

# GAMER BOY

M MCNEILLY-EDGAR

One summer, as an 11 year old gamer girl, I became completely immersed in the world of Super Smash Brothers Ultimate: the massive crossover fighting game on the Nintendo Switch. Smash was my gateway drug for fighting games, because I loved the massive cast of characters familiar and new. A cast in which I could be anyone I wanted.

I played a plethora of random characters, not all too random though because I did have a specific preference. Always the default Corrin, the default Robin, the default trainer. It's the first option, that's why I like playing them. It only makes sense to pick it, definitely not because they're all handsome guys! With those words I could easily gaslight myself.

But there was always one character who I couldn't help but be obsessed with: CloudStrife. He was the coolest guy I had ever seen, byronic aura, spiky hair, larger than life sword. And his figure. He was toned, and his posture so strong, his chest so... flat, his facial features young and masculine... Why did this make me mad? Green, I was bright green with envy. Always playing him, but never able to be him, never able to be a guy like him.

Haha what a weird thing to think, it's CLEARLY just a fictional crush right? Lots of tween girls have them, nothing wrong with that. Completely normal and NOT jealousy.

I lost the cartridge for Smash Bros. Then not long after, I started high school. I grew into a teenage girl, one with a big, empty space in her heart.

When I turned fifteen, I knew I couldn't hide how I felt anymore. There was someone I wanted to be, someone that the world told me I wasn't. Tears fell a lot, I didn't want to go on as a girl girl. The space inside kept consuming more of me.

But after a long time, I started coming to terms with who I am. A He, not a she. Steve, not Alex. I looked back to my childhood wondering if somewhere in the fog there were signs. Wait, I can think of one memory.

I brought out the old Switch, still no sign of the old Smash cartridge. Annoying. So instead I Bought Final Fantasy VII, the source material of Cloud Strife. That game left a resounding impact on me. I let my heart reside in the story, in the characters, finally leaving my pain and confusion to sit and digest, so I could come to terms with myself and so much more. I won't spoil it, but if you're reading this I'll assume you're woke enough to enjoy it.



Playing that game, I learned how to accept myself regardless of the circumstances of my life. Growing up I was a gamer girl, but now I'm a gamer boy. The gamer boy I always wanted to be, who I always was deep inside.

P.S. I did find the Smash Bros cartridge, it was in my living room the whole time.

