22 Twitter Posts Tell One Heartbreaking AIDS Story

Read them here. But first, grab a tissue.

September 20, 2018 By Trent Straube

Earlier this week, while perusing the comments section of a gay news blog, I came across someone's post that said something like, Off topic, but you guys must read this Twitter feed. SO good.

I noticed the linked tweet was about AIDS, so I clicked and was taken to the Twitter page of Tucker Shaw, who describes himself as "Editor, America's Test Kitchen/Cook's Country @testkitchen. Gin, up, twist." His series of AIDS-related tweet tweets was, as promised, SO GOOD.

Throughout the next days, his story popped up in feeds and comment sections. Clearly it resonated with readers, many of whom posted their own AIDS stories and photos in response. It's another testament to the power of storytelling—and to the fact that you never know when your posts on social media will break the internet (just ask POZ blogger Shawn Decker about his recent HIV tweet about Kylie Jenner).

In case you haven't come across Shaw's twitter feed, check it out below.

But fair warning: You might want to have a tissue ready.

> I overheard a young man on the train on the way home today, talking to another young man. Holding hands. In college, I guessed. About that age anyway. Much younger than I am.
>
> — Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

He was talking about AIDS, in a scholarly way. About how it had galvanized the gay community. How it had spurred change. Paved the way to make things better, in the long run.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

The long run.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

Maybe he’s right. I don’t know. It’s not the first time I’ve heard the theory. He spoke with clarity and with confidence. Youthful, full of conviction. But.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

Remember how terrible it was, not that long ago, during the worst times. How many beautiful friends died. One after the other. Brutally. Restlessly. Brittle and damp. In cold rooms with hot lights. Remember?

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

Some nights, you'd sneak in to that hospital downtown after visiting hours, just to see who was around. It wasn't hard.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

You'd bring a boom box. Fresh gossip. Trashy magazines and cheap paperbacks. Hash brownies. Anything. Nothing.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

You'd get kicked out, but you'd sneak back in. Kicked out again. Back in again. Sometimes you'd recognize a friend. Sometimes you wouldn't.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

Other nights, you'd go out to dance and drink. A different distraction. You'd see a face in the dark, in the back of the bar. Is it you? Old friend! No. Not him. Just a ghost.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

At work, you'd find an umbrella, one you'd borrowed a few rainstorms ago from a coworker. I should return it, you'd think. No. No need. He's gone. It's yours now.
— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

Season after season. Year after year.
— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

One day you'd get lucky and meet someone lovely. You'd feel happy, optimistic. You'd make plans.
— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

Together, you'd keep a list of names in a notebook you bought for thirty cents in Chinatown so you could remember who was still here and who wasn't, because it was so easy to forget.
— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

But there were so many names to write down. Too many names. Names you didn't want to write down.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

When he finally had to go too, you got rid of the notebook. No more names.
— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

Your friends would come over with takeout and wine and you'd see how hard they tried not to ask when he was coming home because they knew he wasn't coming home. No one came home. You'd turn 24.
— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

When he'd been gone long enough and it was time to get rid of his stuff, they'd say so. It's time. And you'd do it, you'd give away the shirts, sweaters, jackets. Everything.
— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

Except those shoes. You remember the ones. He loved those shoes, you'd say. We loved those shoes. I'll keep

those shoes under the bed.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

You’d move to a new neighborhood. You’d unpack the first night, take a shower, make the bed because it’d be bedtime. You’d think of the shoes. For the first time, you’d put them on. Look at those shoes. What great shoes.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

Air. You’d need air. You’d walk outside in the shoes, just to the stoop. You’d sit. A breeze. A neighbor steps past. “Great shoes,” she’d say. But the shoes are too big for you.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

You’d sit for a while, maybe an hour, maybe more. Then you’d unlace the shoes, set them by the trash on the curb. You’d go back upstairs in your socks. The phone is ringing. More news.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

The long run. Wasn’t that long ago.

— Tucker Shaw (@tucker_shaw) September 18, 2018

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