

# Emerging Writers

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## New Year's Gay

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Jacob Eubanks

Second-Place Winner

Creative Non-fiction Category

2019 Emerging Writers Contest

### New Year's Gay

Have you ever had a secret? Something you've kept inside for the majority of your life? Something that could hurt, not only yourself, but the people that you love the most? Growing up, I always knew that I was "different." I was never interested in the stereotypical normality's placed upon boys. I didn't care to play with cars, shoot guns, wrestle, or hang out with little boys my age. I wanted to sing, play with dolls, and hang out with girls. As a child, I noticed things that sparked my imagination. Little boys would flirt with little girls, but I never found myself in that situation. Perhaps at the time it was the "cooties" that really drove me away from liking girls, but who knew? I decided to not think about this too hard because what else should a child do? After all, I was only concerned with learning my ABC's and preparing for the 100th day of school activities. Therefore, it was not a big deal—until it was.

One day in first grade, I remember sitting in music class and the teacher announcing that we had a new kid. His name was Justin. Justin and I shared a mutual love for music and eventually became super great friends. I didn't realize I had feelings for him, but then he got a girlfriend. I felt confused. Why was I the kid that was having feelings for a boy? Growing up in a Christian household, I was always told that being gay was wrong! "You're supposed to like

girls, Jacob!” I would tell myself. I felt crazy, and alone at such a young age. For a while, I tried my best to ignore the fact that I had the hugest crush on the new boy in town. As an outlet, I began to develop a relationship with a girl in my class. We dated from fifth to eighth grade. I have no explanation as to why I did this. I wasn’t doing anything but hurting not only myself, but the girl that thought I actually had feelings for her. As the years went on, I gradually started realizing that I was gaining a predominant attraction for the same sex. As a firm believer in Christianity, this hurt me. I started questioning my faith. I would ask myself: “If God didn’t make me this way, then why am I feeling these things?” I went through years of exhaustion, years of not knowing, and years of depression. I could not bear the thought of dishonoring not only my parents, but God. I did not know how to live with myself. For years I researched scripture, speeches on conversion, and asked God to heal me from this sin that I was living in, but I never got an answer.

I began to feel ashamed of myself. In my mind I began to wonder if anybody would miss me if I ended it all. My depression became severe, and I knew it was time to talk to someone, but who? I had always heard horrific stories of parents abandoning their children if they ever found out they were gay, so I didn’t know what to do. My parents have always been good people and although I didn’t think they would abandon me, I still had no idea how they would react in the moment. My older brother, Jeramie has always been one of my biggest support systems. We have always had a good relationship. Although I wasn’t sure how it would turn out, I decided to tell him. At the time, the concept was new to him, but he was open to helping me comprehend what I had been feeling. I began to gradually surround myself with people I felt comfortable telling, and I was able to openly share my huge secret, with those closest to me. Those closest to me, except my family.

In the Fall of 2017, I was a part of my high school's One-Act Play, "The Lottery". My friend Caleb was in the play, and during a rehearsal, he told me about this tall, beautiful boy named Taylor who was interested in me. Taylor and I had never met before, but he told Caleb that he had noticed me at school. He wanted to meet me. I was flabbergasted. Interested in me? No one had ever been interested in me! I was so baffled, but suddenly, all of my senses were buzzing. I decided to just sit with it. I didn't want to trust one person's statements, and I most definitely wasn't going to be the desperate boy who texted, "Hey! I know we haven't talked, but I heard you had a crush on me!"

So, I waited. I waited for a message that may or may not happen. Until it did. I remember sitting in my room one day and hearing the "ding!" from Facebook messenger. It was the most excited I've felt in a while. My heart started racing rapidly, and I looked down to see that it was him! The boy who had been allegedly interested in me had finally sent me a message! I decided to give it a go and respond to him. We talked about our lives, and how we both came from religious backgrounds. We hit it off immediately. I was in love. I was content. Days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months with Taylor. By December, I really thought I had found my soulmate. I was wrong. On December 30th, 2017, Taylor broke my heart into pieces. When Taylor told me that he didn't want to talk to me anymore, I thought my heart had been ripped out of my chest. "Everything happens for a reason," I kept telling myself. I was defeated. I realized that I was not happy with myself because I was scared to embrace who I fully was. On that day, I decided to call my parents and tell them I was gay.

I called my mom first. Tears were rolling down my face, and my throat began to dry out. "Mom, all of my life I've kept a part of myself hidden." I remember the awkward silence. "Mom, I'm gay." For a moment, I began to imagine a life without my mother. "Honey, I will

always love you no matter what,” she replied. That was all that I needed. Next, I called my father. Telling him was perhaps the most nerve-wracking thing I’ve ever done in my life. “Son, I want to always have a relationship with you,” he reassured me. Although he still doesn’t fully understand my sexuality, I know my father loves me. Finally, I was free to be all of me! I wanted to let the whole world know, and so I did. I posted a picture on Instagram and came out as gay. What better way, to kick off a new year right?

Sometimes it’s hard for me not to know all the answers. I still catch myself questioning why I was made this way, and at times I wonder why the world treats me different because of it. Then I remember, it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter what the world thinks of me. I will be proud of who I am! On December 31st, 2017, I decided to stand up for love and for myself. This was the day I began living with love in my heart, and it is something I will never regret.