

Carl Weldon Chalmers had a serious problem, and half a mind to do something about it.

It had been almost a month since he had released issue #29 of his webcomic, *Pixiesparkle's Playhouse*. Almost a week since he'd even worked on it. In that issue, the main cast had finally arrived at the threshold of the villainous Gladys Jane Fischer's castle lair (a villain who was, incidentally, based upon his cruel old high school English teacher of the same name, and who occupied a castle based largely on the school as well.) Pixiesparkle herself, a fully original and unique *My Little Pony* character, had led the charge into the lair, when a forcefield of dark magic suddenly materialized around the castle and incapacitated the poor filly, leaving the entire plan up to her companions: Sonic the Hedgehog zoomed off to find the source for the energy field, while Spongebob, the Weekenders, The Teen Titans (except for Starfire, who flew off to scout with Sonic) and the rest stayed to tend to the needs of Pixiesparkle. Carl's self-inserted character started shouting wishes into his mystical star wand, begging for Pixiesparkle to be okay, which resulted in a spray of fairy dust descending upon her injured form.

(The true allegiances of Daffy Duck were not yet known to the others at this point in the story, and he played along as if he were none the wiser.)

After the release of issue #24, the readership of *Pixiesparkle's Playhouse* had steadily begun to increase in a big way, and not for the better. While Carl had imagined his comic becoming popular, and perhaps himself being invited on a late night talk show to discuss it, he had never accounted for his works being discovered by the mysterious online harassment enclave known as Nokochan. Since then, he'd been slower than ever to pen each issue. The constant negative comments, the false information being spread far and wide; those trolls had taken up too much of his goddamn time. He had been forced to introduce the wicked Nogoodchan into the ongoing *Pixiesparkle* narrative; a clever parody of the leaders of the hate campaign waging war against Carl, for the purpose of responding to their slander, as well as good old fashioned revenge. Pixiesparkle and Carl wound up boiling them alive in a vat of acid partway through issue #27.

When issue #29 dropped, however, things somehow got worse, and quickly. Not only had Carl's attempt to shut down Nokochan seemingly backfired stunningly, but he had learned almost immediately when *Pixiesparkle's Playhouse* had been discovered by some YouTuber named Waffletosser, with almost two million subscribers, who had seemingly endless jokes and criticisms at Carl's (and Pixiesparkle's) expense. His subscribers themselves were just as witty, apparently. Nokochan's hateful comments and disrespectful parodies of his work were just the start of it; now Carl and his comic were becoming an internet sensation. The world was jumping to uneducated conclusions about Pixiesparkle's purity, amongst other things. This would not do, and today was the day Carl would set things right.

He drained his bubble bath, and got himself cleaned up like how his mom would demand he prepare himself before Sunday mass; a relatively clean shirt, with a collar,

and he even washed his hair. The trolls were claiming that Carl appeared dirty and disheveled in his photos, and he was determined to correct the record. He was in fact only dirty when he'd forget to shower for a while, and only disheveled when he was too lazy to find clean clothes. He had even polished his Pixiesparkle Pendant, too.

When he lurched his way back into his bedroom, he was delighted to discover that someone had apparently cleaned up most of the Fanta bottles and fast food packaging littering his floor while he was busy bathing. Likely his mom, he figured, but he didn't care to analyze the fortuitous occurrence any further. The room was still a bit cluttered, with hundreds of toys decorating the shelves and surfaces, clothes all over the floor, occasional trash, and random technological odds and ends sporadically buried under the rest of the landfill. None of it really bothered Carl that much. He landed heavily in his computer chair, opened up his webcam interface, and began recording without pause.

"W-Well, hey y'all." His discomfort was immeasurable, but he pushed through. He looked around the room nervously as he spoke, or sometimes just stared into space at nothing in particular, and virtually never directed his attention to the lens. "My name is Carl Weldon Chalmers, and I am the—I created the—I'm the author of the *Pixiesparkle's Playhouse* webcomic. I understand a lot of y'all have recently joined the—have started reading the comic. And a big howdy to all of you, today. Okay." He mimed a tip-of-the-hat motion. "Now, there's been some talk. . . and uh, people have said some things. . ." He straightened his glasses a little bit. Then, pressing his finger down on one nostril, he snorted out a large snot wad, which seemingly landed somewhere on the floor and out of the webcam frame. "And I just want to try to—I want to speak my truth."

He set out to explain things which were routinely being misinterpreted by the trolls. Firstly, they had been spreading a particularly nasty piece of slander that Pixiesparkle had aborted Sonic's baby after they slept together in issue #20.5, the infamous Christmas special. Even before his rise to infamy, his regular readers had had *quite* some words about that one. Supposedly, one of the trolls on Nokochan had spoken to the actual doctor who performed the abortion, which Carl supposed was possible, though he maintained his position that Pixiesparkle could simply never do such a heartless thing.

"M-My dad told me once that I was—that I almost got aborted, because my mom 'sleeps around,' whatever that meant. A-And that felt bad, to imagine what it'd be like if I got aborted and was dead and all, and plus my dad seemed—he got real upset when he talked about it, so I've never wanted to get that." He pushed his glasses up. "A-And besides, Sonic and Pixiesparkle had safe sexual relations, and that issue was not even canon anyway!" Carl realized that he had begun raising his voice—not a yell, but an impotent rasping plea that he hoped his parents wouldn't hear from down the hall. He quickly calmed himself back down with some breathing exercises.

After Carl had tabled the discussion of Sonic's and Pixiesparkle's relationship, his next point of order was to address the criticism of the actual comic at large.

"So I, uh—I watched the video from the—from Waffletosser, that guy. I saw all the, uh—a lot of the comments, there. Y'all were saying a lot of hurtful, and quite rude things." He let out a lamentable stress sigh. "I do not know if y'all are—if you guys know that words can hurt, but that is—I am n-now living in that reality."

Indeed, their words did hurt. Calling his art childish and poor, and calling his sanity into question due to certain elements of his writing. Carl wasn't insane; he just had some. . . difficulties. Besides, his mother didn't believe in the "mental health scam," as she called it, and there was no reason he should, either. These trolls didn't understand him, and could never fully comprehend his work. It wasn't merely some "bad story." It wasn't even just art. Pixiesparkle came to him from somewhere far beyond.

"Th-The other day, I got a—saw a comment on issue #14, which said that Carl's—that the bathhouse scene with Carl an-and Tuxedo Mask was, and I quote: 'h-homoexotic.'" He frowned wide and stared into the camera directly, a rarity. "That kind of thing is not okay, you trolls! Th-That sort of behavior would never—it will not happen in my comic, you freaks!" Again, realizing he was seething, Carl made an effort to calm himself down.

Roughly the next ten or so minutes of the recording were occupied with a hasty autobiography, in response to the misconceptions of Carl's haters. He began, naturally, at the beginning: his fateful encounter with Frankie the Funtime Furball back in 2000, during his 6th birthday party at Funtime Pizzeria. He explained how Pixiesparkle came to him in a dream at the age of 9, and their inseparable bond ever since.

In effort to silence the trolls' claims that Carl was homounnatural, he told the tales of his search for love in his teen years and beyond. Normal, sacred, straight love. He name-dropped two of his darlings in particular, to prove his heteronormality: Jasmine, who worked at the Game Crazy store he later got banned from; and Kelly, one of the most popular and sexy girls at school. Not to mention all her cute friends, who also giggled at him and loved his company.

He was not gay.

Lastly, he wanted to plead for compassion and forgiveness. He knew the trolls were just human, ultimately, and they would listen to reason.

"W-Well now, I am sorry for those who dislike—w-who think my art is not good. And my story, and things." A heavy stress sigh. "It is my hope that in the future, I can change and grow, and that—and I hope that y'all can grow as well. The *Pixiesparkle* storyline will continue. I hope y'all will please—can you please stop bullying me?" His voice took on a quality like that of a whimpering dog. "I am a good—I'm not a bad person, okay? I believe in Jesus and being honest and true with—being true to myself. And I hope it weighs on your hearts t-to think and ruminate on my pain. Thank you all for listening to me, and I hope you have a—have a lovely day."

Carl stopped the recording, and uploaded it to his channel with no fanfare, under the title of, simply, "*A Responce To The Hate.*" With nothing else planned for the day, he found himself watching fan-made *MLP* music videos on YouTube until well past dusk. He was happy. Contented, even. He knew this video would set his trolls straight and settle the conflict between them. Pixiesparkle was certain this would work. He was already planning out the first page of issue #30. His mother came into his room eventually, offering him his dinner: a juicy rack of BBQ ribs, and a corn cob slathered in butter. One of his favorites. He was thrilled to dig in.

The End.