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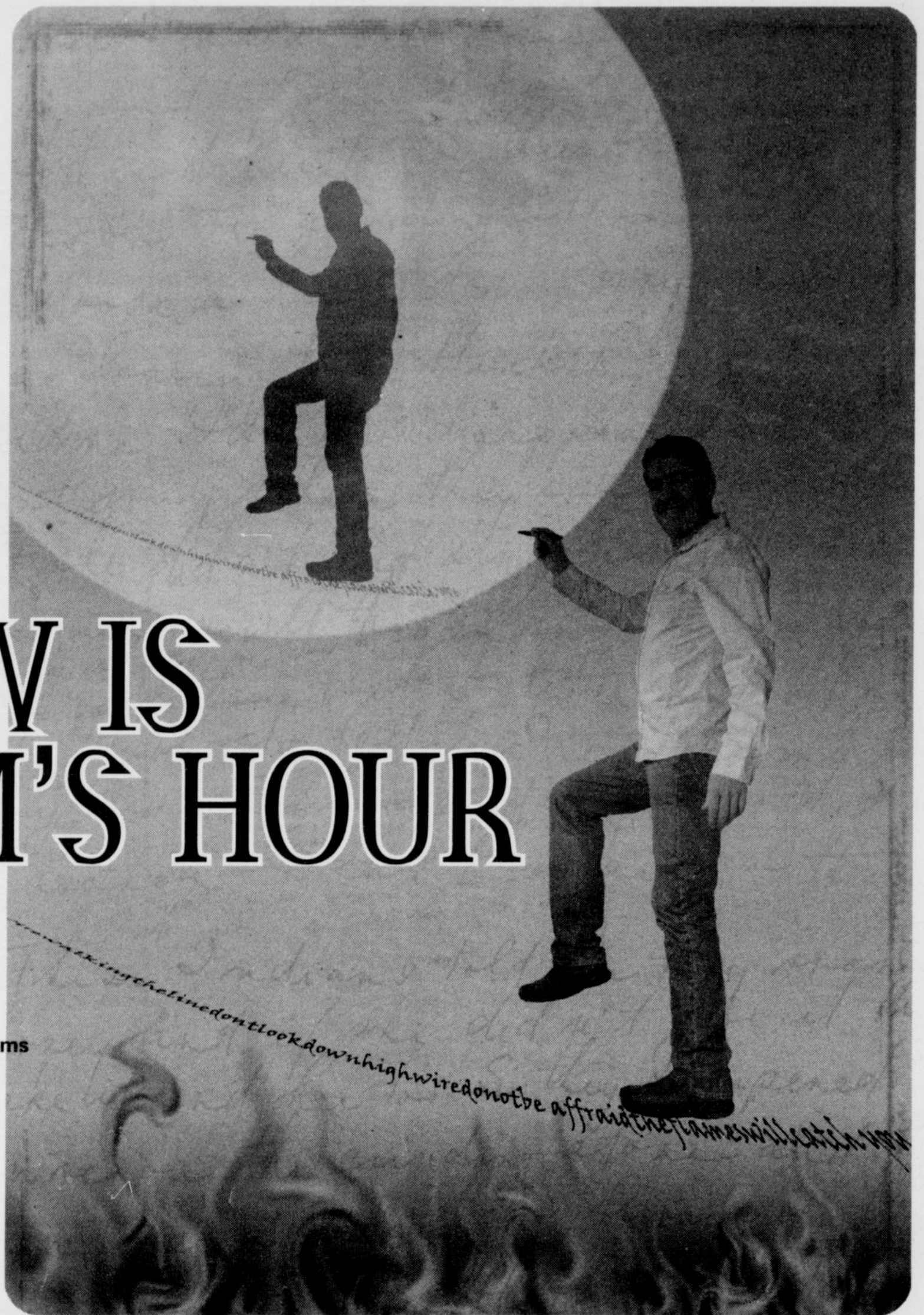
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# NOW IS TOM'S HOUR

A conversation with Portland's most dangerous writer

by Glenn Scofield Williams  
Photos by Xilia Faye



I'm always amazed when I talk to queers in this town who are not familiar with the name Tom Spanbauer. I mean, are you kidding? Spanbauer is no less than a national treasure with a cult following that circles the globe. He is a writer and a queer icon, and his works address the deepest issues of what being queer means using the boldest, frankest language imaginable.

And he lives right here in Portland.

Spanbauer is the author of four books, the newest being *Now Is the Hour*, which will be released May 15. His most famous is the Pulitzer-nominated *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon*, which was named by *The Advocate* as one of the top 100 gay and lesbian novels ever written. The book has been in continuous print since 1991—no small feat in these publishing times—and is considered by many to be one of the most original, radical and beautiful pieces of fiction in the past 50 years.

Throughout the years, Spanbauer and several colleagues have also become well-known for developing an approach to fiction they call "Dangerous Writing." This approach, simply put, asks writers to dig deeply into the darker recesses of their experiences and write about these things with brutal honesty and without sentimentality.

Not long after *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon* was released, Spanbauer nearly died of AIDS complications, and for a while it looked like the world was about to lose yet one more incredible talent to that horrible epidemic. But whatever trickster spirit-god it is who looks after queers and other outcasts, well, he had other plans. Thanks to the "cocktail" and other advances in health care, Spanbauer recovered and thrives.

During his illness and recovery, he struggled to finish *In the City of Shy Hunters*, which finally debuted an agonizing 10 years after *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon*. *Shy Hunters* is a dark, angry tale of the rise of the AIDS epidemic, the Reagan-caused explosion in homelessness and one queer's search for family and identity in 1980s Manhattan. It was released a few months before 9/11 and proved semi-prophetic in its gritty, apocalyptic view of New York.

Since the release of *Shy Hunters*, Spanbauer has been very busy: *Love. Teaching.* A new book.

Spanbauer recently sat down in his Southeast Portland home to discuss life, writing and his new novel, which explores such themes as bullies, Catholicism, racism, rural life and, of course, being queer.