



My Love Is a Beast: Confessions Alexander Cheves

sculinity was born watching boys in my class and on my varsity football
e than them, it was the hunters, men who kept their crossbows in the
pickup trucks, men who smelled of dried mud and sweat and diesel. I was
ause of them — because I loved them and was raised by them, and because
d with them and have been all my life. I know what the insides of their
ke, what their necks smell like, what their John Deere hats smell like. I have
since before I knew what wanting was.

Praise for *My Love Is a Beast: Confessions*

It's a rare memoir in which one can see themselves — a small town farm slut turned big city Queer journalist, for example — and constantly pause at the unflinching and powerful way an author recounts their own personal journey. Alexander Cheves has offered such a book in *My Love is a Beast: Confessions*, a provocative and poetic look at one young Queer man's own coming of age in rural America and through the dark days of the pandemic lockdown. As a Queer writer in America, I see myself in his exploration of the kink and fetish world, his embrace of sex work and recreational drugs, even his move from city to city in search of himself and his people. His story reflects so much of the modern Queer experience in the gay meccas of America today. Even more powerful, as Cheves moves from Atlanta to San Francisco to Los Angeles to NYC, having sex with abandon, he moves through issues including a reappraisal of what it means to be "gay" today, his role as a feminist in a male body, what is an embrace and what could be a betrayal of self. His candor around sex work and his own sexual thirsts are laid bare, very bare, in efforts to be transparent, a bit of a braggart, and to buck the stigma that comes with sex work, chemsex, and fetish play. In doing so, Cheves offers a page-turner that must leave even the hungriest of sex pigs hoping his parents never read his book. And the parents, those rural Southern Baptist kin who adopted him at birth and love him, are a feature that bookends the memoir like the duality that is contrasted throughout: love and hate, sex and death, ownership and freedom, belonging and outcast. I loved every uncomfortable minute of *My Love is a Beast: Confessions*, and it's a must-read for many folks, not just Queers. Cheves gives nods throughout, in different ways, to why you too should care, with an acknowledgement of thanks to "those who fought a plague and liberated me and all future faggots by refusing to simply die."

Diane Anderson-Minshall

CEO and Editorial Director, Pride Media and author of *Queerly Beloved: A Love Story Across Genders* and four novels.

Emerging as a much needed and influential voice, Cheves shocks while also liberating and healing readers with his vulnerable account of a journey into sexual authenticity and humanity. The honesty here sharply penetrates and stays with you long after reading. *My Love is a Beast: Confessions* cements Cheves as an important author who combines powerful storytelling with his own pain and struggles. Through its exploration of sexuality, relationships, and social trauma, this book reminds us of the beauty and bravery of living in our truth. Radical and triggering, Cheves is also brilliantly soothing.

Chris Donaghue, PhD, LCSW, CST

Host of *Loveline* and author of *Rebel Love*

Alexander Cheves encapsulates the breadth of gay male sex and identity in words so beautiful they make one weep with unbridled joy. With wisdom and insight beyond his years, Cheves has created a work of art that worships at the altar of starkly honest desire. Few writers can muster such brazen transparency. Cheves directly confronts the topic of modern gay sex with a writerly aplomb most authors never find. Savor every word of this literary bacchanal. I predict it will catapult to the top of Queer book offerings.

Race Bannon

Author and Community Leader

I read, I laughed, I cried, I jerked off — sometimes all at once. Alexander Cheves tells his story of early gay life as it should be told: terrifying, daring, angry, and so very fragile. When I first met Alexander, despite our 30-year age difference, I knew immediately I had found a comrade in the war against shame and sexual correctness. With this book, he gives me hope yet again.

Christopher Harrity

The Advocate

These revealing stories resonate profoundly. They bring a sense of relief: *finally, someone said it*. Such an act of authorial vulnerability creates life-giving intimacy. As a professional counselor, I deeply value Alexander Cheves' refusal to need a "why" regarding his kinkiness and his sexuality. This makes his work a poignant rebellion against the constant pathologizing of all things Queer. This is an important memoir in its refusal to shy away from the most taboo aspects of a young Queer man's complicated and powerful sexuality.

Amariah Love, MS, NCC, LPC

I admire Alexander Cheves for boldly and unabashedly putting to paper his thoughts and experiences around gay men's sex culture. We need more anti-assimilationist and un-sanitized Queer voices like his.

Stephan Ferris

Queer Legal Scholar and Activist Attorney

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Ghosts

My father was walking through the woods when he heard something strange. He had been forming these trails since he was a boy, running around unsupervised on his grandfather's land. He kicked away the leaves and muck on the path. What he found was no lost dog or injured coyote. It was smaller, hidden near the roots of a shagbark hickory tree. He carried it back to the house, bringing me into his world.

Adopted children often invent their own creation myths. I knew I was not from my parents, but I was theirs. I did not ask the inevitable questions until I was almost a teenager, after I learned that the beginning of a person is sex and pain. *Fucking.*

They knew nothing about the woman who birthed me except that she was described in the adoption papers as *a dancer*, a 1992 code word for *prostitute*, or so I've always believed. At first, I envisioned her as a ballerina or Broadway starlet, someone doing a bawdy number in a sequined dress. But this seems unlikely.

I grew up on a river, an early branch of the Ogeechee, which runs through my family's land. My childhood was colored by its sandbanks, its smell, and its chill. As a child, I was skinny and loud, big-lipped, pouty. I played on the rocks of the river, got wet, ruined my clothes. My parents thought something was wrong with me because, when they called me, I ignored them and kept running — onto the train tracks, into traffic, across the river stones. When I was four, they learned the reason: I was deaf in my right ear and simply didn't hear them. They adjusted — learned which side to talk to — and discovered, as I did, that in addition to my reduced hearing, I was simply disobedient.

I was not very athletic, but I grew up alongside kids who hunted and fished, and although I was not much like them, I understood them.

In my last year of college, I felt a strange pull, something like homesickness, but not for the place I was supposed to call home. I belonged to the woods and river, but I did not belong to the house, where so many family fights had hurt everyone involved.

In that final, restless year of school, I missed something about the river and the rural men I used to love. I was planning to leave the Deep South for good and never come back. And because of my coming exodus, I already missed the hunters in camouflage who came to shoot deer in the woods when I was younger. I missed the guys from my varsity football team who spit chewing tobacco into plastic cups in their mud-splattered pickup trucks. I missed farm boys, guys who smelled like earth. So, I started driving outside Savannah, my college town, on weekends to meet guys in the country.

We fucked in barns, in the backs of trailers, on the beds of work trucks. We fucked in the woods. These men smelled familiar, like oil. I imagined them all having just crawled out from under a car at an auto shop.

My favorite playmates were two guys, a couple, who lived an hour outside of town. Their house was at the end of a long dirt road, far from the main highway. When I drove up to their place for the first time, I saw a chicken coop and two old pickups in the yard. They cooked me dinner, showed me the chickens and the garden out back, and after dark, took me to the bedroom.

+ + +

I kissed the taller man as he pulled me onto the bed. Together, the two pulled off my pants with a coordinated and practiced tug.

“Wait,” I said. “I haven’t cleaned out.”

“We don’t care.”

The taller man unbuckled his belt, a big silver cowboy buckle, and slid down his pants and underwear. His dick flopped out and it was the biggest one I’d seen at that point.

Go ahead, suck it.

I could barely fit it in my mouth. But with a focused pressure and thrust, a wrist-thick part of someone else was packed into my airway. He cupped the back of my head and pushed me down on it. When I gagged, I felt like I had failed, but he seemed proud of me.

He pulled me to his face and kissed me. I smelled beer. He had a salt-and-pepper beard. His partner was watching us. “Sit on it,” he instructed and produced a bottle of K-Y water-based lube from the bedside table — the cheap stuff that teenagers buy at gas stations. I rubbed his dick with the goo and tried to mount it, but it delivered a jolt of pain, so I pulled off.

The other man, the one watching, came up behind me and started massaging my shoulders. “You’re so tense,” he said. “You gotta relax if you’re gonna take that.”

“Yeah, it’s a nice dick.” I didn’t think I could do it.

“Try again,” the man below me said. “Just breathe.” He fingered my buttocks as I straddled his belly, and I could tell his fingers were calloused, his palms rope-burnt, fingernails untrimmed. The guy behind me was gentler and softer, and I guessed he was usually the bottom. He wanted to see my hole resized by his reliable aggressor.

I tried again, slowly.

The man seemed annoyed that I was struggling with it. He put both hands around my hips and pushed me down. I yelped like a kicked dog.

I don't remember everything about that night, but I remember the yelp, the beautiful sound of being taken by force. The man behind me rubbed my shoulders; the man below kissed my neck.

"It's so thick." I whimpered.

This might really hurt me.

"I know, baby boy. I got you."

He's got me.

His boyfriend whispered in my ear: "You can do it." The man behind me had a stronger accent, more honeyed, longer vowels, and I guessed he was from South Georgia. The man I was riding was less discernable — North Carolina, maybe.

"You got it," South Georgia said. "You're halfway there." I heard him spit heavily, then felt his dick pushing in over the one in me.

I sat up. "I can't do that."

No, no. I haven't ...

"Yes, you can," North Carolina said.

South Georgia held a cold bottle of poppers — an inhalant people like me use to relax sphincter muscles and take dick up the butt — beneath my nose and told me to breathe in deeply. I was new to poppers and did too much. In a moment, my vision blurred, and I started a euphoric spinning, my hole opening.

The men rubbed me the way I needed to be rubbed, the way I wanted guys from high school to rub me. They had that earthy tractor smell, and I melted in their words, became liquid metal, invincible. South Georgia slid his dick in, and it felt like I was being split.

This is some dark heaven, some raging joy.