

EMILY AUSTIN

GAY  
GIRL  
PRAY  
ERS

POEMS

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# **Gay Girl Prayers**



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Though much of the work of Brick Books takes place on the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Mississaugas of the Credit peoples, our editors, authors, and readers from many backgrounds are situated from coast to coast to coast in Canada on the traditional and unceded territories of over six hundred nations who have cared for Turtle Island from time immemorial. While living and working on these lands, we are committed to hearing and returning the rightful imaginative space to the poetries, songs, and stories that have been untold, under-told, wrongly told, and suppressed through colonization.

For anyone taught they were going to hell.

### **Note On Formatting**

This ebook edition of *Gay Girl Prayers* is specifically designed to be accessible for a wide variety of readers and devices. Because of this, the individual poem formatting may differ from the print edition.

Strange women,  
darkness remains dark  
until there is light—  
so, smoke a cigarette  
and listen to the beast roar.

Shall we resurrect, strange women?  
Rise like steam, like birds from a subway station?  
Defy the convention of the proverbs?  
Write with our fingers?  
I am.

Resurrect the spirit,  
fly into the ember,  
caw a song in the air  
like a crow.

I am who I am,  
she is who she is,  
you are who you are.  
Can you hear me?  
Are you listening?

I am sweltering.  
Rainbows arched in the sky,  
ink in our skin.  
I am.

Naked under gold and pearls  
a volcano erupts.  
Take the pew,  
she is at the pulpit.  
She is.

Take the white clouds into white rooms.

She is at the front now,  
fire in Her belly,  
fruit on Her chin.

There are words in Her mouth,  
in Her gut with the apple.  
We listen to the crack of fire,  
burning bushes  
                crack  
listen.

There are virgins in the white clouds  
waiting for dead men  
                crack  
if heaven is hell for girls  
                crack  
then heaven is hell.

Keep your soul insurance in the fountain  
                crack  
there is a shadow poisoning the well.

Wet your hair with drops of the night  
                crack, crack  
praise the monsters,  
meet me where the fire never goes out.

*Crack, Crack*

If they try to strip you  
of your technicolor robes  
show them how the sun  
the moon  
the stars  
all kneel to Queens



## *Genesis 37*

Truly I tell you,  
if you have pride  
as small as a mustard seed,  
you can say to a mountain,  
“Move from here to there,”  
and it will move.

*Matthew 17:20*

I am lying  
with strange women  
in torn clothing  
my blood is wine  
and I am eating Madeleines

I have drawn on my skin

a triangle  
a nautical star  
a stalk of lavender  
two men making out  
the eleventh letter of the Greek alphabet  
a unicorn and the words:

*If ghosts exist  
my body turns to stardust  
If ghosts do not exist  
I do*

*Leviticus 18–20*

Heaven is ten girls  
who take their lamps  
to one another's bed chambers  
to light their rooms  
until they sleep.

*Matthew 25:1*



You were created in the image of God—  
man and woman, God created you  
so, man and woman God must be.

The holy spirit is hovering.  
She is fluttering over the face of the waters,  
she came to earth in the body of a son.

Do not forget the rock who begot you.  
He gave birth to you  
because fathers can give birth.

Change the bread into flesh,  
change the wine into blood—  
sacred bodies transubstantiate.

Use a chalice rather than a cup.  
A chalice is a godly kind of vessel,  
a hallowed beaker for transcendent blood.

*Deuteronomy 32:18 & John 6:35*

Hail Jeff,  
blessed are thou among men  
and blessed is the fruit of thy seed, Judy  
pray for us

*The Virgin Jeff*

Don't forgive me  
I haven't sinned  
in my thoughts  
or in my words  
in the strange things I have done  
in the ordinary things I have failed to do  
through my heart  
through my heart  
through my heart

*Act of Pride*

Those who lie with men  
as men lie with a woman  
inherit heaven

Take off the grave clothes  
nothing abominable is attractive  
you are altogether beautiful

There is no flaw



*Leviticus 20:13*

Don't take this, any of you, and eat it—  
this is her body.

Don't take this, any of you, and drink it—  
this is her blood, which pumps for its own ends.

Faster when she's nervous,  
when she's buying shirts from the men's section

or shopping at PinkCherry,  
when she locks eyes with a woman wearing a carabiner,

when there is a passing mention of queer people in media,  
like when a cartoon character has two dads.

Slower when she's explaining there hasn't been a mistake at the hotel  
when the room for her and a woman has one bed,

when she looks over her shoulder at dusk  
while holding hands with someone who isn't a man.

Faster again when she clocks a queer kid  
and says your hair looks cool.

## *Words of Consecration*

Her desire will be  
for whatever she's into.  
If she wants it to hurt,  
she'll ask.

She doesn't need to multiply anything  
to fill her quiver  
or be fruitful.

*Genesis 3:16 & Genesis 9:7*

Heaven is ten girls  
who take their lamps  
to each other's bed chambers  
to read lesbian erotica  
and make out.

*Matthew 25:2*



She is not a lily among brambles  
waiting to be led to still waters.  
bless her if she is perverse and wayward,  
cunning.  
Bless her if she pleases herself.

*Matthew 25:2*

Ghosts visit girls at nighttime  
come upon them in their sleep  
try to turn them into vessels  
into servants

Ghosts find girls are as empty  
as the Red Sea at high tide  
as the inns were in Bethlehem  
as the earth on the seventh day  
as the trees were in Eden  
as the tabernacles during Ordinary Time  
as the baskets when Jesus fed the multitude  
as a thurible teeming with incense

They are in servitude to no spirit  
but their own

*Luke 1:26–38*

If the power of the flame draws those  
who gaze at stars,  
at new moons,  
it will not burn them.  
Behold, God made them enchanting,  
strange, and incombustible,  
like water.

Read the lines on your palms.  
Ask the stars; ask the dead.  
Fortune tellers know  
thou shalt relish a witch to live.

*Exodus 22:18 & Isaiah 43:2*

Heaven is ten girls  
who take their lamps  
to each other's bed chambers  
to consider polyamory  
and sperm donors.

*Matthew 25:3*



Take the stones you plan to throw at her  
for not screaming  
or not screaming loudly enough  
while she was raped  
put them inside of your pockets  
and walk on water

*Deuteronomy 22:23–27*

As you did it  
to the strangest  
of my sisters  
you did it to me

*Matthew 25:40*

I presented myself, as a living offering, to Rebecca.  
I offered my body to Tamar and Abigail,  
my blood to Miriam and Deborah.  
I gave my reasonable service to Rehab  
and to Hannah, Mary, and Ruth,  
who all sacrificed a lot  
to offer their bodies to me  
and their spirits to themselves.

*Romans 12:1*

- 1 Two angels disguised as humans pulled over in the city of Sodom. They were on their way to heaven but needed to stretch their legs, use the washroom, and grab a bite to eat.
- 2 That evening, the men of Sodom were drunk and rowdy. It was a statutory holiday, and there was a football game on. That, coupled with the fact that Sodom was notorious for having a disquieting number of men's rights activists, created an inhospitable environment for many day-trippers, and for most folks taking rest stops off the highway.
- 3 When the men of Sodom spotted the angels, they started shouting f-slurs. This is because the angels looked clean, fashionable, and pretty, and men in Sodom associated that with homosexuality. They didn't realize those qualities happened to be linked with celestial beings.
- 4 Before the angels could get back to their car, the men of Sodom surrounded them. They yelled at them to suck their dicks. It was difficult to tell whether they were joking, or whether they actually wanted to receive rape-blow-jobs; however, Lot, a local vicar, thought they were definitely being serious. That dismayed him—not because he took an issue with rape; he was also a rapist himself—but because his religion was homophobic. So, he shouted, “Come on, guys! Don't be gay! That's gross! I have two virgin daughters right over here. Wouldn't you rather assault my girls?”
- 5 There were two teenagers standing near him. They had their arms crossed. They looked freaked out. One said, “What the fuck, Dad?”
- 6 The crowd of men paused. One put his hand to his chest and said, “Wow, that is so charitable of you, Lot.”
- 7 Another said, “Damn. What a nice guy, eh? Offering up his virgin daughters. That is incredibly big of you, sir.”

8 “What a hospitable dude.”

9 While Lot was being praised, and carried around on the men’s shoulders, the angels asked the girls, “Are you two okay?”

10 The girls said, “No, our dad is obviously an incestuous pedophile. Can you please take us somewhere safe?”

11 The angels nodded, “Yes, for sure. We’ll take you to the gay bar in heaven.”



*Genesis 19 & Hebrews 13:2*

This is where he was baptized,  
his head held down under water.  
He didn't drown,  
but he wasn't born again.

He was born again when he met Matthew,  
Mark, Luke, and John,  
who held his head down in their laps,  
stroked his hair, and lifted his gaze  
to heaven.

*John 3:1–21*

Heaven is two girls  
who take their lamps  
to their shared bed chambers  
to call their mutual ex-girlfriend  
to ask what's new?  
How are you?  
Do you want to grab lunch tomorrow?  
I was thinking of your mom the other day.  
How is Mary? Tell Mary I said hi.  
I'm here with Delilah. Do you want to talk to Delilah?  
Okay, here she is.  
Bye, I love you too.

*Matthew 25:4*

If you are ever forced to conceive of anything,  
by a condom or a government that fails you,  
by a Tinder date who ghosts you,  
by God, your father, or by some unholy spirit,  
let it be that you are important and good, like Mary  
but with more choice.

*Matthew 1:18*

This isn't the hill she wanted to die on,  
but she will be damned  
before others pass here.

She'll climb on her cross at Easter dinner  
while her homophobic uncle serves sour wine.  
She'll call her cousin out when that cousin says something hateful.  
She'll say, "Mom, they know what they're doing."

She will rise from her chair,  
contemplate going through hell to forgive them,  
ascend to the room she prepared for herself,  
and find peace in the miracle of her life.



*At Calvary*

Your mother came naked from her mother's womb  
and returned there gutted

Cover yourself in a golden chamois  
return to the forest adorned

*Job 1:21*

Jesus's great-grandmother was a harlot and a saint  
she was virtuous and worthy  
not because of the time she hid men in her rafters  
to help them escape  
but because she was intrinsically valuable  
sacred like all sex workers  
like all people  
like you

## *Joshua 2*

Heaven is ten strange girls  
who take emulsion and sensitizer  
to their basements  
to screen print T-shirts  
with the text:

*If God hates gays  
why are we so cute?*

*Matthew 25:5*

A strange woman  
is a bright sky  
a catholic goldmine  
an angel's quarry

Her steps take hold on heaven  
follow her



*Proverbs 22:14 & Proverbs 5:3–5*

If some guy asks who you belong to  
while you're sowing your oats with women,  
answer Ruth, if Ruth is your name.

*Ruth 2:5*

He was fingering dirt  
in his castle  
while he watched her

He was unclean  
when he took her

foul as always  
when he left

She was bathing in the moonlight  
when he saw her

She was spotless  
when he took her

clean as always  
when he left

## *2 Samuel 11*

- 1 Newborn enbies are the crown of old fruitcakes;  
the glory of baby gays  
is in their daddies.
- 2 Fairies are the pride of their aunt Dorothy;  
butches are a blessing  
to femmes, stones,
- 3 pansies, other butches, and androgynes.  
They are a splendour  
to earth's garden.
- 4 Trans kids are the joy of their elders,  
and their sports teams.  
Every fruit is a blessing.

*Proverbs 17:6*

Heaven is two women  
who take their phones  
to their shared bedroom,  
scroll and laugh sporadically  
as they flash each other pictures of toads,  
and say, "Honey, this reminds me of you."



*Matthew 25:6*

Name the vessel stronger  
than the one that brought you  
and every person who is  
and ever was  
to life

*1 Peter 3:7*

Let me kiss her  
with the kisses of my mouth—  
for her love is better than the apple boughs in blossom.

Because of the savour of lavender ointments,  
her name is as ointment poured forth;  
therefore, do strange girls love her.

Draw me through the glades of poppies,  
we will run after her—  
the queen hath brought me into her chambers.

I will be glad and rejoice,  
I will remember this love—  
the perverts want her.

They made her keeper of the violets,  
but her own violets have not been woven  
into garlands or a crown.

Tell me, where dost she sleep?  
Where dost she nod  
to drones of bees at noontide?

I have compared her, my love,  
to the company of unicorns in Sappho's Garden  
to the grotto cool of the nymphs.

A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me.  
She shall lie all night betwixt my breasts,  
bruised the red blood of roses.

My beloved is unto me  
as a cluster of green carnations  
in the gardens at Mytilene.

She is strange, she is strange, my love.  
She has yearning eyes,  
tresses long.

Our bed is orange, pink, and purple  
for, lo, the winter is past,  
the flood is over.

Moss and flowers  
appeared on the earth  
the black swans have come.

O my spouse, she who cometh from the wilderness.  
Love prevails because it is as life-giving as water,  
more perilous than death; it never waits.

Let my beloved enter my garden.  
Let her eat pleasant fruits,  
wear crowns of roses and crocuses.

I found her whom my soul loveth.  
I held her and would not let her go.  
My beloved is mine and I am hers.

## *Song of Shulamit*

Heaven is ten girls  
who take their lamps  
to their friend's bed chambers  
to bring them soup  
and feel their forehead  
when they're sick.

*Matthew 25:7*



If authority is granted by order  
and Adam was formed before Eve  
then suffer not a man to teach  
nor usurp authority over dust  
but to be in silence—  
for dust was formed first, then Adam.

*Genesis 2:7 & 1 Timothy 2:13*

Families are focused on  
and children are saved  
when drag kings and queens  
read picture books about gay penguins  
wrapping their wings around an egg  
with the pinions and plumage of love.

*Psalm 91*

The price of a man was fifty shekels  
while the price of a woman was thirty  
but the price of Judas was thirty also  
so that is their cost of everything

*Leviticus 27:3–4 & Matthew 26:14–16*

In the name of the questioning,  
the curious,  
and the closeted.

Glory be to the butches,  
the studs,  
and the femmes.

In the name of the aces,  
the demisexual,  
and the gray.

Glory be to bisexuals,  
pansexuals,  
and the fluid.

In the name of trans lesbians,  
t4ts, non-binary bisexuals,  
and all queer trans people.

Glory be to the intersex,  
all gay men, witches,  
and bears.

## *The Sign of the Cross*



Hey Mamma  
who art in a lesbian bar,  
hallowed be thy yearning.  
Thy drag kingdom come,  
thy strap undone  
with femmes as it is with butches.  
Give us our daily oat milk,  
forgive us our baby gay phase  
as we forgive God and her misled toadies.  
Lead us not into bigoted churches,  
deliver us from conservative politicians.

*Hey Mamma*

Heaven is ten girls  
who take their lamps  
to each other's bed chambers  
to have an orgy  
until a phone rings  
and a girl gets bad news  
and the room surrounds her.  
They put their hands on her shoulders  
and say, "We're here for you."  
"We'll help."

*Matthew 25:8*

Don't break your chest for me  
if I were made of ribs  
dry rubbed in sugar and spices  
I might love you for it  
but I existed in the previous verse  
and I like eating fruit and being smart  
so don't hurt yourself  
I will only ever love dirt and my chosen family

*Genesis 2:22*

Though Delilah's hair was a covering,  
a veil to keep her modest,  
a cloth to wash your feet,  
she too was born with superpower strength.

It grows from her armpits, her arms, her legs,  
from the tissue that covers her pubic bone,  
from her face, her stomach, her feet.

It grows from the bare patches in her eyebrows,  
from her bald or shaven head.

*1 Corinthians 11:1–6 & Luke 7:36–50 & Judges 16:17*



Lot's unnamed daughters had an unnamed mother.  
She was turned to salt for looking backwards.  
At nighttime, before the girls slept,  
they must have talked about her.  
"Should we keep her salty body?"  
"How will we remember her without pictures?"  
"Cameras don't exist yet."  
Maybe they hummed songs she sang,  
or made recipes she taught them.  
Maybe they saw her in their dreams,  
or wrote poems about her face and wonders.  
Could girls write back then?  
How did they remember her?  
How do we remember them?

Spit on the ground,  
put the mud in your eyes.

*John 9:1–12*

The natural use of a person's body  
is to carry their heart and brain.

Let there be light in the vaults of the sky,  
let the water teem with living creatures.

Let there be elderly queer men in movie theatres,  
eating popcorn, laughing loudly at previews.

Let non-binary parents nap on the beach  
while their kids bury them up to their necks in sand.

Let dykes offer crows hazelnuts and cranberries  
until the crows bring them buttons and bones.

Winged birds fly, wild animals roam,  
seeds and plants sprout.

Look upon that and all that has been made  
and see that it is good.

*Romans 1:26–27*

His soul is bound to the soul of another,  
and he loves him as his own soul.

He shall leave his parents  
and be joined to his husband.

The two shall become one flesh.  
Let no one separate.

Love is proud.

*2 Samuel 1:26 & Matthew 19:4–6*

Ruth said to Naomi,  
“Entreat me not to leave you,  
or to turn back from following after you;  
for wherever you go, I will u-Haul;  
your people shall be my chosen family,  
your clothes, my clothes,  
your God, my God;  
where you die, I will die,  
there will I be buried,  
and theologians will write that we were friends,  
travelling companions,  
but I will have loved you  
with the purest desires of my heart.”

*Romans 1:26–27 & Ruth 1:16*



There is grace in men having long hair  
grace in women shearing their heads

My godmother is wearing a wrestling singlet  
my godfather is wearing a silk trumpet gown

*Deuteronomy 22:5 & 1 Corinthians 11:6 & 11:14*

Here I am  
the mother of your mothers  
tell the others  
I am on fire  
and I am who I am

*Exodus 3:14*

**Thou art worthy,  
O queer folk,  
for thou hast made:**

- teleidoscopes
- modern science
- computers
- search engines
- erotic pop art
- sex toys
- the cure to sleeping sickness
- flowerpots made out of toilets dumped outside lesbian bars
- Pride parades
- a sensor to detect early-stage pancreatic cancer
- Grindr
- the Mona Lisa
- safer spaces
- dance films
- every funny tweet

- “Bohemian Rhapsody”
- “Fast Car”
- riots
- poetry
- mistakes
- families
- blood
- spit
- sweat
- tears
- carbon dioxide

There was a bright star in the sky  
the night you were born.

*Revelation 4:11*

Long lay the world in error pining  
'til strange girls felt worth

A thrill of hope  
weary folks rejoice

Yonder breaks  
a new and glorious morn

Stand on your feet



*O Holy Night*

She is as brilliant as jasper or carnelian  
give her our gifts  
protect her

## *Matthew 2*

Do you hear what I hear?  
Heaven and Nature are singing  
they're drag queens  
they're harmonizing  
queer joy to the world  
while two men slow dance  
and I read a text from my friend  
who is four months on T  
sharing their name is Felix now  
which means happy  
repeat the sounding joy  
there is a character who is bi on prime-time TV  
and a Pride flag at City Hall  
repeat, repeat  
there's a queer picture book display at the library  
a kid is picking one out, his dad is smiling  
saying, "That's a good pick, buddy"  
and I'm going to tell someone I love them  
and they're going to tell me they love me back  
and we're going to get married and immaculately conceive a baby  
with our two holy spirits and a turkey baster  
or maybe we won't  
maybe I'll just write a poem about that person I love  
that gay people might feel happy reading  
and when I'm grey I'll remember them fondly  
think of how lucky I am to have loved someone  
and hum Heaven and Nature's song

*Joy to the World*

Heaven is all strange people  
who take their lamps  
to their bed chambers  
to say good night,  
I love you.

*Matthew 25:9*

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Lastly, thank you to anyone reading this. I am earnestly grateful to anyone who has spent time reading anything I've written.



## About the Author



Emily Austin was born in St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada. She studied English literature, religious studies, and library science at King's University College and Western University. She has received two writing grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, and she has written two novels (*Everyone in this Room Will Someday Be Dead* and *Interesting Facts About Space*). Emily currently lives in Ottawa in the territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation.



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