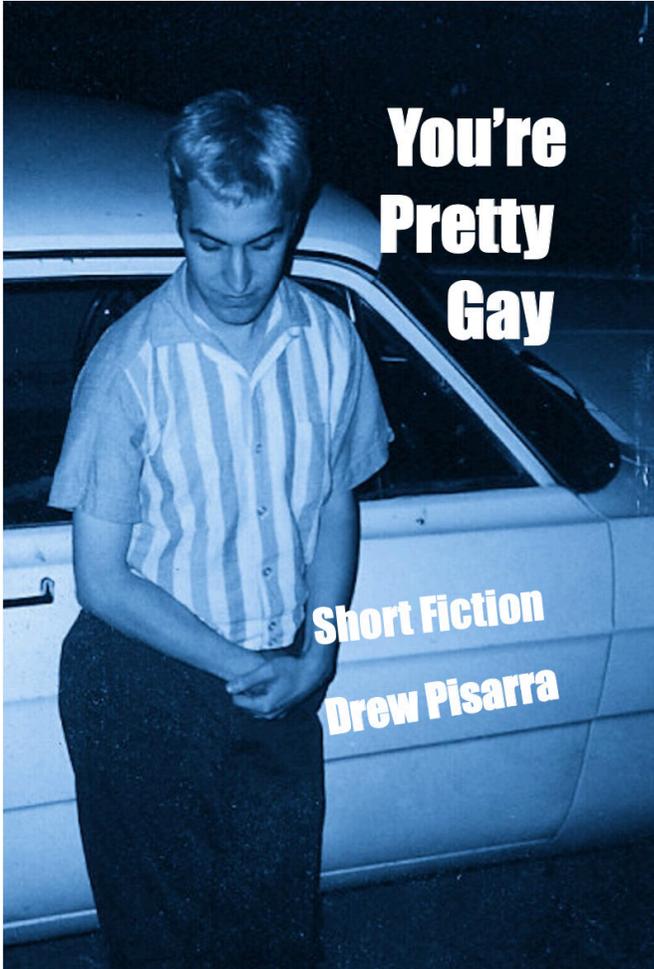


Chaffinch Press -Press Release

You're Pretty Gay

by Drew Pissarra



Author: Drew Pissarra
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Author Bio

Drew Pizarra

Drew Pizarra is a 2019 literary grantee of the Café Royal Cultural Foundation; Pizarra has also won grants/commissions from the Brooklyn Arts Exchange, Curious Elixirs: Curious Creators, Imago Theater, the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, the Portland Art Museum, and the Regional Arts & Culture Council.

You're Pretty Gay marks his second collection of short fiction. The first, *Public Spanking*, was released by Future Tense Books and was hailed as "mesmerizing" by *Puck Magazine* and "brutally real" by *PDXS*. His subsequent book, the sonnet collection *Infinity Standing Up*, was published by Capturing Fire Press and lauded as "brazen and lusty and often amusing" by *The Washington Post* and "by far one of the most relatable volumes of poetry currently in print" via *Valley Voices*.

An award-winning poet and playwright, Drew Pizarra once toured his one man shows ("*Fickle*," *Queer Notions*, *The Gospel According to Saint Genet*) around the United States before abandoning the form altogether and switching over to television for nearly a decade. There he worked in the digital sphere on behalf of such iconic shows as *Mad Men*, *Rectify*, and *Breaking Bad*.

Additionally, Pizarra is the co-founder of Saint Flashlight (with Molly Gross), an art activation project that finds inventive ways to get poetry into public spaces. Their work has been produced by the Poetry Society of America and the Poetry Project and featured at O, Miami Poetry Festival and Poets House NYC.



About *You're Pretty Gay*

CHAFFINCH PRESS ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE OF A NEW COLLECTION OF QUEER SHORT FICTION: DREW PISARRA'S ***YOU'RE PRETTY GAY***

On Fri., Jun. 25, 2021, Chaffinch Press will officially release Drew Pizarra's new short fiction collection ***You're Pretty Gay***. The book is currently available for presale at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Book Depository, Booktopia, and other fine distributors.

Chaffinch Press is an independent hybrid publishing imprint of poetry and literary fiction, based in Dublin. The press publishes a limited number of titles each year and grew out of The *Blue Nib*, an online and print magazine established in 2015 as an alternative platform offering a voice for talented writers, both established and emerging, across the globe.

What early readers said About You're Pretty Gay

"Drew Pissarra is a poet writing prose. And his second book of stories, You're Pretty Gay, reveals his poetic gifts -- the nakedness, the clarity, the conciseness -- in all their glory."

- Leanne Grabel, Brontosaurus: Memoir of a Sex Life

"You're Pretty Gay is a prime example of Drew Pissarra's dangerously funny and queerly inventive brain. Each story is its own performance, its own shattering of expectations and social mores. But shining through all the wild wit is a glowing heart looking for connection."

- Kevin Sampsell, This Is Between Us

"Each highly enchanting story in You're Pretty Gay is like another spoonful of a gloriously rich yet light gateaux that will make you hungry for more."

Alison Norrington, Class Act

"These stories instill a sense of anticipation and longing, recalling not simply what happened but also bringing forth the wishes for what might have been."

*- Nicholas Ealy, Narcissism and Selfhood
in Medieval French Literature: Wounds of Desire*

Sample Story

What Bugs Me

Sometimes it seems as if your whole life could pass by in a single day, as if one day could encapsulate your whole life. It isn't a novel thought. The Ancient Greeks knew it. It was the basis of classical tragedy. Everything had to take place within a twenty-four hour period. Everything you're about to read is true. Well, almost everything.

On June 21st of my thirteenth year, I woke up with the sun. I went into the kitchen where my mother was having a breakfast of margarine toast and black coffee, and my mother pushed this tattered brown envelope across the table and said, "Look honey, this is you before you were you."

Inside was this old sonogram, the shadow of the sound of the seed that would one day turn out to be me. There was nothing special about it as far as I could see. I looked somewhere in between a lima bean and a ghost baby. But my mother insisted I was unique. I was a breach baby. I was born feet first.

I probably wouldn't have thought anything more about it but later that day, I was lying in the backyard of the Rutherford's house. Michael, Tony and I formed an equilateral triangle around this caterpillar. It was a one-of-a-kind find and who exactly found it... Well, why open an old can of worms? But it was different, so different it was almost scary. The three of us had come to the mutual decision that whomever it crawled to first would get to keep it. Now, we had a time limit because we hadn't told Martha this. Martha was inside calling the Smithsonian Museum's Insect Zoo to see what we were supposed to feed it. We were growing increasingly impatient. We decided that each of us could take a poke at it with a stick. And whenever we poked it, it would just roll up into this little ball, not unlike the little ball that I appeared to be in the picture my mother had shown me that very morning.

I thought, why does it do that. It doesn't make it any safer. In fact, rolled up in a little ball like that it was easier to squish with your foot. But I guess in the back recesses of its tiny brain it associates that position with a time of comfort, and food, and warmth.

Well, on the final poke – mine I think – it inched forward a centimeter at most towards Michael. Then it stopped. We waited. We waited until Martha came running out of the house screaming, we're famous, we're famous. Tony stood up – careful – What when where how why. The Smithsonian said this is a rare caterpillar. She said a long impressive Latin word or two. It was then I had my first visions of fame. I saw my name engraved in brass near a childproof glass terrarium. This brass plaque would say: This very, very rare caterpillar, this Latin word, this thick, fluorescent green, red-horned wonder was bequeathed to the Smithsonian Museum Insect Zoo by Mr. Andrew Xavier Pizarra, the first... and his friends. My reveries were interrupted by Michael who snatched up the caterpillar and said, it's mine. Martha said, the Smithsonian is coming to pick it up this afternoon. Michael said, it's mine, it crawled to me, and then he ran with it. We ran after him. Thank God, they had a fence. We ran around and around the yard in circles. Michael was faster than us but not fast enough to give him time to get that gate open. Then somebody had the bright idea of running in the opposite direction. The moment Michael saw that he ran straight into the middle of the yard and said, it's mine, it's mine, it's mine. I said, Oh my God. Michael said, Shut up. I said, Oh my God. Michael said, Shut up. I said, Michael. Michael said, I said shut up. And then he pushed me. And then I pushed him right back. And then he punched me. And then I punched him right back. This was a serious fight. We went right for the face with our fists. And then all of those kids who had left and thought that caterpillar was nothing came back en masse. This was the fight of the summer. I tasted blood. Albeit my own. And then I connected a good one right to Michael's jaw and this tooth came flying out. We all knew he had a loose tooth. He'd been complaining about it for weeks but it still got quite a reaction from the crowd, and from that point on, Michael fought with a vengeance. I began to lose. I began to feel humiliated. Michael was two grades lower than me who cares that he was a year older. And then I had an idea, or rather I remembered.

On the last day of school, Roy Wilson had said to me that if you ever get in a fight and you start to lose the way to win is you clasp both hands together behind the opponent's head, pull the head down, and slam your knee up into the person's face. If you do it right you can break his nose, and if you're lucky, you can kill the person by pushing the cartilage and bone up into the

brain. I clasped my hands together behind Michael's head. I pulled his head down. But I couldn't do it so I pushed him aside into a brick wall as it were and ran into my front yard.

I couldn't kill Michael for a caterpillar, no matter how rare. I couldn't do it. And if I couldn't do it, I couldn't see why I should keep fighting.

The crowd followed. They lined at the edge of the curb and chanted: Chicken. Faggot. Chicken. Faggot. And then the crowd parted. Michael emerged, blood streaming down the side of his face, and began to punch while I stood there. Stunned. A human punching bag.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw this impressive black car driving up the road. On the side scrawled in silver was the word Smithsonian. It stopped right in front of my house. A man stepped out of the car and said, "Can someone please direct me to the caterpillar?"

There was a hush. Even Michael turned.

And during that pause I ran up my front steps, tore open the screen door, and there was my mother, my father, my older brother, and my younger brother, this wall of sound saying get back out there and fight get back out there and fight like a man. I tried pushing my way through this crowd that was my family but they pushed me right back. Get back out there and fight. Chicken. Faggot. Chicken. Faggot. Get back out there and fight like a man. I was trying to get back to a position of comfort. But I couldn't.

I ran down the steps, down the path, past Michael through the crowd to that black car with the silver word Smithsonian on the side just in time to see it pull away. It stopped at the stop sign. I ran after it. It turned. It went five blocks until it reached the stoplight where our neighborhood hit the highway. I ran down the street and watched WALK change to blinking DON'T WALK change to solid DON'T WALK and the red light turn to green. The car turned and drove off on the highway and out of my life. But I kept running and turned in the opposite direction up the steep black driveway of Saint Francis of Assisi church, parochial school, and gym. The blacktop was abandoned. There was no one playing hopscotch or jumping jacks and when I got to the other side of the gym, there was no one playing tennis on the courts. I crawled under the honeysuckle bushes that filled the narrow space between the tennis court fence and the school. I shimmied up a drainpipe to the roof but it wasn't far enough. I could hear the kids returning to their games. So I walked to the end of the roof where the school met the gym. The gym was a good story and a half higher than the school but nobody ever climbed to

the top of the gym because the only way up were these grates behind which were these whirring fans that promised to cut off your fingers. I didn't care. I braved getting stubs and carefully pried my fingers in the grates and pulled myself to the top. I sat there on that white-pebbled roof under a blazing sun and smelled the scent of honeysuckle so thick it made me sick, all the while listening to the sounds of the kids returning to their games of tennis and baseball, and skipping rope, and hopscotch.

Around dusk, some kid hit a tennis ball up on the roof. I instinctively threw it back down. Thanks, I heard. I looked around me. The roof was covered with tennis balls. A few baseballs even. And I began throwing them down one after another. And all those kids who were playing tennis stopped and started laughing. Cheering. They created a commotion because the kids who were skipping rope in the parking lot came around to see what was going on and then the kids in the baseball field wanted to know why everyone was leaving the blacktop and going to the other side of the gym. Until there was this huge mass of kids laughing, shouting.

And I threw those balls down. There must have been a hundred. I threw balls for an hour. And they were laughing, and screaming, Who's up there. Who's up there. And I waited until I had two left and I went to the edge of the roof and let them drop. And they looked up at me and said in one voice, HEY, ANDY! HOW'D YOU GET SO HIGH?

For further information contact Chaffinch Press 00353-858513376
or email us at info@chaffinchpress.com