

Pull, Not Push: Why I'm Rebuilding My Online Presence Backwards

By Austen Tucker · 2026

I've had more names on the internet than I've had prescription strengths.

That's not a joke. Sly Squirrel came first — a high schooler posting furry fiction and somehow landing an Ursa Major nomination before graduation. Then Sly Rabbit. Slyford T. Rabbit. That's where I actually learned to write, chapter by chapter on ANTHRO, figuring out what a novel was by publishing one in public. Then came Carl (picked up for a community anthology and a podcast episode), and that opened the door to Bait and Switch getting published for real.

Then I fell off the map for ten years.

Not off the page, though. Never off the page. I just stopped publishing. The writing kept going. I'm sitting on ten novels right now, with more coming. But the public-facing part? The putting-yourself-out-there part? That went quiet.

Now I'm back. One name. One site. No masks.

The Old Way Was Push

For fifteen years, my online presence (when I had one) was push-based. Write something, post it somewhere, hope the right people saw it before the platform folded.

Different platforms, different audiences, different names dropping content into feeds and walking away. The furry fiction on FurAffinity. The queer essays on Bilerico. The tech writing wherever tech people gathered that year. Never in the same place, never under the same name, never with the through-line visible.

It worked, for a while. The Ursa Major nod happened. Carl got picked up. Bait and Switch found its readers. But every one of those moments happened \despite\ the strategy, not because of it. I was scattering seeds across a dozen fields and acting surprised when a few of them grew.

And the fields kept disappearing. Bilerico is gone. The forums where I first posted Bait and Switch chapter by chapter? Gone. ANTHRO, where I learned to write in public? Gone. Years of work, hosted on infrastructure I didn't own, couldn't back up, and couldn't redirect.

That's what push gets you. You're always renting attention from someone else's platform, and you're always one algorithm change or shutdown away from starting over.

The Mask Thing

Here's the part that's harder to write.

Having multiple names wasn't just a platform strategy. It was a mask. Several masks, actually, each one showing a version of me that felt safe in a particular context. The furry writer. The queer journalist. The software engineer. The novelist. All real, all me, but carefully separated, because the world is easier to navigate when people only see one dimension at a time.

I know something about masks. I have DID. The experience of presenting different selves to different contexts isn't metaphorical for me — it's neurological. And for a long time, the compartmentalized online presence felt like an extension of that: natural, protective, necessary.

But there's a difference between dissociation and discretion, and somewhere along the way I lost track of which one I was doing. Was I protecting myself, or was I just afraid that the whole picture (queer, low vision, neurodivergent, furry, novelist, engineer, parent) was too much for any single audience to hold?

The answer is both. And the follow-up question is: does it matter?

I'm forty. I've published novels. I've written over a hundred pieces of queer journalism. I've been doing this long enough that the fragmented version of my online self isn't protection anymore — it's just confusing.

So the masks come off.

Pull Means Owning the Ground

This site (thearcades.me) is the opposite of the old way. It's not a broadcast tower. It's a building.

The difference matters. Push says: here's my content, go find it in your feed between an ad and a political argument. Pull says: I built a place. It's here. The address doesn't change. Come by when you want.

I'm not quitting other platforms. But I'm done treating them as primary. LinkedIn, Bluesky, whatever comes next. Those are hallways, not homes. They're where I point people toward the door.

Here's the thing, though. This isn't just about practicality. I'm tired of chasing the market economy on my own creative work. I don't believe the platforms are stable. I watched the places that hosted my early career vanish one by one, and I watched the ones that survived get strip-mined by engagement algorithms until the writing didn't matter anymore — only the performance of writing mattered.

Given the option to build my own thing, and given I have the skills to do it, I choose full ownership.

The platforms can do whatever they want. I'll be over here.

Building Backwards

Most people build an online presence by starting with social media and maybe eventually getting around to a website. I'm doing it the other way.

Website first. Blog with RSS. Email if you want it. The social profiles point here, not the other way around.

This feels backwards to anyone who's been marinating in growth-hacking advice for the last decade. Where's the content calendar? Where's the funnel? Where's the engagement strategy?

It's right here: I'm going to write things that are worth reading, and put them in a place that I own, and trust that the people who care will find their way here. That's the whole strategy.

I've been a working writer for fifteen years, even when the public couldn't see it. I know my readers. They're not scrolling LinkedIn looking for thought leadership. They're the kind of people who still use RSS readers and check bookmarked sites and follow actual links in actual emails. They want the work, not the performance of the work.

So I'm building for them. Pull, not push.

What's Here

If you're new: welcome. Here's what you'll find.

I write speculative fiction: novels where identity is literal, physical, political. \The Two-Flat Cats\ is about four queer toons buying a house together the night before a fascist inauguration. \Bait and Switch\ is a YA civil rights allegory with cartoon physics. \The Painted Cat\ is weirder than I can summarize in a sentence. And there are ten more where those came from: a decade of quiet work that's finally coming out of the drawer.

I also write about the tools I use and the workflows I've set up. I run a multi-agent editorial team through Paperclip to help me revise my manuscripts, because I'm low vision and neurodivergent, and the

traditional editing process was a wall I couldn't climb. I'll be writing about that workflow here, because I think other writers should know it exists.

And sometimes I'll write about the stuff in between. The furry community. The queer writing world. What it's like to be a disabled creator who got tired of waiting for someone else to build the infrastructure and decided to set it up themselves.

All of it, one name, one place.

The Invitation

This isn't a launch announcement. There's no product. There's no newsletter signup with a free PDF. There's just a writer who finally stopped splitting themselves across five platforms and ten names and decided to stand in one spot and say: I'm here.

If you've read my work before under any name (Crowder, Sly Squirrel, Slyford, whoever), this is where I am now. Masks off. One voice. The real one.

Come by whenever. The door doesn't move.

Austen Tucker is the author of *The Two-Flat Cats*, *Bait and Switch*, *The Painted Cat*, *A Fuzzy Place*, and *Single Player Co-Op*. They build worlds and write about the people that live there.