records of throughout her lifetime as a dedicated activist.

After leading a full life, death and burial, many communities have claimed to be visited by reincarnations of Saint Martha. A stranger dressed in the same manner she was, bright colours and loud prints, would stay as a quietly nurturing presence for as long as their movement required. On the night before a major success, a large meal would be cooked in the communal kitchen and everyone would feast nervously as they waited with bated breath for the final move to be made. The next day, when someone raced back to the kitchen to share the good news she would be gone. The Feast Day of Saint Martha is often celebrated by a bountiful meal. When toasting, participants of the feast recollect the changes leading to and following queerdom come.

Saint Martha's Letter to the Young Activist

Dearest,

Let me begin this letter by showing you how I pray for myself and the activists that shape our world today.

When the time comes for us to act, every person I know lights up the streets and prepares for the long march. But I find the comforting ghost of the past in my heart and start to cry out and lament. Since I wash off my guilt with tears, I need to find a way to rekindle the fire in my belly. When the call for action reaches the door of what I can do, I lock myself in. Which way should we go? I missed the chance, I need to make up for this, you and I will receive innumerable tests of our loyalty because of these missed chances. I wonder if the actions of those who are enraptured in this new movement are right. You tell me the truly involved activists will always be in the right time and place for whatever needs to be done. Is this the right time? Or is this a doomed attempt? Was I meant to fail in this action? I can't speak because of fear. How can I knock on the door of the powerful? Because my hands and heart are no longer mine. I am not in me. They have taken my hand and heart. O my fellows! Nothing remains in me. You once gave me assurance and trust. By our shared goals and aims for this new world, I do not know how to act. Did I complete the action? How was the aftermath? I have no idea. From now on let me be like a shadow in front of and behind every action so that I may follow the movement's every tiny movement, never out of step with its deliberate and careful pace.

I hope this shows you how puzzled and confused some of us supposed veterans of service and activism are. You, as a young activist, will have a better hand on the pulse of what we need going forward. Your heart will tell you what needs to be done. And we who trust that your heart is well will join you in your cause.

There is an outdated prayer that a wayward but well-meaning friend once shared with me:

Father, give us courage to change what must be altered, serenity to accept what cannot be helped, and the insight to know the one from the other.

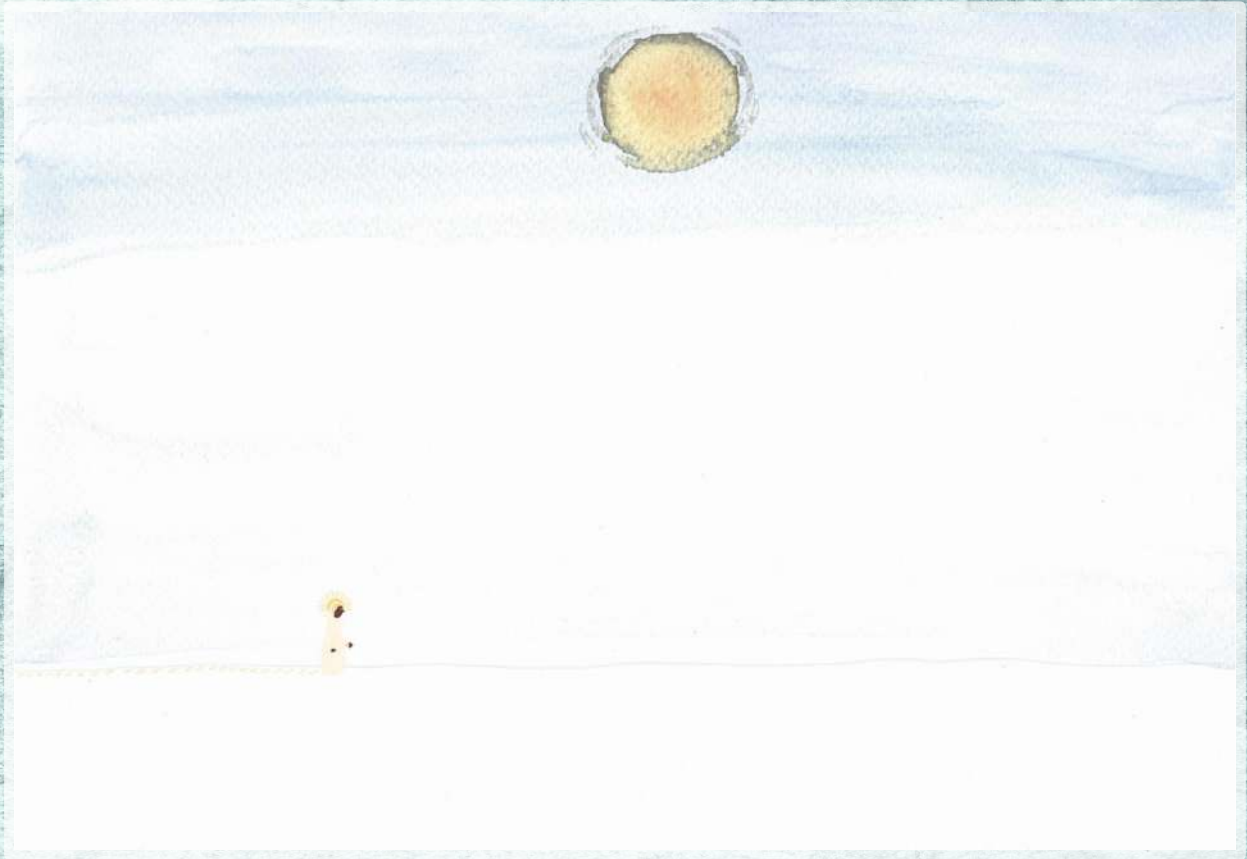
This friend used to caution me about my activism, that perhaps I was doing too much too soon, that perhaps the time for change would be sometime in the future but not now. They came from a tradition where the woman named Martha in their holy scripture was often ridiculed. A woman who busied herself in menial tasks like cooking and cleaning but failed to prioritise the bigger miracles at work in her own home and in others' hearts. I take this as a cautionary tale, but I also believe that in order for any real activism to happen as many people as possible should have a properly cooked meal in their belly. People get cantankerous and unnecessarily hangry when they start burning out from all the good work they try to do.

This dear friend believed in change too, but never lived a life that proved this belief. They believed that change would come from some higher being that lived in the cotton candy clouds of heaven. I often mourn for my loss of faith in some higher being that lives like this. What my friend never knew about me, and what I feel I must share with you a stranger, is this: the loss of faith is a continual process of healing. What you once had faith in was a firm foundation, and it is frightening to navigate this world without the rituals that once held your life together.

To be an activist you will need to keep a little gentleness burning bright in your heart. For the times that you lose your foundations, this gentleness will be enough to light your way forward.

I have found this to be true. Perhaps there is a newer and better way that you can teach me. But for now, this will be enough to keep me going.

Ever your friend in spirit, word, and deed,
Martha



Saint Yaksha of Greenland The Minor Saint of Ecocentric Narratives

Born and raised in a rural coastal village along the Straits of Malacca, Saint Yaksha became an itinerant marine engineer on international oil tankers. Witnessing the never ending environmental law violations and severe oil spills globally, per spent off months working with environmental activists in cities to campaign for better regulations and greater accountability. After a decade of seeing little to no results, Yaksha left the gruelling but financially lucrative job to become a party cadre working alongside major politicians. Assessing environmental risk, analysing reports, keeping up to date with the latest developments, Yaksha condensed highly technical information into spiffy, non-nonsense, one page briefs and three minute speeches. But no matter how much literal blood, sweat and tears were recorded into these politically correct narratives of humans in the climate crisis, nothing seemed to shift.

Emotionally drained, Yaksha began writing vignettes. Small accounts of reveries about nature where no human soul seemed present except for the language that held it together. Per acknowledged that these narratives were only written in human terms for communication. The rest was owned and lived by the natural forces that bound all life together in the constantly moving eddies in time. Led by where per feet brought per, Yaksha wandered around the world in vast distances matching the journeys once taken on board the massive oil tankers. Sending off texts, tweets, talks and teleconferences from whatever environment per was in, Yaksha gave listeners the recorded echoes of canyons, birdsong,

floods, humming, breezes, rumbles, earthquakes, buzzing, thunderstorms, crackling... everything too vast and too quiet to hear properly in the populous cities of the world.

Yaksha eventually arrived in the basecamp Siorapaluk. Becoming the resident librarian of the small public library, Saint Yaksha continued writing and recording for the next twenty years in this remote part of the world. After Yaksha's retirement, the Inuit have numerous verified and unverified accounts of seeing Yaksha on per travels, all by perself in the cold wilderness of Greenland's ice caps. Per often leaves tracks on the pristine snowfalls, a trail that indicates where the journeys into nature can be so miniscule, so humbling, so beautiful.

The Last Written and Found Journal Entry of Saint Yaksha

I have not used the personal pronoun "I" in any of my writing for a very long time. But because I am trying to think about my own death I suppose this is necessary. To face myself and my feelings towards leaving this plane of existence, rather than hide with strange allusions or veiled comments.

Sometimes I wonder if my desire to always be in nature comes from this. A need to let the "I" disappear into something that is dwarfed by the multitudes that exist outside of me, inside of me. Then maybe all my choices are made by other forces and not just me. That's a lot more reassuring than being solely responsible for everything I've chosen to do. I've just been guided by the currents and tides I've been placed in. That's a nice way of considering things.

I would like to give myself a sky burial. I do not like the idea of putting myself into a coffin made of dead trees. I always thought about giving myself back to the earth, letting other beings feast on me as I once feasted on other beings throughout my life.

Unfortunately the place where I am currently residing will mean that my corpse will not be eaten away, but preserved almost perfectly by the elements. It may mean that one day, years from now, no matter how desolate the spot I choose, that another person will unexpectedly stumble into me. I have always wondered why it is that a human corpse is always a much more acceptable reminder of mortality than say... a tree stump, a dish of meat, an insect that has unwittingly started to drown itself in your cup of water.

We eat a lot of sea birds here, the Inuit often invite me to their festive meals of kiviaq. Seabirds fermented in sealskin and seal fat and left under piles of rocks for three to eighteen months. We pluck off the feathers of the birds before eating them. That first

taste of kiviaq was probably what made me decide to stay here for so long, after wandering across this planet for so many years. They understand here the need to live as part of the environment, not working to control the forces of nature. I realise now that I am a coward, too afraid to see the desecration of the forest paths I used to know. Here in Siorapaluk it would take too much human effort and too little profit to change the landscape, to change the way humans live with nature. I decided then that I could afford to rest in this place for a while, and now I feel like I could rest here forever.



Saint Takiwatanga of the Unnameable The Minor Saint of Queer Nomenclature

When Takiwatanga was found in a cardboard box on the steps of a religious home for orphans, there was no birth certificate, no traceable parentage, no record of xem in the system. There was only a string of doctor's appointments for various ailments and assessments arranged by the anxious administrators of the adoption agency. Takiwatanga was adopted at the age of three by a gay couple who loved and adored xem.

Recognised as an outsider to mainstream society at a young age, Takiwatanga was often left to xemself or mocked by others who did not know any better. To escape the glances and stares, xe often went to the swimming pool and swam faster laps than anyone else. Long after many teenagers went to towel themselves off, xe continued to swim steadily until xyr parents called xem out of the water for dinner. Having a keen interest in endurance swimming and nautical adventures, Takiwatanga wanted nothing more than to experience the summer doldrums where sailing ships would be becalmed for weeks. Left to xem own devices after gruelling training swims, xe often floated on xyr back in the water, pondering anything and nothing at all as the vibrations of ripples formed the sonic backdrop to these daytime dreams.

While Takiwatanga was never officially recognised as a record-breaking endurance swimmer or professional athlete, xyr dedication to the sporting community and process became an inspiration to others like xem. Passing away at the young age of twenty-six, Takiwatanga's parents found the various writings, audio and video recordings made and boxed up and labelled by xem with: for everyone I have left behind. These messages from Takiwatanga have resonated with many around the world and offer a glimpse into the gentleness of a mind constantly engaged in listening to the names and movements of people around xem.

Saint Takiwatanga's Letter to the Unnamed

Hi

I've left this letter addressed to no one because I want anyone to be able to write whatever name they have there.

It gets difficult without having a name. You become a *thing*, a *that*, an *it*.

Other humans like to make sure you have a name. Easier for a precise label, a pigeon hole, a carefully defined boundary to keep you in. But for some of us we fall in-between the boundaries, not quite here and not quite there. We share traits, characteristics, identifiers, ways of being with other things that seem to be incongruent but are exactly as they should be.

Names are fragile but not dainty. Names are powerful because they claim a shared understanding of what you are. A name means you are part of a language, part of a system, part of a whole mess of other links and references that support you being in the world. Someone named you, so someone knows you exist. Someone calls you by your name, so they know you are present and can respond to that naming.

But some of us don't have a name that matches us. I didn't have a name that fit me for years and years. I couldn't hear the name they called me. Couldn't identify it from the chaos of all the other things that are named in this world.

There's a little story that I wrote that I want to share here. Someone told it to me once, and I changed a few parts of it until it made sense to me.

There was a tiny shop that was uncomfortably full, but there seemed to be almost nothing in it of the slightest value. The floorspace was very restricted, because all round the walls were stacked innumerable picture frames of strangers

peering down and all around. In the window there were trays of trinkets, bits and bobs, broken tools, tarnished jewellery that did not even pretend to be more valuable than they seemed on the surface, and other miscellaneous rubbish. But in all these trays there was a sense that they might include something interesting. As you wander towards the table your eye is caught by a round, smooth thing that gleamed softly in the lamplight, and you pick it up.

It is a heavy lump of glass, curved on one side, flat on the other, making almost a hemisphere. There was a peculiar softness, as of rainwater, in both the colour and the texture of the glass. At the heart of it, magnified by the curved surface, there is a strange, convoluted object that was constantly moving and shifting in the light.

'What is it?' you ask, fascinated.

'I am your name,' said the curious lump. 'I have come from the distant past where there were plenty more names than are used now. When there was no definite, solid name for anything and so everyone could name whatever they please with whatever sounded most right. But when they wanted others to really take a look at what they were naming, they used to kind of embed it in the glass. This particular casing of language that I am currently in is at least a hundred years old. More, because I never really keep track of these things.'

'You are a beautiful thing,' you say to your name.

'You are a beautiful thing,' said the name in the lump of glass appreciatively. 'But there's not many that'd say so nowadays.' The name cleared its throat. 'Now, if it so happened that you wanted to have me, it won't cost you anything. I can remember when a name like me could only be officially recognised after piles of paperwork, tons of informal justifications, endless explanations and — well, I can't work it out, but it was a lot of unnecessary trouble. But who cares about all that, since this is a bond between just you and me? You can put me back here anytime, find another name, not have another name. But if you like how this feels at this moment, I'll stay with you.'

You slide your name into your pocket. What appealed to you most about it was not so much its beauty as the air it seemed to possess of belonging to an age quite different from the present one. It was not like anything temporary and ephemeral

that you conjured up by yourself. It is by all appearances useless to anyone else, and may get a bit heavy in your pocket. But fortunately it said that it could be put down and taken up and left behind whenever you choose. It is a queer thing, even a compromising thing, for an unnameable being like you to have a name in your possession. Anything that claimed a legacy, and for that matter anything beautiful, had always seemed more than you could ever own for yourself.

I've found my own name for the time being. It felt like picking up that lump of glass in this story. I liked the heft of it, the way it felt in my hand. I could stare at it and consider its depths for as long as I liked and not feel scared.

Perhaps finding your name will be part of your journey. It doesn't have to be, but as long as you are unnameable, there's a wonderful power floating along like this too.

My name constantly changes. But I'll always still be me.

Yours,
Takiwatanga



Saint Kim of Margin Lane
The Minor Saint of Shifting Boundaries

Saint Kim lived as a professional cartographer, knowing by heart the myriad routes and layers that covered up the surfaces of busy cities. Sifting through maps of ages gone by, Kim knew that not one square inch of land was truly untouched by humans. There are no longer any opportunities for grand explorations into the unknown, no swathes of virgin land to conquer and parcel out. Alone in the state cartographer's office, ze spent hours tracing out the boundary lines between what used to be, what now was, and what could be made in the porous spaces left open to a new way of occupying space.

State officials quickly discovered how Kim was suggesting uses of these maps to underground networks, organisers, protesters, and the homeless. Just as the warrant for the arrest of a traitor was being written, Kim slipped away into the cracks, taking with hir the numerous notes and maps created. All other data being wiped clean from official state files, Kim left the officials with a single, slightly outdated, global positioning system corroborated map. While the maps made their ways into the right hands, there are no clear records of where Kim next went or who Kim became to escape detection. Stories about people living on the margins and in the streets have frequently been attributed to the tales collected and added by hir in the form of handwritten notes slotted in-between the folds of a precious map.

These maps of Saint Kim have resurfaced across the decades since queerdom come. Most if not all that have emerged from various contributors are now open source files widely shared and used for good. Some copies are likely still kept in secret, a necessary caution for when certain secrets will become powerful tools to aid the distressed.

A Tale Told by Saint Kim When Storytelling on Side Streets

Have you heard of the rakshasas? Some say they are blood hungry man eaters, banished from heaven and doomed to live on earth. Others say they form military alliances with noble men, forming great feats in battles and wars to quench their thirst with corpses of enemies.

This is a different tale of a rakshasa I used to know. Ze came to on many nights, in a dark alley near the outskirts of this city. Ze was seeking out the quickest and safest way to meet the gaze of a man who scorned and assaulted hir. This is what ze told me:

In my lonely travels, I chanced upon a noble young man who walked like a god. He had lean arms, the chest of a lion, eyes like lotus petals. Though delicate, he bore all the signs of royalty. Swarthy, radiant, the very image of the lover I never knew I wanted. When I saw him my desire grew. He was handsome, and I am beautiful in my own way.

He told me he was the eldest son of a great king, travelling with his younger brother and his wife. He was commanded by his mother and father to live in the forest, and he wanted

to perform his obedience to them, believing this to be the rightful way. He asked me to tell him truthfully who I was, who I belonged to, and what purpose I had.

Hearing his words and consumed with passion, I replied,

listen, then, I shall tell you, and my words will be truthful. My name is Shurpanakha. I am a rakshasa, who can take on any form at will, and I roam this wilderness all alone, striking terror into every living thing. I belong to no one and no body but I am part of a powerful clan of rakshasas who feed on the desire of humans who dare to cross our paths, exactly as you, your brother, and your wife have done. But I am prepared to defy them all, for I have never seen anyone like you. I approach you as I would a husband, with true love, noble man. Be my companion; what do you want with this singular wife of yours?

Alone, she is unsuited to satisfying all your desires and needs. Look upon me as your companion. And then, my beloved, you shall roam the world with me, viewing all the wonders of the world. When you like, you may return to your wife, but first try a taste of what I have to offer.

Thus addressed by me, the younger brother burst out laughing but then went on to reply with customary eloquence.

I stood there foolishly bound tight in my desire, and did not understand their laughter. The noble man smiled and, humouring me, replied in jest:

I am already married, my lady, and I love my wife. And for beings such as you, to have a rival wife is a source of bitter sorrow. But my younger brother here is of good character, handsome, powerful, majestic, and still unmarried. His name is Lakshmana. He has never had a woman before and is in need of a wife. He is young and handsome and will make a good husband, one suited to such beauty as yours. Accept my brother as your husband, large-eyed, shapely being. With no rival, the two of you will be inseparable as sunlight and Mount Meru.

When I, with a deepening desire to keep this noble man in my life by whatever means possible, heard him address me in this way, I reluctantly turned my gaze to the younger brother who laughed:

I shall make you a lovely companion, one befitting your beauty. And together we shall roam so pleasantly all through the world.

The younger brother smiled at my words and with customary eloquence made this fitting reply that I did not realise was in cruel jest:

Why would you want to be my sole companion, lotuslike beauty? I am completely subject to the will of my noble brother. I am a slave, and she who is my wife must be a slave as well. Become instead the junior wife of my noble brother, large eyed being of unblemished beauty. He is prosperous, and with him your fortunes, too, will prosper and you will be happy. Soon enough he will turn away from this misshapen slut, this hideous old wife with her pinched waist, and give his love to you alone. What man with any sense would reject this singular beauty of yours, my fair and shapely being, and bestow his affections on a human female?

So the younger brother spoke, and foolish me, unused to teasing, thought he was in earnest. Then the noble man, the invincible slayer of enemies, sat with his wife, and I addressed him once more, compelled by desire to speak the thoughts of my heart:

It is on account of this wife, this sole companion bound to you by legal matrimony, that you care so little for me. I have already suggested an alternative to the same legal restrictions your younger brother offers to tie me to you. I reject this. I shall live happily with you for just a while only. You are free to leave whenever you wish.

And with this, I flew into my frenzied dance of love, and with eyes flashing like firebrands I quickened my approach to the noble man I desired, like a giant meteor toward the star Rohini. But as I was about to fall upon him in an embrace, he treated me like the very noose of Death, and angrily restrained me, saying to his younger brother:

Never tease savage, ignoble creatures. Look at my wife, dear brother, she is frightened half to death. Now, tiger among men, mutilate this misshapen slut, this pot-bellied, lustful rakshasa pretending to be a woman.

So he spoke, and the powerful younger brother, in full view of the one I loved and was now horrified by, drew his sword and in a rage cut off my ears and nose. My ears and nose hacked off, I gave out an earsplitting roar as I fled back into the way I had come. Mutilated, spattered with blood, and all the more dreadful now, I roared incessantly, like a storm cloud when the rains come. Gushing blood all over, a terror to behold, I disappeared, howling, my arms outstretched.

I made my way back to my clan of rakshasas. Mutilated, I fell before them to the ground, like a bolt of lightning from the sky. Spattered with blood, wild with fear and confusion, I

told them the whole story. They wept with me as they pressed ointment to my wounds, called reconstructive surgeons to my aid, guided me through the process of healing.

The last step of this healing is to let go of this man who made me burn with desire. I only want to see him once more, to meet the gaze of the man I wanted and not to flee in terror as I once did from the hateful beast who mutilated me with his brother. I will then be able to leave quietly into the night, pack up this image and all these memories. I will not be able to forget this encounter, but I can slowly let the bitterness transform as I let myself go into the world. With every new dance and song of desire that I perform I will take on the forms that I will myself to be. I will defy anyone who dares to deny my right to pursue, my right to desire.



Saint Zareen of the Public Square
The Minor Saint of Collective Spaces

Saint Zareen became one of the main leaders and organisers of public protests throughout the region in the last few decades before queerdom come. Beginning as a graffiti artist, Zareen used ter own

blend of golden glitter paint that shimmered in the sun and was particularly difficult to wash off or cover up. Tey was noticed by grassroots organisers and activist leaders for the spunkiness found in each of ter works. Inviting Zareen for meetings, they allowed ter to grow ter voice and gave ter their open support. Believing in the public square as a place for celebrating gatherings of equals, Zareen always encouraged protesters to pack picnic baskets as they made their placards. A rallying and polarising figure, tey was often targeted by the opposing forces against queerdom come.

Surprising many stunned passersby, Zareen would casually invite tired and foul mouthed protesters from the other camp to join ter on ter picnic mat. Long conversations sprinkled with generous helpings of curse words would ensue between ter and these strangers. They did not talk about politics but about the weather, their life histories, their dreams for the future, their appreciation for sandwiches and a cooler for drinks. Rested and fed, the strangers often talked about these encounters with fondness and smiles. In later years, quite a few of these unlikely strangers joined Zareen on ter side of the protest, more than happy to take up an offer of joining others like tem.

When the method of the public protest became co-opted by more virulent opposing forces, Zareen went underground for years without a trace. Then, ter golden glitter paint began to scrawl again over public monuments, buildings, walls, barricades. In ter golden years post queerdom come, Zareen often had picnics near government buildings where tey once feared arrest and detention. Tey had a special affection for pigeons and always had a bag of birdseed ready for them.

The Code of Saint Zareen for the Use of Public Spaces

As a public space, state lands, fields, parks and squares are open for everyone to enjoy. The right to speaking in these spaces was established to ensure that an embodied presence can claim the right to expression. Believing that the digital realms can only go so far to connect humans on a visceral and instinctual level, the ability to congregate should not be a privilege granted only to persons deemed acceptable by any governing body. Places for any person to express themselves in various ways, such as delivering public speeches, holding peaceful demonstrations, exhibitions or performances is thus maintained as necessary communal and collective spaces.

Those who wish to express themselves in public spaces will never need to apply to any governing body. This should be done on a voluntary basis, with the governing body maintaining the public space beholden to the people to provide access to amenities and facilities in support of events like these.

The moral code for the use of public spaces, a space that you have the right to use as your platform for the expression of any view, idea or opinion for discussion, debate and deliberation is as follows:

Please use language that is inclusive of your audience.

Please respect alternative opinions.

Please show courtesy to other speakers and members of the public.

If others are waiting, please limit your time to a maximum of ten minutes. That is also about as much time as even an unusually erudite person can speak without being boring.

Use this space to engage, inform and enrich opinion — and whenever possible, entertain.

The governing body maintaining the public space does not have any right to duty to do the following:

Require persons to refrain from speaking or dealing with matters that may cause enmity or ill will between different intersectional positions and groups.

Require speakers to speak only in official languages or accents.

Require persons to never, at any time, display or exhibit items containing violent, lewd, or obscene material determined by subjective and undefinable scruples.

Prevent any person from joining the gathering or from expressing their right to speak, regardless of what identity the person holds. Non-citizens and non-residents are as much a part of the public, with rights and responsibilities, in any population.

We believe in the supportive communities that form when people gather. While this method for expression and protest has been abused and warped, past precedence should not be an excuse for limiting the rights of present and future peoples.



Saint Vinaigrette of the Tossed Aside
The Minor Saint of Derelict Buildings

Very little is known about the life of Saint Vinaigrette. More is known about the derelict buildings that we spent our life painting with fantastical colours and murals. These buildings ranged from abandoned houses and facilities, irregularly maintained heritage sites, white elephants gone to waste, and uncompleted construction sites. Saint Vinaigrette drew her own portrait on only one of the buildings, supposedly the one we stayed in the longest, an unnamed sanatorium on the outskirts of queerdom's capital.

Many of the murals, like the rooftop loft of an apartment complex that this illustration depicts, were made with astoundingly vibrant colours mixed from natural pigments gathered, crushed, mixed and used specifically for each site. While many of Saint Vinaigrette's murals are now faded away, a small following of artists have dedicated their lives to tracing each line we made with locally sourced colours. Supplies for the homeless have been added to each site as a homage to Saint Vinaigrette. A dedicated volunteer caring for the space by making twice weekly trips to check stocks and welcome any new residents to the space.

Since this following of artists began tending to Saint Vinaigrette's derelict buildings, even more derelict buildings have been transformed in a variety of styles inspired by the originals. Thousands of temporary residents, for the night or for years, have found solace in these quiet spots. The busyness of passersby that sometimes drop into the buildings rarely faze the residents. The most frequent passersby are the stray felines that find warmth and food alongside their human counterparts.

The Liberatingly Vague Creed of Saint Vinaigrette

This creed is inscribed in many of Saint Vinaigrette's reclaimed derelict buildings. Most notably, the creed has been replicated by many homeless graffiti artists around the world, sometimes symbolised by the symbol of a message in a vinegar bottle. In some locations, a facsimile Molotov cocktail is left as litter outside government buildings or the homes of doxed unpunished criminals as a muted sign of protest.

By calling ourselves residents of derelict buildings, we mean we are people who...

1. Believe that squatting in neglected spaces can lead to healing and wholeness, both through a mystical connection to the place itself, as well as an awareness and experience of not only the sacred, but the oneness and unity of all life that deserves a space to exist, thrive, and flourish;
2. Affirm that the teachings of hegemonic institutions provide but one of many ways to experience the sacredness, oneness and unity of life, and that we can draw from diverse

sources of wisdom, the rejection of owning property, the inevitable cycles of decay and life caused by nature, in our spiritual journey;

3. Seek and create community that is inclusive of All people, including but not limited to:

Conventional home dwellers, the homeless, and questioning sojourners,

Believers and agnostics,

Those of all races, cultures, and nationalities officially defined or otherwise,

Those of all sexual orientations and all gender identities,

Those of all classes and abilities,

Those historically marginalized,

All creatures and plant life;

4. Know that the way we behave towards one another and Earth is the fullest expression of what we believe, therefore we vow to walk as the kindest of us might have walked in this world with radical compassion, inclusion, and bravery to confront and positively change the injustices we experience as well as those we see others experiencing;

5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning with an open mind and open heart, than in absolutes or dogma;

6. Work toward peace and justice among all people and all life on Earth;

7. Protect and restore the integrity of our Earth and all of Creation;

8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love on this journey toward a personally authentic and meaningful living.



Saint Bob of Side Hustles

The Minor Saint of Workers in Capitalist Systems

Saint Bob had lived an ordinary desk job life until their mid-thirties. Living a life of temporarily blissful pleasures, the dullness of the work day was countered by the evening drive home: sweet treats eaten to the road trip soundtrack of minimalism podcasts and punk rock albums. On their thirty-fifth birthday, Bob received the overwhelming epiphany of the never-ending payments towards student debt, the mortgage, eldercare for their parents and this nebulous fund for a future marriage, future children, future grandchildren.

Forced to confront the nature of spending, Bob automated all payments and went off the grid for a year. Hitchhiking across countries, Bob became an odd job person for whatever household took them in for the night or week. Harvesting alongside poor farmers, becoming a costermonger for a day in busy city streets, filling in forms for government subsidies and unemployment benefits, being a nanny to nine children, a dog walker for six canines... Bob sweated and worked and slept better on a stranger's couch than they ever did in their own lonely essential oil diffused home.

Leaving the life of a stable desk job, Bob began to convert their apartment into the central living room for a small commune. Running a neighbourhood help centre, Bob also became a freelancer who wrote

articles for a mildly successful blog. These writings subsequently formed the basis for the daily devotional Bob's Bubbles. Every trusted neighbour was given a key to their apartment and there was a guarantee of a warm bowl of whatever's stewing in the crockpot. On the first day, everyone ate in surprise. On the second day, a neighbour brought a loaf of homemade sourdough. On the third day, a single-mother offered to take over the meal prep. People began to bring fresh herbs and fruit from their gardening plot, prized family recipes, throw cushions, loved books, spare mattresses, cleaning agents, their heartaches and joys. People stayed overnight, talking cheerfully or melancholically for hours with whoever was still awake and they would watch the sunrise together. Bob would be awake by then, brewing pots of tea and coffee to gently rouse the well-rested sleepers.

No one else quit their day jobs and professions. But as Bob aged, another Bob emerged and took over the day to day tasks of quiet organising that kept the neighbourhood connected. Bob slipped away quietly one night, going off the grid and never to be seen again. Some wandering vagrants claim to seeing Bob in the twilight hours, gently waving at whoever called their name. In memory of Bob, the apartment's living room kept a small memorial altar of all things bubbly and brimming with laughter.

The Daily Prayer of Saint Bob

I believe in anti-work, the anti-capitalist,
recreating our fallen world.

I believe in the free person,
conceived by the philosophers,
rejected by modern society,
now suffering under oppressive conditions,
who is physiologically and psychologically ill to the grave;
the person themselves regardless of race, language, religion, class
and gender and any other dividing positionality,
to be seated at the table of mankind,
where we will all be equals.

I believe in a shared life,
the respect for free speech,
the communion of all living things,
the righting of wrongs,
the recognition of privilege,
and a world without work.

And all in agreement say Aye.



Saint Chu Zuo Ci of Soup Kitchens The Minor Saint of Ugly Foods and Discards

Growing up with in a family whose lives revolved around the activity of the kitchen, Chu Zuo Ci quickly learned how to slice, chop, mince and dice in service of his skilled sisters, cousins, aunts, mother and grandmother. Meal after delicious meal was routinely prepared from miraculous sources of food. Anyone late to the table would have to be content with the last few delectable bites that remained. When he

was a teenager, famine and rising sea levels struck his hometown and his family dispersed into the wide seas of refugees drifting across the world.

Moving to the city in search of better prospects, Zuo Ci failed at recreating the taste of family meals in the cramped quarters he shared with a dozen other day labourers. Working as an illegal alien first at a fast food joint and then a neighbourhood diner, he worked his way up to become a line cook in one of the best restaurants of the world. Zuo Ci mastered combinations of flavours and exotic foods that no one else in his family had ever tasted. However, none of these daintily plated morsels tasted as hearty as the bags of kitchen waste he repurposed into feasts. Like the women in his family did in their cramped kitchens, he crafted full menus from the day's scraps. After closing time, Zuo Ci served as head chef to all the families at his quarters. Working at butcheries, supermarkets, delis and night clubs around town, they brought whatever they could from the trashed items of wealthy establishments to the tiny kitchen shared by a hundred residents.

When the next wave of famine and rising sea levels hit this city, Zuo Ci made one last visit to the vacated restaurant to pick up chef knives, a cutting board, a stock pot and whatever spices and condiments he could fit into his haversack. He drifted again, older and used to missing the family meals of his childhood, a poor gourmand who fed the bellies of those who gathered around him. He made stone soup for the greedy, tricking them into adding their plenty into his pot. He made nourishing stocks out of water for those who had nothing.

Zuo Ci eventually found a resting home in a warm soup kitchen that gave him a home and made him the chef of his own cobbled together family. Under his instruction, daily meals were served and no one was turned away. An elderly Zuo Ci passed away while waiting for dessert to be served. Those seated next to him noticed his unnatural silence, prodding him cheerfully and then concernedly at his unmoving belly. He always called out high praises to his apprentices after the first eager bite.

A Dream Recorded by Saint Chu Zuo Ci

I dreamed this after some naysaying political elites made this declaration against soup kitchens: "No one is so far astray and out of order as the gluttonous, self-serving poor, consumed by the excessiveness of their own fat appetites!"

There was a Great Master:

For him all eatables on earth should be savoured,
A consortium of flavours understood in an instant.
The field and the hearth were his door and window,
The heat and steam his garden paths.
He travelled without carriage or footstep,

Inhabited no room or hut.

He made of Heaven a curtain and of Earth a mat,
Following his guts as he pleased.

Each time stopped, he opened his table and lifted the covers of spectacular dishes;

Each time he moved, he packed up his travelling kitchen and raised his glass.

Food was his sole pursuit:

What else should he know?

There was a splendid young nobleman,

And a gentleman of tablet and sash.

They shook their sleeves and waved their lapels,

Glared at each other and gnashed their teeth.

Setting forth opinions on the rites and laws,

Truth and falsity rose up in contention.

And the Master

Then lifted up a fork and stirred broth in a bowl,

Fed himself generous servings and swallowed after contemplative chews.

He belched unabashedly and squatted down,

Made a pillow of rock and a mat of grass.

Without a thought, without a care,

His happiness was overflowing.

At times he was fast asleep,

And at times he would wake.

He listens so quietly he could not hear the sound of human chatter,

Looks so closely he could not see the mass of modern machinery.

He would not notice the chill or heat cutting his skin,

Nor cease in his search for more ingredients.

He looks down at the profusion of the myriad things,

At the tiny shoots of living things growing into fruition,

And these two worthies wait beside him,

Like the fly and the maggot waiting to be fed.



Saint Bhogayya of Pagan but Vegan
The Minor Saint of Charming Ironies

Coming of age in an ashram with her gone back to nature parents, Saint Bhogayya led an unusual life even amongst the recorded lives of the sainted aunts. Perceived as a unwitting and innocent victim of a cult, she was used to the repeated attempts of missionaries who wanted to save her from what they called: slavery of the mind and body. She often laughed merrily, invited them in for tea brewed from flavourful garden variety herbs and sent them confused and wondering whether her very delicious cake contained hash in it. It usually did not.

Inside the ashram, there was constant talk about psychic energies and auras that made intuitive sense and the outside world of rationality that labelled this jargon as indoctrination. Navigating between these two spheres, Bhogayya eventually left the ashram and was forbidden to enter its gated community or see her biological family again unless she renounced her worldly pride and came under the fold of the great leader again.

Integrating into the world outside the ashram was difficult, requiring the relearning of basic concepts, terminology, ways of being. Bhogayya missed the sense of having a tribe she belonged to, the fresh food that graced every mealtime, the vitality of encounters and spaces when everything and anything could be and probably was ritualised.

Coining the identifier Pagan but Vegan, Bhogayya became a leading voice of a new counter-cultural community of queers in the decades before queerdom came. Coming from many different so called pagan backgrounds, many of the members were survivors of fervent cults and sects. Together, they shared and used aspects of lives lived in the past that served them well, communicating what they desired from these previous selves and how they wanted to live their freed lives in the future. Many of them lacked the basic education required to seek out even menial jobs in the normal world. Enjoying the literal fruits of their labour, they harvested meals from the crops they planted. They subsisted on a vegan diet and enjoyed the company of animals purchased from terrible farming conditions and let loose onto the meadows and pastures cordoned off for them. Bhogayya invited and paid experts and teachers to join the community for as long as they wanted, training the members for basic certification and life skills required to transition back to normal society.

Numerous commentators and investigators have tried to pin down Bhogayya's ethics and principles. However, apart from being vegan and inclusive, her philosophy towards life has evaded strict definitions. Joyfully experimenting with her evolving community's myriad of rituals and practices, Bhogayya lived her life as she saw fit. Her very being enabled people to learn to care and love, regardless of how they chose to stay or move on from the resting place she provided.

A Ritual by Saint Bhogayya for Much Needed Laughter

Begin by putting on your headphones. Listen to the sounds that fill your ears.
Can you hear that?

Someone is laughing.

[]

That's a baby gurgling in joy.

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That's a group of friends sharing a well worn joke.

[]

That's a knowing chuckle from an elderly grandparent.

[

]

That's a shared moment of hilarity between two people who have started to forget what they were really laughing about but still cannot stop the laughter from bubbling out from them. Each time they try the other person begins another bout of giggles and they are both doubled over until their sides ache and they are gasping but that just brings even more laughter rising up from within them and out on the exhale.

It is wonderful to hear such laughter.

I record these sounds because I sometimes get anxious that I may never hear such innocence again. On days when I fear I cannot find any laughter in myself again, I force myself to hear these sounds. Recalling the times when I heard them or making up stories for disembodied laughs, I can begin smiling again. I notice how seriously I am taking this whole practice and I manage a little snigger at myself. On days like these, that is enough to keep me going.

Other people I have met are afraid of laughter. They worry about everyone laughing at them rather than with them. People fear sarcasm, biting irony, taunting jibes. But sometimes these are the entryway to knowing what we truly fear. When the nervous darkness of knowing laughter triggers within us, we should pay attention to it.

It is a signal for what affects us down in the depths of our guts. Trust those instincts.

If something can be laughed at, it is in the process of becoming something else. There is an unspeakable power in that.

This guided ritual is a moment taken for yourself to give yourself a little gentle grace through laughter.

You are all that matters in this moment. Distractions and diversions are a natural part of this process, and perhaps they'll be something that can trigger off a peal of unexpected laughter.

Find a position that feels comfortable to you. Gently inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. On the next exhale, close your eyes. Allow yourself to rest in the darkness behind your eyelids. You may notice those little bursts of colour that you see anyway, your visual system is still at work, still processing whatever light there is in your environment. That is a wondrous thing, how these funny bodies of ours work.

Begin to take deeper breaths. Through the nose, and out through the mouth. Listen to the rhythm of your breath. Notice its own undulations and patterns. Allow it to find its natural pace. If you find yourself distracted, focus it by thinking "I love myself" while breathing in. As you exhale, imagine the distractions floating away on your breath. They may not float far. They may be very near and immediate to you. Just continue to think and feel the words "I love myself". Embracing such self-given love is so rare in the world sometimes. There's an immediate sense of relief when we take the time to consciously breathe it in.

Let a smile begin to form as you breathe in these words. Feel it solidify into a statement that rings through. Feel the smile widen ever so slightly.

Now let a giggle to arise with your exhale. Just a soft release of breath. It can be a snort. I call it a mouth fart. Which it is. The natural passing of gas through an orifice of the body. Breathe in, hold it, and now let's hear your mouth fart.

Have you listened in to your mouth fart? Give it permission to expand. Just breathe and exhale this goodness you have to give to the world. Allow it to get as big as you can make it get.

We're now going to try and force a much deeper, bigger laugh. Fake it till you make this laugh unconditionally expansive, until it is the laugh that washes over you in waves. It may not happen in many of the times that you do this ritual, but it is waiting for you. Sneakily hiding just around the corner in a childish game of hide and seek.

If you notice your mind straying, let it stray back to the words "I love myself". If you are finding it very difficult to laugh today, shout these words "I love myself" as a big ass declaration of fuck you to the things that are drowning out your laughter. This is a

beautiful moment of healing you are giving to yourself. Let it be as huge, as gigantic as you can make it.

When you are ready, gradually start to slow this laughter back to a gentle giggle. Feel the tension in your body melt away as you calm the healing bigness of the laugh.

Relax the giggle into a soft, knowing smile. Continue to breathe deeply. As you breathe in, think "I love myself". As you exhale, let out the gratitude you feel for this moment, this space.

Thank you for joining me. Laugh on, dear friend.



Saint Umm of the Permanently Exhausted The Minor Saint of Self Care

As a teenager, Saint Umm was labelled reserved and shy. When ey could articulate eir need for help, Umm searched and found professional strangers who worked alongside eir throughout eir life. When adulthood struck, Umm often felt unable to face the day ahead. Completing the simplest of daily tasks - brushing teeth, eating enough, not crying during work hours - was sometimes impossible.

Constantly comparing eir past, present and possible future selves, Umm was permanently exhausted and reeling from the inability to function as a responsible and reasonably competent adult. Working as a transcriptionist for interviews, Umm heard stories from all around the world and felt no need to leave eir room. There was no pressure to interpret or respond to any of the content, just a need to type out exactly what was being said. To make these accounts searchable by key words and readable by others who were unable or unwilling to tune in to strange accents, halting fumbles, fillers and filibusters.

Umm kept to eirself and began writing in a journal whatever words ey could craft even on the worst days. On rare days, Umm recorded eir own voice and transcribed the recording exactly as ey did for a multitude of others. When Umm felt able, ey took long, meandering walks avoiding strangers and taking photographs of striking details ey encountered. The smashed shell of a snail, the creeping carpets of moss on bark, the blurred ripple in a puddle. Uploaded to eir blog, these photographs and eir words became

a task that ey held herself to doing once every day. Thousands of other quiet, homebound people across time and continents found comfort in eir sharing. On days when ey felt able, ey would prepare as many posts as ey could ahead of time. On days when even getting out of bed was challenging, ey mustered up enough resolve to walk the few steps, turn on the device, login to the account and click on upload. Ey would then crawl back under the covers, listening to the minutest sounds that formed an overwhelming symphony in eir mind.

Umm lived the life of a celibate hermit. When the night time weather was inclement, ey found a strange urge to walk through thunderstorms and drench eirself. According to all sources, Umm never did so, only daring to brew a pot of tea, crack open a window, and sit with the weather until daylight arrived again. Long after eir passing, some people claim to have seen Saint Umm calling out to lightning bolts and chanting spells to bless the land.

A Devotional from the Blog of Saint Umm

By lying face down on my bedroom floor,
I learn that even dust has its language.
Sitting here, where we once played.
The ancients had just breathed their
Last winds and we needed crayons
Not words to record the event.

I discover again how loud feigned silence can be.
The white noise of "ummm", "hmmm", "ork".
Monosyllabic platitudes of people pretending to listen
In a world which never has, never will, never will be
Ours. We pass through the motions of daily tasks
In mild surprise at our best intensions and worst habits.
I sometimes wait with bated breath for death
Or a little bit more of living.

Sitting here, I sweep up shards of bitter neglect
That clatter into the noisy space of people lacking
Silences; and why their speech ossified into
Dialogue that became too heavy for laughter
In our cautiously contrived communion.
Why, when we hurt like this, we bring
The resounding echoes of mumbled grumblings.

As if actions always speak louder than words
When everyone dares not whisper of wants
To free themselves of the dead's lifelong wishes.
When it all grows far too loud for speech:
I breathe — inhale, exhale, inhale — and say nothing.



Saint Lune of the Scattered Bibliotheque
The Minor Saint of Lost Archives

This collection of the lives of sainted aunts was started by Saint Lune. As keeper of the lost archives, faer official duties were to battle the mulch and silverfish that threatened the collections. These were the unofficial stacks, culled from the frequently cited sources that filled the national and international archives. Brought in shipment loads of containers from around the world, it was stored in an isolated series of warehouses large enough to contain the palpable writings of generations. Shortly before queerdom come, fae endeavoured to catalogue the growing piles of potentially queer histories and stories by examining the context and subtext of significant works.

Much of this scattered bibliotheque was destroyed by extremists set against queerdom come. Saint Lune and faer fellow librarians managed to store away the most sacred and notable findings in a network of underground bunkers. Some accounts suggest that the extremists left no survivors. Others suggest that locals in surrounding communities helped the librarians to escape. Most believe that Saint Lune would have preferred to disappear alongside faer unfinished work.

In the innermost bunker, an intact writing desk and a large box of diaries written with the same hand was found. Inscribed with the initial L, we believe that they were written by Saint Lune faerself. If so, Saint Lune had a very specific wish, to live on after death for a little while longer as a fairy tale that is remembered and retold. In faer sprawling studies of archives, fae witnessed postmortem the attrition of civilisations long ago, until barely an original manuscript remained. fae believed that the wish for immortality was a cruel joke imposed by the reigning hegemon. No record will survive forever. Everything changes and nothing stays the same. We've done our best to honour her wish in various chants dedicated to the sainted aunts and bedtime stories told to the young. We hope you'll say faer name at least once to someone else in the moonlight, or maybe even pen a story in faer name.

Marginalia Found in the Scrap Writings of Saint Lune

Spent many weeks translating and scouring the archives for obscure writers who sought personal pleasure. Many visitors to the bibliotheque have an interest in hedonism. I wonder why. Must remember to ask them more pointed questions. No one should feel embarrassed about asking for some pleasure in our little lives.

I have adapted a poem from Tang Yin, a disgraced scholar of the Ming Dynasty in China. His seal claimed that he placed first in the provincial examination, but it is recorded that he was complicit in the examination scandal at the imperial examinations. The recordings say that he frequented pleasure houses, seeking distraction from the could have beens of a life better lived.

The poem was once accompanied by a portrait of Chang'e, the moon goddess, punished for eternity to consume and make the immortal herb she stole from her husband. It is identified

as a cassia branch in this specific portrait. The word for cassia 桂 is a pun on the word for nobility 贵. Then again, some cultural historians believe that this was a portrait of a prostitute that Tang Yin favoured, pitying the mortal and immortal suffering that her profession would bring upon her soul.

I have written my own rules for my way of life. I regret nothing, but I sometimes wish I had yearned for more.

Fae was long ago a resident of the Moon Library,
Where sojourners and philosophers gathered and embroidered
stories into their clothes before journeying away.
Lune, in love with the dream of the gifted scholar,
Breaks off for faerself the topmost branch of the cassia tree.

Epilogue



Saint Delilah of the Unshaven
Minor Saint of Ringing the Devil's Doorbell

This was a pleasure project, created because I wanted a personal and mildly-heretic queer shrine crafted from my hodgepodge of artefacts and beliefs. There are numerous uncited works I have appropriated and changed and flourished to suit my fancies. I am most certainly ringing the devil's doorbell with my sainted aunts, but I believe they are the sort who would still choose to indulge me with more tea and biscuits.

For more sainted aunts and other scattered musings, I live mostly on Instagram as [annaonni](#).

With love and thanks for sharing this space with me,
Anna Onni

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