

poems

# Queers like me

poems

Michael V. Smith

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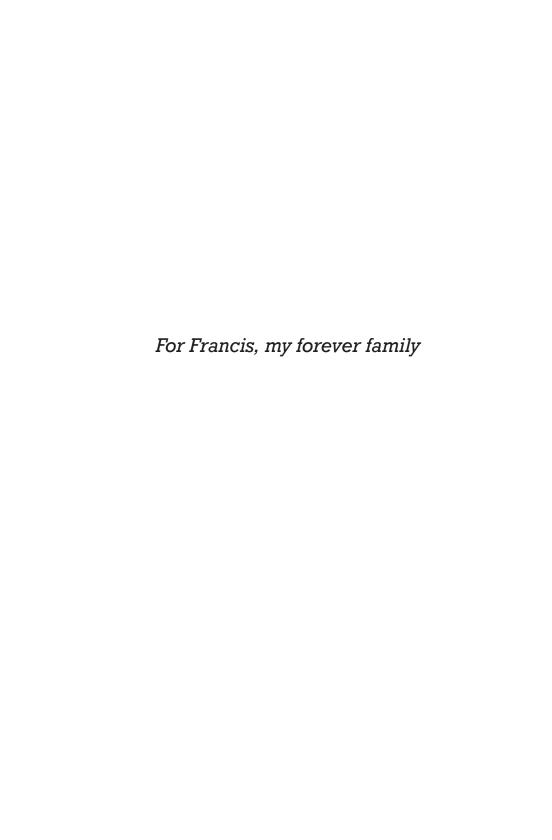






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## Grandma Cooper's Corpse

Here is how this story show works:

I have a Magic Story Bag and every day I draw a card with a title on it.

Today we drew...

GRANDMA COOPER'S CORPSE

which is a fucking whopper because it's hard to talk about your grandmother's corpse

tho it *is* good to learn new things.

It doesn't matter how pretty you are, you always have more to learn cuz pretty doesn't last.

[Michael taps forehead.]

Brains do.

Grandma Cooper was my mom's mom.

My extended family, both sides, all live in a little tiny place within a twenty-minute drive of each other. Kemptville, Ontario.

(We lived an hour away, in the city.)

Grandma Cooper lived next to the beer store, so she knew what was going on with the Smith side—she could watch them coming and going.

When I'd show up at Grandma Cooper's, she'd say, OH you know your grandfather—she meant my dad's dad—your grandfather was at the beer store yesterday AND today, he got a two-four both times.

I knew my Smith grandparents' drinking habits because Grandma Cooper paid attention. Small town. One day Dad phones when I'm in Cornwall visiting my sister, Mom is there too,

and Dad says

Are you sitting down?
I got some weird
news for you. Have you heard
about your Grandma Cooper?

And I'm like, No.

And he says, Well, I think your Grandma Cooper is dead.

And I'm like, Oh fuck.

And he says, The story I heard from your uncle Ted is that your uncle Bob got arrested for transporting a corpse.

And your grandmother is dead.

I was all *Holy crazy shit.*That is some crazy-ass shit.

Now, there are a few things you need to know:

The reason why I'd hear through the grapevine that this happened is because we don't talk to Uncle Bob Mom's only sibling.

Bob came along quite by accident after a few miscarriages not long after Grandma and Grandpa Cooper adopted my mother.

We always suspected

THAT

had made Bob special: the natural-born one who managed to survive. Bob

liked to wait until after we'd arrived to have a shower then wander the rooms in a towel not quite big enough to fit around his waist.

Grandma would say, ROBERT, stop parading around the house and get dressed.

It was Uncle Bob who brought me to watch the first *Star Wars* movie at the Seaway Drive-in

and gave me his stack of 1950s comics, then realized they were worth something and made me return them.

When I was growing up, I used to stay with my grandparents a week at a time.

Once I brought my bicycle with me—
I had this BIG,

well, "BIG"—I was ten—
I had a fancy ten-speed
to replace my banana bike
whose long orange seat had separated
from its post
during my last ride with it.

Bob said, I'm going to help you tune your new bike.

Bob was a mechanic.

He never really had a job, only reasons why he didn't have a job. He kept getting fired from places for his ATTITUDE.

My grandmother had financed a brand new double-door garage in the back property where Bob could do mechanic work under the table.

So

we took my bike up there, Bob laid out all the tools on a towel and he showed me how to do things.

I was like, Oh my god, Bob's actually being nice to me.

He didn't do things like this for me,

he preferred my sister,
and here he was
showing me
how to take things apart
and use this tool
and put this here
and put that there.

I took off the pedals and chain and brakes and axle and removed all the ball bearings.