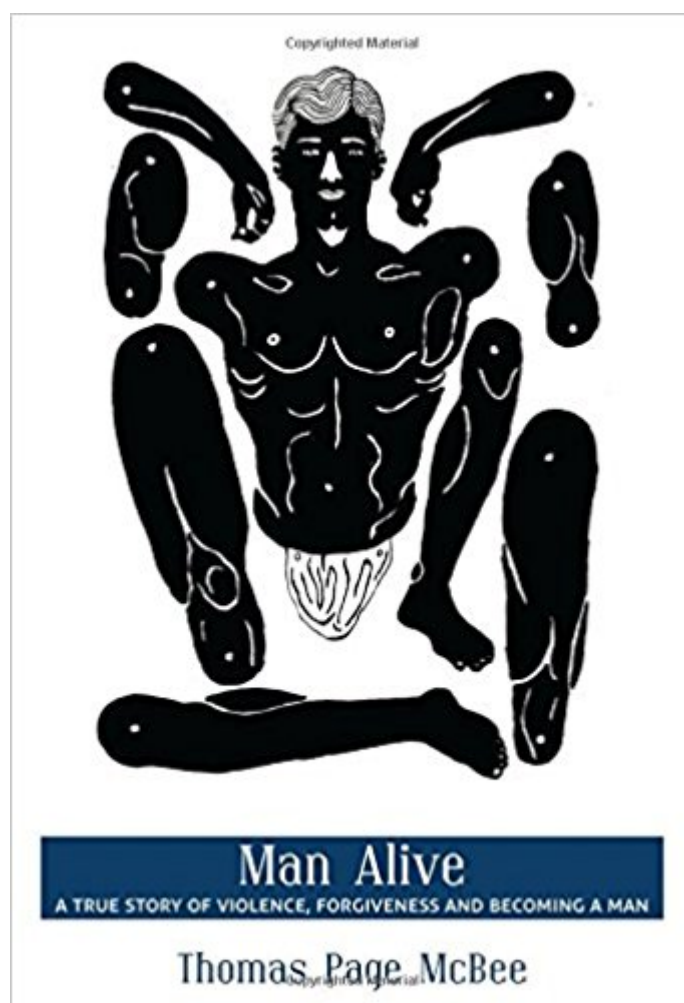


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# Man Alive: A True Story Of Violence, Forgiveness And Becoming A Man (City Lights/Sister Spit)



## Synopsis

Winner - Best Transgender Nonfiction - 2015 Lambda Literary Awards  
Best Books of 2014 - Publishers Weekly  
Best Books of 2014 - NPR Books  
Best Nonfiction Books of 2014 - Kirkus Reviews  
10 Best Transgender Non-Fiction Books - Advocate

"Thomas Page McBee's *Man Alive* hurtled through my life. I read it in a matter of hours. It's a confession, it's a poem, it's a time warp, it's a brilliant work of art. I bow down to McBee's humility, his sense of humor, his insightfulness, his structural deftness, his ability to put into words what is often said but rarely, with such visceral clarity and beauty, communicated."—Heidi Julavits, author of *The Vanishers* and *The Uses of Enchantment*

What does it really mean to be a man? In *Man Alive*, Thomas Page McBee attempts to answer that question by focusing on two of the men who most impacted his life: one, his otherwise ordinary father who abused him as a child, and the other, a mugger who almost killed him. Standing at the brink of the life-changing decision to transition from female to male, McBee seeks to understand these examples of flawed manhood and tells us how a brush with violence sent him on the quest to untangle a sinister past, and freed him to become the man he was meant to be. *Man Alive* engages an extraordinary personal story to tell a universal one; how we all struggle to create ourselves, and how this struggle often requires risks. Far from a transgender transition tell-all, *Man Alive* grapples with the larger questions of legacy and forgiveness, love and violence, agency and invisibility.

Praise for *Man Alive*: "Man Alive is a sweet, tender hurt of a memoir ... about forgiveness and self-discovery, but mostly it's about love, so much love. McBee takes us in his capable hands and shows us what it takes to become a man who is gloriously, gloriously alive."—Roxane Gay, author of *Bad Feminist* and *An Untamed State*

"Thomas Page McBee's story of how he came to claim both his past and his future is by turns despairing and hopeful, exceptional and relatable. To read it is to witness the birth of a fuller, truer self. I loved this book."—Ann Friedman, columnist, *New York Magazine*

"Whoever's child I am, my body belongs to me,' McBee writes, and his book is an elegant, generous transcription of the journey toward this incandescent, non-aggrandized, life-sustaining form of self-possession; the kind that emanates from dispossession, rather than running from it."—Maggie Nelson, author of *Bluets* and *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning*

"Well aware that memory and identity rarely follow a linear path, Thomas Page McBee attempts to answer the question, 'What does it really mean to be a man?' Weaving past and present to do so, the book's journey connects violence, masculinity and forgiveness. McBee has an intelligent heart, and it beats in every sentence of this gorgeous book."—Saeed Jones, author of *Prelude to Bruise*

"Exquisitely written and bristling with emotion, this important book reminds us of how much

vulnerability and violence inheres to any identity. A real achievement of form and narrative.âJack Halberstam, author of *The Queer Art of Failure*

About the Author: Thomas Page McBee was the "masculinity expert" for VICE and writes the columns "Self-Made Man" for The Rumpus and "The American Man" for Pacific Standard. His essays and reportage have appeared in the the New York Times, TheAtlantic.com, Salon, and BuzzFeed, where he was a regular contributor on gender issues. He lives in New York City where he works as the editor of special projects at Quartz, and is currently at work on a book about modern American masculinity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

âMcBee enlarges the study [of masculinity] from a series of vignettes into a full, poetic narrative â; a physical transition is part of the work of reclaiming the lost body. But first he must understand how violence fits into the male equation, using as his case studies two men who set out to do one thing but did the opposite: The protector who abused him, and the killer who let him live â; the act of writing could amount to a kind of revenge. But empathy, instead, is McBeeâs objective, the most important part of becoming real in oneâs own eyes. 'Being human,' he concludes, 'means being at the mercy of others.' Thatâs a part of aspiration, too. We are born human; with hard work, we achieve humanity.âHenry Giardina, New York Times Book Review

"In this lyrical, affecting memoir, McBee ... [tries] to map his own journey to manhood ... The writing is strongest when McBee is most vulnerableâ;contemplating 'the warble between the shape in my mind and the one in the mirror'"âKate Tuttle, Boston Globe

"Man

Alive stands as a vitally important book. McBee's story harnesses the power of self-inquiry, of generosity, of a transformation powerful enough to address even the fallout from child abuse."—Greg Glazner, Los Angeles Review of Books

[Thomas Page] McBee's answer to the initial question of "what makes a man?" is more generous, more inspiring, and more creative than the usual gender binaries allow. Full of bravery and clear, far-sighted compassion and devoid of sentiment, victimization, and cliché, McBee's meditations bring him a hard-won sense of self—one that is bound to inspire any reader who has struggled with internal dissonance. —Publishers Weekly starred review

[A] unique, powerful rite-of-passage memoir. Plenty of writers have written about the experience of making the transition from one gender to another, but most haven't also dealt with child molestation, paternity issues and a mugging by a man who would soon commit murder—not to mention a partner who has mixed feelings about the author's becoming a man. Resisting the inclination to sensationalize (or sentimentalize), McBee interweaves the various strands of the narrative, exercising plenty of restraint

The author writes in matter-of-fact detail about the tension and love shared with a fiancée and about self-discovery pilgrimages to explore bloodlines and paternity. 'The world is vicious and beautiful and, to some extent, unexplainable,' writes the author. 'But that doesn't stop us from wanting a story.' This is quite a story, masterfully rendered. —Kirkus Reviews starred review

Man Alive does not follow the typical transgender narrative that being with years of struggle in the "wrong body" and ends with arrival in the right one. Instead, the story is a meandering internal journey that traces McBee's struggle to come to terms with a legacy of male violence in order to fully inhabit his body, his gender, and his life

Paradoxically, by insisting on the full humanity of both of the men who have caused him harm, McBee is able to claim his own agency as a man who chooses compassion and connection over wielding violence against others. —Wendy Elisheva Somerson, Bitch

McBee's beautifully written story is engrossing and brave, and rings with triumph."—Isaac Fitzgerald, BuzzFeed

"Being human means being at the mercy of others,' Thomas Page McBee points out in Man Alive. It's one of the many sobering observations he makes in the lyrically written memoir of his transition from female to male. Narrating a series of snapshots of his childhood and twenty-something life, McBee explores not only what defines a man through dissecting his traumatic history, but the mark he'll make as he mints his identity as male. The book reads like fiction—it's smooth as butter—and you'll digest it in just a few hours. What'll last, though, is McBee's humility, and the insight of his lessons, and his meditations on love. In a journey to which you might not think you can relate, you'll find something on nearly every page

thatâ€™ll resonate.â€”Meredith Turits, *Bustle*"In his quick, compulsive new memoir, *Man Alive*, Thomas Page McBee details his FTM transition following a moment of explosive violence. Walking home with his girlfriend one night in Oakland, Calif., McBee is nearly killed in a mugging, saved only when the female sound of his voice scares off his attacker. In that moment he feels both alive and not alive at all, recalling childhood traumas and suddenly becoming acutely aware of his struggle to remain in a womanâ€™s body when he knows heâ€™s a man. Flashing from the past to the present, McBeeâ€™s prose is crisp and attentive to the role pain plays in molding our identities. 'Whoeverâ€™s child I am, my body belongs to me,' he proclaims, a crystalline reminder that our most fearsome and earthshaking confrontations are the ones we have with ourselves."â€”Emily Drabinski, *Out Magazine*"In many ways, this book occurs at the eye of McBee's storm, a crossroads, a major pivot point in his life. He exercises a profound level of compassion to reconcile his past with his present on behalf of his future. Through conversations with his girlfriend, his mother, siblings, father and extended family, one thing grows abundantly clear: Thomas Page McBee is a man of astonishingly strong character, full of empathy and dynamism. *Man Alive* isn't a simple memoir; it is a culmination of, as much as it is a springboard into, a manhood that proves to be in the greatest sense alive.â€”Dave Wheeler, *Shelf-Awareness*"Like jazz. Compelling. Vivid. Dramatic. One would be hard pressed to find better words to describe McBeeâ€™s tale. *Man Alive* doesn't just offer the reader insight into the creative nonfiction genre, but into trans storytelling as well. McBee is among a growing strand of trans literature that considers transition alongside, and often secondarily, to other key events. The focus of *Man Alive* is held within its first sentence: 'What makes a man?' Itâ€™s uncertainty, its yearning, its deceptive simplicity, its focus on mythical meanings rather than physical ones, its potentially dark undertones, and its potentially liberating ones chart their course through an early adulthood that is undebted to, yet so much more, than an outward, bodily shift from 'female' to male.â€”Mitch Kellaway, *Lambda Literary Review*"*Man Alive* is a moving personal account of what was not long ago decried as an abomination of nature; a perversion. McBee seeks to honestly reveal the emotional and physical complexity underlying the process of gender reassignment, and when all is over, his transition complete, heâ€™ll be just one more ordinary man. The world has changed, but only so much; a fact McBee's memoir illustrates with heartbreaking clarity.â€”David Rosen, *dot429*"Thomas Page McBeeâ€™s *Man Alive* hurtled through my life. I read it in a matter of hours. Itâ€™s a confession, itâ€™s a poem, it's a time warp, itâ€™s a brilliant work of art. I bow down to McBee's humility, his sense of humor, his insightfulness, his structural deftness, his ability to put into words

what is often said but rarely, with such visceral clarity and beauty, communicated."#151;Heidi Julavits, author of *The Vanishers* and *The Uses of Enchantment*"*Man Alive* is a sweet, tender hurt of a memoir. Thomas Page McBee deftly recounts what has shaped him into the man he has become and how#151;from childhood trauma to a mugging in Oakland where he learned of his body's ability to save itself. This is a memoir about forgiveness and self-discovery, but mostly it's about love, so much love. McBee takes us in his capable hands and shows us what it takes to become a man who is gloriously, gloriously alive."#151;Roxane Gay, author of *Bad Feminist* and *An Untamed State*"Thomas Page McBee's story of how he came to claim both his past and his future is by turns despairing and hopeful, exceptional and relatable. To read it is to witness the birth of a fuller, truer self. I loved this book."#151;Ann Friedman, columnist, *New York Magazine*"Reading *Man Alive* is like sitting with someone uncurling his hands, then holding them out to you, open, so that you can behold all the hard-won strength, insight, agility, and love to be found there. 'Whoever's child I am, my body belongs to me,' McBee writes, and his book is an elegant, generous transcription of the journey toward this incandescent, non-aggrandized, life-sustaining form of self-possession#151;the kind that emanates from dispossession, rather than running from it."#151;Maggie Nelson, author of *Bluets* and *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning*"Following a twisty course marked by multiple switchbacks, *Man Alive* picks its path through a life pocked by abuse, yearning, violence, danger and desire. The book refuses to cleave to the conventions of other narratives of transition and makes uncertainty the hallmark not only of the past but of the present and the future as well. Exquisitely written and bristling with emotion, this important book reminds us of how much vulnerability and violence inheres to any identity. A real achievement of form and narrative."#151;Jack Halberstam, author of *The Queer Art of Failure*"*Man Alive* isn't just a story about a transgender man. It's a story about self-discovery. It's a story about patience, forgiveness, kindness and bravery. It's a story told so beautifully and clearly that you can't help but see your own journey in these pages. With this book, Thomas Page McBee has done exactly what we should all strive for: to tell our stories in ways that humanize rather than sensationalize."#151;Lauren Morelli, writer, *Orange Is the New Black*"Thomas Page McBee's memoir grips you like a thriller yet reads with the lyricism of poetry as he details how a brush with violence sent him on quest to untangle a sinister past, and freed him to become the man he was meant to be."#151;Michelle Tea"[McBee's] thoughtful memoir probes the assumptions of masculinity and identity."#150;#150;SF Weekly#147;McBee's work is a case of remarkable storytelling in the wake of violence #133; While *Man Alive* focuses heavily on McBee's journey as he transitions from female to male, from Page to Thomas, at its core is a change even bigger, deeper, and more extraordinary than that: the

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*Man Alive* is a moving personal account of what was not long ago decried as an abomination of nature—a perversion. McBee seeks to honestly reveal the emotional and physical complexity underlying the process of gender reassignment, and when all is over, his transition complete, he'll be just one more ordinary man

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A wry, tender memoir by one of the leading voices on transition and masculinity --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is one of the most beautiful memoirs I have ever read. So brutal and full of feeling. Tracks the violence of family, both physical and relational, how narratives can trump and drown one another and still, Thomas McBee finds space in his narrative for love. Space for love that is not redeem, space that does not mean "everything turns out okay in the end," but space that suggests that we continue to pursue our questions, our hearts, even when everything is at stake. And even when everything won't survive it. Thank you for such a generous work.

*Man Alive* is a powerful book; it isn't afraid; it travels in light and sound to the depths of emotion, to the heart. McBee allows himself to be alive "to stay awake to complexities, to feel them, move through them, and to heal. In doing this, he shows his readers that this is possible. For me, this book raises questions: What does it mean to grow up? What does it take to trust yourself? How do we wake up to our lives? What do we do once we have? Thomas McBee's heart is so big, one hundred hearts are not enough to hold his love. This book is a lesson in compassion

and truth-telling. I want to give this book to everyone I know.

A gripping, honest story of a life lived in pursuit of personal truth. McBee presents his own story as only that, in no way attempting to speak for the experiences of anyone but those unique to him. Broad in scope, a story about America, family, and coming to terms with one's past. He holds up for us to admire the beautiful contradiction that is understanding that gender is a construct, but wanting to construct one's own gender none-the-less.

Very well written book that captures the inner conflict and innate certainty of living in the wrong body. McBee conveys brilliantly societies bias and fears of "breaking" the rules of expected behavior both as a lesbian and a transgender person. More importantly the book opens are minds to what it means to be different in a society that, for all its proclaiming freedoms, requires conformity.

Please give this wonderful work Of self discovery a go. All humans struggle to understand who they are and why they choose certain paths. This well visualized work is an appeal to all people to seek personal and genuine understanding.

Excellent in every way. Thomas McBee shares his life story in a way that is authentic, sensitive and informative. Highly recommended to readers in the health care profession.

Not done reading the book, but wanted to say it is a great book. Would recommend it to those who are questioning or love someone going through the changes.

Wonderful in truthfulness and bravery. Well wrtten an filled with an over abundance of love for this life with all it's struggles an triumphs. This family has been an inspiration for me.

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