

the *Wallflower*

the PRIDE issue June 2024

The Quiet Queer

Are “Pride” and “Introvert”
Mutually Exclusive?

Bobby Berk’s team on
creating an
introvert-friendly
space

Houseplants:
Our not-so-silent
friends

Top 5 LGBTQ
book releases
this year

Ace or Aro?
Test your
knowledge
of Pride
flags





Contents

Milo Sanders 3	Letter from the Editor	
Kelly Rota 4	Big Talk Houseplants: Our Partners in Reducing Stress at Home	Sarah Bushwell 14
Milo Sanders 5	Interior Design with Introverts in Mind Q&A with Adam Nelsen	
Milo Sanders 8	We're Here, We're Queer, Can We Go Home Now Please? Surviving Burnout of a Loud and Proud Month	Tom Burton 18
Lupita Aquino 12	Book Club Five LGBTQ books for Pride month	"It Was the Gayest Thing I'd Ever Seen." One hiker's experience with Mother Nature
		Pride Flags Quiz Test Your Knowledge before the Parade

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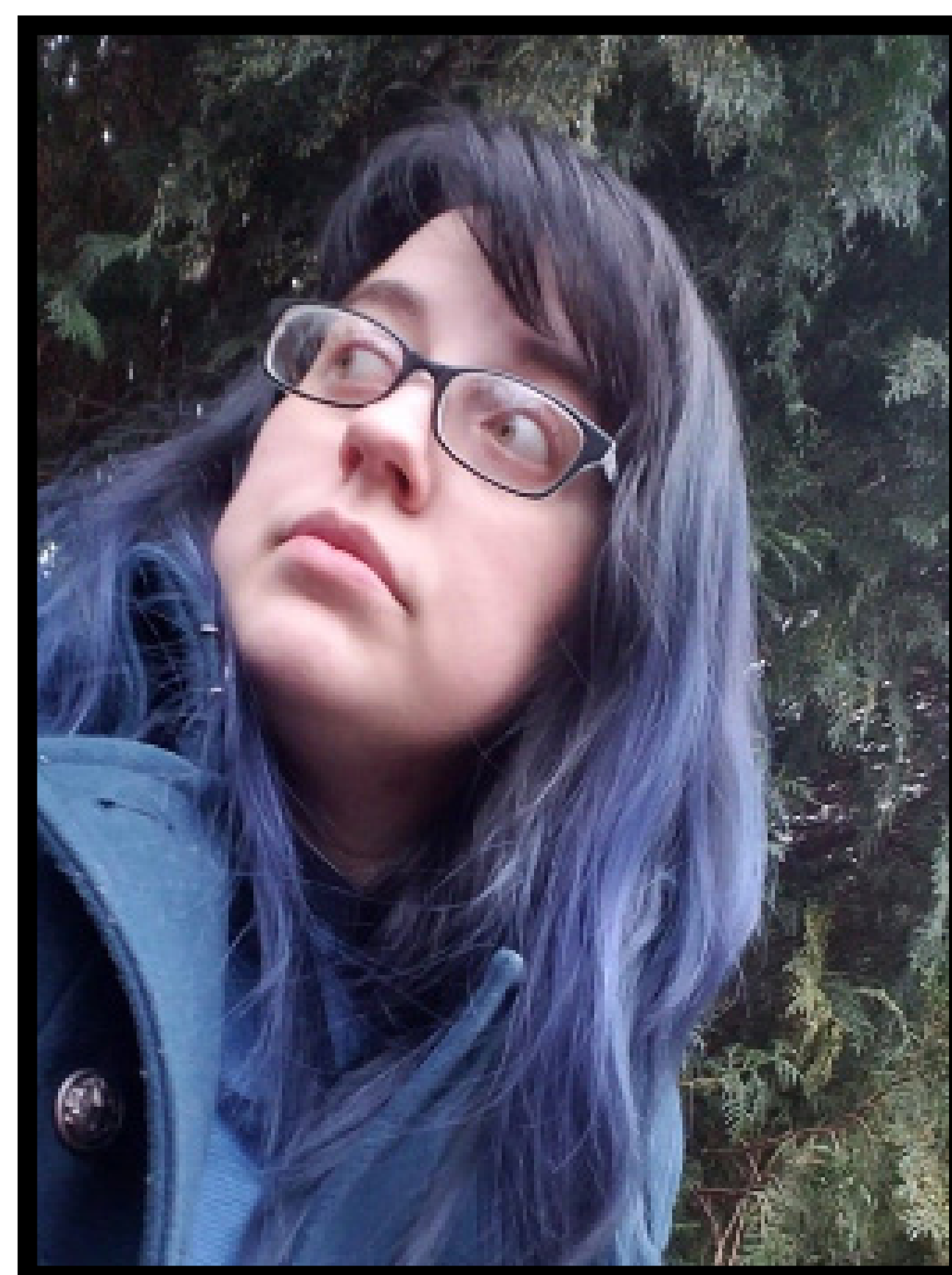
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It is with great pride that I welcome you to the first issue of “The Wallflower”, the first magazine designed for the quiet-natured, the introverts, the avoiders of small talk. The world doesn’t seem built for introverts, but this magazine is ready to welcome anyone and everyone who has ever felt overwhelmed and in need of restoration. This month we’re focusing on LGBTQ issues and how introversion can intersect within this marginalized community. As a queer person myself, I find it hard to balance pride with my subdued personality. I came out in my thirties and still have so much to learn about how I want to express myself.

Do I want to be loud with my voice, and introduce myself as bi and nonbinary as soon as I meet someone? Do I want to dress in a way that showcases that, perhaps with LGBTQ pins or androgynous clothing? Or do I want to show my inclusivity through how I act and treat others? Can I be all these things and more? This issue of this magazine is part of expressing my identity, and I would love for you to join with me as I explore what that looks like. So again, welcome, as we dive into Pride month as only a wallflower can. Within these pages we’ll see how other introverts celebrate Pride, how to build conversation in group settings, and what books to put on your shelf for when you need some alone time. In addition, we’ll give you tips on how to design a recharge space from Bobby Berk’s amazing team of designers, and Kelly Rota will give you some food for thought on how plants communicate. I hope you’ll find inspiration and rejuvenation here. Most importantly, this magazine is about being seen for who you truly are, and finding acceptance within yourself—this month, and every month.

With all my love,
Milo



Big Talk

Houseplants: Our Not-So-Silent Co-Habitants

by Kelly Rota



The outdoors can be overwhelming for an introvert living in a world dominated by extroverts. While nature, wild and unpopulated, can be relaxing and healing, many of us don't have the chance to immerse ourselves in such peaceful settings as often as we'd like. This might explain why many introverts choose to surround themselves with houseplants, cultivating an illusion of tranquility and seclusion within their compact living spaces. But be aware that if you neglect your houseplants, they can disrupt your sanctuary with unsettling and undetectable sounds.

HOUSEPLANT POPULARITY

A significant shift took place during the pandemic, as highlighted by a 2022 survey from the National Gardening Association, revealing a notable surge in the popularity of houseplants, especially among younger generations. Remarkably, spending on gardening-related products soared by \$8.5 billion in 2020 compared to the previous year. This trend has not only endured beyond the pandemic but has also inspired a vibrant community around #PlantTok on TikTok.

This growing interest in houseplants has prompted researchers to examine the effects these plants have on their caretakers. According to TIME Magazine's article "Your Houseplants Have Some Powerful Health Benefits," published March 2, 2023, studies showed that having indoor plants can lower cortisol levels, accelerate healing, and enhance overall life satisfaction. It's no wonder this trend has taken off!

Nevertheless, even with the calming presence of plants, the pressures of daily life can intrude upon our sanctuaries. You might find that simple chores — like washing dishes or watering plants — can fall to the wayside, leaving you and your green companions even more stressed.

THE SECRET SOUNDS OF PLANTS

While you may recognize the usual signs of plant distress — such as wilting leaves, discoloration, or leaf drop — you might not realize that plants signal for help well before these visible indicators appear.

In March 2023, researchers placed ultrasonic microphones near plants and discovered they produced sounds. Astonishingly, plants can emit ultrasonic noises that vary according to their conditions. When under stress, they make popping noises akin to bubble wrap being popped. As noted by the Natural History Museum, "The precise mechanism behind these sounds is still unclear, but researchers believe it may be linked to air bubbles forming and collapsing in the plant's vascular system." This phenomenon, known as cavitation, occurs when partial vacuums form in a liquid due to a rapidly moving solid or intense sound waves.

Scientists already knew that plants could communicate stress via electric and chemical signals. For instance, roots can sense drought conditions and signal leaves to minimize transpiration and conserve water through electrical impulses brought about by chemical movements.

As researchers delve deeper into these plant communications, they begin to "translate" the different signals. Each plant reacts uniquely to various stressors — whether it's dehydration or pest damage — and learning to listen can not only deepen our bond with them but, according to National Geographic, can help inform farmers how to adapt to climate change appropriately.

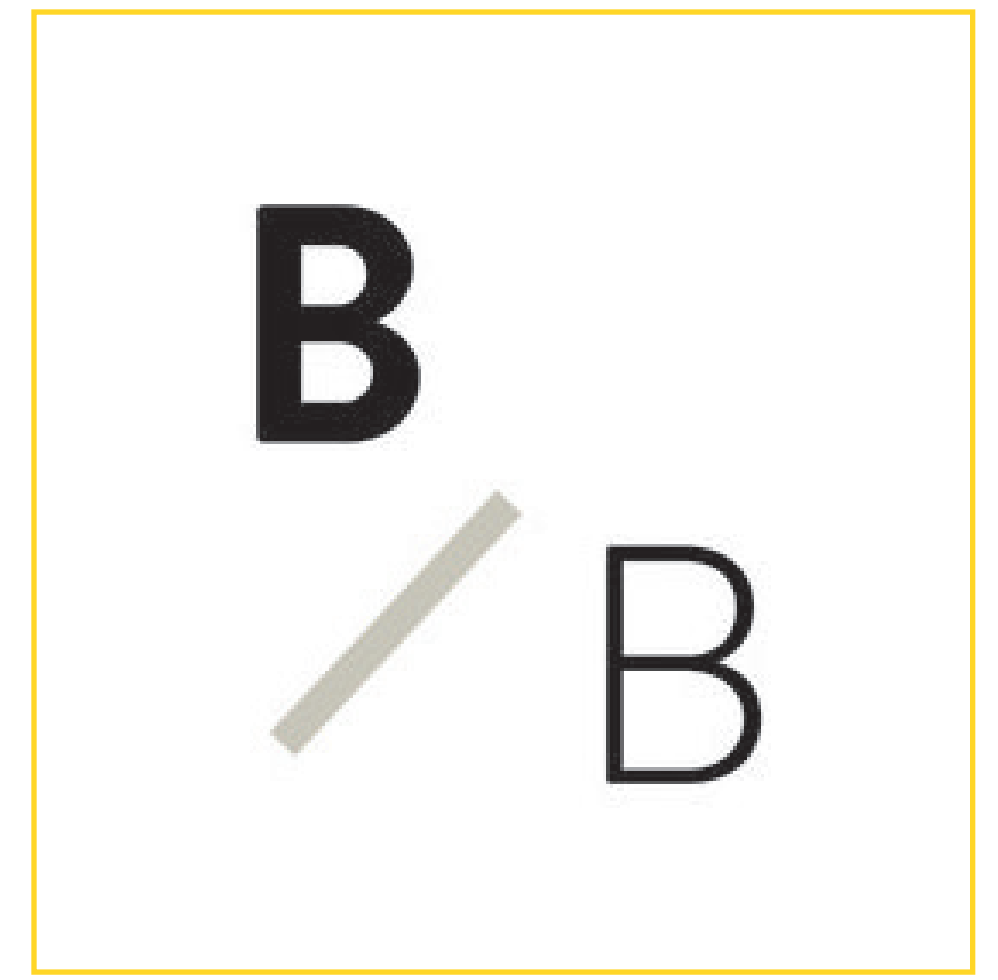
SERENE SYMBIOSIS

This fascinating discovery deepens our understanding of life at a microscopic level and reveals the hidden sounds of the natural world that extend into our homes. So, the next time you feel overwhelmed or stressed, remember the importance of nurturing your houseplants. While they have the potential to alleviate your stress and promote a sense of healing, they can also fill your living space with a cacophony of ultrasonic sounds that might add to your unease. By prioritizing their care, you can cultivate a harmonious environment for you and your green companions, allowing you to thrive together in your serene indoor oasis! •

Kelly Rota is the editor-in-chief of "PlumBum" magazine.



Q & A with Adam Nelsen



Designing a space for an introvert isn't something you often see in media. But Adam Nelsen is aware that introverts have a different set of needs in their homes than their extroverted counterparts.

Nelsen has been working in interior design for over a decade. With a degree in interior design from the Art Institute of Santa Monica, he's worked with world-class designers and brands through his career. For most of his career, he has been part of Bobby Berk's team.

Bobby Berk rose to fame in 2018 with the revival of the reality TV fixture "Queer Eye" as the interior design member of the Fab Five, but he was a well-respected interior designer for many years before that. As an admirer of Berk's brand and philosophy, Nelsen jumped at the chance to join his team more than 10 years ago. Now Berk's senior project manager and a pillar of his brand, Nelsen has worked with Berk on a wide variety of projects, including model home merchandising and high-end residential spaces. Read on to learn how Nelsen and the rest of Berk's team would approach interior design from the perspective of an introvert client.

Q: Which part of Berk's approach to design resonates with you the most?

Bobby's design approach is all about accessibility. He's very focused on creating spaces that are beautiful yet practical for everyday living. That balance between aesthetic and function is something I connect with deeply, and I've carried it into every project I work on.

Q: What have you learned from working with Berk? What have you taught him in turn?

Working with Bobby has taught me to always prioritize the client's lifestyle when designing a space. I've also learned how to balance bold, creative ideas with what's

realistically feasible. As for what I've taught him, I'd like to think I've shared my eye for detail and helped bring a level of precision to some of our projects, particularly in terms of layout and material selection.

Q: Would you consider yourself an introvert?

I actually consider myself more extroverted, though over time I've come to realize that a lot of my extroversion stemmed from a desire to please others. As I've gotten older, that eagerness has tempered, and I've developed a much deeper appreciation for solitude and the time needed to recharge. While I still lean more toward the extroverted side of the spectrum, I now recognize that my energy is a finite resource. This awareness has made me more selective about how I spend that energy, allowing myself to say "no" more often and enjoy quiet, restorative time for myself. Interestingly, this shift has also made me a better designer. I now have a deeper understanding of varied personalities and how those differences translate into design choices, particularly when creating spaces for introverts or those who need more quiet and calm.

Q: Do you often design spaces for self-proclaimed introverts? How would you (and Berk) get to know an introvert, get a sense of their interests and preferences?

Yes, we do encounter clients who identify as introverts. It's important to create a space that serves as a personal retreat for them. The key to understanding an introverted client is through attentive listening. We take the time to talk with them about how they spend their time, what environments make them feel at ease, and what sensory elements (lighting, colors, materials) help them relax. We don't rush this process—it's more of an unfolding conversation.

Q: How do you design a space keeping introverts in mind?

Designing for introverts is about creating spaces that offer privacy and peace. It's not just about creating a single "quiet room"; instead, the entire home should feel cohesive and calm.

Q: How does an introvert space differ from a home where the goal is to entertain, or “extrovert”?

A home designed for an introvert usually has quiet, intimate areas with subdued lighting, soft textures, and a sense of warmth. In contrast, a home for extroverts might feature open, communal spaces designed for gatherings, with brighter lighting and more bold, stimulating design elements.

Q: Do you include each space in a house, or just focus on one special, introverted space?

I like to consider every part of the home when designing for an introvert. While there can be a designated "recharge" space, I believe the home as a whole should offer areas of comfort—whether it's a cozy reading nook or a quiet corner in the bedroom.

Q: What is a way to create an area for recharging but not necessarily sleeping?

A perfect example is a meditation or reading nook. It

doesn't need to be a large space, just a corner with a comfortable chair, soft lighting, and minimal distractions. These areas can be designed to encourage relaxation and mental clarity without being tied to rest or sleep.

Q: What calming features do you like to implement?

Natural materials, soft textiles, and warm, neutral color palettes are key. I also pay close attention to lighting—using dimmable fixtures, warm bulbs, and natural light to create a calming atmosphere. Sound insulation can also be important, particularly in homes where introverts need quiet spaces to retreat from the outside world.

Q: What are the biggest mistakes people can make when creating an introvert space?

The biggest mistake is over-cluttering. Introverts need spaces that are mentally calming, and too much visual noise can be overstimulating. Another mistake is ignoring lighting—harsh or overly bright lighting can make a space feel uncomfortable rather than soothing.

Q: What advice do you have for people who don't know where to start making an introvert-friendly space for themselves?

Start small and think about how each room makes you feel. Identify spaces where you naturally feel more comfortable and build from there. Focus on creating one area that feels peaceful, like a nook or corner, and then gradually expand that feeling throughout your home. Choose calming colors, soft textures, and focus on reducing unnecessary clutter. It's also worth paying attention to lighting and sound—these subtle elements can have a huge impact on how a space feels. •

Consider every part of the home when designing for an introvert.



We're Here, We're Queer, Can We Go Home Now, Please?

Surviving the Burnout of a Loud and Proud Month

The first Pride was a riot. The Stonewall Riots began June 28, 1969 with the shout of Stormé DeLarverie as she was being put in handcuffs: “Why don’t you guys do something?” The voices of those first protesters echo through the years each June as both a celebration and a continued protest. Pride parades have long been part of the day, with other events often planned throughout the month, including picnics, drag brunches and bar crawls. Many of these events are based on loud group activities that grow each year as LGBTQ rights gains more traction among the general populace; though the colors, the noise and the crush of people are welcome, they can be overstimulating and overwhelming. Introverts find this to be true more than their extroverted counterparts, who thrive in the crowds. Queer introverts can struggle between celebrating themselves and continuing to fight for their right to exist while also respecting their need for alone time and introspection. How do they manage these conflicting interests without damaging their wellbeing? Lucia Rivera, Laura Morgan and Sheila Loesch, three self-proclaimed introverts and members of the queer community, weigh in on how they manage the challenges of Pride month.

“Stealth Queer”

Lucia Rivera, an assistant professor at a Boston-area college, hasn’t been “out and proud” most of their life. Rather, they grew up in a conservative time to a “repressive” family where they didn’t feel able to explore their identity. “I never thought I could be queer, even though the signs were all there,” they said with a little bit of a laugh. Over the years, as Rivera grew into adulthood and the discussion about queer rights became louder and more laws passed for equality, they’ve felt the confidence to explore their true self. But even now, they consider themselves a “stealth queer.” Their



Above: Laura Morgan (third from left) with friends at Seattle Pride (photo credit: Evelyn King)

Right: Attendees at Seattle’s Pride in the Park (photo credit: Nate Gowdy)

need to be visible in the community personally isn’t as strong now that they’ve come to terms with their identity. But that doesn’t stop Rivera from celebrating. They know that Pride as an event is crucial to the community and still needs to be loud. Rivera remembers a time, not many years ago, when “queer” was a slur, and companies like Target weren’t willing to sell rainbow apparel in the month of June. “I know we still have a long way to go, but I’m okay with the noise because it’s a sign of [queerness] being part of the conversation,” they said. They make a point to attend one Pride event each year. They join family members and friends who need

the visibility to encourage their own self-discovery. Then, to balance out the noise and the busyness, Rivera spends the rest of their time in solitude or in small groups. Sometimes they hang with friends and watch queer movies. This year, they spent the weekend of Pride in New Hampshire. They participated in classic introvert activities like reading and enjoying nature. “I’m doing what I need to take care of myself,” they said.

Attending the Parade

Laura Morgan doesn’t usually choose to celebrate vocally during the month of June, but she observes it as an important part of her cultural history. “Pride is an important time for me to reflect on the history of Pride and to remember that there is a community that came before me and a community that I’m in right now and a community that will come after me.” This year, despite some

I’m okay with the noise because it’s a sign of... being part of the conversation.

trepidation, she attended the Seattle Pride Parade, an event established in 1977 and that in recent years has garnered crowds of over 300,000. Her strategy to not getting overwhelmed was going with her girlfriend and her polycule. “I had more fun than I

thought I would because I was with a small group of people that I know and trust.” They also were able to leave the parade early, and Laura could spend the rest of the day recharging in a quiet space. Like Rivera, Morgan grew up in a conservative community and came to accept her queerness later as an adult. As a result, she struggles with knowing when she’s being just introverted or hiding her identity. This is especially hard living in a “red” state, where prejudice is still prevalent and voices against the queer community are loud in the news.

In the end, she thinks the difference between social anxiety and the fear of being treated differently is about intent. “If I’m part of a conversation where I want to say something that would out me, if I notice that I’m not saying it because that means I would be outed, that is the closeted stuff.” Around friends, she’s able to speak up, but not in all situations. And it’s not just in speaking that one can be loud or quiet. While Morgan appreciates that many queer people enjoy dressing up in loud colors and unusual styles, that’s not her aesthetic. Instead, she finds that wearing rainbow socks or keeping rainbow flags among her possessions is a quieter way to signal her identity without having to be “flashy.” It’s a difficult balance between being proud and being quiet that she still hasn’t quite figured out yet, but she’s working on it.



The Stonewall Riots: A Not-So-Fairy Tale

Once upon a time, not so long ago (55 years ago, to be exact) there was a place in New York City called the Stonewall Inn. It didn't have any running water, and it was owned by the mafia. But it was a safe place for gay people to spend time in a world where being gay was still a crime. Gay men, drag queens, homeless youth and (a few) lesbians considered this place a haven in a cruel world. But it wasn't completely safe. It would often be raided by police, and a lot of people would get arrested.

One night the police came to raid the Stonewall Inn, but this time, the people there said, "No more! We don't deserve to be treated like this!" A group of people gathered outside the Inn and began throwing bricks and other debris at the bar while the police barricaded themselves inside with some of the people they were trying to arrest. A riot began. It lasted throughout the night and then began the next night too, with up to a week of riots and protests. It was the start of something new. Of gay people saying they mattered and didn't deserve to be treated as lesser than just because of who they loved and how they dressed.

The Stonewall Riots, as they came to be known, is largely considered the birth of Pride. When President Obama declared June Pride month in 2009, he referenced the Stonewall Riots as a reason to "commit to achieving equal justice under law for LGBT Americans."

The community that will come after her needs all kinds of representation, not just the people who wear bright colors year round.

Gay New Year

Sheila Loesch, on the other hand, felt the need to be overly loud and proud when she came out to compensate for what she sees as internalized homophobia. Then, in later years, she swung the other way again. A freelance writer and editor from the Seattle area, Loesch approaches Pride not simply as an event but as a time of reflection and redirection. Now she centers her personal needs without compromise, viewing Pride as a kind of "gay New Year." She asks herself, "Have I really been living to all of my gay, happy, queer dreams?" And if she hasn't, well, it's time to recalibrate, and she has 12 more months to focus on her goals. Loesch said that what makes Pride most overwhelming is the guesswork—how to interact with people, and what groups to attend events with. She's found that volunteering at a booth is a great solution for her introversion. Behind the table, she has a designated place to be and designated people to talk to. But even when it gets too be too much, the very act of celebrating is another form of self-care. "There have been years where I haven't celebrated, and then I'm always sad afterward," she admitted. She focuses on smaller Pride events in her area instead of the large Pride parade in Seattle proper to keep from getting overstimulated. This year she chose to attend an inaugural Pride celebration in her hometown. "I loved it... It was so cute." She mentioned the joy of being able to see younger people exploring themselves without fear at Pride events.

Tips for Introverts

Whether it's feeling the freedom to leave an event early, choosing smaller venues or avoiding them altogether, introverts have long put the onus on themselves to know their own limits and how to deal with the overstimulation that events like Pride can bring. In fact, Loesch says that she always knows her limits and makes sure she doesn't put herself in situations where she might be overwhelmed. But it doesn't need to all be on her or introverts like her. It doesn't take much for others to be aware and considerate. In recent years, "quiet areas" have appeared at large events for those who need to de-stim and decompress, for example at Seattle's Pride in the Park, a family-friendly event held at Volunteer Park. A shaded and fenced-off area was denoted for attendees with sensory issues, set off in a different area of the park than the entertainment stages and the majority of the booths. Loesch appreciates the appear-

ance of these—they're not meant specifically for introverts, but introverts are welcome to take refuge in them. In addition, Loesch said extroverts should respect others' needs and not force introverts to celebrate when they're tapped out. Sometimes it's hard for introverts to realize or speak up when they've reached empty. So when they do ask for space, it's especially important to listen. "If [introverts] say, 'I'm gonna call it a night. I know it's only nine p.m. but I'm going to call it a night.' Don't say, 'No, you gotta stay out! We gotta stay out really late!' That's not cool," Loesch said as an example. Another way to encourage introverts to participate is creating events with planned activities. Morgan suggested a queer book club, a

celebrating Pride. That's the antithesis of what the gay civil rights movement is all about.

Pride Is a Protest

Even though queer people have more rights than ever before in the U.S., it's not the time to be silent. The 2024 election sees a lot of transgender issues coming up for debate yet again, including restricting gender-affirming care and President-elect Donald Trump's promises to dismantle Title IX's inclusion of gender identity. Pride is a celebration, but it's also still a protest. Introverts can get overstimulated, but with some strategies in place, they can still participate in this important month. They may not be literally noisy, but



crafting meetup or a hiking group, things that foster natural conversation over small talk.

Inclusion Means All

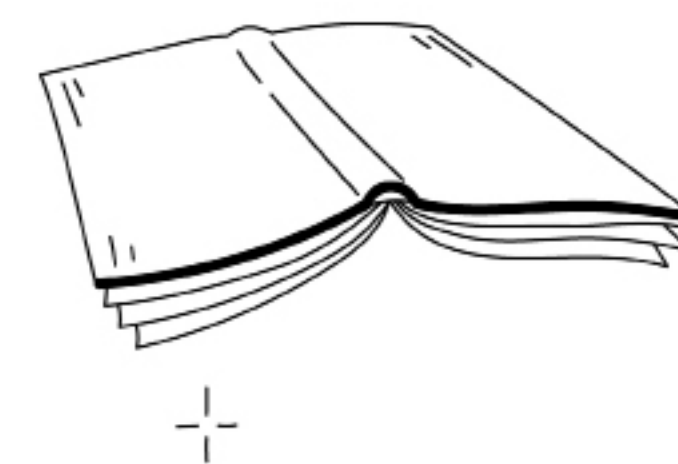
Rivera also stresses the importance of respect but from a different aspect. "The progress isn't linear," they noted. They've seen gatekeeping in the queer community recently. This year specifically, there was an outcry on social media about people showing up to Pride who didn't "belong." Too many couples—or even just one person in a group—found themselves turned away from events because they passed as heterosexual. But a person's perceived sexuality or gender shouldn't prevent them from

they can use social media or other text-based forms of communication to promote the cause and make noise of a different kind. Small acts of support, even just wearing a flag pin, can mean a lot to someone who is feeling alone in their journey of self-discovery. They can be there for one-on-one discussions and step away from groups for a moment when the social pressures mount. There are so many ways to be "loud and proud." Ultimately, it's about inclusion and respect. From allies to introverts, from transgender people to those still questioning, it's vital to let everyone feel welcome at Pride events. •

Some names were changed for privacy.

Book Club:

Five LGBTQ reads for
Pride 2024



Curated by Lupita Aquino

The Sons of El Rey by Alex Espinoza

Lupita says:

"It is basically three men; they are all part of the same family. So it starts with the grandfather, the father, and then the son. And they all find themselves tied and have a passion for Lucha Libre, which is like Mexican wrestling. And so the grandfather actually has a secret, and I can't say much, but it's a beautiful book that I think explores coming to terms with oneself, coming of age, grief, and machismo--which I think a lot of books do explore that, but this one explores it in a particularly tender way."

Boulder by Eva Baltasar, translation by Julia Sanches

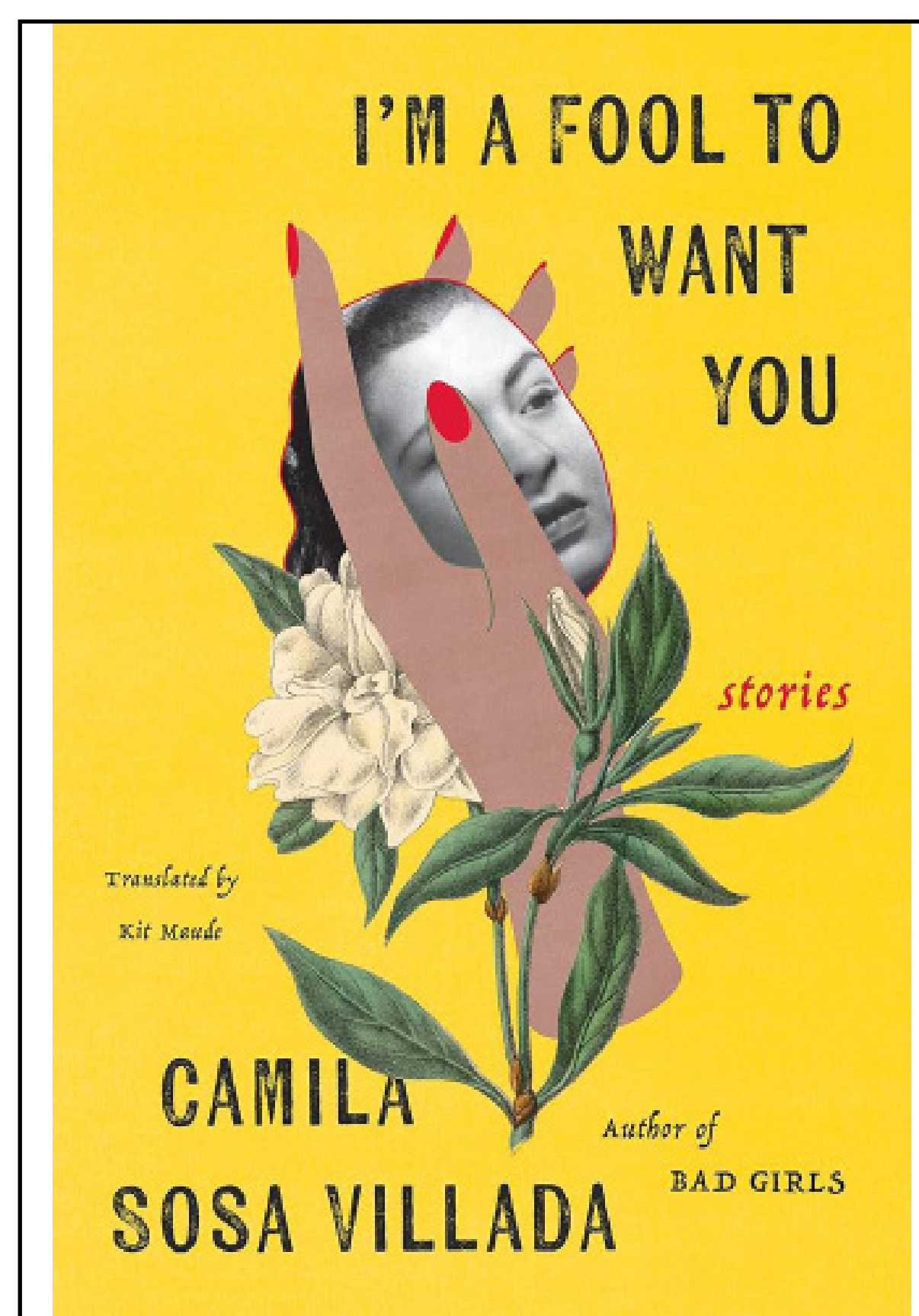
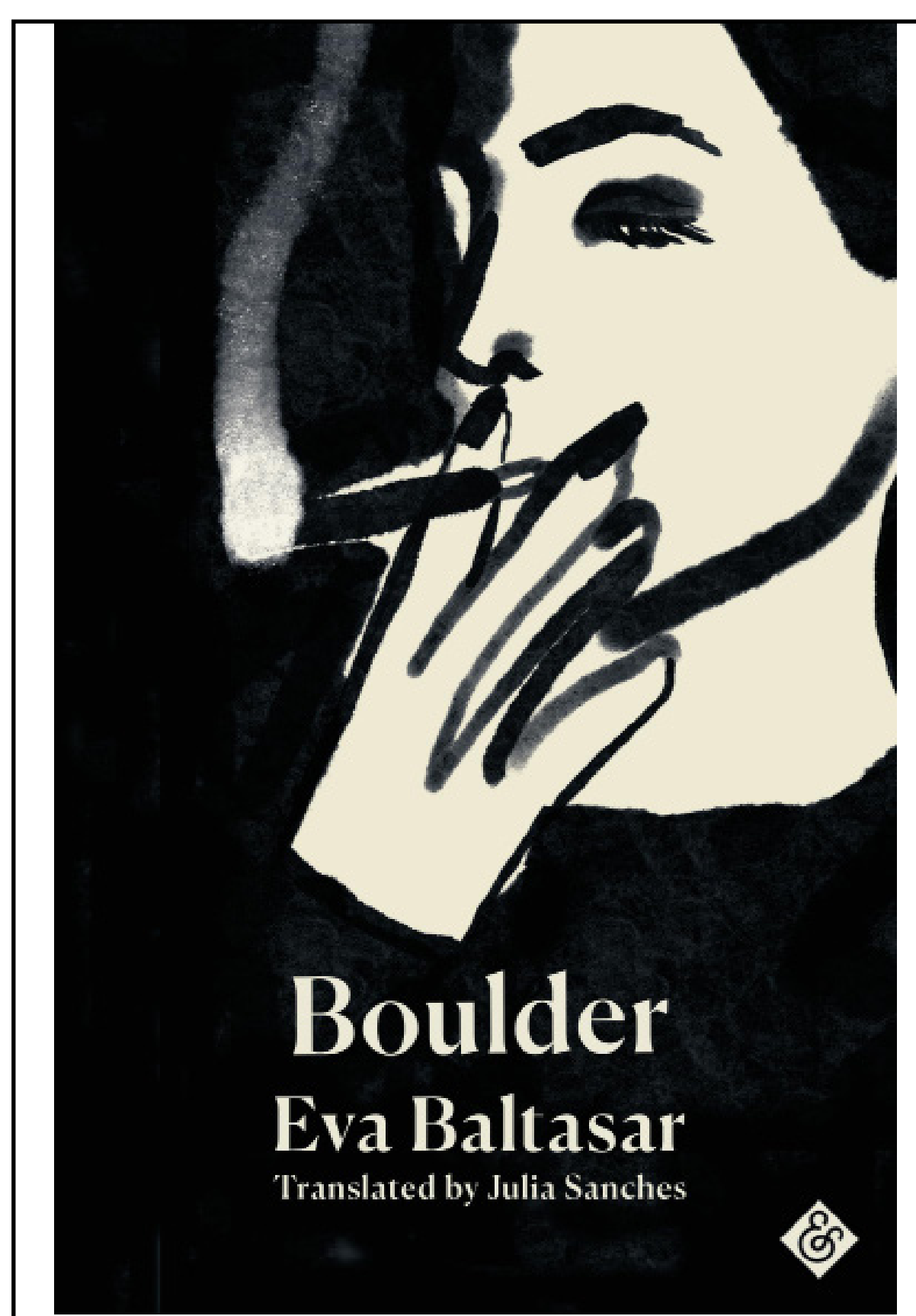
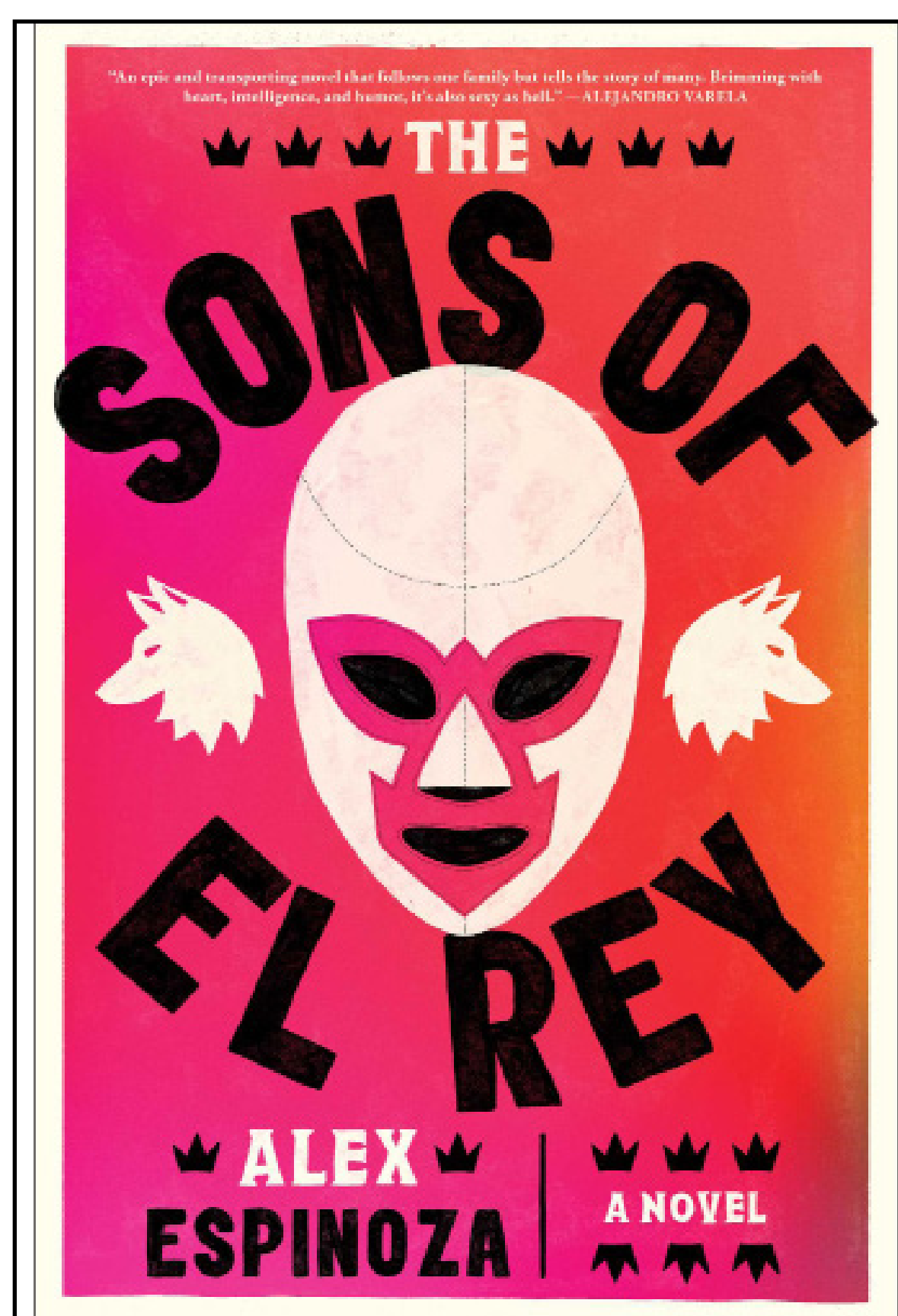
Lupita says:

"It is a very thin novel. It's almost like a novella. It is translated from Spanish. The author is originally from Spain. It is probably one of the most accurate books I've ever read about being in a long term sapphic marriage--commitment--and kind of what that looks like. It's also one of the books that I feel like I've read that really captures the rawness of having a child within a sapphic relationship. It does such a good job of detailing that and kind of going there without being afraid to go there."

I'm a Fool to Want You by Camila Sosa Villada, translation by Kit Maude

Lupita says:

"It's a short story collection. It's written by a trans woman and I think it's originally in Spanish... It's from a smaller press. But what's so fascinating about it is the craft level of this writer, and how they really capture the essence of desire and love, but not in a way that's typical, where we typically think of desire and love. It's really gut punching. And some of those stories are wild. They include sci-fi and fantasy, and you're just like what? I love short stories that exist on the spectrum."





Biography of X by Catherine Lacey

Lupita says:

"It just blew my mind. It's basically a story about a woman married to a nameless person named X. And this woman leads this really weird life, and she actually knows nothing about her wife and her past and where she actually comes from. And so it's so fascinating and so well written and so well done."

*Find Lupita Aquino on
Instagram, TikTok and Threads
@Lupita.Reads*

Exhibit by R.O. Kwan

Lupita says:

"I thought [this] one was really interesting in the sense of you have the main character, who is a photographer, and she's feeling stifled in her life. She's married to her college sweetheart, to a man, and she comes to a pause in her career as a photographer, and she's not sure, like, is this what I want? And then there's the pressure also of her husband wanting to have kids, and her family pressure to have kids, and she's never seen herself as a mother. And so she's kind of feeling boxed in until she meets this woman. And so the story explores BDSM, just the freedom and liberty and trying to pursue yourself and find yourself through what you actually want and what you actually desire. It's really short, it's really intense; the writing is sharp."

Bonus Book: ***Dead in Long Beach, California*** by Vanita Blackburn

Lupita says:

"The main protagonist is a woman, and she walks into her brother's apartment to go see him, and he has committed suicide, and so she's the first to find him. And instead of calling the police, I think because she is so stricken with grief, and people are calling his phone and texting him, she decides that she is going to pretend to be him. And so the police do end up coming and taking him, but basically no one knows outside of her that he is gone. And so she keeps trying to pretend to be him, specifically for his daughter, her niece. She just keeps up the charade. And it's this wild exploration of grief and what it does to you. It's one of my favorite books." •

