

Truth be told, I would rather not be up here talking to you with one eye out of commission. My preference is to appear as if all my parts were working.

One of my many complaints is that people want to talk about this malady. I can go on and on, naming the problem, relating my dizzying Odessey of visits to emergency rooms and medical facilities, or listing the questions the health professionals did not answer. Recently, a friend interrupted. All she wanted was to “know that I was well.” I don’t feel well: Recovery is hypothetical; I am not patient about this; I crash into people in stores.

But I get it. When someone we know experiences a hardship, we want them to be on the mend. For a queer person like me, this annoying expectation that I would report that I am well felt familiar. Here, where people have no argument with the idea that different people have different sexualities, I sometimes think that we acknowledge this about one another, and then imagine that we glide past it.

Don’t get me wrong. I said it was hard to stand up here with a weird eye. I have understood for ages that being gay is not an affliction. Unlike my eye aberration, I am not waiting impatiently for it to go away. If my queerness went away, I would have lost the best part about being me. But this truth is only a place to start from. It is not a description of what it is like to be a queer in this mostly not-queer space.

Looking at my eye, you want to hear that I am on the mend. End of story. Discovering different sexualities – beginning of story. We are doing ourselves a disservice if we are just cool about it and move on to something that is easy to talk about. Staying in our comfort zones is not radical transformation. My hope for the coming year, as we renew our commitment to welcoming LGBTQQIA+ people, is that I learn, that we all learn, how to jumpstart ourselves out of that zone; that we find ourselves in a dazzling world of understanding, embracing, and celebrating this most wonderful set of differences; that we find ourselves in a place where every queer person in Tompkins County would be thinking about how they could fit into this great community.