



Context

People mentioned (and pronouns as I understand them as of 2024-12-04)

Leslie [They/She/Fae]

Adam [He/They]

Cooper [He/Him]

Kay [She/They]

Marc [He/Him]

Pan [He/They/She]

Richard [He/Him]

This started on Monday 2/19/2024, one day after I shared concepts of Emergency Power Network (EPN) stickers featuring trans-positive messages. This was the second batch of stickers I had designed, featuring artwork by Derry Luttrell of Dice Will Roll. The two stickers that came up in this conversation are shown above. Cooper's character, Pons, is the brain. The other character is Sworkuz, who is an NPC played by GM Adam.



Adam Damas Yesterday at 12:47 PM

So, I've gotta talk to you about something, and I was having trouble sleeping because I was thinking about it.

I want to make sure not to misrepresent or misconstrue anything and accidentally cause hurt feelings or mess up friendships but there are a few things I want to talk over with you. If you are working, and don't have the time at the moment, that's fully fair and you can hit me back later, but I'll put a bit here so you have some context on what I want to talk about. Sorry for the text wall.

The first is:

Cooper hit me up last night concerning the stickers with the EPN characters and the Trans support messages. He laid out that while he is generally good with the idea, his concern lay with the potential of having his character being directly connected to a stance on Trans athletes. Being in the same field I understand where he is coming from. It's an absurdly complex issue that doesn't have an answer that works for everyone. He would like it if Pons would not be linked to that particular issue. (I know that in your last mock-up batch that message was on the Sworkus sticker, but he's looking at it as a whole.)

I don't want this to come across as Cooper is unsupportive of the LGBTQ+ athletes community or anything, as that isn't at all the case. He even lamented society is so fucked that it can't sort it out in a way to have competitions that is satisfactory for everyone, (I'm paraphrasing obviously, haha). He's just in a position where the issue is a contentious one and having his character, and therefore himself directly, taking a stance one way or another could be a potential issue.

If you have time to do a mumble call or something that might be nice but, again, I know you're probably working right now. I was going to ask you to voice call first but I didn't want to just blind side you or something. Just let me know if that's possible.



cheeseandkrakens Yesterday at 12:51 PM

that's... unexpected

especially since like you said, the pons one isn't even the one discussing athletes

Frankly I'm not sure how to respond here



Adam Damas Yesterday at 12:56 PM

I think Cooper just want to make sure Pons isn't linked in the future.

It's a really tough and... painful issue for a lot of people. Which is why I wanted to voice call you. Dani and I were talking it over last night too.

Can you spare a few minutes to talk? I'd like to go through some of this with you and text isn't great for important conversations.



cheeseandkrakens Yesterday at 1:02 PM

I think I need a bit of time. I'm a little shaken
maybe tonight?

What time do you work



Adam Damas Yesterday at 1:03 PM

I'm off tonight.

If you are going to think it over: I do want to reiterate that this isn't Cooper saying they dislike or don't support trans people or their rights. It's this very specific and complex issue that is close to them and their profession. He's not a bigot, nor does he hold any disdain for people who are different. Nor is this intended as a direct personal attack on you or who you are. I can put all of that as a 100% certainty. (edited)



cheeseandkrakens Yesterday at 3:48 PM

OK I know what I want to say



Adam Damas Yesterday at 3:51 PM

Alright. I'm heading home from the store. I'll message you when I get there.

Included below is the letter I read during the call with Adam.

First: I regret that the burden of arbiter has been placed on Adam. I know you have no ill intent in coming to me with this, but you need to know that this is not a small or simple thing that is being asked.

I am deeply disappointed, hurt, angry, sad, and frustrated that we are talking about this. I get more and more NOT OK with it with each passing moment. The Pons sticker isn't even the one with a message about trans athletes. The Pons sticker has the most cat-poster "hang in there" message of ALL the stickers. His complaint doesn't hold water.

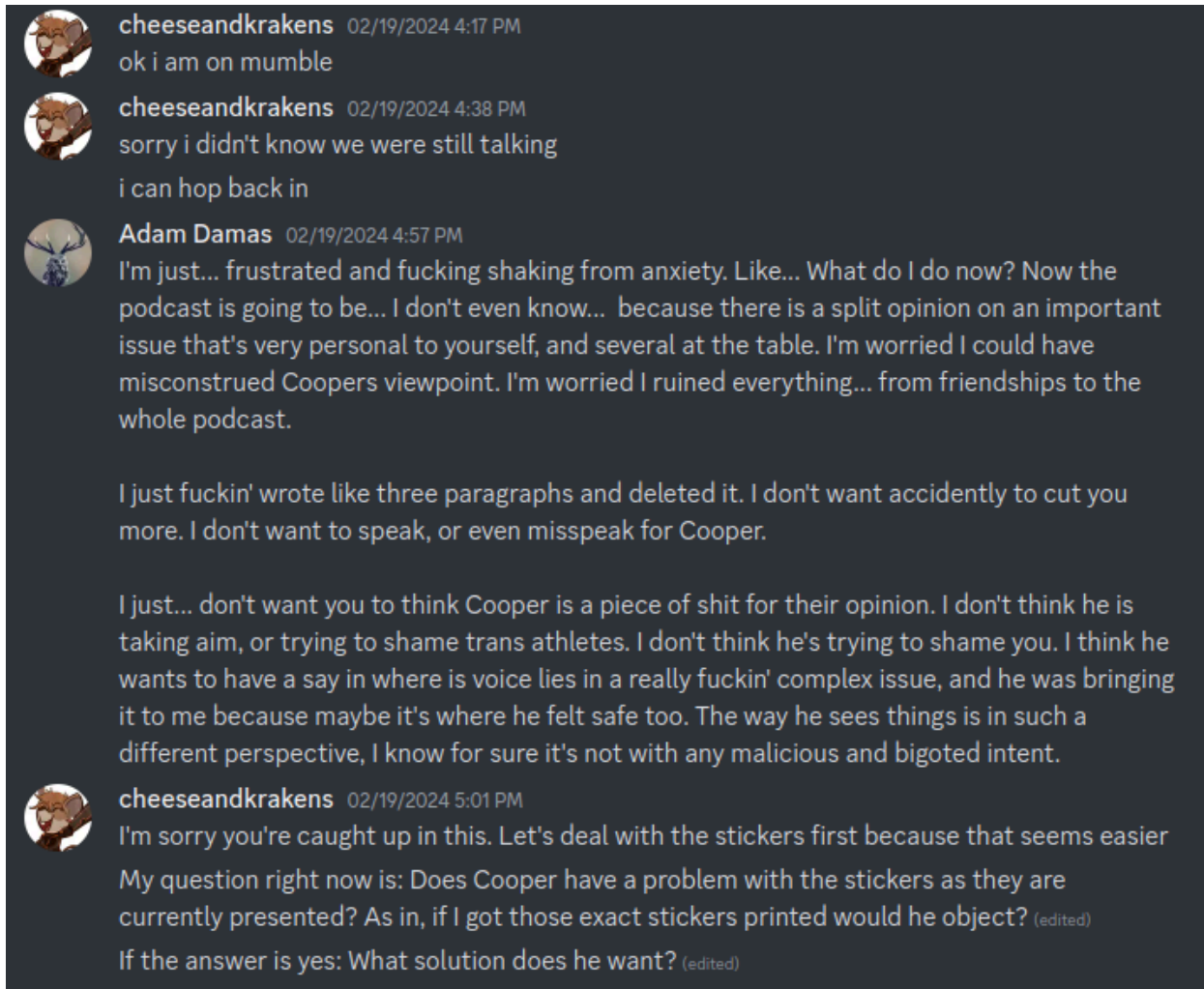
There's no EPP branding on the stickers to tie it back to him. Nobody in the gymnastics sphere is going to see a sticker of Pons (if they even see the stickers AT ALL) and think "Hey that's Cooper's character." The Venn diagram of "gymnasts" + "people who listen to EPP" is 2 people: Adam and Cooper.

I can't not take this personally. Trans people are being stepped on so much right now and too few want to stand up for them even in the most microscopic way. Cooper is afraid of the repercussions of having a nice thing written about trans people on a sticker. Meanwhile others are being actively denied from participating in sports, both at the competitive and recreational levels, and still others are being physically harmed simply for being themselves. I don't even know if I'll be welcome in this country this time next year. That is not the behavior of someone who is "supportive." He quite literally is not supporting trans people here. He can't claim to be supportive if he's apathetic, nor can he be supportive if he actively distances himself from statements of support.

I'm still trying to process everything. My feeling of safety and comfort at the table has definitely been shaken. It's gonna be weird that Pons doesn't have a sticker and everybody else does. But it is Cooper's character, so so be it.

Once again I'm sorry that you are being put in the middle of this conflict between two of your friends.

Of course, with a game of telephone like this, there are bound to be miscommunications and misunderstandings. One such miscommunication was whether or not the existing stickers were acceptable or not. Regardless though, the cat was out of the bag.

A screenshot of a Discord chat window with a dark background. The chat shows a conversation between three users: cheeseandkrakens, Adam Damas, and cheeseandkrakens again. Each message is preceded by a circular profile picture. The text is white, and timestamps are shown in a smaller, lighter font. The chat is set to a channel named 'mumble'.

 **cheeseandkrakens** 02/19/2024 4:17 PM
ok i am on mumble

 **cheeseandkrakens** 02/19/2024 4:38 PM
sorry i didn't know we were still talking
i can hop back in

 **Adam Damas** 02/19/2024 4:57 PM
I'm just... frustrated and fucking shaking from anxiety. Like... What do I do now? Now the podcast is going to be... I don't even know... because there is a split opinion on an important issue that's very personal to yourself, and several at the table. I'm worried I could have misconstrued Coopers viewpoint. I'm worried I ruined everything... from friendships to the whole podcast.

I just fuckin' wrote like three paragraphs and deleted it. I don't want accidently to cut you more. I don't want to speak, or even misspeak for Cooper.

I just... don't want you to think Cooper is a piece of shit for their opinion. I don't think he is taking aim, or trying to shame trans athletes. I don't think he's trying to shame you. I think he wants to have a say in where is voice lies in a really fuckin' complex issue, and he was bringing it to me because maybe it's where he felt safe too. The way he sees things is in such a different perspective, I know for sure it's not with any malicious and bigoted intent.

 **cheeseandkrakens** 02/19/2024 5:01 PM
I'm sorry you're caught up in this. Let's deal with the stickers first because that seems easier
My question right now is: Does Cooper have a problem with the stickers as they are currently presented? As in, if I got those exact stickers printed would he object? (edited)
If the answer is yes: What solution does he want? (edited)

After giving the situation almost 24 hours, I responded

February 20, 2024



cheeseandkrakens Yesterday at 3:14 PM

Has Cooper said anything?



Adam Damas Yesterday at 6:00 PM

He has no problem with the stickers as they are now and is good with Pons being used in other Tran supportive stickers, aside from the one combination particularly discussed. (edited)



cheeseandkrakens Yesterday at 6:04 PM

OK



cheeseandkrakens Yesterday at 6:18 PM

Let's see how things go on Sunday.

As time went on, however, I was feeling worse and worse. I could not think about anything else, and decided to wait until I could meet with my therapist to have further conversation. Then I sent the following to Cooper and he responded.



As you can see, we had a second misunderstanding caused by indirect communication. I originally thought Cooper had asked Adam to talk to me.

I did not feel safe at the table but wanted to see if it was possible to get us all to a place where we can play together again. The items below I sent to Cooper and Adam, outlining what it would take for me to feel safe again at this table. In short: if Cooper is doing this to protect his job and not because he holds transphobic beliefs, I felt I can move on from this.

February 24, 2024



cheeseandkrakens Today at 10:37 PM

Well here we are. It has been one of the worst weeks I have ever had. I am going to get to the point: I no longer feel safe at the EPP table. I know we all would love to see the conclusion of EPP, and I would like to find a path forward with everyone at the table, but to do that some things need to happen:

- I would need each of you to assure me of my safety at the table, in your own words. That statement should include
 - That this was done out of fear for Cooper's job, and not because you personally believe that trans people should be made to participate in sports as their assigned sex at birth (which is an inherently invalidating and transphobic belief).
- I would like Adam to agree that if this ever happens again, he will not allow himself to deliver a transphobic message on behalf of someone else. He will either quash it when it arises, or not get involved.
- I will make a statement to the EPP group chat outlining what happened and that the issue is resolved (assuming it is), so that there are no more back-dealings and we can all move forward with a greater level of trust in each other. You may make a statement as well should you wish.

Food for thought: If cis women athletes were being discriminated against the way trans athletes are, and the sticker was "Protect Women Athletes," y'all never would have brought this forward. (edited)

MEMBERS—3



Adam Damas



cheeseandkrakens 👑



Cooper Bishop



Message Cooper Bishop, Ada...



After 5 days of total silence, Adam then responded in a separate group chat, with me and Kay. Cooper was not included and never responded to my previous statement.

February 29, 2024



Adam Damas Today at 1:53 PM

I've written down my thoughts and feelings, and for the sake of transparency, I have brought Kay into this conversation.

I've been taking time to sort out the situation and my emotions as best I can. This situation falls to me to decide on and it's been painful to say the least. My life is tumultuous right now, trying to secure a home, work has been pretty bad recently, and for a great many reasons and this situation has drastically affected me. I know this will be hard for you to see or understand, please know that I am coming from a place of empathy and love. You are my best friend and I want things to remain that way.

Right now, as you are reemerging as a new and wonderful person, finding who and what you are in a world of possibilities, everything is fresh and raw. Words can bump up against deeply personal issues, without ever intending malice, dismissal or offense. Everyone at the table is and has been supportive of you and your journey, and I want to make sure that comes across clearly, even when such painful misunderstandings happen.

As GM, it falls to me to oversee and ensure the well being of the table and the fun of the game, but I know myself

MEMBERS—3



Adam Damas



cheeseandkrakens



Kay Purcell 🏆

As GM, it falls to me to oversee and ensure the well being and mental health of everyone at the table, myself included. It is very important to me that everyone has a right to their voice and the feeling of comfort and safety. I want to assure you again that everyone at this table supports you, your journey, and your people, but I fear that guidelines you have offered will make others at the table think that their voices won't be allowed to be heard. Your safety and comfort are important to me, but so are the safety and comfort of everyone else at the table. If everyone is not able to express their concerns in a safe way, where we are all heard and are able to discuss, underlying issues will go unresolved. Those situations are not only unhealthy, but it means that we will all miss our chance to grow.

So for the time being, I would like to ask you to take a step back from the podcast for a bit.

I've set the importance of this issue right alongside Dani and I trying to buy a house, thinking about having children, and how the next 30+ years of our life are going to look. I have it there because of how deeply I care about you. So I think it would be best to give the whole thing some space, and give yourself the room to grow in the way you are striving towards. Then, down the road if the situation changes and you feel the comfort return, then I would be thrilled to have my best friend back in the mix.

All of that said, if we find other opportunities to game together, maybe on the same side of the table for once, I would be fuckin' thrilled. Maybe this environment just isn't the right one at the moment. Kind of like how our game with your coworkers went, how we just couldn't all get on the same page. Maybe we can find something else a little more relaxed to play in. Gods that sounds nice.

If all of this hurts, and is upsetting, then I fully understand. Your feelings are valid. Please take all the time you want to process this. I truly do want only happiness and fruitful discovery for you.

I love you, my friend.

I've tried to keep my personal opinions out of the main body of this document, and included them here.

My thoughts

The sticker with the "combination particularly discussed" DOES NOT EXIST nor was it planned to exist. The whole reason this was brought to me was completely imaginary. But that is now beside the point.

I am astounded that Cooper and Adam would think that delivering this transphobic message via intermediary was a good idea.

I am hurt that Adam chose to not only allow this transphobic message, but to deliver it himself thereby throwing his support behind it.

You cannot claim to be supportive when you are actively enabling a talking point championed by bigots nationwide.

I will say it again: If cis women athletes were being discriminated against the way trans athletes are, and the sticker was "Protect Women Athletes," this complaint would be immediately recognized as sexist and never would have been brought forward. But since it harms trans people, "we have to make sure everyone's voice can be heard"

Everyone at the table is and has been supportive of you and your journey, and I want to make sure that comes across clearly, even when such painful misunderstandings happen.

*The "misunderstanding" I was trying to clear up was whether Cooper held transphobic beliefs or was just taking that stance to protect his job. You initially claimed it was the latter. But **when I requested a statement to that effect that would allow me to feel safe at the table, you changed your tone.***

but I fear that guidelines you have offered will make others at the table think that their voices won't be allowed to be heard.

See previous statement. I didn't realize we were giving equal talking space to bigoted opinions. Isn't this table a safe space? Or just a "safe space"?

If everyone is not able to express their concerns in a safe way, where we are all heard and are able to discuss, underlying issues will go unresolved. Those situations are not only unhealthy, but it means that we will all miss our chance to grow.

You just missed the chance. Here. Just now. Instead of growing, you doubled down on a bigoted comment.

Re: not “intending malice, dismissal, or offense”: **Impact > Intent**. You know, Marc’s wife Rhe called me out with this response once, and it’s true. We don’t always realize the impact we have on others unless someone speaks out. But when someone does speak out, a good ally will listen and change their behavior, not defend it.

You cannot try to claim you are “asking me” to step down. It was already clear I was going to step down due to feeling unsafe at the table after being approached with a transphobic message.

This isn’t “The new me” that I am finding, it’s only new to you. I was always me, hiding under layers and layers of protective masks that I wore for my own safety.

Supplemental Stuff

Side Conversations

I originally left this content out of this document. It was more about a lack of support than actively transphobic. But I have since come to the conclusion that anyone enabling transphobic behavior deserves the same treatment. Unlike above, I'm going to include my own thoughts with these screenshots individually.

"If you don't accept a little bigotry... you're going to live a lonely life"

A note about this one, we originally tried having it over voice chat, but were having connectivity issues so switched to text. That's why I tried to recap as much as I could.



Kay Purcell >



February 24, 2024



Kay Purcell Today at 9:10 PM

Ok so friend needs a little time to sort their thoughts, apparently. Sorry for the hot-and-cold, and not being sure how long I have, but if you want to chat, I can!



cheeseandkrakens Today at 9:10 PM
sure



Call Ended

3 minutes — Today at 9:10 PM



cheeseandkrakens Today at 9:14 PM

<https://vdo.ninja/?room=backstepAvisitmoment9&hash=179e> (edited)

VDO.Ninja

VDO.Ninja

Bring live video from your smartphone, computer, or friends directly into Studio. 100% free.



Kay Purcell Today at 9:28 PM



cheeseandkrakens Today at 10:10 PM

To your point of living a lonely life unless I accept a little bigotry from my friends: I lived a lonely life for 35 years because I was trying to hide who I was from bigots. Growing up, I never had more than 3-5 people I considered friend, and even those I was

people I considered friends, and even those I was very particular about what I shared with them (Adam included).

I have more friends now than I've had at any other point in my life. Queer friends, and good allies. They were out there, I just had to go looking. That is not to say I WANT to lose my friends who have displayed bigoted beliefs, but I'm also going to challenge them on those beliefs if I'm in a position to do so, and give them a chance to reflect and be better. But if they double down, I'm gonna cut out the cancer.

And yes maybe I'm looking at it with rose-tinted glasses

I know there will be shitty people in my life, some maybe that I can't avoid. But I don't have to take that kind of hurt from my friends



Kay Purcell Today at 10:14 PM

I'm not telling you to be best friends with people who don't wish you well. But I'm also telling you that everyone learns and grows at different rates. People grow, and their views and opinions change as society and what is acceptable does, too.

Someone who is supportive of some or most LGBTQ+ policies but not all can still be an ally, and they can grow and become even better allies.



cheeseandkrakens Today at 10:17 PM

I understand that, but sometimes they have to learn and grow from someone else.



Kay Purcell Today at 10:18 PM

Yup. And it doesn't have to be you. That is not emotional labor you have to do. But again, if you cut every person who still has to learn our, then your world is going to be very small.



cheeseandkrakens Today at 10:18 PM

It might be a little smaller, but I'll be a little happier



Kay Purcell Today at 10:18 PM

I hope that's true.

This one hurt, I'm not gonna lie. Kay started on T about the same time I started on E, a matter which we bonded over regularly. I thought if anyone is going to see why this is wrong, it would be them. Learning to be an ally is one thing, but they weren't. And it doesn't mean we should tolerate their transphobic behavior on the off-chance that they'll change their views later.

“I do not need my speech policed”

This took place about a week after I had already left the podcast.

March 5, 2024

 **Richard Moore** Yesterday at 3:22 PM
Leslie,

While I have many feelings about the events that transpired in recent days regarding EPN and the people involved at the moment, my love for each of you has not diminished as a result.

I deeply regret that things ended the way they did as far as the podcast goes. I have observed missteps, misinterpretations, and miscommunications on all sides of this conflict that leave me uncomfortable on a number of fronts—but ultimately the outcomes are, and have been, beyond my control. The crucial decisions that might have changed things were not mine to make, and even if they had been I'm not sure I could have helped make things turn out differently.

The resolution of this conflict has been traumatic to some degree for everyone involved—some much more than others. And while I have no intention of writing anyone out of my life and I want to be a good friend to everyone I've met through this project, I also have to acknowledge my own limitations and needs.

This blowup has echoed some events in my own past that I am still struggling to cope with mentally and emotionally, and I can't be a source of support for others unless and until I myself am in a better place. In short, I need to put my own oxygen mask on first.

One lesson I think we can all take away from this conflict is that boundaries are important, and the best way to assert and enforce them is to take the time to figure out what they are before they are necessary, rather than realizing them in a moment of crisis.

So I'm taking this week, at a minimum, as a block of time to distance myself from this situation entirely. I don't mind interacting or communicating with you or anyone else involved, either in private messages or larger group contexts such as the Discord servers we are both a part of, but I'm not willing to discuss anything pertaining to EPN. Please understand that this is a measure of self-care, not an indication of wanting to shut anyone out of my life. (To be clear, this is also not a boundary exclusive to my interactions with you—I am asking the same of everyone involved should they reach out to me.)

If you are realizing boundaries of your own that you need to communicate to me, that is also okay. I would not want to do anything to exacerbate the negative emotions I am sure you are already coping with.

I hope that time and reflection will eventually put all of us in a better place than we are now.

With Deepest Respect & Warmest Regards,
Richard

March 6, 2024

 **cheeseandkrakens** Today at 8:55 AM
I'm glad you're taking time to reflect and recuperate, but please don't tell me I made "missteps" in how I spoke out against bigotry. It's very invalidating.

Roughly a week later...



Richard Moore >



March 14, 2024



Richard Moore Yesterday at 10:56 PM

It is not my intention to invalidate you, and I apologize for any harm my words caused. But you did, in my estimation, make mistakes here. If you get to a point where you want my feedback and are willing to openly discuss how all this went down, let me know and we can arrange a chat. There's no expiration date on that offer.

In the interest of transparency, I feel I should state that if Adam and the remaining crew agree to continue recording new content and finish out this season, I intend to do so as well.

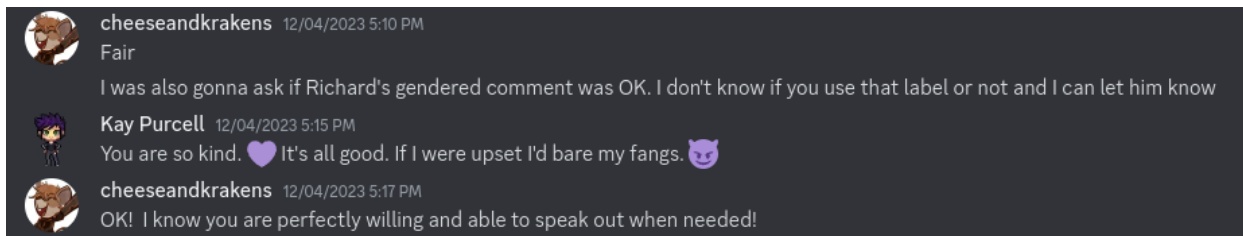
Additionally, I want to address something that was brought to my attention over the last couple of weeks. Kay told me that you reached out to them in a private message to ask if you needed to address me for using "gendering/misgendering" language in response to a message I sent in Roll Ass along the lines of "girl same" or "yas girl" that was intended for them.

If I look at this action in the most positive light, I can interpret your intent as checking in with a friend who may possibly be experiencing discomfort due to another friend's words. But if I look at it in the context of my total past experiences of dealing with individuals who use social justice language in private conversations to gather clout or negatively influence a person's reputation, I have to admit that this knowledge leaves me feeling quite gunshy.

I do not need my speech policed in whispers among friends; viewed in the most cynical way, your query to Kay strikes me as a means of "othering" an individual within a circle of queer-identifying friends for being the "least queer" and calling them to task as a means of bolstering your relationship with another person you deem "more queer".

I have no way of knowing the truth of your intent

*And the thing he accused me of being the PC police for? A casual check-in with a mutual friend when **I personally** wasn't sure if how they were addressed was how they identified.*

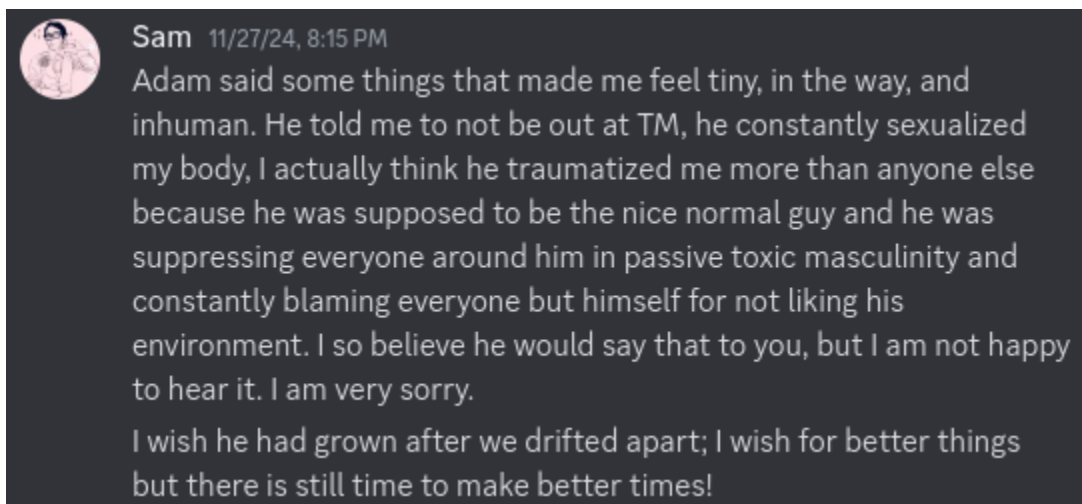


I never spoke to Richard about this (because once I got the response from Kay, nothing needed to be said), which means Kay was trying to stir up shit where they KNEW there was none, in order to paint me in a bad light.

Adam's history of transphobia and abuse

Preface: After struggling with the trauma from this ordeal for 8+ months, I was seeking some kind of closure. Most of the crew has blocked me as of this excerpt, except for Pan (who distanced themselves from all this) and Marc (who stepped down when I did). So instead, I reached out to Adam's ex Sam [He/They], who Adam had once told me was trans (I learned through the course of conversation that Sam has since discovered he is intersex and no longer identifies as trans). Sam and Adam lived together for a large portion of their relationship. I am only sharing the parts from Sam that I have permission to share, but I think it shows that, even though I did not see this coming, it was nothing new for Adam.

TM = Twin Mask. The LARP we all used to attend.



And after I shared this doc with Sam:



Sam 11/28/24, 7:50 AM

OHHHH MY GOD

you know you can share that he hid my identity from friend and larp
irl. [REDACTED]

December 4, 2024



Sam Today at 7:53 AM

You can add that we were roommates, we were apparently “on and off”
according to him but we lived together for years.



Sam Today at 8:16 AM

The more profound things he said that stood out to me when he left was:
now that he wasn't attracted to me anymore, he could finally value me as a
friend, dnakajjs

And something transphobic he said before I realized he really meant it
some of it was once I asked if I got on T and grew more facial hair than him
how he'd feel and he said he'd fucking kill himself.