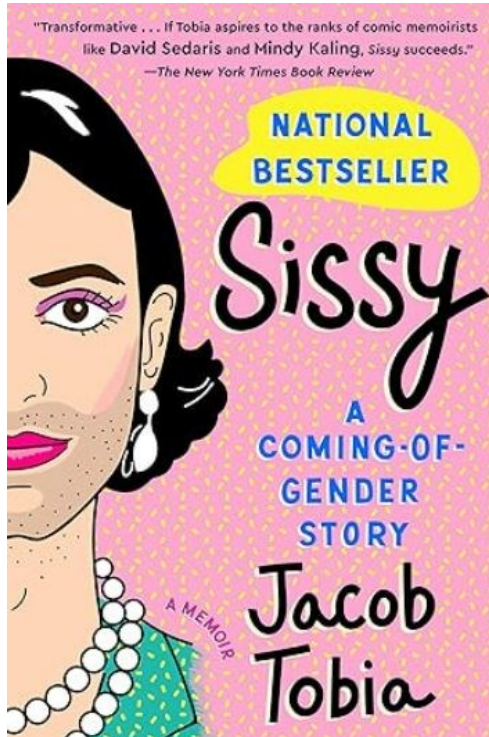


SISSY : A COMING-OF-GENDER STORY



Adult

By Jacob Tobia

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Book Summary:

A man recalls his past involving his gender and sexuality.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains sexual activities; sexual nudity; excessive/frequent profanity; derogatory terms; alcohol and drug use; alternate gender ideologies; alternate sexualities; and controversial religious, social and political commentary.

3 /5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

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2	I went downstairs on that rainy December night, gathered my parents around the kitchen island, and came out as gay.
6	There were queer conferences where I found entire rooms full of people like me. ...There were moments when I was onstage, performing in drag or performing as someone else, when I could sneak away from it. There was the summer I spent in Cape Town living with my gender nonconforming best friend, dressing up and hosting dinner parties.
7	As a gender nonconforming adult, I am still recovering from how the world treated me when I was a child. But because of the love that has been shown to me by other trans and gender nonconforming people, I am much further along in my recovery than I once was.
8	And this healing isn't just for gender nonconforming people. This healing is for everyone. Perhaps the greatest oversight of the trans movement thus far is that it has positioned gender-based trauma as something that only trans people experience. As a result, there are millions of cisgender, heterosexual people—particularly men—who have never coped with the trauma they've experienced, who don't even recognize their experiences as trauma in the first place. ...Through sharing my experiences on the margins, I'm aiming right for the center, for the core of how gender hurts us all.
9	Growing up, I didn't have the words trans or genderqueer. I didn't know that I even counted as trans until I was in my twenties. ...I'm the shiniest, queenliest, sparkliest faggot that I can be.
11	This isn't a book about a self-actualized trans person who knows everything there is to know about their gender; this isn't a book about a demure, polite queer person who's here to teach you Transgender 101; and this certainly isn't a book about a queen who's got everything figured out. In fact, this book is a rebellion against a mainstream, classical trans narrative that's, quite frankly, gotten a little repetitive. This far past the Trans Tipping Point™* the Trans Narrative © has basically been distilled into something of a Mad Lib™. It generally goes like this: My Classical, Binary Transgender Story I was born in the wrong body. The doctors told my parents that I was a _____ [boy or girl], but I always knew that I was the opposite of that. I grew up in a _____ [small/ medium/ big] _____ [town/ city/ village/ suburb] in a _____ [nuclear/ single-parent/ conservative/ dysfunctional] family. I told my mom that I wasn't a _____ [boy/ girl], I told my dad that I wasn't a _____ [boy/ girl], but no one believed me.
13	That's when I decided that I needed to transition. I started hormones and had a _____ [breast augmentation/ reduction]. Then I did the really hard thing and got "the surgery" to make sure that my genitals aligned with my identity. And don't even get me started on body hair! It takes so long to _____ [grow/ get rid of]. ...Now I'm living as a _____ [man or woman] and I couldn't be happier. I reintegrated into the gender binary and "fixed the problem," so now I'm a _____ [man/ woman] just like you! I am so happy now that my body finally aligns with what heterosexual society expects a _____ [man's/ woman's] body to be. Now I can be a normal person and live as a full part of society. Thank you for listening to me and hearing my authentic truth [smile so that you don't seem threatening]. Trans people are just like you!

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15	<p>What also frustrates me about the classical trans narrative is that it depends on trans people existing solely in the man-woman binary. Fitting into the gender binary, being a “real woman” or a “proper man,” has been baked into almost every facet of trans storytelling. Your body and the sex you were assigned at birth are poised as the enemy, as the dragon that must be slayed, as the Ring that must be hurled into Mount Doom, as He Who Must Not Be Named. At the end of the story, you have overcome your body to truly fit into the gender binary again. Fitting into the gender binary propels the rising action, the climax, the falling action, the denouement. Without the gender binary, many might feel that trans storytelling wouldn’t hold water.</p> <p>Sorry, but I’m not going to use the binary idea of “coming into my manhood” or “earning my womanhood” to orient you. This isn’t about any singular conquest, because as it turns out, trans storytelling gets better without the gender binary as the goal.</p> <p>...Free from proscriptive binary boundaries, we are able to tell stories that don’t come with an inevitable conclusion, and the possibilities become as endless and varied as the world around us. I’m bored of our culture’s obsession with binary-oriented storytelling. It feels like being stuck in missionary position, when all I really wanna do is ride.</p>
16	<p>I didn’t know that I was a girl. And forgive the double negative, but I wasn’t sure that I wasn’t a boy, either.</p>
18	<p>The trans narrative perpetuated by mainstream media fucking sucks because it rarely acknowledges history or community. It implies—or, at times, outright says—that this whole trans thing is new. That the trans experience is a product of the modern world. As if trans people haven’t been around for all of recorded history. As if gender nonconformity isn’t as old as gender itself. As if precolonial and indigenous cultures across the world didn’t have rich traditions of honoring gender nonconforming, trans, and two-spirit people. As if every trans person on the planet doesn’t owe our present freedom to the struggles of generations of gender nonconforming and trans folks who came before.</p>
19	<p>It’s time for trans folks with the messiest identities to step up to the plate. It’s time for gender nonconforming and nonbinary trans people to get the mic. It’s time for trans people of color to shape the story. It’s time for low-income and rural trans people to guide the narrative. It’s time for disabled trans people to set the course. It’s time for indigenous trans people to get the whole damn stage.</p>
31	<p>Before gay, before transgender, before genderqueer or nonbinary or gender nonconforming or GNC, sissy was the first word the world ever gave me.</p>
33	<p>I was six years old and hadn’t quite developed my political consciousness about cultural appropriation or the colonization of the Americas and subsequent genocide of Native American people at the hands of white settlers yet.</p>
35	<p>If we lived in a better world, I would’ve turned to her and replied, “Really, Jane? Are you serious right now? You want me to go as John Smith, the asshole colonizer? I mean, I know the Disney version of the movie makes his ethical position sort of ‘debatable’ or whatever, but we all know that is some propaganda bullshit. Are you seriously suggesting I walk around the neighborhood dressed as a genocide-perpetrating white dude?”</p>
46	<p>I wish that I had some poignant story about the moment I officially gave up on being feminine, about the moment I gave up on feeling happy in my skin, about the instant when I decided that the shame of being gender nonconforming was finally too much, but I don’t think gender works like that.</p>

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47	<p>Because self-destruction was the only coping mechanism that made sense to me at the time, at the age of eight, I often thought about killing myself. And I'm not talking abstractly. I'm talking vivid fantasies of suicide; fantasies that I never told my parents about; fantasies that I never told anyone about until I sat down to write this book.</p> <p>...For years of my life, I told myself this was normal. That kids just thought about killing themselves sometimes. That every third grader had experienced that.</p>
48	<p>I remember lying in my childhood bedroom for hours, fantasizing about what it would feel like for a knife to enter my wrists. On the rare occasions that I was alone in the house, I remember pulling our biggest knife out of its holder and staring at it for a few minutes. I remember running a butter knife along my wrist, careful not to leave a mark, just to see if anything would happen, just to see how it felt, scratching my skin.</p> <p>...On the contrary: Contemplating suicide at a very early age isn't remarkable for a trans child. So many of us did.</p> <p>I'm sharing this with you because I want the world to understand that depriving a child of the ability to express their gender authentically is life threatening.</p>
50	<p>In my adult life, I'm a chilled-out, millennial-as-fuck Christian. You know the type: loosely believes in God, but tries not to use the label "agnostic" so they won't seem like an asshole; believes in the spiritual teachings of Jesus, but is unsure whether the whole "God impregnated Mary" thing makes sense; believes in the concept of the Holy Spirit, but believes equally strongly in the power of crystals.</p>
53	<p>I also really liked God, or at least the idea of God as he was presented to me, because God was a little bit of a queen, too.* I mean, think about it: He sits up in heaven on a gold-ass throne with a bunch of baroque naked babies flying around him and demands that you worship him and sing him lots of songs or else he will destroy your entire city and kill all your relatives. Talk about a diva. I mean, like, the Old Testament is pretty much just a litany of all the times God threw a diva tantrum in his dressing room because one of his fans coughed during his performance.</p> <p>...He even had a weird stoner cousin, John the Baptist, who ate locusts and honey and lived in the woods, taking people on spiritual journeys in the local river.</p>
55	<p>The opera was called Amahl and the Night Visitors (which, it has only just occurred to me, sounds loosely like the title for a problematic Middle Eastern-themed porno. I can make that joke because my family on my dad's side is Lebanese).</p>
58	<p>I also think of her every time I recite the Lord's Prayer, albeit my updated-for-the-feminist-matriarchal-twenty-first-century version:</p> <p>Our MOTHER, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy QUEENdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven.</p>
59	<p>Also, let's face it: What nerds lack in homoerotic locker room culture and late-night sexual experimentation, they make up for in the ability to be pretty queer on a daily basis.</p>
60	<p>Half the time, his muscles would get so big and swollen and veiny and hard that they would rip half his clothes off. Then, all blond and sweaty and powerful and rock-hard, Goku would fight with some other dude (or alien), who was also sweaty, powerful, rock-hard, bleach-</p>

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	<p>blond, and throbbing. Honestly, Dragon Ball Z is so gay that even just writing this paragraph I got sorta turned on and had to suck on an ice cube to stop myself from going on Grindr.</p>
67	<p>Add the fact that—surprise!—I’m trans, and the story becomes nothing short of comical. ...For many gender nonconforming and trans folks, puberty feels like a death sentence, the beginning of the end. Your body starts to change and everything suddenly feels wrong and your whole world is turned upside down. In retrospect, I hate my puberty. I loathe it. I wish I’d grown up ten years later than I did, after the Trans Tipping Point™, so I could’ve gotten on hormone blockers, thought through some things, and perhaps made a more informed decision about how my body was going to progress. I hate watching little-kid Jacob squandering their ability to slow down their biological process; I want to buy them a chance at transitioning physically. I want to put on a really cute skirt, hop in the DeLorean, go back to the past, slap my fifth-grade self in the face, and just be like, “Hey! You! Stop this puberty mess. You don’t want it. Trust me.” And then, just as my time machine is running out, cry out, “You’ll have back hair by the age of twenty-siiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiix——save———yourself!”</p> <p>But to say that I begrudged my puberty as it was happening just wouldn’t be right. Honestly, I was way too busy being horny twenty-five hours a day, three-hundred-sixty-six days a year to even think about my gender identity.</p> <p>When testosterone hit my system, it hit hard, if you, erm, get my drift. Like, just hard all the time. Like, hard for absolutely no reason. Like, the wind would blow and I would get an erection. I would be riding into school with my carpool and the car ride would get a little bit bumpy, and presto—I’d get a stiffy. I would take one look at my crush, and kapow—accio, boner! The only useful thing about the childhood bullying I endured was that it compelled me to switch from short shorts to baggy cargo shorts. The switch was fortunate because cargo shorts just had, well, more room to move, as it were, without being seen.</p>
71	<p>It even had a few diagrams, which I found thrilling, especially the one of an erect penis inside a vagina. But most important, it had an entire section about sexual orientation, and specifically, about homosexuality and bisexuality.</p>
72	<p>I was no longer jacking off, I was masturbating. I was no longer gay or queer, I was homosexual or bisexual.</p>
73	<p>While it talked a great deal about vaginal sex, it didn’t discuss anal sex even once.⁸⁷</p>
74	<p>At the beginning of sixth grade, I still believed that a blow job had something to do with blowing air on or around a penis.* But those high school boys. They discussed making out and losing their virginity and they actually knew what they were talking about (or bluffed very convincingly).</p> <p>...Every spring and fall, we would pack our whole youth group onto charter buses and head off to a campground for the weekend, where we would spend 40 percent of our time talking about Jesus and the other 60 percent canoeing and speculating about the mechanics of hooking up.</p> <p>...Some of my friends even managed to sneak away for make-out sessions during free time.</p>
75	<p>I lived in constant fear of my dick, terrified that it would give me away, that I would see someone I was attracted to, get a boner at an inconvenient moment, and have my secret, my deviancy, revealed to everyone.</p> <p>...I rarely felt more alone than I did in those cabins after the lights were turned off. As my friends drifted off to sleep, I spent countless nights staring at the ceiling, resisting both the urge to masturbate and the urge to cry.</p>

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	...I think, on some level, that a number of fundamentalist evangelicals actually believed that 9/ 11 was God punishing us for the scourge of butt sex and glitter that was sweeping the nation.
84	Under the guise of wanting to have sex with girls, I was able to gain unfettered access to femininity. My straight friends wanted to get close to girls to know more about their boobs and vaginas. ...And in return, my brother got some fairly risqué sexual experiences, including, but not limited to, a girl showing him her boobs behind the multipurpose room during the annual Mardi Gras celebration.* In exchange for beads, of course.
85	I'm sure she meant this as a nudge in the right direction: Look, Jacob, David Bowie is so cool and gender-fluid and incredible and sexy and you can be all those things! ...For one, I was legitimately perturbed by how much you could see his dick in that movie. You know how male ballet dancers always have those sculpted, beautiful, well-padded crotches? Apparently Bowie felt that was too much effort or something, because my biggest memory of Labyrinth was simply seeing David Bowie's flaccid, lumpy dick boppin' around inside those tights.
87	When he wanted us to come down for dinner or when Meredith's parents came to pick her up, he would knock on the closed door, wait about five seconds (ostensibly for me to put away my dick or Meredith to roll off me or whatever he imagined was happening) and then ask, with the door still closed, "Can I come in?"
89	It hurt more than I can describe, and I'm someone who, as a consenting adult, takes it up the butt.*
91	You can get away with a lot, you can hurt me in a myriad of consensual and delicious ways, but you cannot, under any circumstances, chase me around your house with a flamethrower.
107	Second, I knew that all those dudes on TV who spent so much energy talking about how nasty homosexuals were either secretly wanted to get it on with other dudes or were just jealous of our innate ability to match fabrics. In my own head, I was crystal clear that Jesus didn't hate me because I was gay. Jesus was wayyyyyy too chill of a dude for that, and also Jesus hung out with hella prostitutes and weirdos, so he'd be like, "Sure, homos, come hang out too! We can all walk on water! Have some wine!"
109	Mostly just in the "oh my god I want to kiss boys so bad and I can't" sort of way. For those four years, my sexual frustration was profound. I masturbated eight thousand times a day.
111	That doesn't mean you have to rub your perfect love in our faces, okay? (Though you're welcome to rub other things in my face, just sayin'.)
117	Yes, I hated God for making me gay. I hated God for making me queer. But instead of trying not to be queer anymore, I decided that night that the only way to move forward in my faith journey was to forgive God for making me gay and finally embrace that the thing that made me different was the thing that made me beautiful.
121	Then, a month later, my brother was busted for smoking weed outside his freshman dorm.
131	Do queer people really owe honesty to people who have spent their entire lives precluding the possibility that we are anything but straight, anything but the gender we were assigned at birth?

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	<p>...I could've sucked a dick or two before having the big talk with my folks. My straight friends never had to have a conversation with their parents about their heterosexual desire before slurping on a D or munchin' on a muff, so why was I held to that standard? It strikes me as ridiculous that I should have to declare my sexual consciousness to the world around me before I could even explore it, before I really even knew what it was. No one should have to come out before they get the chance to (consensually!) put their mouth on genitals of some sort, just to be sure.</p> <p>After I came out as gay, I never officially came out as genderqueer or as nonbinary or as trans or as feminine. I never, not once, sat anyone, much less my parents, down and said, "My gender is different than what you think it is."</p>
133	<p>If you want to seriously ruin a family holiday, all you really have to do is tell your parents that you're into pounding—and, more important, getting pounded by—other men.</p>
149	<p>And as far as they were concerned, I was their official third wheel. We weren't a throuple, per se, because they would only kiss each other, not me; but I'd like to think we were emotionally polyamorous.</p>
155	<p>On another evening, I was perched on my homework couch—reading <i>Walden</i> by Thoreau and studying the transcendentalist movement—when I found myself brainstorming in the margins of my book:</p> <p>Gender Transcendentalism?</p> <p>I chewed on those words. Wasn't that what I wanted? To go into the woods, into a world of my own, build a gender of my own design, and set my own rules, free from the influence of the outside world? Didn't I want to transcend the binary? Float above the idea of manhood and womanhood, float above and beyond the idea of gender altogether, transcend to a higher spiritual plane? I twirled my hair with my finger, and after another moment's thought, scrawled:</p> <p>I'm a gender transcendentalist!</p>
160	<p>With each successive "thump" of the football hitting a wall and with each verbal expression of masculine dominion, a multitude of closet doors were slammed in my face. Some of these doors were ones I had never seen before, some led to rooms I had never known existed, and some were doors that I thought I had opened long ago. They were the doors of fluid sexuality, of ominous white privilege, of pervasive masculinity, of continual and sustained affluence, of reformed gender identity, of under-the-rug misogyny, of flawed moral principle.</p>
162	<p>I understood intersectionality—the way that white supremacy props up patriarchy props up poverty props up environmental destruction props up white supremacy again—on a gut level, even if I didn't know to call it "intersectionality" yet. I understood that sex workers are often stigmatized, barred from claiming their full humanity, by sexist culture and feminist movements alike.</p>
163	<p>I understood that by challenging gender norms and conventional masculinity, I was challenging, well, everything. Through challenging the idea of manhood, of being "a good man," of "manning up," I was burrowing deep into the core of power, privilege, and hierarchy. On a gut level, I understood that my freedom and liberation were wrapped up with those of so many others who were facing oppression.</p> <p>...It's just that we aren't understood as such because we love glitter and sequins and vintage dresses from the 1980s and our grandmother's clip-on earrings, and patriarchy deems all things feminine to be less intelligent.</p>

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167	<p>As a gay man, I understand diversity through the lens of privilege; because, in essence, diversity and privilege are diametrically opposed to one another. The presence of privilege is the absence of diversity, and conversely, true diversity can only exist after all systems of privilege have broken down.</p> <p>...I have learned that the walls of “the closet” are not composed of ignorance as much as they are built by the reality of heterosexual privilege. Thus, the closet door is the threshold between the world of privilege and the world of diversity.</p>
169	<p>Like, if you actually graduated from Harvard, you get to walk around with your crimson-colored, Harvard-branded dick out all day being like, “I graduated from Haaaaaaaahvahhhhd. Look at me!” even though everyone knows that graduating from Harvard doesn’t mean shit.</p> <p>...You actually have to move to New York City without a job at the New Yorker already lined up, keep your dick in your pants while attending a fancy party at the Harvard Club, and then get drunk enough to start blurting out, like some insecure asshole, “Oh, I totally got into Harvard but didn’t go” in order for people to fully understand your intellectual pedigree.</p>
171	<p>Wrapped in the validation of the ivory tower, protected for the first time by its toxic mantle of privilege, I finally gave myself permission to feel bitter and vindictive toward all the straight and cisgender people I grew up with.</p>
188	<p>Like clockwork, all three of them dropped their towels at the same time, standing buck-naked for a moment, locker room style, before stepping into the private shower stalls. I didn’t even have to spy. They just did it right in front of me. Like it was no big deal. Like they weren’t showing off their perfectly sculpted butts in front of a very sexually frustrated queen.</p> <p>...I could, by no means, handle seeing Kyrie Irving’s butt on my third day of college. My body was not ready. My mind was not ready.</p>
191	<p>By the end of the first weekend, the massive, twelve-by-six-foot benches out front of three freshman dorms were graffitied with the slogans “Drunk Bitches Love Cock,” “TITS,” and “HERMAPHRODITE.”</p>
195	<p>When used properly, drag is a radical tool that challenges the gender binary by mocking it, heightening it, exaggerating it, or rejecting it altogether, but that doesn’t mean all performers experience it equally.</p>
202	<p>“YOU GOT SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT MY LIPSTICK? YOU GOT SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT MY FASHION CHOICES, YOU PIECE OF SHIT? DOES MY LIPSTICK MAKE YOU INSECURE, LITTLE BOY? DO YOU NEED TO SHOW YOUR FOOTBALL BROS JUST HOW MUCH OF A MAN YOU ARE BY MAKING FUN OF ME? WELL, THE JOKE’S ON YOU, ASSHOLE: MEN AREN’T EVEN REAL. GENDER IS FAKE. AND THE ONLY GUYS WHO MAKE FUN OF GENDER NONCONFORMING PEOPLE ARE GUYS WHO SECRETLY WANT TO FUCK US.”</p> <p>...“IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT, DUDE? YOU WANNA FUCK ME? IS THAT IT? HUH? WELL, GUESS WHAT? I WOULDN’T FUCK YOU IN A MILLION YEARS, YOU BRAT. YOU WANNA KNOW WHY? BECAUSE DUKE FOOTBALL SUCKS AND Y’ALL HAVEN’T WON A GAME ALL SEASON. MAYBE TRY ACTUALLY BEING GOOD AT FOOTBALL. WIN A GAME FOR ONCE. THEN, MAYBE, IF YOU’RE REAL LUCKY, WE CAN HAVE A CIVILIZED CONVERSATION ABOUT EXACTLY THE METHODOLOGY I WILL EMPLOY TO DESTROY YOUR DICK. CAPISCE, MOTHERFUCKER?”</p>
203	<p>“You’re late for our double date,” Taylor fusses, playfully pulling on my scarf before planting a kiss on my red lips.</p>

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214	<p>You tell yourself that you aren't the only trans person in student leadership because Duke excludes trans people and creates a culture that is hostile toward trans success; you tell yourself that you're the only trans person because you are that much more talented than the rest of trans people, because you are better than the rest of your community.</p> <p>...It's that most trans and gender nonconforming people simply weren't bright enough to make it into Duke in the first place.</p>
216	<p>So while many of my friends in college were alternating late-night study sessions with dating, raucous social schedules, and sex lives, I threw myself almost wholly into work, only partying on occasion to keep up appearances. Though none of my peers really knew it, I lost the ability to party, the ability to drink frequently, by my sophomore year.</p> <p>...My fellow students drank and got horny. I drank and spiraled into self-loathing and despair.</p>
220	<p>Why do I feel like I'm the only person with facial hair and high heels here? I pondered. How is that possible? I mean, there are definitely trans people here, but where are the other nonbinary/ genderqueer/ gender nonconforming femmes like me? Where are all the other sissies?</p>
224	<p>When President Obama finally did come out to give his speech, the cheers were deafening. He spoke eloquently and with poise. But honestly, I can't say that I was altogether focused on what he was saying. If we are keeping it one hundred here, my brain kept playing one thought over and over again:</p> <p>If that isn't one of the sexiest men I have ever seen.</p>
228	<p>And if you're trans like me, "being professional" can mean putting your identity away unless it conforms to dominant gender norms.</p> <p>...Plainly put, the imperative to "be professional" is the imperative to be whiter, straighter, wealthier, and more masculine. A wolf in sheep's clothing masquerading as a neutral term, professionalism hangs over the head of anyone who's different, who deviates from the hegemony of white men.</p>
244	<p>I needed to tell masculine respectability politics to fuck off.</p>
245	<p>I had labels upon labels, hundreds of identities to choose from—queer, femme, trans, gender nonconforming, genderqueer, genderfluid, gay, fabulous, gorgeous, nonbinary, cute, gender transcendental, genderfucked, unicorn, motherfucking witch—so what could I possibly need "man" for anymore?</p>
246	<p>I stopped saying I was "gay" and started saying I was "genderqueer."</p>
255	<p>I was going to have to figure out how to navigate professional culture that made it difficult to be gender nonconforming.</p>
256	<p>It also didn't help that Rachel Maddow was a Rhodes Scholar. I mean, if Rachel did it, I should too, right? She's so handsome and dapper and cute and smart and I wanted to be like that (and also maybe transition and become a lesbian so I could marry her? Are you into that idea, Rachel? Let's talk.).</p> <p>...Fourth, and by far most important, no amount of privilege earns you the right to be gender nonconforming. Gender nonconforming people truly are the object of scorn and reprimand at every socioeconomic level, among every class of people.</p>
259	<p>My Marshall Scholarship interview was abysmal. It took place at the British Consulate in downtown Atlanta, in a conference room on the thirty-fourth floor of a skyscraper. When I walked in and saw four old white men and one older white woman on my interview panel, I</p>

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	knew my odds were slim to none. I prayed that maybe one of the dudes was at least gay or something, but didn't hold out hope. The fact that anyone could set up an interview panel for the southeast region of the United States in a black-as-fuck city like Atlanta, Georgia, and not even put a single black person (or any person of color) on the panel was beyond me. The Marshall Scholarship should be ashamed of themselves.
261	Interviewers have to be empathetic and kind, affirming the interviewee actively as the interview progresses, going out of their way to ensure that the interviewee knows that people like them are welcome. To neglect that duty is to condone racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or worse.
263	The dual forces of family rejection and structural discrimination—racism, poverty, xenophobia, and others—lead to LGBTQ kids being out on the street with no safe place to turn and no ability to safely navigate the state institutions that are purportedly in place to protect them . . .
265	She was doing her part to welcome me into a sisterhood; a tradition of women and femmes who'd smacked headfirst into the glass ceiling; a legacy of women and femmes who'd fought for what they deserved, only to be denied because of our gender.
271	You don't have to be a bad person or even have bad intentions to personally profit from sexism, homophobia, or transphobia. You don't have to do anything. As a heterosexual, cisgender masculine guy, you simply have to throw your name in the ring against someone like me and automatically you have those forces on your side. All you really have to do is say nothing against them. All you really have to do is keep quiet, remain "neutral" in the face of fucked up power structures, and those fucked up power structures will go on to do what they do best: walk all over people of difference.
276	<p>"Yes of course, I have a male body. But why does that mean I have to go with the other males? Are we only going to be talking about our bodies? Are we only going to be talking about our penises and beards and how weird it is when you start to grow hair around your nipples?"</p> <p>..."But I swear to God, if people start talking about their gender instead of their bodies, I'm gonna lose it. This better be an hour-long conversation about dicks."</p> <p>...Much to my disappointment but not to my surprise, we did not spend the time talking about our male bodies. I wish we had. I love talking about my dick—what it wants, what it doesn't want, my insecurities about it—and I'm always happy to trade best practices on masturbation, prostate stimulation, or body hair grooming.</p>
280	I resigned myself to a life of being mistreated, misunderstood, miscategorized in a world that could only see gender as one of two options.
285	Or when I decided I wanted to start using gender-neutral pronouns everywhere, not just at queer conferences. And I started telling people on campus—professors, students, administrators, everyone—that they shouldn't call me "he" or "him" anymore, that I wanted to be called "they" and "them." I felt a new sense of power because I was finally learning to stand up for myself; because I was finally acknowledging that my gender deserves to be accommodated and treated well by other people, even if it requires them to use language and pronouns they aren't used to.
286	Or on the last day of classes, when we had a big music festival on campus and everyone drank all day and I ran around drunk in a neon pink tutu and bodice with a smaller purple

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	tutu around my neck to round out the look, then met up with Sunny and Ronnie and other friends and we all painted our nails in the common room at the end of the night.
286	I don't think that you have to actually succeed at having a lot of sex in order to be a good slut. These days, sluttiness is more of a political mind-set, a rebellious declaration of sex positivity, than an activity. During graduation weekend, I was at my peak. I used the unruliness of my body, its immodesty and irreverence and lack of discipline, to fight back. I was a dignified social-justice slut who never actually succeeded in getting laid.
292	<p>Not only was I making him be seen in public with me in a dress for the first time, I was making him be seen in public with me in a slutty dress, which was fabulously too short and might've shown a bit of bulge at the right angle, for the first time.</p> <p>It was truly a double whammy, because we were combining a big cis-father/ trans-child fight with a separate, more classic fight that most girls have with their parents at the age of fourteen: the "you can't go out in that skirt, it's too short" fight. So I was having my gender-affirmation and my sex-positive-femininity fight with my dad at the same time.</p> <p>Dad, I'm gender nonconforming and you have to get used to it. And I'm also kinda slutty and you have to get used to that, too.</p>
294	I left Duke knowing, more categorically than ever, exactly how resilient I was. If I could end four years at Duke standing firmly onstage in slutty Jackie Kennedy drag, singing the Alma Mater in front of thousands, I could take on anything.
297	I spent the rest of the evening celebrating four years of identity development and work well done in the only fashion truly befitting a revered institution such as Duke: by accidentally flashing everybody my underwear. The more drinks I had, the less I seemed to notice the exact geometry of my legs and their intersection with my skirt. I danced on the bar: probably flashing everybody. I danced in the cage: probably flashing everybody. I danced on the giant sculpture of a rearing white horse: definitely flashing everybody. I have photographic proof of that one, a picture of me proudly standing on the horse's rump, holding on to its mane, perching the leg closest to the camera at an upward angle so you can perfectly see my dark blue briefs.
298	<p>Being gender nonconforming as a college student felt easy enough. People expect you to play with gender and sexuality while you're in school, to experiment a little.</p> <p>...It's okay to try hooking up with girls in college, Tina, just so long as you settle down with a good man in the end.</p>
301	<p>If I pretend you've always been a perfect dad, if I erase the parts where you were a little bit of a jerk (or the parts when I was a little bit of a jerk), I would be doing a disservice to other dads out there who are struggling to get through their own ideas of masculinity in order to love their gender nonconforming kids.</p> <p>The reality is that you were not raised to understand a child like me. You were not brought up in a world where someone like me was deemed possible. And yet, after you married Mom and had kids, you found yourself contending with the impossibility of my gender.</p>
303	I love that you've always had a gender-bending edge yourself, though there are times when it makes me question whether we are, in fact, related.
310	Gay boys won't touch you with a twenty-foot pole and you don't have the right equipment for straight guys, so you're stuck trying to find all the beautiful bi-/ pansexual dudes out there, and even though, statistically speaking, millions and millions of people are bi/ pan, bi erasure is real, and finding actual bi/ pan guys on dating apps is really hard. So you haven't

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	<p>gotten laid in a lot longer than you'd care to publicly admit. ...You just have to become a national sensation and write a show for yourself where you get to date Chris Messina and Glenn Howerton and Seth Meyers and a bunch of other traditionally gorgeous guys and then everyone will figure out that they actually wanted to fuck you this whole time.</p>
312	<p>You owe everything you are to Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera and Flawless Sabrina and Miss Major Griffin-Gracy and Bamby Salcedo and Joan of Arc and Walt Whitman and Christine Jorgensen and Holly Woodlawn and Candy Darling and Mary Henly and Joseph Lobdell and Jennie June and Billy Tipton and Virginia Prince and two-spirit people and every gender nonconforming person who rioted at Compton's Cafeteria and every trans person who rioted at Stonewall and thousands and thousands and thousands of others. ...You also know that Jesus was nonbinary. It's kinda obvious to you, actually, at this point. God is clearly too big, too wise, too omnipotent to have an easily discernible binary human gender. I mean, God made all the genders, so clearly God isn't just one. God is genderless, or rather, genderful. And, according to Christian theology, Jesus is the child of God—God's spirit manifested in a human body that just happened to be male. So Jesus was a genderless, divine soul living inside a male body. Which means that Jesus was nonbinary and a member of the trans community. The way I see it, either you believe Jesus is the child of an omnipotent, genderless God and was therefore trans, or you're denying the full divinity of Jesus Christ. Boom. Take that, haters.</p>
319	<p>God is a woman, by the way. Likely a transgender woman of color, according to contemporary biblical scholars (i.e., me, my friends, and Ariana Grande). ...I know that I've already said that God is a trans woman, so I think it's worth clarifying: when God isn't busy being a woman, she can also take the form of a gay man, trans dude, or butch lesbian. God's genderfluid like that, praise be unto Her/ Him/ Them! ...cisgender + heterosexual = cishetero. It's an abbreviation that queer/ trans folks use instead of having to type out "cisgender, heterosexual" a gazillion times on Twitter. ...If we're being completely honest, I don't even think you should have to be "a couple" in the classical sense to get married. I want people to be able to marry as many of their platonic friends as they want. If I'm Phoebe (and I am), why shouldn't I be able to marry both Monica and Rachel? I mean we all (basically) live together, we're functionally co-dependent, and we all find Ross obnoxious. Sounds like marriage material to meIn eighth grade, I thought that flamboyant, sex-positive gay men made "the rest of us" look bad. In the present day, I have become a flamboyant, sex-positive activist who dances in the street, scantily clad, while demanding my rights. Whoops. ...God bless Obamacare and the LGBT Center of Los Angeles's health clinic. Oh, and it should go without saying, but fuck capitalism. ...Have you ever been to the Castro with your parents? In addition to the giant rainbow flag billowing over the street and the endless sea of posters featuring half-naked nineteen-year-olds in kinky puppy outfits, there is a bakery that sells cookies shaped like literal dicks. My dad deserves major kudos for not only keeping his cool there, but financing the excursion. ...* Check out @gnat_glitter_kink on Instagram. I promise you will not be disappointed.</p>

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	42
Bitch	2
Cock	1
Dick	19
Fag/Faggot	18
Fuck	79
Goddamn	6
Piss	1
Shit	33
Tit	1