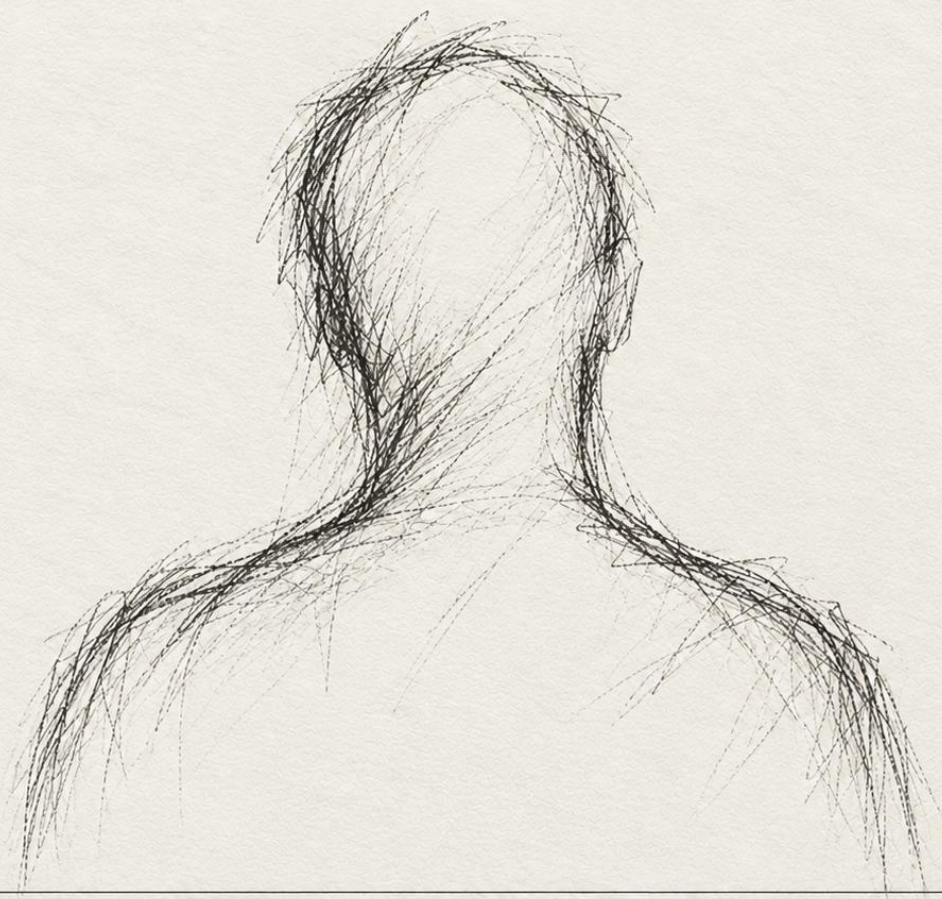


Written, Then Spoken



Poems & Prose by Paul J Burgess

Life. Love. Loss. Rage. Hope.
And everything in between.



A Few Words Before the Other Words

I have been writing for most of my life, although I haven't
always thought of myself as a writer.

Some of the pieces in this collection were written as poems.
Some were articles. Some were Facebook posts or thoughts
tapped into my phone because something had happened,
something was bothering me, or words had simply arrived and
demanded somewhere to live.

Very few of them were written with the thought that one day
they might sit together in a collection like this.

Writing, for me, isn't only an artistic exercise. It is often
cathartic, healing and, at times, essential to the way I deal with
the world.

I write when I'm happy. I write when I'm angry. I write when I'm
grieving, questioning, remembering, celebrating or trying to
make sense of something that doesn't make much sense at all.

Sometimes writing helps me find an answer.

Sometimes it simply gives the question somewhere else to live
for a while.



The pieces here span many years and many different versions of me. I've deliberately allowed them to remain largely where they were written. I'm not the same person I was twenty, ten or even five years ago — none of us are — but those words belonged to that version of me, at that particular moment.

I've corrected the occasional spelling mistake and misplaced apostrophe along the way, but I haven't tried to rewrite the person who originally wrote them.

I also write much as I speak.

There are pauses where perhaps a comma shouldn't technically be. Sentences occasionally stop before the grammar police would like them to. Some thoughts arrive LOUDLY. Others barely whisper.

That's how I hear them, and that's how they're meant to be read.

So, if you can, imagine a soft-voiced Northern fella — occasionally in a fabulous frock — reading them to you.

Some are serious. Some are ridiculous. Some hurt. Some healed. Some still do.

They're fragments of a life lived, loved, lost, questioned, challenged and celebrated.

They're pieces of me.

Written, then spoken.

Paul x

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ART



Art can make you vomit
It can kick you in the balls
Leave you crying in the corner
Send you screaming down the halls

Born of creativity
Made of imagination
A chorus of a million
One singular sensation

We artists need to make things
With our voices, hands and hearts
From the show that runs forever
To the dance that never starts

Expression is the air we breathe
On canvas, stage and screen
On paper, in the studio
Too much of it unseen

We ask you see and hear us
Help us reach whatever goal
For when we share our work with you
We're offering our soul



© Paul J Burgess



TIME



I was eighteen just a week ago. I'm sure of it.

A few days later I was in my mid twenties and life was wonderful.
Everything was within my reach. I knew little of politics,
nor did I care to.

Surely that time was no more than days ago?
Wasn't it?

Sometimes it feels like the essence of my youth has been poured
into a vessel too old and worn and cracked for something so vibrant
to occupy it comfortably.

I don't occupy it comfortably.

I look for ways to strengthen this vessel. I try to make it appear
younger, newer, more alive. I try to make the wrapper match the
contents, the cover match the book. All to no avail.

What happened?

Did I really 'put off 'til tomorrow' quite so much?

Or has some master of time, some soul swindler, played a dirty trick
on me and now laughs with evil glee at the confusion cruelly
placed in my head?

Was I really so angry at my parents for so long, or was I
subconsciously trying to end our relationship so I wouldn't
have to face the inevitable?

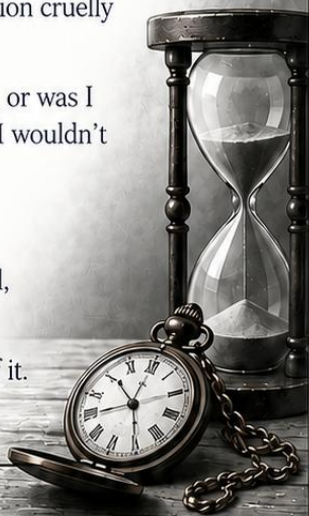
Could I be that shallow?

I know the clock ticks constantly, but still,
where did all this time go?

I was eighteen just a week ago. I'm sure of it.



© Paul J Burgess





Luna



I'm more than you made me feel.
More than you expected.
Much more than you dreamed I'd be.
Not now the one rejected.

I grew so big from little.
Such height for one once small.
And all those things you thought of me.
My big deflects them all.

I hope you've learned support now.
I hope you've found your soul.
Empathy and kindness should be every human's goal.

Don't worry that you scarred me.
They healed and now they're gone.

Don't hurt others, let them be.
I'll be your final one.

For all of us.



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SURVIVOR



Once I was a victim.
Now I'm a survivor.

My victimhood tried to define me.
It tried, and tries to make me into its very definition,
but I am me, and it hadn't factored that into its equation.
It is strong, though. More powerful than I acknowledged.

It has many facets, dozens if not hundreds of battlefronts,
It gets into places you'd forgotten you even had.

An impact statement can only use words, written then spoken.
It can never, will never and could never tell even a quarter of the tale.
The tale is ongoing. A series. There are episodes to come, not yet written.

Victimhood assumes it will always win.

And so do I.
So will I.

It has pity, sorrow, regret and pain as bedfellows.

I have a husband, belief, power, strength, will,
promise, hope, energy and the future.

I live, and I tell the tale.
I'm a survivor.



© *Paul J Burgess*





PRIDE



There's plenty time to party and there's lots of time to dance,
But let us not forget those, who never got the chance.
Many Queens before us had to take the hateful heat
So that we who follow now can dance to freedom's beat.

Let's go back to yesteryear, late sixties, Stonewall Inn.
A balmy night in June when all of this would soon begin.
Marsha P Johnson, and so many others too.
Would rise up to intolerance, and fight for me and you.

With wigs and heels as weapons, they would hide away no more.
"COME ON" they screamed, "rise up now, bust out that closet door".
A riot was predicted, and a riot came to town.
All of us together, never ever backing down.

Fast forward through the decades, many groups would come and go.
Each fighting for a freedom that we queens were yet to know.
And one by one the laws would change, intolerance rejected.
We were going nowhere and our lives would be respected.

Our younger generations, persecution oft denied.
Will rarely know the stories of the warriors that died.
With lives in dedication to the causes in their soul.
The freedom of their family, an ever moving goal.

So here today we celebrate the freedoms won by others.
The past determination of our sisters and our brothers.
They gave us the keys to unlock all we have inside.
So lift your head and party now. To all, a happy Pride.



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THEY STAY



No-one ever leaves you if they live
within your heart.

Our memories live on and so we never really part.
Loved ones now in spirit still surround us every day.
Giving us their wisdom to help us on our way.

Only helping out when they are sure it is required.
Always there to talk to, they are never, ever tired.
Offering their guidance through the passage of our days.
Here whenever needed, in a thousand different ways.

The love of those around us and the lives we choose to lead.
Reflect to them their legacy. The culture of their seed.
Know that they're around you and in everything you do.
The essence of the people passed is still alive in you!



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Jason



Roses are red.
Bluebells are blue.
I was a lonely boy, 'til I met you.

First we were good friends.
Then we got hitched.
All of our lone times and sad times were ditched.

Many years on and we're still here, together,
In gay years three decades is just like forever.

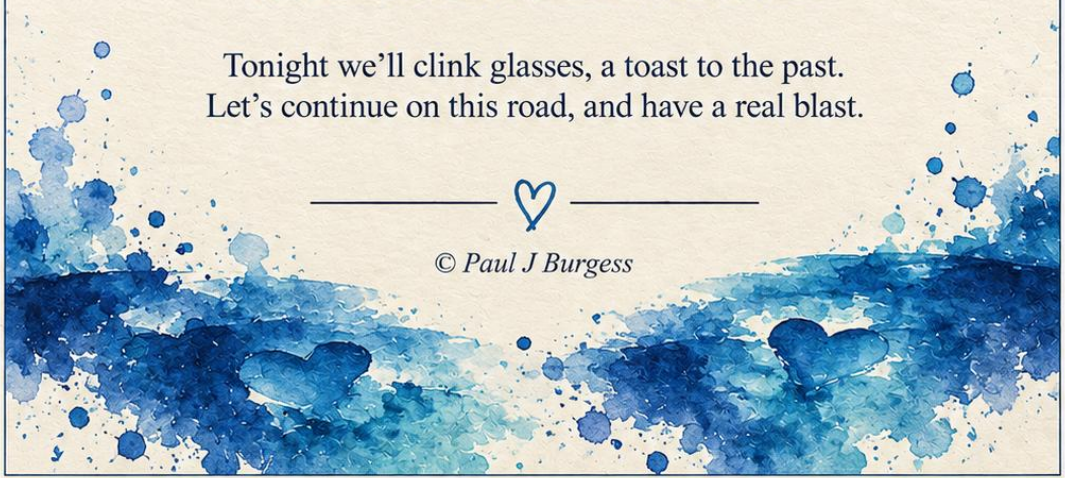
So here's to our future, to Those Vegan Guys.
To know that you love me, I look in your eyes.
I see all I need there, in puddles of blue.

On this day, on ALL days. I'm glad I'm with you.
With good times ahead and with you by my side.
I'm thankful to be on this wonderful ride.

Tonight we'll clink glasses, a toast to the past.
Let's continue on this road, and have a real blast.



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There for you



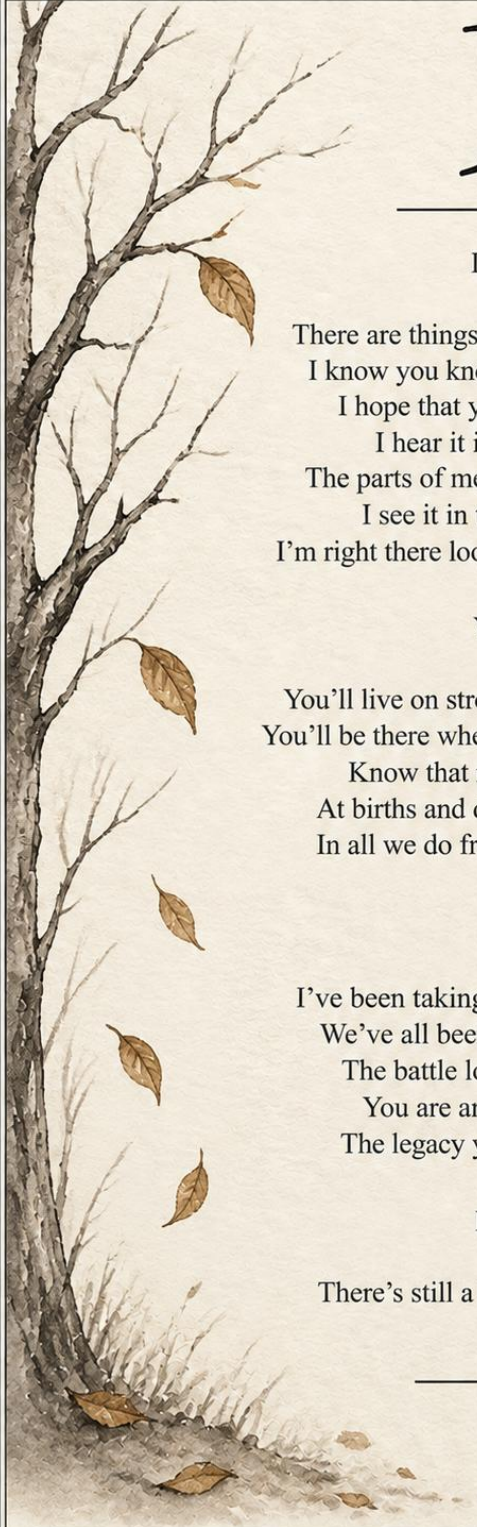
I will keep my arm extended,
and my hand at open clasp,
so that if you find you're falling,
there will be something to grasp.

I will stand out in the sunshine,
when in darkness you reside,
so that when you find you're ready,
there will be a friend outside.

Although I cannot be there,
at the time we are apart.
Know that you will always have
a place here in my heart.



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Dad



Don't go away too soon Dad.

Not right away. Not yet.

There are things I have to tell you, I don't want you to forget.

I know you know I love you, and I know you love me too.

I hope that you can see Dad, how much of me is you.

I hear it in my conversation, almost every day.

The parts of me that come from you have quite a lot to say.

I see it in the mirror when I have myself in view.

I'm right there looking back at me, and you're there looking too.

You'll always be around Dad.

Even when you're gone.

You'll live on strong in all your kids, from four right up to one.

You'll be there when we all fall down, you'll see when we achieve.

Know that now and set in stone. To be is to believe.

At births and deaths and celebrations you will be around.

In all we do from now to end, our Dad will still be found.

After revelation.

Since that darkened mile.

I've been taking mental pictures and recording every smile.

We've all been marking moments and trying to pitch in.

The battle long and arduous but sorrow will not win.

You are an inspiration in the most unlikely ways.

The legacy you leave is simply all the stuff that stays.

Don't go away too soon Dad.

Not right away. Not yet.

There's still a lot to say, and we don't want you to forget.



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INSIDE



You may not always know me, yet I
am always there.

Every moment, good and bad, every
thought I share.

I'm your strength and wisdom,
always right at hand.

Should you need someone to hear or
simply understand.

Living deep within you, growing
every day.

I will never leave you. I must always stay.

You must learn to know me, friend,
as I discover you.

When we work as one there's not a
thing we cannot do.

I speak of us as two and yet, we
two are only one.

Weaving all our wisdom until all
the pain is gone.

I'm your crutch in weakness, the
strength to reach your goal.

I'm the deepest part of you. For I am your Soul.



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LOCKDOWN

I miss you.

Yes. YOU.

Lady at the bus stop. Man in the queue. Young woman with a child at the checkout in front of me. And on. And on.

I miss the random conversation about the weather. The clearly expressed joy regarding the upcoming school holidays, suddenly never ending. I miss hearing you complain about the bus service.

I miss the random smiles, nods, the speedy 'good mornings' as we pass.

I was at Sainsbury's last week, queueing in the new way. My position marked out with a cross on the concrete, in yellow and black tape. Moving one cross at a time, in slow procession, as the ones at the front hear the new rules before they enter, in 5s and 6s.

One way out. One way in. Proceed through the store. No coming back. No passing go. No collecting £200.

There was a lady in front of me. Grasping the freshly sanitized trolley handle. She was shaking. Not enough that everyone could see, but enough to see, if you could really see. It was almost our turn to go inside — and the staff member allocated the role bid us good afternoon before outlining the rules — again. It was a well-crafted script, no doubt one she had repeated exponentially throughout the day.

We listened. We nodded. When the instructions were complete I said, as is my new normal —

“Thank you, your work is appreciated, very much.”

The lady in front of me turned and added.

“Yes it is. Very much.”

Now you could hear the shake. Delicate. Adorned with years of experience, tough living, grit and purpose, but still there. Clear to open ears and eyes.

I wanted to hug her. I wanted to say it was okay, we were going to get through this.

Instead I just smiled.

But of course, smiling behind a mask cannot always be seen.
I hope she saw it in my eyes.
I hope she didn't see the tears welling. I didn't mean for them to come.

I ventured inside and followed my set path to the shelves I needed.
Swerving around others, keeping a safe distance.

I saw the lady again, in the biscuit aisle. She was taking a pack of digestives off the shelf. I stood on one of the crosses — now inside the store too. This time I spoke to her.

“A biscuit and a brew, we've still got that.”

This time there was a little smile, cautious, but visible in her eyes.
She responded.

“It's always the little things.”

Then she was gone.

I grabbed a pack of digestives myself. Scanned them with my app
and popped them in my bag.

I looked forward to being back home. Decontaminated.
Dipping a biscuit into my coffee.

It really is the little things.

And I really do miss you.
Yes.
YOU!



The Kid in Me



I see him. Sometimes. Glimpses.
Short but significant.

He is broken into so many pieces. Unable to breathe in a world
this blistered and bruised, the air so thick with conflict and division.

I want to tell him it will all be okay in the end, but I can't lie to him.

I won't lie to him. I won't lie. I won't.
He wouldn't want me to.

He is only a boy.

The world doesn't make any sense to him.

Nor will it.

Nor should it.

It doesn't make sense!

It can.

It has to.

For him.

For the kid still in me.

For the kid still in you.

For all of us.

We, the adults, must make the playground safe again.

We must chase away the monsters.

Restore the swings and the slide.

Provide a 'safe space' where those two words are never mocked or minimised.

We owe it to them.

To us.

So I'll see you in the sandpit.

I'll be the one with the rainbow bucket and spade.

Bring sandwiches, vegan ones.

I love you.



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GEMINI

I'm an 'older' queen now, late fifties.
I have lines, bags and wrinkles.
Every one of them tells my story.
My life has been beautiful and my youth, fleeting.

I have almost six decades of stories to tell.
Four and a half decades of drag on my face.
I am beautiful and powerful and wise beyond my years.
I am he/she/they/them

I am ME.

I have lived a full life and I wear it on my face.
In my lines.
Between my wrinkles.
I wouldn't change a thing.



Win or Wallow



Will I win or will I wallow?
Asked the middle of the sides
The bright place where the hope lives
And the rut where darkness hides
Bright replies in earnest
"YOU decide, YOU hold the key"
Darkness speaks in lies again
"You WANT to be with me"

Darkness dresses up sometimes
A blanket or a bed
Some place where you'll find comfort
To rest your weary head
Bright will keep you accountable
To all you say and do
Will always make it clear
ALL paths forward start with YOU

Will you win or will you wallow?
It depends which wolf you feed
Know that every step you take
Dark will try now to impede
So don your brightest armour
Do not hide yourself away
Fight for better for yourself
The battle starts today?



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DOG MILK? DOG MILK!

Apparently good for humans, this "substance" is now being produced in what I expect will be the first of many "kennel farms".

The first has only three hundred bitches and one male dog they call the stud. Staff use this tool type thing to basically masturbate the dog and collect the sperm, sometimes daily.

Then they stick a tool up the bitch's anus, to stimulate the vagina, whilst they artificially inseminate them one by one.

Once pregnant they are left to start producing the milk, which is taken as soon as it can be taken. When the puppies are born, they are taken away almost immediately, leaving the bitches and puppies in terrible distress. (Still producing milk though, so it's all good.)

Male puppies are almost always immediately killed. A bullet or hammer to the head is quick and humane. Odd males are kept alive to become studs. Not many though.

Female puppies will be fed a substitute, and will follow in their mothers' footsteps.

Mothers or bitches, will be made to have up to four litters, before they are humanely killed (often by throat slitting) for "meat".

Sick.

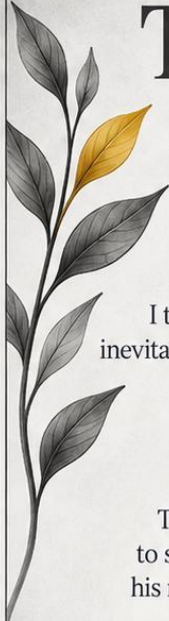
Isn't it.

Wait, did I say dogs?

I meant cows.

Oops.





The Uninvited Guest



I first heard about him on holiday, it was February 2012.

It wasn't confirmed that he would be arriving at that point,
but it was more than suspected.

I tried not to worry too much, but as someone's child you know that day is
inevitable. Roles reverse at some point in your life, different for everyone I suppose.
All the same, inevitable.

After the holiday, after more correspondence and such,
his arrival was confirmed.

The uninvited guest would be coming to stay. It was Dad he was coming
to see, specifically, but we would no doubt all have to pander to his whims,
his needs, even his wants. His reputation as being demanding preceded him.

He was a taker, of that there should be no doubt.

Little by little he began to steal things, little things at first.
Things you would barely notice. We didn't notice. Nobody notices.

It is only when his demands become so disgusting, so vile and inhumane
that you notice, and this could be months.

He's a tricky one, of this there should also be no doubt.
He more than overstays a nonexistent welcome.

There are stories, many wonderful stories, of people who managed
to get rid of him. Evicted, gone, but never forgotten.

There are also many stories of his victory.

We all knew there would be massive cost attached to his visit.
The cost was our Dad.

Watch out for him.
His name is cancer.



© Paul J Burgess



A Call to Queer Compassion

Originally written for GenV (formerly Million Dollar Vegan), as part of an ongoing relationship that saw The Vegan Queens collaborate with the organisation on a number of projects.

In the interests of you finding it easier to read this here piece, I would like first to explain to you that I write as I would speak. So if you imagine a soft voiced middle-aged fella and drag queen saying this to you in a North West English accent, you're on a winner.

Hi, I'm Paul, 53 years young, queer, gender fluid, one of Those Vegan Guys with my husband of 13 years and partner of 25 years, Jason, and also one of The Vegan Queens, with my dear friend Stuart.

I wanted to talk about the point where two (or more) issues meet, not necessarily related issues, but issues able to impact and empower one another. I wanted to talk about it because I believe - no - I KNOW that the oppression/suppression I felt as a gay man fed directly into my becoming vegan. It had to. The link was there.

In 2009, Jason and I got married. I say married, it was actually a civil partnership at the time and not convertible to a marriage until 2015, but I digress. We had a gorgeous ceremony, surrounded by family and friends and at last, after way too long, our relationship was recognisable under law. In that same year there was a significant and well-publicised homophobic attack on an off-duty trainee police officer, James Parkes. It was a despicable crime, up to 20 youths beat him so badly that he was hospitalised with multiple skull fractures and fractures to his eye socket and cheekbone. His condition was described as 'very critical'. This incident had me googling 'homophobic attacks'. There were so many, the world over, and we had been unaware of them for too long in our own comfort bubble.

That was a massive wake-up call for us. We had simply been living our lives surrounded by people who loved and fully accepted us for who and what we were. Homophobia hadn't existed in 'our' world for quite some time, so it was more than a bit of a shocker to read about this horrendous attack.

A few short months later I came up with the idea of starting a theatre company specifically founded to tackle homophobia. Pink Triangle Theatre was born, and for almost a decade we worked in schools, colleges, prisons, workplaces, theatres and many other venues with our powerful piece, SHOW ONE! At the time we were vegetarians.

Suddenly, fighting oppression and suppression was a core part of who we were and what we did.

I had vegan friends at the time, in the early twenty tens. Sometimes, they would call me out on my posts about 'happy eggs' and such, and I would deny and deflect.

"BUT it says happy right there on the box!!"

I was urged to look a little deeper, but it wasn't until 2014 that I did. On the recommendation of a friend we watched a documentary called 'Vegucated'. It took two viewings for the truths to hit, and when they did hit, they hit hard.

I got it, all of it. There was no such thing as happy eggs, or kind milk, they were lies I had been told all of my life and had willingly believed. We went vegan the day Vegucated was viewed for the 2nd time.

How could I fight oppression, suppression and outright cruelty against humans and NOT see it with animals? I was vegetarian because I couldn't stand the thought of an animal being killed for my plate, yet up until 2014 I had been willingly supporting the horrendous treatment of cows, chickens and so many other beings because I wanted to eat my cheese, eggs, cream and butter. 'My'!! Now there's a word.

It was never 'mine'.

Animals are suppressed/oppressed and so much worse, continually, every single moment of every single day and for what? Human consumption! Worse, UNNECESSARY human consumption.

Anti-hate and anti-violence were a much broader spectrum than I had acknowledged.

These issues had met in the middle for me.

If I truly cared about animals like I always told people I did when they asked why I was vegetarian, then I had literally been kidding myself. I hadn't been really looking.

Now, I could see clearly, and things had to change.

Our journey into veganism, like so many others before us, was rocky at the start. We felt so limited by what we could safely consume as back then, yes even that short a time ago, there wasn't the massive choice we have now in every single supermarket. We managed it though, always keeping in mind the 'why'. We were doing this because we were not able to accept ill treatment and violence for ANY reason against ANY being.

Our 'issues' had met in the middle, and what a middle it was.

We started to share our journey, and of course our reasons for doing it, at first only in Facebook posts etc, but pretty soon we would have a YouTube channel sharing our 'down to earth veganism' as widely as we could. We do that to this day. We share easy recipes, detailed shopping vlogs, the journey at our allotment and so much more. I even wrote a free ebook, 'Down-To-Earth Vegan', to help people on their own journeys. The animals being at the core of all we do and say.

One year after going vegan, in 2015, I was hosting a TV show in Manchester called 'Now We're Talking' and as we got closer to Manchester Pride, I thought it might be fun to do a pre-Pride special episode of the show in drag. I had been a drag queen since the age of 13 but hadn't done it for quite a while at that point. I asked my bestie Stuart if he would do it with me, and we asked two more drag queen friends to join us. It turned out to be an awesome show and we had so much fun doing it. At the end of filming I asked Stuart if he fancied becoming a drag duo, 'The Vegan Queens'. He agreed, and here we are still going strong, performing at local Prides all over the country. We've done bingo calling, children's story time and so many other fabulous shows. Again, making sure our veganism is front and centre.

I guess the point of this piece is to ask you to look at the issues that matter to you, and to recognise any parallels you see. If you are against oppression, suppression, violence and abuse, then be against it regardless of the being it is being done to.

YOU have the means to be a powerful and incredible force for good, with every action you take and every word you speak. So why not do that?

Activism starts within. It starts with calling yourself out for the things you accept. Every being on this beautiful planet of ours has the right to not be forcefully bred like cows are - the right not to live in foul and cramped conditions like chickens are. Every being has the right to a life without violence, abuse and oppression. EVERY being!

Find your parallels, acknowledge them, and be the enigmatic force for good that the world needs so many of us to be. It'll be one of the best things you ever did.

Promise. X

PHOBIA!!

A monologue from Pink Triangle Theatre's SHOW ONE!

What were you thinking as you stomped on my head?

As you felt the bone crack beneath your angry heel, as you spat your venom onto my soul, what thoughts ran through?

I am, but a man, myself.

Had I not the right to speak out against your vomited intolerance?

Was I expected to listen and fear?

I am, but a man, myself.

I cannot fear that which is so shallow and empty. I will stand against your bigotry even if it hurts me physically. The alternative is that I allow it to destroy my mind.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no!!!!

I only showed you a mirror.

What you saw made you want to kill me.

I am just like you in so many ways.

Except that I dare to love another man.

With all of my heart and every ounce of my being, with my soul, my lips, my eyes, I love another man.

I am, but a man, myself.

And I will live through this.

I will still be whole, intact, unique, and beautiful.

My hand is extended, should you ever be relaxed enough to take it.

I am, but a man, myself.



Distractions

2018



Watched the brand new box set.
Got tickets to the gig. Ordered some new slippers.
Smoked my new e-cig.
Booked the flight for next June.
Already dead excited.
Got new bedding coming and I really am delighted.

Trump? In't he that fella with the fowl yellow hair?
I don't know much about him but I can't say that I care.
Brexit? Well, we voted and the leave side won it fair.
I didn't vote meself though and I still don't bloody care.

Tuesday to the cinema.
Friday girls' night out.
Not too long off Christmas.
Me kids won't do without.
Can't wait to see their faces.
Got everything requested.
When will all my friends learn facts, I will not be bested.

Life's not a competition.
Yeah I know that. Course I do.
And please believe me when I say I don't compete with you.
We're equals me and you pal. Besties to the end.
You could look around forever and won't find a better friend.

Love ya.





Alphabet



- A** Another waste of space
B Blaming anyone and everyone else
C Can't take responsibility
D Doesn't know how to
E Everything is a game
F Floors me too often
G Great isn't it?
H Heart is what now?
I I won't be like them
J Jokers, fools and liars
K Kleptomaniacal soul suckers
L Love me, they chant in silence
M Me me me me me me me me me
N NO!!
O Opulence isn't a given!
P People are not toys
Q Quietly they laugh
R Ridiculous really
S Someone should say
T Try truth for a change
U Under everything it lies
V Victims often self-appointed
W Why not surrender to reality?
X Xtra xtra, read all about it
Y You can do it you know
Z Zebras are black and white, not life.



Pig Save

About bearing witness.

Originally posted on Facebook in January 2018. I did eventually attend a vigil — and even vlogged about it — but these were my thoughts at the time. I never attended another.

I've thought about writing this post for months, I've worried about the possible backlash too much, I've mulled my thoughts over many times and here I am. Posting.

There is a reason I've never been to a bearing witness event at a slaughterhouse. I've been invited, particularly when I was hosting a TV show in Manchester in 2016, but I never did make plans to attend. Two reasons were at the forefront of this. I was worried about how I might react to some of the words and actions from drivers and slaughterhouse workers, which I had read and been told about many times, but mostly, I can't stop thinking that there is an element of unintended cruelty to these events. I'll explain.

If an animal, whatever animal but in this case it was/is pigs, is in one of these horrific trucks on its way to certain death, obviously terrified, highly stressed, confused etc. Does that brief moment of respite invoke a false sense of security? In our language...

"That was all horrible but these people are nice, talking to me, giving me water. I might just be okay."

Of course they never are okay, the truck trundles on, the destination is the same. Does that moment of tenderness really help the animal, or does it promote a false hope making the next part of the journey even worse?

This is why I never went and don't think I could.

Thoughts?



BULLY



There's a bully in the playground
His name I will not speak
He is threatening all around him
And pounding on the weak

He is taking people's backpacks
And stealing all he sees
He will beat and bloody anyone
'Til all are on their knees

"This has to stop now, child,"
They are yelling with emotion
Then watching as he throws to all
Another crude explosion

There's a bully in the playground
He will stay there 'til he's stopped
There's little use in counting
All the hatred that he drops

The strap and cane are useless
In this scenario
And the bullied wander aimlessly
With nowhere safe to go....



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GO VEGAN!

2023

TIRED?

of allowing yourself to be angry at vegans for being right?

FED UP?

of making excuses for yourself to continue willingly participating in the horrendous suffering of sentient beings for a few moments of easily replicable sensory pleasure?

SICK?

of listening to your own brain shit?

Is it time to change, for the animals, the planet and yourself?

Of course it is — it has been for decades now!

Let's do it!

We'll help.

Everyone will.



#GoVegan



Man, I pee you later!



Bejewelled in jealousy.

I glisten.

Unable to resist asking those things which,
when answered, will emasculate, perpetuate, eviscerate.

I ask.

And on I gleam.

Encrusted.

Adorned.

I continue to invite the emotional train.
It's journey increasing with every doubt.
It's motion effortlessly powering my need
to abolish all of that and them.

Your past.

All that came and occurred and took place without me.

Before.

Me.

It must be gone, it will be gone.

Still I shine on.

I may well drink you down.

But man, I pee you later.

Oodlesnoop.

Cudgy wudgy bear.

Fool!



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Beside.



I see you now, not all that you once were,
at least no longer to the physical eye, but intact, still.

I wonder this and that, and that and this,
whether my right to wonder or not, I do.

Maybe a poem would break the spell, or shell,
the film the field the barrier, behind which, beyond which,
through which, you reside intact.

I still believe.
Whether it is my right to believe or not, I do.

I can remain here, where I have been now for some time, and wait.
Though it is not a place, or time, simply a state.

You may need a hand to take the leap.
I dare not push too much, but I still have to push, some.
Whether it is my right to push or not, I do.

Not hoping or wanting or waiting for a crack,
unless it is one made with your own conscious and decisive
and realistic thoughts.
That crack I would be happy to see, but would not want to suggest
or impress or invite.
At least, not from me, or for me, or in any way because of me.

And maybe you are happy in there, and maybe one day I will realise this
and the state will end and the wait will end and a different path will be walked.
Still near, or aside, and when needed behind.
Just, in some ways, different.

I am after
all, a friend.



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Please Don't!

2023

Don't let your heart die

Don't get addicted to anger.

Don't let your age influence who you are too much.

Don't be afraid to love and be loved. Encourage it.

Don't let hate or intolerance be spoken within earshot.

Don't dominate a spotlight, leave room for others.

Don't take all the good for granted. There's lots of it.

Don't forget yourself.

Don't eat animals.





Let Them Come...

Let them come,
in droves if they must,
let them bite and tear at what they think is me.
They will have their pound of flesh,
but it will not be mine,
for I am not there,

I am above and beyond this realm.
What they seek from me is invisible to them,
out of their reach,
beyond their grasp,
floating in the never-ending dreams of tomorrow.

So let them come,
they will never have me...
Let them wallow in the ethereal mist that casually
surrounds my being,
let them ponder the thoughts they will sniff out within,
thoughts alien to their craving souls.

Come the morrow I will still be me,
intact,
whole,
unique,
and as for them,
well,
only time will tell.



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FACETS

2023

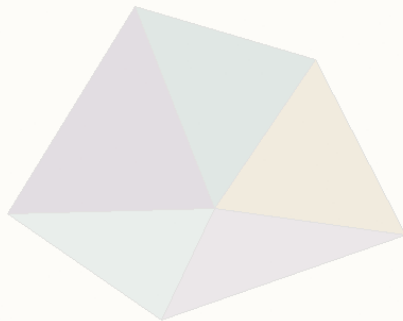
Although, of course, I have facets, one of my actual, workable coping mechanisms is other mes. Parallel universes if you will.

Somewhere, there is a Paul who cannot cope. A Paul constantly in or on the verge of ridiculously powerful tears.

Somewhere else is the Paul who totally has his shit together. The Paul so confident (but never cocky) that any and all hatred bounces away into the ether.

There's a place where every version of me resides and I try my very best to adopt the best assets of all of us.

Every single one of me.



Planet Vegan

Before I was a vegan, I ate eggs up by the shell,
I gorged on butter, cream and cheese and called it living well.

With no consideration for the animals providing
I knew, but didn't want to know, my conscience was in hiding.

I woke up with a start one day albeit quite belated,
I watched a documentary and my mind was Vegucated.

After twenty years as veggie I was vegan overnight.
The journey has been fabulous and still is in mid-flight.

I eat amazing food each day, conscience oh so clear.
My life has little impact on the planet I hold dear.

I carefully consider now, the items I will buy,
no products from abuse, nothing squirted in an eye.

As little harm as possible would seem to be the key,
a theme that helps the animals, the planet, you and me.
It isn't more expensive you'll discover when you start.
Jump on board to Planet Vegan, open up your heart.



© Paul J Burgess

TRANS

2023

What makes you, you?

You are who you believe you are, who you think you should be. Whether that is a product of peer pressure, positive influence, family expectation, simply your pure free will if you're lucky enough, or any one of a million other things and/or a combination of many of them.

You're not defined by what is or isn't between your legs, what is or isn't on your chest. You are you in mind first. The person you have constructed yourself to be. The person you know you are.

Now imagine, for a moment, as hard as you possibly can, imagine that your body did not match who you were in your mind. Imagine that for some reason you suddenly had a body the opposite of who you knew you were.

Imagine there was a way to make them match. Your mind and your body.

Now you have the absolute most basic understanding of what trans is.

Dolls House

2018



When I was a little boy, I didn't care for guns and action men.
I avoided muddy encounters and rarely, if ever, climbed a tree.
I only played as I truly wanted to play, whenever I was in the company
of girls.

Sisters, cousins, friends. I liked dolls' houses, the big yellow teapot,
the treehouse.

I liked to pretend.

If there were dolls or characters to play with too I would undoubtedly
cast myself as the youngest female.

I would make a home I would love to live in.

I would imagine living there, cooking and cleaning, keeping my man
happy.

There was always a man, even sans effigy.

Turns out I'm a great homemaker, and a fabulous cook.

**I wonder sometimes if my imagined man was ever called
Jason?**



Sometimes Searching

2023

Sometimes I feel like I'm searching for reasons to cry. Because they dwell everywhere when you're really looking. My soul isn't sure whether the longing is a need to purge, or indeed whether it is a longing at all.

A longing? A need? A want? A necessity?

I wish sometimes with so much wish that I leave little for myself that I was part of a world that made me smile more. A world that gave me reasons to smile, without having to actively seek them out. Compilations on YouTube, or the once in a blue moon feel-good story in a tabloid.

Can't be bought but must be sought.

And that's sad.

Another reason to cry.

Or is it?

Am I searching?

Is this an addiction like some seem addicted to anger these days?

Am I searching?

I'd rather smile.

I love you.

I hope that made you smile.

I don't want to search anymore.

smiles



Drag Queen

2020

Don't dare steal my thunder.
Or rain on my parade.
Don't expect to share my tea when only bringing shade.

Don't disrespect my wardrobe.
Or glance down at my look.
You didn't write one chapter in this never-ending book.

Don't disregard my numbers.
Or the way I cut my jib.
Don't tell me that my art is an affront to women's lib.

Try not to be hateful.
If you do not understand.
I will answer any questions you may have about this land.

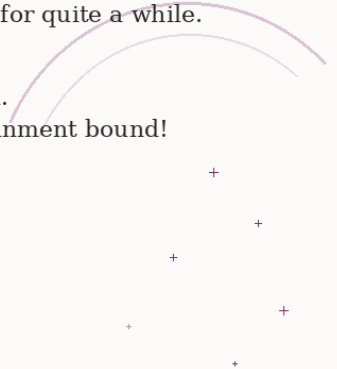
Once I'm in your vision.
Hold me in your gaze.
Watch me sing and strut around just trying to amaze.

I'm what they call a drag queen.
Two people made as one.
And I'll try to entertain until intolerance is gone

I'm crude and crass and dazzling.
I sparkle head to toe.
And once I have you in my spell I won't be letting go.

So let me entertain you.
Let me make you smile.
We're in this world together and we're here for quite a while.

I don't want a pedestal.
Just let me stand my ground.
Come on gurl, let's do this, we're entertainment bound!



LOVE

Love isn't always what you think it is, or even what you hope it will be. Love isn't always a warm blanket or a safe place to fall. It isn't always the thing that gives you comfort or helps you feel alive even.

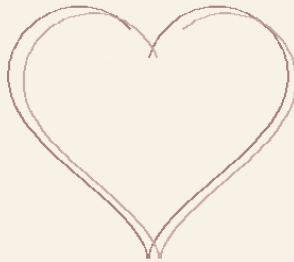
Love will sometimes scream in your face. It will threaten to walk out of your life for good, because love has to protect itself, and sometimes, it has to protect you too.

Love won't always tell you that you're right. Love won't always agree with you or even see your point.

Love will sometimes cut you, not physically of course, love is never violence. It can sting though. Love is hearing, learning things about yourself you want to keep denying.

Love can be cruel in its kindness.

Know it well, and cherish it. Xx



Some Think

2023

Some think that veganism is all about quinoa, dusted with rosemary twine and seeped in a water bath with a winkled faggot of juniper berries.

I mean it is to some.

But it's also about beans on toast. A VFC fillet on a muffin with a side of crisps and mayo, filthy fries dripping in vegan cheese and hot sauce.

Veganism is about a lot of things.

Not using or abusing animals being the key.

I mean nobody but really sick people actually want to hurt and abuse animals.

Right?



Hey Paul,

November 2018. Written as a note to myself, two years after 'The 'Error' — an armed robbery in 2016 — during a long and difficult period of healing. Originally posted on Facebook.

Remember that guy who wrote you a letter when you started college all those years ago? Well it's me again, commonly known as past Paul. I was going to write this in your journal (the one you're already neglecting), alas, I feel Facebook is better for this. You see past posts through here and timehop, so in a year, you'll see this. Again.

It's time for you to move on from me. Right now! The last twelve months have been tough, so let me, and it go. Be an older, wiser version of Paul who woke up that morning in 1997, read that letter from a previous version of himself and started a journey. Let the journey continue again. Ride the roller coaster, fuck the merry-go-round. That just goes around! Nothing!

I've hated much of the last year truth be known. So much loss, pain and illness, both physical and mental. Let it be done. Let ME be done. YOU have to carry on where you left off before this all started. A year is enough, more than enough! Too much!

You are strong. You are good. You are a beautiful spirit, a talented performer and when you can be bothered, a brilliant writer.

Be bothered!

Be beautiful!

Be brilliant!

Most of all, be brave!

I love you. I love you too much to stay. Let me take it all away.

Bring me back when we can write about how well things are going, how successful our ventures are, how happy we've become.

For now I bid you farewell, and Paul please, fare well!

I love you more than any other person on the planet.

Remember that.

Always. Xx



Two Hearts As One

Song Lyrics • 2026



We were just two simple guys
In different worlds we grew
Much we both anticipated
Little that we knew

Music and the magic of the stage would help us see
Futures would be written
We'd become a you and me

Love is love is love is love
Fuelled by heart and soul
Our decades prove it worthy
Our shared and only goal

Let's keep going strong now
As the world turns on and on
One day we can usher in a time that hate is gone

You're my one and only
We've done so much making proud
Living, loving, laughing, giving
Wearing us out loud

Decades in the triple sphere
Our bond still fast and true
Futures have been written
For two guys like me and you

Love is love is love is love
Fuelled by heart and soul
Our decades prove it worthy
Our shared and only goal

Let's keep going strong now
As the world turns on and on
We have seen the bonding of two hearts becoming one



I Can't Wait to See Me

Written in 2018, shortly before a much-needed holiday in Kefalonia.

I broke myself into defined and complete pieces, once, and gave each segment a name and a face.

I wanted us to be a team.

Formidable. Fierce. Family!

We were. We are.

I wrote us into a play. All of us.

Every single one of me.

Some of us fell by the wayside over the years. Some of us tried to leave for good, for a million different reasons, the kind of reasons that you might find in a journey of discovery book, or maybe in a brutal story of survival.

We made a pact though. Together.

We planned that if we ever needed to reconvene, if one of us or all of us would benefit from being together again, we would make it happen.

There's a beach somewhere beautiful and tranquil and incredibly healing. I'm going to be there soon.

And you know something.

I can't wait to see me

Writer's Recipe



1. Get a paper bowl.
2. Throw all the bits you have lying around into the bowl. Doubts. Fears. Hopes. Dreams. Beliefs. Wants. Could-have's. Should-have's. Plans. Procrastinations. Possibilities. Probabilities. Hurt. Elation.
3. Add as much of it as you feel right, or all of it.
4. Season with people and personalities. You've met plenty, your spice rack is vast.
5. A pinch here, a trait there.
6. Use your favourite pen as a spoon.
7. Mix well.
8. Taste.
9. Adjust accordingly.
10. When it makes you laugh or cry, when it teaches you something or makes you think, when it impacts you in any way, it's done.
11. Serve digitally, or in hardback or paperback.
12. Repeat.



Written, Then Spoken



Paul J Burgess is a writer, actor, performer, drag queen and vegan activist from the North West of England.

His life has taken him through theatre, television, radio, community arts, activism and, occasionally, a fabulous frock.

Paul writes much as he speaks: openly, instinctively and from somewhere very personal. His words wander through love and loss, anger and injustice, humour, hope, memory, survival and the strange business of simply being human.

Written, Then Spoken brings together a selection of poems and prose written at different moments in his life. Some were born from joy. Some from grief. Some from frustration, friendship or fury. Others simply demanded to be written.

Together, they are fragments of a life lived, questioned, challenged and celebrated.

Life. Love. Loss. Rage. Hope.
And everything in between.



Paul is also the author of the children's book ***Penny the Pigeon Queen***, and his poetry has previously appeared in ***Best of Manchester Poets, Volume 2***.

He can be found online as one half of Those Vegan Guys, alongside his husband Jason, and as one half of drag duo The Vegan Queens.

You can find Paul through social media channels for Those Vegan Guys, The Vegan Queens and related projects.



Those Vegan Guys



The Vegan Queens

