

★ **Wolf Act****AJ Romriell**

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The traumas and triumphs of a former Mormon's coming-out story are given theatrical accouterments in AJ Romriell's memoir *Wolf Act*.

Ensnared in the ruse of a screenplay, the memoir recounts Romriell's arduous Mormon upbringing. His dawning recognition of his sexual orientation clashed with the church's theocratic foundations. His older brother's coming-out lurked in the background as Romriell plumbed the depths of his adolescent musings, his mental and spiritual lifelines in fairy tales, and his seeming kinship with the dynamic wolf (both the character and the canine).

Romriell's path was marked by an aborted missionary trip to Europe, during which the initial stirrings of his feeling at odds with the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints percolated to unignorable levels. Later, he packed up and headed to Orlando with his husband for an internship with the Disney College Program; his marriage imploded, though. Other relationships burst and bloomed at the periphery of Romriell's late-dawning acceptance of himself. After years of self-evaluation, therapy, and experiences with gay dating apps, he was able to maneuver through his existential quandaries with poetic hindsight, highlighted by the supportive foundations of his family and friends.

*Wolf Act* thrives in its interactive and ingenious structuring. More than a simple coming-out memoir, the story volleys between lupine interludes, flashbacks that belie the comfort of chronology, and Romriell asking questions of his readers even as he seems to be rounding corners toward his emotional salvation. The chapter building is an inventive byproduct of his theater upbringing, creating a space for the story to build thoughtfully, even at its most scarring moments.

*Wolf Act* is a powerful memoir that serves as a reminder of the hidden wounds that individuals must reconcile themselves to in order to survive.

RYAN PRADO (January / February 2025)

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