

# THANK GOODNESS FOR GOODIE BAG

BY MERLIN SIMARD

## #1 PLEASURE IS GOOD ENOUGH OF A REASON.

- a) Kazoos
- b) Confetti/Glitter/Chewing Gum/anything that will fuse with a child's perma soft hair.
- c) Non-descript Candy. Lots of it. (@\_@)
- d) Shiny stickers of horsies wearing birthday hats !!!!
- e) Mystery-scented "lip gloss."
- f) A gift just a little bit less exciting than the kid whose birthday it is, but not by that much, ok?

Those are the things that I remember populating the goodie bag of the olden days of the early 2000s. Never again will crap from the dollar store mean so much to me. Sad...

What I adore about the late stage capitalism concept of goodie bags is that it is a gift you get for showing up. It is the key to elementary school popularity. It is the bribe to curb your budding jealousy. It is the prize that you acquire just for gracing the party with your presence.

As I gre(o)w up and struggle(d) with illusions of meritocracy, I often forgo(e)t that my body's worth is inherent by virtue of existing. As a trans woman, I find that my body is often told the opposite: it is simultaneously too much and not quite enough to be deserving. As I consider the many barriers that separate me and my community from our god-given right to safety and rest, I can't help but to dream of a future where my trans kin can access pleasure without all of its ruinous cost.

In February 2023, Dancemakers and Celia Green manifested this dream into existence. Goodie bag is a week of massage, acupuncture, tattoos, workshops, and more for trans and gender-nonconforming dancers, artists, and creators. And here's where the goodie part kicks in – IT'S ALL FREE. Free, as in 100% discount. Free, as in "how is this possible?" Free, as in, why isn't everything free all the time, hmm?

There is no need to explain why this would be anything but life-affirming for anyone in the margins. Access to care deserves to be equally universal as it is equitable.

Throughout the week that Goodie Bag took place, I got the immense privilege of feeling my body celebrated without worry. Here is a short account of that miracle.

## **#177 I FEEL NEUTRAL ABOUT MY ANXIETY.**

Lies. Most days, I detest my anxiety. As I make CBD into a pantry essential, I wish that the mushy blob inside my skull would just like...realize.

One of Goodie Bag's offerings was a workshop with Ronnie Ali titled *Breathing is a Radical Act*. My off-camera reflection quickly got teary as I attended the Zoom from the comfort of my trustworthy duvet. Rarely have I gotten the chance to witness someone exude calm as much as Ronnie did. They guided us through their generous wisdom and accompanied us down the path of breath with zero judgment and rigidity over what exhaling, inhaling ought to be. WOW. *Who knew it would feel so transformative not to be told you're relaxing wrong?*

My favourite moment from that workshop is its ending. We all turned our cameras off and left our mics on, breathing in unison throughout the grainy silence. *Then*, \*someone\* laughed, and everyone followed suit. It was magic, because there was no shame. It was a true liberation from the pressure of expectations. In that moment, my anxiety just was. Maybe that's all calm is?

## **#4 MY PUSSY IS TASTY, FRESH, AND IRRESISTIBLE.**

The rumours are true.

Merriam-Webster defines cunt as a state of sexy, iconique, immaterial, and subversive mystical energy. Most of the time, I embody those things. The rest of the time, I nap. Imagine me as a soft, curly lamb whose heavy eyelids tether it to a soft patch of Icelandic moss. UGH.

Another of Goodie Bag's party favours was a tattoo by Faith Alexandra Marie (@needle.imprints). I ended up going with—you guessed it, my aforementioned lamb. What can I say? I love foreshadowing!!!

As I lay on the comfiest massage table surrounded by gold mylar fringe, Faith diligently blessed my upper left thigh with a tattoo that will forever commemorate the sanctity of this blessed week.

At the time, my gaze landed on the chandelier above me, wrecking my retina ever so slightly. So much so that once the tattoo was done, I took a good look at the baby sheep on my leg and said wow "I love what you did with the green!" Faith looked at me bewildered and said, "well, that's a first." :-)

While the tricks of the light had definitely made me imagine green ink, what I had not made up was the priceless feeling I got when I looked down at my upper thigh right after. Sexy. A little bit more at home in my own body. Isn't that such a great gift for any trans person to feel?

## #175 GOOD GOSSIP IS COMING MY WAY.

I loooooove gossip, and I'm not ashamed about it. Sorry! (. ◡ ◡ .)

Goodie Bag's last hurrah was king yaa's (@queerbithworker) community workshop titled Embracing Gender Diversity, which was accompanied by a free-for-all buffet of complimentary packers, shampoo bars, lube, books, and, *most importantly*, Bulk Barn's fresh sweets.

As folks trickled out of Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, a few of us stragglers lounged on the most GIGANTIC pillow imagination can fathom. This mighty cushion was situated in the centre of the mylar halo: Goodie Bag's last epicentre of gossip. Extending our stay into the forever night of the theatre, we shared laughter, jokes, and, of course, good gossip while we took turns rolling off the edges of this trans pillow. (they/she)

Goodie Bag isn't just about free stuff; it's also about creating a space where we can let our guard down and find comfort in the things we don't need to say out loud.

## #152 THERE ARE ENDLESS NIGHTS OF GOOD SLEEP AHEAD.

If you are not trans or even an artist and you are reading this and asking yourself: hey, this is a fantastic initiative, but how exactly does this serve the artistic community? First off, jealousy is not a cute look on you. Second off, Institutions *love* to hire us to bolster their grant applications but often refuse to do the necessary work for trans people to feel good while they shake their asses on stage. As frustrating as it is, it's often up to us, as a community, to ensure that spaces like Goodie Bag even exist so that we can take it easy and replenish. Care is artistic, and if you disagree, then I don't want to fucking work with you.

I am so grateful to have taken part in this week of luxury. To know what it feels like to get a taste of something that may seem impossible but actually is well-within reach. As I close my eyes and slip into sleep, my dreams are filled with trans people getting massages, trans people laughing on a pillow, and trans people breathing. Isn't that magic?

*The affirmations present in this text come from 212 Affirmations For The Transgender, commissioned by Dance Makers for Goodie Bag and written by your truly. You can find the rest of them [here](#).*