

The Coming Out Monologues at UCR, 2007

Performed at the University of California, Riverside on April 18, 2007

Sponsored by Queer Alliance at UCR

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If you would like to perform this script or any portion thereof, please contact The Coming Out Monologues at coming.out.ucr@gmail.com.

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Subject Line: Hey Everybody and Part 2: The Coach Returns by Justin O'Neill

Going In by Beth Newell

One Day I Sat My Friends Down by Eduard Cao

Confessions of a Mad Straight Woman by Natasha D'Costa

Jamie Lee ?? by Brian and Noel

Mom, Guess What? I'm _____ by Maddy Ryen

This Is My Normal by La Morenita

Whips, Leather, and Chains...Oh My...I LOVE IT. Don't You, Mom? by Matt Davis

Inevitability by Travis Cook

Form by Anonymous

Southern Baptist Boi by Kylan Coats

Researching Lesbians In Texas by Nancy Jean Tubbs

Comfort by Darren Rebar

Biology Is Not Destiny by Nick

Not Gay Enough by Jami R. Grosser

Memories by Janelle Crane

To the would-be creators of future productions:

We believe in a living script. We therefore encourage additions and subtractions from the Monologues. Add monologues, write your own, remove some. Do keep TCOM informed of which monologues from this you are doing, of course, because we need to keep the authors up-to-date on where their work will be performed, but we encourage the continuing evolution of the script.

That being said, we'd also request that the texts of the monologues themselves not be changed unless you contact us and we contact the individual author's first. We worked hard to maintain the integrity of the monologues and know that in order to disperse it, we needed to make sure the authors could trust us and those who would perform it. Due to the emotive and personal nature of the work, some authors are more likely to allow changes than others, which is perfectly understandable.

Please feel free to change and adapt the narration between monologues as you see fit. You are free to alter the narrator's words so long as you make sure to be respectful of the contributors and identities, give credit when its due (including to us), and have fun. Fun is important.

We were unable to get permission to disperse all of the original monologues.

--Brian

Supervisor's Note:

The Narrator was directed to interrogate the audience, opening with, "So how do you identify?" Feel free to experiment.

Opening Narration:

By Noel Mariano & Brian Oglesby
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How do you identify? ... Me? I'm The Narrator.

Once upon a time, in 1869, a German queer rights activist Karl Heinrich Ulrich introduced the idea of "coming out" as a means of emancipation. He would argue that "Invisibility is the major obstacle toward changing public opinion." Now Coming Out is a process, a journey, a statement, and a story about becoming visible by eliminating silence.

Coming Out is not necessarily a peaceful process, of course. Some face physical and emotional violence, censorship, rejection, anger, intimidation, and hatred. We all see the bullies in schoolyards, play grounds, and in the big white houses. That's why the Day of Silence was formed, once upon a time at the University of Virginia in 1996 by then-student Maria Pulzetti. It's national now, transforming students from thousands of schools across the country (including many of you here today) into activists. From sunup to sundown, students maintain a vow-of-silence to represent the silencing of people within the LGBT and ally community. And now you're here. Breaking today's silence with the Coming Out Monologues.

We are a community-based theatre project inspired by Eve Ensler's immortal Vagina Monologues started at the University of California Riverside in 2007. We want to share some stories you may or may not have heard – and in

doing so, celebrate the diversity of experience and identity.

We are by no means a complete portrait of the queer community -- and we know we cannot become it. We're limited to the stories that were shared with us and there are too many issues to address, too many landmines to avoid, too many landmines to trigger, too many narratives -- so much to do and so little time. We can only hope that, for this evening at least, we can come together to share a little bit of each other.

And so, in three acts, *The Coming Out Monologues* for 2007. Act One, "Hello World," coming out to friends and the public. Act Two, "Hey Mom," stories of people coming out to family. And Act Three, "My Name Here," stories of people coming out to themselves. Now, Act One -- "Hello World."

Subject Line: Hey, Everybody

By Justin O'Neill

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To: Arroyo Vista Residential Hall

Subject Line: Hey, everybody.

Insert Text: A quick departure from the usual goofy and incoherent Justin for a minute, if you don't mind.

You probably noticed that today was the Day of Silence, to protest "the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their allies" (from the little card thingies they gave out).

So I thought it was a little hypocritical of me to participate in this event, protesting the silence while I stayed silent myself. So to fix that (and I'm sure most of you are putting two and two together right now), I thought I'd send out this e-mail.

I'm gay.

(Never before have two words been so difficult to type.)†

Just thought you should know.

I know some of you might not be as cool with this as others are, but there's nothing I can do about that. Things are the way they are. I could use this e-mail to discuss whether it's a choice or not, debate the intricacies of gay marriage, or make passionate appeals not to judge me. But it's not what it's for. It's for letting you know what's what.

So you have the information. Do with it what you will.

You may now resume your regularly scheduled programming!

-Me

Part 2: The Coach Returns

By Justin O'Neill

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I'm nervous.

You can tell because of the sweaty palms. I keep trying to wipe them off on my sweatshirt, to little avail. I worry that the sweat will rub off on the book I'm holding and warp it. *He's gonna know I'm nervous, god, he could drown in my hand sweat, he'll shake my hand and run away screaming...*

I'm next in line. My friend is in front of me. I let him go in front of me so I don't have to embarrass myself in front of him too. I wait. They chat for a moment. Dammit, they're talking about how he helped him come out. That's the conversation I wanted to have.

Finally it's my turn. I shake his hand. No running, no screaming. So far so good.

Hi, my name's Justin.

Coach: J-U-S-T-I-N, right?

Yup! He's signing my book. Cool!

deep breath This is a long shot...but do you remember giving a talk in the, the ummm...Honors Houses over in Arroyo Vista? 3 years ago or so?

Coach: Ummm, yes. I did a couple actually, but yeah, I remember doing them.

Oh, great. Well, ummm... I went to one of them. I was the scared little freshmen sitting in the back.

Coach: Oh, yeah? How cool.

Yeah. Umm, y-you said something at the, near the end of when...of your talk, about being sick of gay guys not having the courage to come out and stick up for themselves.

Coach (nodding): Yes.

Well, I, um, that night I went home and wrote my com-coming out letter.

Coach: Really?

Yeah.

Coach: Well, that's great.

I didn't send it right away, it took me a couple weeks, but I did it. So I just w-wanted to thank you.

Coach: Yeah, of course. *shakes my hand* Take care of yourself.

Thanks, you too.

I walk away with a shot of self-confidence aimed straight at my head, despite the stuttering, the tripping over the words, the sweaty palms, and the other byproducts of being a shy, socially awkward, self-conscious kid. Sure I wanted to make a better impression on him. But odds are I'll never see him again, and I knew, for my own personal development, it had to be done.

Okay! Now the backstory. Eric "Coach Gumby" Anderson came to talk to my Sociology of Sexuality class after we read his book "Trailblazing." The man is one of my heroes, and I credit him with giving me the little kick in the pants I needed to come out – and really jolting my perception of gayness in general. I hope someday I can touch as many people's lives as he has.

The funniest part about the whole thing to me though...what I told him was actually a lie. I didn't write the coming out letter that night. I shortened the story a bit for the sake of getting through it all in the time it took him to sign my book. I did vow to myself that I was going to come out to my dorm-mates "soon." That was March 9, 2004 and I sent my letter to everyone on April 21, 2004 -- the Day of Silence.

Going In

By Beth Newell

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We always talk about coming out, but we never talk about going in. Coming out is this lifelong process accomplished in huge events and tiny moments. So is going in, only it usually starts earlier.

Like when you're playing house in preschool and all the girls say you have to play the dad, then they giggle. You don't see anything wrong with being the husband. You kind of like the idea of being married to Suzy Cooper. And having two kids and a dog named Lucy. But when you go to kiss Suzy like the boys always do, you're told you can't play house anymore, so you have to go sit in the library corner and pretend to read to hide your tears behind a book.

And then your aunt gives you a Ken doll, and you don't quite know what to do with him, but you know that the aunt think it's funny that you have 27 Barbies and no Ken. So Ken goes to live on the roof of the dream house and only comes down to mow the lawn. No, he does not need to fix the plumbing on the hot tub, that's what Buzz Cut Barbie is for. Eventually you ask for another Ken doll from your aunt because Ken 1 seems really lonely all by himself up there on the roof, especially after Buzz Cut stole his pants because they were more comfortable and the button fly was cool.

Then you get sent to summer camp, because you're reading too much and need some sun. As you sit in cabin number 4 reading your book, the girls ask you who your favorite counselor is, and you answer. Debbie of course, the one who drives the big truck. The girls don't talk to you much the rest of the

week, because you were supposed to say Dean or Mike or Erik from the boys' camp across the lake. That's when you decide to stop wearing your hat backwards like Debbie.

Suddenly you find yourself in junior high holding a copy of a glossy tween magazine, long before they were called tweens. You see a poster of Hilary Swank from the new Karate Kid movie, but then you tape it to your wall your mother asks why you liked that picture, in a way only mothers can, so you go through the magazine to find the guy with the biggest picture, and decide he needs to go on your wall instead.

And so it continues... you learn quickly not to quote Jodie Foster movies or listen to Indigo Girls too loud. You realize that Peppermint Patty is not everyone's favorite Peanuts character, and that you are probably the only one who knows which season of *Xena* the rerun is just by looking at Gabrielle's costume. In high school, you ask Lance, the Dance Team captain, to the Sadie Hawkins dance. And then, to clear up any rumors, you and Preston go into the closet. Literally, for seven minutes. In amongst the coats, the two of you re-button shirts, pound on walls and pant, all the while giggling and not touching each other. That stops the whispers and the looks for a while.

No wonder we're all in therapy.

Don't think that it stops after you get drunk and fall into bed with your roommate in college, or tell your father why he does not need to worry about a boy knocking you up. Even after you bring your girlfriend to the family picnic or get quoted in the article on pride week in the local paper. When you make sure

that rainbow sticker on your car is removable, you're going in. And when you nod politely and say simply "I don't think so" as your co-workers list single males they know? Yep, going in.

Is going in bad? Maybe it isn't if you simply list "Ally diversity training" on your resume rather than "President and Secretary of the local chapter of the Lesbian Avengers Literary Society." But if you let teenagers call each other 'faggots' because you are afraid of what other people think, going in is bad. If you ever feel yourself too in, just tell the cashier that no, the chicken soup is not for you, it's for your partner, who has the flu, or throw in a reference to Rent, not the movie, the musical. Peek out. It's cheaper than therapy, and you've spent a lot of time going in; you've got a longer way to come out.

One Day I Sat My Friends Down

By Eduard Cao

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One day I sat my friends down. Trina, Tina, Bettina and Bill. I had some big news to tell them and I wasn't sure how they were going to react, but I couldn't take it anymore: the whispering, the rumors, and the speculation. I decided to come out with it once and for all. So I told my friends, Trina, Tina, Bettina and Bill:

I – am – a bisexual.

And everyone gasped. They couldn't believe it, they could not believe it.

“Eddie,” Trina said “You're gay.”

I was shocked. Here I was trying to tell my friends something personal, and that's all she could say.

“No, I'm bi” I continued. “I've been bi.”

Tina was confused. “Then why don't you date girls? I've only seen you date guys.”

First of all, I'm 25, I wouldn't date a girl, I'd date a woman.

Another thing, women are a fine breed of human being. They have to be nurtured, sometimes they demand it. Beautiful creatures. Guys want sex. I am of course being general.

There are times when the opposite sex just doesn't get me. I'd get on with a woman, we'd be having a good time, I'd ask her out, and she'd lay one of these on me:

“I'd date you if you weren't gay.”

Uh huh. She means, "If only you were butch." It's all right though. I get the same shit from guys.

Then my friends asked me to prove I'm bisexual. Prove I like girls.

I don't have to prove anything to anyone.

It all comes down to stereotypes. I'm girly, I talk a certain way, I walk a certain way, I must be gay.

Then Bill said the final thing. "Maybe you like girls, but you're mostly gay."

"Mostly gay?" I need to get new friends. That's as bad as "One foot in the closet."

It's not that complicated. I like guys, I like girls. Bisexual. Simple as that.

Confessions of a Mad Straight Woman

By Natasha D'Costa

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Why am I in here with you? Yes! I'm in here with you! I get to play your "girlfriend." And yes I mind! I know I say I don't, but I do! I mean, it's bad enough that when our friends are around, you pretend like we are a couple, but it's worse when I realize I'm the straight single girl in love with her gay best friend. And oh my fucking god, if you tell me one more time that I'm such a good friend for putting up with this! I swear to god I'm going to smack that oh-so-cute smile off that angelic blond head of yours!

It's just... You weren't always gay...I mean, you were but... I mean you're this amazing guy in my life and I fell for you. And then you told me and it was suppose to be all good? I became this decoy in front of all our friends! HELLO! That's not coming out, that's a test ride on a bike!

I loved the questions most of all! "You guys should be together! Why aren't you guys dating?"... Your response "We're just friends." My response which I perfected: "There are things about us that just wouldn't work out." When all I want to really say is, "He's gay... has been for the past 3 years!"

I'm not mad at you — well, I am.. you've brought me in there with you. You have both of us in this goddamn closet and we're just waiting...

Just come out, they'll love you! It will be rough at first but the people that matter will love you no matter what.

I can't play your girlfriend anymore, I can't help you love yourself.

I've seen this twenty times before. That's why they call me names back at

home — “Fag Hag” is the worst. That one hurts.

Look at David. The first one was David -- I knew David was gay way before he did. We were inseparable, BFFs, from meeting in the sand box to our graduation... In 2nd grade when he pushed me in the playground when I tried to kiss Mark Riders ... And I just knew... And when he finally came out to me in high school, he was the first. And you know the song “It’s Raining Men”? Yeah. Well, halleluiah, after David came Sean the star quarterback, Cody the captain of the soccer team, Scott the senior class president, my brother, then Mark Riders and then another, like, 14. I don’t know why. Mark says I just make coming out feel safe; by the way he and David are going on three years together.

Twenty... I call them “blessings.” Some people wouldn’t like that I call them blessings. That’s why I do it. I’d like to make it 21.

Come out!

I’ve always wished I could come out. I know, I’m straight but, I wish I could too. When I first told my gay friends they laughed and told me that I was crazy. They asked me, “Why would you ever want to go through that!?” Don’t get me wrong -- I do understand that coming out is hard, but I understand the struggle, the pain, the inner fight that goes on before you come to that point, before you proclaim yourself with pride, but I want that...

When my brother and my best friend came out they both had to fight every vice, doubt, demon and battle within themselves. They had to discover who they were, accept it, and then proclaim it to everyone saying, “Take me as I am!”... You go into this deep self discovery that forces you to understand yourself.

My gay friends always tell me that there's no other feeling like coming out, and I bet they're right. To have a moment where you embrace yourself and who you are; for your happiness, for yourself. I wish I could have that moment — I wish you could have that moment.

There's this release, this relief of knowing life will keep going even though you are who you are, out, free from your doubts...

Maybe the reason I want that feeling of coming out is because I find it hard to love who I am. I mean, we all do at times... I look up to my brother and my best friend, now they are so alive so proud of who they are, I want that... I want that moment where I know being myself is enough to make me happy...

Don't you?

Jamie Lee ??

By Brian and Noel

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Coming Out can be problematic for some.

What if, for example, someone does not know what you're coming out as? You might as well come out as a firetruck. Do you still exist? Most people have some basic knowledge of straight, gay, and lesbian. Even "bisexual" has a decent fan-base. But not all identities have that kind of public knowledge.

Take "intersex." If you were to type it into a Word document, you may have to ignore the squiggled red line telling you it's spelled incorrectly. Obliterated by Microsoft ®!

Regardless of the technological or interpersonal ignorance, intersex does exist.

You may have heard the word from the unsubstantiated internet rumor that Jamie Lee Curtis is intersex. She did not submit a monologue to us. We wish she had, but she had other things to do, we're sure. What's important about this urban legend is that many times the question "What is intersex?" is more likely than the question, "Who's Jamie Lee Curtis?"

Now, intersex is a term used to describe someone whose sex-chromosomes, genitals, or "secondary sex-characteristics" are neither just male or female. A girl with a large clitoris. A scrotum divided so it's more like a labia. Someone may be born with either "in-between" genitals or with both sets. According at least to our internet research, a medical expert is called in for about 1 in 1500 to 1 in 2000 births, the same odds as someone being born a natural

redhead. In Anne Fausto-Sterling's *Sexing the Body*, she claims that 1.7 % of human births are intersex, and the Intersex Society of North America states between .1 and .2 % of live births are ambiguous enough to call in specialist attention. This includes baby surgery to disguise sexual ambiguity. Then again, some intersex characteristics don't appear at birth. Some show up at puberty, or when the adult finds themselves infertile, some on the autopsy table when they die of old age.

Intersex is one of many identities, both scientific and personal, that subvert the common knowledge. To explore this, we asked people at the 17th Annual Western Regional Conference what they identified as – In addition to gay, lesbian, and bisexual, we had these responses: queer, unofficially titled, transsexual, trans, questioning, ally, two-spirited, unknown, butch, femme, dyke, fluid, family, flamer, homosexual, confused, sapphist, diva, F2M, M2F, vagitarian, transmasculine, friend of Dorothy's, breeder, drag king or queen, lesbro, gender normative, fairy and others.

NOTE: We were unable to procure permission from the person who identified as "fluid," the monologue from whom followed this one. If you manage to find an appropriate monologue to follow this one, please include it. We even suggest the following transition lines:

Our next monologue is about one of these identities and the difficulties this creates. Sometimes lack of public knowledge isn't the only aspect of coming out that is problematic.

NOTE CONTINUED: If you cannot, we recommend that the transition line

lead into some form of audience participation, such as the inclusion of the listing of “How Do You Identify” in the lobby.... Sorry, but this is a case by case transition. If you need more guidance or advice, please feel free to contact UC Riverside’s TCOM committee.

Closing Narration

We've heard from Justin, Mary, Ed, Tasha the angry straight woman, a Jamie Lee Curtis doppelganger, and Louise. And as we head toward our first intermission and you venture into our lobby to purchase some delicious cookies from our fabulous cashier, we hope that you too will ask, How do you greet your world?

You will have fifteen minutes for the intermission. We invite you to share your stories in the lobby, pick up a pamphlet about our charity – donate to the charity please – use whatever facilities you need, and return for the second act, Hey Mom.

†

Act 2: Hey Mom!

Coming out to the whole world can be scary and sometimes your whole world is in your own home. Telling your family what your sexual or gender identity is can create even more anxiety and drama. Sometimes families knew you were gay before you did. Sometimes they will punish you. Sometimes they will be understanding and run off to join PFLAG. This next act will include stories of people coming out to their families.

Mom, Guess What? I'm _____

By Maddy Ryen

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I don't like talking about my sexuality with my family. I don't. I don't! But my mom, she's the communicator, so I could count on her to pass the information along to my sister and dad.

My mom! I can remember learning the word bisexual from her. She was taking me to see a community theatre production of *The Sisters Rosenweig*. She sat me down before going, and explained to me that one of the characters in the play was bisexual. Did I know what bisexual meant? Well, I was a smart kid who knew my Greek and Latin roots. "Two people having sex?" I asked. "Close enough," she replied, and we were off.

My mom seems to have known I might be queer long before the possibility ever occurred to me. I can remember her asking me in fourth grade if I thought I would ever love a woman the way she loved my dad. At that point my answer was a simple, "No, I don't think so."

The next time she asked was the summer after seventh grade, when the two of us were driving over to my grandparents' house. Seventh grade had been a time of self-discovery – after hearing a panel of LGBT students at diversity training, I had become obsessed with figuring out my own orientation. Finally, with the help of every book in the library's section "Homosexuality – Young Adult – Fiction," I had decided that I must be a lesbian. My mom was teaching at the local high school, and she was telling me about one of her students who had just come out in an anonymous editorial in the school paper. She asked me, in one of

those wonderful “I’m trying to be casual, like we talk about this every day” tones, “What about you? What are your thoughts on your sexuality?” I replied, “Well, I think I’m a lesbian, and I think I want to be out in high school.” She and I joke that the car accelerated sharply at that moment, but, really, I remember her reacting quite calmly. I don’t think we talked much more about it that day.

A few days later, however, when I came in to say goodnight, my mom brought the subject up again. She worried that I was making very confident statements about my sexuality for a 12-year-old. She told me how important it was that I not box myself in at so young an age. And my statement worried her. “Sexuality is a private thing,” she told me. “It’s very hard to be out in high school.”

I didn’t appreciate what my mom was saying – in fact, for a while I thought that I was going to become another queer kid whose parents didn’t accept her. That, of course, was completely ludicrous. My mom was the advisor of the high school’s Gay-Straight Alliance and she had written about the student diversity trainings for our local paper. She was the one who taught me not to take anyone’s crap and to stand up for who I was.

Still, I took her words and decided that if I wasn’t sure I was gay, that must mean that, for the time being, I was straight. I came home from a GSA training one day and told her how odd it was to be one of the few straight allies at the event. “Why are you using that term to describe yourself?” she asked. Great, I thought. Mom doesn’t want me to be gay. Mom doesn’t want me to be straight. What *does* Mom want? Of course, the answer’s obvious: She wanted me to be who I really was.

And, after a few more months, I finally found the word for who I was – who I still am in many ways. Questioning. It described what I was doing – refining my understanding of my sexuality, discovering new aspects of myself, placing myself on a spectrum of sexuality. I’ve ruled out completely heterosexual and completely homosexual, but besides that I’m a dot floating above the axis – I don’t know where I’ll fall or what name (if any) I’ll give myself when I get there.

After a training for LGBT panel speakers where I had finally written my coming out story, I was telling her how fun that was. “So, what exactly *do* you identify as?” she asked. This time, I had a confident answer.

This Is My Normal

By La Morenita
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I turned a blind eye for most of my life
Made afraid to search for any honesty about my sexuality
On the outside it was my Catholic upbringing and surrounding
comunidad
Comunidad that I love for better or worse
On the inside it was a brother's hands that crudely swept over
My developing body
Forcing me numb at twelve to any kind of touch
Mixing up my maturing desire with confusion and fear and hate

I blamed a strict father for not being able to date guys at seventeen
Mi papa would kill me I would say
He is *Mexicano*
The girls...they understood
Their fathers were the same

Little did they know
The repetitive nightmare that took place
As I slept in the living room
On a tattered fold out couch
And the dream I held onto even then

I turned a blind eye for most of my life
But I knew – I had always known
Still I was too afraid to acknowledge
The longing I carried inside of me
Remnants of horror taking precedence over everything else in my life

When I was fifteen years old I fell in madly in love with Winona Ryder
She was Dinky Bossetti dressed in black from head to toe
Fierce in heavy boots – she stomped across the screen
Welcome Home Roxy Carmichael

The year was 1990 and I was a freshman in high school
I wanted her because
She reminded me of a girl named *Cruzita*
Cruzita dressed in black
Cruzita dancing round me
Sex Pistols – God Save the Queen – And me
Cruzita

She was my only friend and I cared very much about her...perhaps too much

And like all the other girls around me
Including *Cruzita*

Winona's character turned to a guy for comfort
The convenient and acceptable solution to her identity crisis
And as if to proclaim there was no doubt that she was heterosexual
Dinky donned a pink satin dress by the movie's end

As the credits rolled I listened to Melissa softly belting out
Lost in your eyes / Caught in your name / I will never be the same
I knew the hunger in her voice
Aware of what was missing in my life
Feeling ashamed that I felt so strongly about girls
I pushed it away

Mis quince años marked not by a coming out
But a masking of my body, my emotions, my truth

Out of high school and
Wanting to explore foreign territory
I too tried the hetero-normative answer
To my identity crisis

I DATED BOYS

Completely non-threatening boys
No backbone whatsoever
Safe because most of my relationships were long distance
Irvine – Santa Ana – San Pedro – Lejos
And *mi papa* would tell me
Morenita armor de lejos es pa los
Pendejos—yeah—or a sexually confused *mujer*
Who thought the further away they are the better

At least I could say I had a *novio*
To my nosy *tía* who wondered why I never brought any *muchachos* around

It was hard trying to keep my mask on
Trying to be so straight laced
The good *catolica*
Lopez' daughter
La Morenita....La Lupita
I was wound so tightly

I forced myself to go through the motions...

Trying hard to remember not to stare at *mujeres* for so long...
Trying hard to make it work with a man...any man...

Just to keep any and all of their questions at bay...
But they knew...
They all knew...
I wasn't fooling anyone...
But myself...

So I...drank and drank and drank
My desperate attempt to escape
I drank to numb myself even more
I drank to make myself undesirable
I drank to kill the demons inside of me
I drank to erase my dreams – because they were unacceptable
to everyone that matter to me...

Lupe the big lush who could drink any woman or man under the table
Though you wouldn't know it now

All of my knowing and unknowing went on for so long
Until one day I finally broke down and broke free

I was twenty five years old when I crawled back into myself

And then the questions came

Could this be true so late in your life Lupe?
Could this be true when you have only been with men?

YES! I knew – I had always known

Como una mujer could make me squirm
With the soft subtle shake of her hips as she walks past me

Como una mujer could make my *corazon* beat faster
With the flutter and honesty of her laughter

Como una mujer could make me red with desire
A soft hand placed upon my full cheek

I knew the way a *mujer* could take me
Holding me close during a fast song because

I wanted to learn how to dance *cumbias* in my senior year of high school

When I was younger
I turned a blind eye
Thinking I was alone in this
This lifestyle not for a *morenita* like me
I must be selling myself out
It was years before I realized
The multitude of strong Chicana Lesbians
That had already laid a solid foundation for me to stand and stomp on

I was twenty six years old when I told *mi mama*
The only thing she said to me was
I know mijita de mi vida

The best things come to those who wait
Her name is Maura by the way

The word *lesbiana* a taboo?
The lifestyle a sin?
That just doesn't sit right with me.
I knew – I had always known

And I embrace myself...now
And I love myself...now
And I allow myself to experience life and living...now

This is my normal
My life's saving grace
This late bloomer has been found

Whips, Leather, and Chains...Oh My...I LOVE IT. Don't You, Mom?

By Matt Davis

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Picture this: I'm 19. A scenic drive from my campus to home. We're in the family truck. My mom is driving and I am in the passenger seat.

I should probably put in a bit of back story. I'm kinky. I figured out I was kinky before I figured out I was only attracted to men. Well....I like bondage, and leather, domination, S&M in all its wonderful forms...the trust and the connections...the power/control transference...the amazing headspace that vanilla sex can't quite approach. Hell...I dominated a guy before I ever kissed one....I'm THAT into it. It is one of the few identities I will always have. And one of the things I did when I was younger was create an e-mail address that was distinctive in its depiction of my *ahem* tastes.

Now for my mom. She was raised a Mormon, but was excommunicated from the church when she got pregnant with my older sister when she was 16. Got the back story? Good. Back to the car ride home.

We're cresting a hill on the way to San Bernardino. My mom says "I don't want you using that e-mail on my computer anymore. I don't want Melody seeing it and I don't want you using it." I turn and look at her and think a million thoughts at once. ÜI think of my identity as a kinky Dominant. I think of the arguments I've had with the Old Guard generation about my being a Dominant without being a submissive first. I think of me mumbling something about that e-mail being my junk-mail address. Then I think of pride, and that pride produces rebellion. And that rebellion is what makes me respond with:

“Why do you think I chose an e-mail like that? I’m INTO it.”

Her response: “You don’t know what you’re talking about!”

My retort: “Yes I do.”

Her follow-up: “Why would you want to do that? You like to get tied up?

People are going to take advantage of you and you’ll end up in the desert in a million pieces.”

Now, because of my age and my relative naivete, it’s easy to see why I would be mistaken for a submissive, which, right now, is a huge insult. How dare she label me a submissive!

I turn to her and I say: “No, actually it’s the other way around. I’m the one that does the tying up.”

Her response: “When could you do this? You’ve never done any of this.”

My retaliation: “I did it with C---.” C---- was the first guy I ever dominated. A guy I met from online fresh out of the closet. Not my brightest idea though he did turn out to be a great guy. Not psychopathic at all.

Now at this point my mother is fired up. When she has an emotion, she doesn’t have it half-assed.

Her outburst: “Well if any children disappear around the neighborhood I’ll know who did it.”

Very few times in my life am I truly shocked into silence. And this is one of them. A few minutes later I respond with: “I can’t believe you just said that.”

She’s at the point where she’s simmering down, so she remains silent.

Sidenote: Don’t come out to your parents, in any way, when they’re driving

on the road. It's a safety hazard.

I don't speak to my mother much over the next few weeks. I am livid, constantly reliving the conversation over in my mind. And it doesn't end there.

Over the next few months she makes ignorant jokes about my extra-sexual activities. Until one day I get tired of it. I am fed up. So I sit down next to her and have this long convoluted conversation with her about kink. I liken it to other socially acceptable activities. Think marathon runners or bodybuilders, they do it to feel good and get those endorphins and get a rush right? Well I tie up guys, I spank them, I induce consensual pain with clothespins and paddles and hot wax to get to a very similar headspace.

In the end: I cry, she cries, but mostly I cry. The conversation lasts more than two hours. And I am hoarse from talking so much. I give her a lot to think about. And to her great benefit she's much better about it now, and about me being gay, and that's why she will always be the most inspirational person in my life.

What's the email that started all this, you ask? It is bondagemaster25@hotmail.com. Send me a message sometime.

Inevitability

By Travis Cook

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There's nothing dramatic about the story of when I came out to my mom. There was no screaming, no bawling, no swearing, no threats, no ultimatums, no Christian counselors and no exorcisms. None of that. After I told my mom I was gay, we sat on our townhome's balcony for three hours just talking. For nearly that entire warm July evening, my mom and I sat outside having an honest and revealing conversation about my life. Pretty much the ideal outcome, I guess.

But that's not what I most vividly remember from that day. Instead, I remember everything prior to our time on the balcony. I remember that feeling. Do you know what I'm talking about? It's this raw nervousness so intense you can never forget it. Imagine your stomach is drenched in cold acid and your heart pulses out hot lava, and the two substances swirl and churn in your midsection.

For me, it started in the morning. I knew this would be one of the only days I'd have to spend with my mom. I had decided weeks earlier that this was going to be the day I told. My mom asked if I wanted go with her and my step dad to the mall. Just before we left, I sent her an email. The email said I had to tell her something important and that if she had not yet talked with me, she needed to find me and force it out of me. The moment I clicked 'Send' was when the feeling hit me hard. The plan was set in motion. There was no turning back.

When we got to the mall, I walked steadily about ten feet behind my parents, not because I was nervous to walk with them, but because my body was stuck in this inebriated slow motion preventing me from functioning at a normal

speed. I felt heavy even though my feet felt numb and light. I began regretting putting myself in this situation. I didn't want to be following my parents around the mall. I was angry at myself for sending that email. I worked out plans in my head to hack in to her email and erase the message. This didn't have to happen. Why did I agree to go run errands with them? This was not fun. I didn't want to stand in the women's section anymore while my mom looked for the correct pair of nylons. I did not want to be there. I wanted to go home, but did not want to be at home. I had an alien was about to burst from my ribcage. Why couldn't I be left alone? This was inescapable. I did not want to let myself down. If I didn't do this now, I would be so angry at myself.

We made it to the checkout line, and my step-dad ran off to go grab one more thing. My mom looked at me and asked if I was alright. I told her I was. "What's wrong? Please tell me what's wrong?" she asked. There was no way I was about to spill my guts around hundreds of other bargain shoppers. I said I would tell her later. She looked me in the eyes. "Will you tell me today?" she asked. I looked back and promised I would.

She asked me two more times on the way home what was wrong. I said I'd tell her when we got back to the house. After we parked and carried everything inside, my step-dad disappeared into the master bedroom, and my mom took out a cigarette and her lighter and walked to the balcony door. She turned around and motioned for me to follow. I put my hands in my pockets, walked across the living room and out onto the balcony. I felt like I was five years old again, and I was being punished. I stalled for as long as possible.

Then the last part of me finally broke down, and I told.

Did you feel it? Now do you know the feeling I'm talking about. You have to feel it to understand. It's nausea, anxiety, regret, anxiousness, pain, excitement, depression, and a hundred other emotions all mashed together. For me, the only word that comes remotely close to naming this feeling is "inevitability." I know that inevitability is not an emotion, but that's what it feels like to me.

But maybe for a lot of us, it's not even a choice to come out. Maybe it's a necessary step towards happiness and fulfillment. Maybe that horrible feeling I mentioned is actually the strength building within us, because I have yet to meet anyone who does not consider themselves stronger after coming out to the people they care about most. And maybe it's that strength that ties us together. Or maybe it's our strength that is inevitable. I don't know. I haven't figured it out yet.

Form

By Anonymous

On my nightstand, there is a bottle of red nail polish that I never wear. It is red with silver flecks swirled in it. Everything I own is red; I wear red dresses with red shoes. When I go out, I drink red drinks and wear red lipstick. I do this because as David Hernandez says, red really means go.

I was born Mario Ramez, youngest son to my Juan and Rosa Ramez. Younger brother to Anita Ramez. Every family picture, there would be my stern father standing next to my mother, and my sister and I in front of my parents. My father's hands clamped around my shoulders. Sometimes I think he knew from the beginning, he knew that I was meant to be a woman. I was thin and my face looked young. I grew my hair long and learned to run like my sister. I had delicate eyebrows, and very little body hair. Early on, people would compliment my father on his two beautiful daughters. My father would angrily respond, "He is my son."

Maybe my sister, Anita, knew this too. Maybe she knew that I would stand in front of the mirror staring at my body, hating what I had between my legs and cursing it. Wishing it weren't there. Maybe she knew even before she caught me in her room when I was thirteen; going through her clothes and putting on her favorite skirt. Maybe she wanted a sister after all, but she never told. She would paint my nails when my father was at work and we would comb each other's hair. She would tell me I'm beautiful. She gave me my first tube of lipstick. I was afraid to buy it because of the *chismosa* at the counter who told my mother about everything I did. I bought cherry flavored chapstick once for Anita and the lady at the counter told my parents. "He's buying lipgloss to wear on his shiny pouty

lips.” My sister bought me lipstick, Nude Invisible Red. It was so naughty and seductive. The first time I put to my lips and dabbed them with a tissue, I felt like I was alive.

I did things to keep my father happy. I dated a girl, but it was because I wanted to be her more than I cared about her. It was gender envy. And even though I was with her, I still kept looking at boys, and this confused me. I tried to play football. I joined the football team, but never played. I felt like my pads were swallowing me. In the pictures that were taken of me in my jersey and pads, my father stood behind me, his hand on my shoulder like a claw, and he was smiling. Now when I see the few pictures of me from then, it looks like I am struggling.

I wanted to be my sister. And my father hated that. He took me to play sports, to join boy scouts, he wanted me to be a man. And all the while, I wanted to stay at home and play house with my GI Joes and Anita’s Barbies. My father blamed my mother. Said it was her fault that I was a mama's boy. That I didn't want to be a man. He blamed my sister. And every now and then, he would beat them. Not enough so anyone could tell, but he would hit them and then hit me. This went on for a while. And then my sister went away to college. It left me with my parents, and that's when I started to sneak out at night. I was 16. I would go into my sister's room, take some of her clothes. It was while I was out at night that I met other people like me. People who thought that they were born the wrong gender. They were prostitutes and they were my friends. They taught me things. They taught me how to tuck. How to push my penis and my balls inside of me and how to hide it with tape. And the first time I did it in my room, I almost

cried. I looked in the mirror and there was nothing there. And I was happy.

One night, I got careless. I came back home late, and instead of bringing a change of boy clothes with me, I kept wearing my sister's. My mother heard and she woke my father up. My father caught me. "You want to be a girl so badly, I'll treat you like one." He beat me and kept beating me. I cried, I screamed for him to stop, I tried to fight back, but he kept beating me. Blood was getting all over my clothes, it was flying up. He pulled chunks of my hair out. Hit my face until it started to swell. The red blood was telling him to keep going. When it was over, I was left crying and curled up against the wall.

Now, I live with my sister. We've moved out and I am seeing a counselor and we are talking about the options I have. I am on hormone therapy. I am saving for surgery. Not long ago, my sister and I went shopping for clothes. I still have a lot to learn about myself. I still see myself, my real self trapped when I look in the mirror. I'm working on it. I'm almost free.

Southern Baptist Boi

By Kylan Coats

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NOTE: This monologues should be performed in a slight Southern (Houston, Texas) accent. Care should be made that the performance does not appear as a southern stereotype.

There's no way I could call myself anything, but Southern. Technically I was born in Amory, Mississippi, but my family lived in a log cabin in Columbus, Mississippi. I lived there for six years, Louisiana for seven, and Texas for five before finally coming out to Los Angeles for college.

I grew up Southern Baptist. For kindergarten, I went to a private Catholic school, only because Immaculate Conception was the best in the area, for which I don't think Ma-Maw ever forgave my parents.

At the age of 14, I looked at gay porn for the first time. I simply typed in the word 'gay' on the internet out of curiosity as to what it could possibly mean. I had certainly called enough people it, specifically this one new boy at our school with a lazy eye. Whenever I did, the other kids would stop making fun of me and start on him which made my life a little easier. My father saw the list of internet sites that I looked at during my search for what 'gay' meant. He yelled at me and told me that I should never look at that again and that I could have messed up his reputation and name by looking up things like that. I cried and apologized.

Over the next four years I learned, like any good gay boy, how to hide my searches for pornography. However, growing up Southern Baptist brought with it numerous calls to repentance and I confessed my struggle with gay pornography several times to my parents. The first time they reacted surprisingly well and I

thought that everything would be Okay. Then they sent me to a Christian psychiatrist. After a few months of seeing the woman, and largely due to my parents' reminders of how much her services cost them, I told my parents I was fine and they didn't bother me anymore about it. When I confessed to them again before I left for college, they were less understanding. My father yelled that if I ever looked at it again, he would physically hurt me to the point that I would have to go to the hospital. I would never be allowed to come back to the house or to see my two younger brothers ever again. I was then told to inform my mother of the "agreement" that he and I had. In a way, this made going to school in Los Angeles a little bit easier.

In college, I became much less Southern Baptist. This didn't happen overnight and many spiritual events occurred in life to bring me to the point where I simply told God, "This doesn't work." I couldn't look at myself in the mirror with so much hate and self-loathing and say that I was living the life God wanted me to.

The man that showed me more about love and acceptance than anything I had ever learned in all my years in the church, he was my first boyfriend. Without him, I don't think that I would have ever found myself where I did on October 16 at the Houston Intercontinental Airport.

I had flown back to surprise my younger brother for his 18th birthday. He was surprised. My parents were pleased. I was shining as an older son. My intentions were genuine for the entire trip; I really did fly back on my dime to surprise my brother. And as my parents drove me to the airport to go back to

L.A., I made a decision for myself.

I had my bags with me as I stood outside my dad's white H2 Hummer. His pistol was at home and he didn't have any weapons concealed in his truck that I knew of. My petite mom was desperately struggling to climb up into the front seat. I had my boarding pass in my hand for my flight. I managed to get out, "Mom, Dad, I have something to tell you..." and then I started bawling. After about ten minutes, I managed to stammer out, "I'm gay," and then continued to cry as I braced myself for my parents' reaction. My mother hugged me. My dad looked at me with a face that will be burned into my memory till I die. My mom said she loved me. My dad said I would always be his son. And then I ran into the airport.

I texted my ex-boyfriend and best friend who were both standing by to pick me up from LAX. They told me they couldn't wait to see me and I would be home in no time. Although my flight was delayed first an hour, and then two, I rested in the knowledge that I had told my parents and had come out of the ordeal relatively unscathed. It wasn't until after the fourth hour of being delayed, when the flight was cancelled, that I began to pray. I told God that He had a very, very sick sense of humor and I expected a golden chariot if the flight wasn't leaving. The chariot didn't arrive and neither did my flight. I had to call my parents and tell them to come pick me up and take me back to the airport the next morning.

In my mind I told myself that I would look back at the situation and laugh and I have, but it's a lot harder to laugh when you are in the situation, knowing

that your father has had ample time to retrieve his firearm before getting back into his H2 Hummer. I keep bringing up guns because my family has a history of shooting at each other. Normally people aren't actually hit by anything, but shots have been known to go in the general direction of a relative.

When my parents did pick me up, the ride home was merciless. My mother called me a coward and a liar. She told me that I would become a pedophile and move to San Francisco and get AIDS. She asked me how I could live with myself knowing that I had committed such a horrible sin. My father was silent. When we finally got home, my mother stormed off to her room. My dad gave me the same look that he had given me in his truck earlier. He told me that I would always be his son and that he would always love me. He said he always knew that I was different and he thought that it was all biological, but that if it was a choice, I had chosen a very tough life. He confessed that he was really confused with everything and just didn't know what to do. Then he hugged me and cried. I hugged him back and I cried.

The next morning he drove me to the airport. We talked more openly than we had ever talked before. He asked me questions about things I had said when I was younger and I responded about the things I could remember. When we came back to the terminal again, my dad hugged me in his truck. He cried again and I did too. He told me that he loved me, that I would always be his son, and that we would get this worked out. Then I stepped down out of the Hummer, walked into the airport, and flew back to my school in Los Angeles; still a Baptist, still Southern, and still gay.

End of Act 2

As your program states, we're off to our second intermission right now. But before you go, I want to tell you about our charity. The Kalyn Smith-Tranquil'son Memorial fund was founded in order to provide resources for students who lose financial support from their parents because of their involvement with the LGBT community. It's an emergency fund started by his mother, Tanquil Calley. And we'd like to thank our sponsors – Queer Alliance and the LGBT Resource Center – for making this happen.

Alright, come right back for Act 3 – “My Name Here.”

Act 3: My Name Here

Before we ride off into the sunset with our happily-ever-after, we haven't heard stories from people coming out to the most important person in their lives: themselves. Sometimes the hardest person to come out to is your mom, sometimes it's your best friend, sometimes it's your loyal fans, and sometimes it's you. In Act 3, we present stories of people coming out to themselves.

Researching Lesbians In Texas

by Nancy Jean Tubbs

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I'm a homocrat. A career queer.

I actually make a living directing an LGBT resource center on a college campus. 15 years after coming out as a lesbian in Texas, I'm getting paid to be a queer bureaucrat in California. How cool is that?

Because of my job, people come out to me on a daily basis. Sometimes nervously, sometimes casually, and in all kinds of places: restaurants, restrooms, cars... lots of cars. Some days, I feel like I'm living in a thousand coming out stories of other people's lives.

Of course, I have my own story. Despite what some of my students think, it's not like the nurse cut my umbilical cord and announced to my parents, "Congratulations! It's a lesbian!"

Once upon a time, I was living in the city of College Station, Texas, where people think Southern Baptists are too liberal. A student at Texas A&M University, it was my first year of being a Senior (I graduated early on the 7-year plan), and my first year thinking maybe all those crushes on women might mean something.

The problem was that I doubted that lesbians, like the Easter bunny, really existed. I mean, the only time they came up in high school was when someone accused Wonder Woman of being a dyke. So lesbians wore Underoos and saved their boyfriend from the Nazis every week? Hmm.

I decided that some research was in order.

I went to the local bookstore... this was before Barnes and Nobles and

their mammoth Lesbian and Gay book section. I zeroed in on the magazine rack. There it was, The Advocate, aka "Newsweek for gay people."

Feeling extremely embarrassed to be seen buying The Advocate, I decided to confuse the book clerk. I selected three magazines: The Advocate, Playboy, and Playgirl. Just try to figure me out! The clerk slowly held the magazines one-by-one up to the light, saying he had to find the bar codes. Then he took the plastic wrappers off. Then he asked me if I needed a bag. "No" I squeaked, grabbed my receipt and scurried out the door.

The Advocate taught me a lot about gay men, and abbreviations in personal ads, but not a lot about lesbians.

Then I rented Desert Hearts, the only lesbian movie to be found in College Station. The videotape started jumping right before the sex scene, where it had been rewound over and over again. Be kind, rewind... I did, too. Over and over again.

I began to think desperate measures may be needed. That summer I traveled the lesbian Mecca: an Indigo Girls concert! As I stared at the group of lesbians making out in front of me, my best friend's boyfriend remarked "They are much more entertaining than the opening act."

Mental note: Lesbians smoke lots of cigarettes and have excellent musical taste. I hated cigarettes, but I was willing to make an exception if a lesbian was involved.

Okay, so there were definitely lesbians in Texas.... at least at Indigo Girls concerts. But in College Station? Where people get gang-witnessed by Bible-

thumpers? I was skeptical.

About this time, I met Beth the Bisexual. Whoo hoo! An actual, in the flesh, I've kissed-women-and-I'll-admit-it-out-loud friend. Beth, bless her heart, convinced me to attend a GLSS meeting. The student group, Gay and Lesbian Student Services, met every Thursday in the Memorial Student Center. We quietly walked in and sat in the back row. I rubbernecked like mad.

And this is who I saw: a classmate from high school; my new supervisor at the library (turns out he also managed the local gay club); another co-worker and her girlfriend; and, the man who fixed my mother's roof over the summer. Wow! The whole world was gay!

My story doesn't end there, of course. I could tell you about my best friends wondering why I was so nervous before I came out to them. Their theory was that I was pregnant or maybe secretly a Republican. I could tell you about my sister enrolling in the Gay and Lesbian Literature class, because she needed another course and I had already bought the books. And, no, I wasn't out to her yet. But I was out by the midterm. I could tell you about coming out to my mother on National Coming Out Day. (I so hated being a clichÉ.)

Yep, I have 15 years of coming out stories in my brain, and now I am a "coming out Professional": gay for pay... but in a good way. I guess all that researching lesbians in Texas paid off.

Comfort

By Darren Rebar

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Being the youngest in the family can be a strange thing. I got the used toys. I got the used clothes. And here's the real impact - it all came from my older sister. You get the general picture. While most boys were playing with their G.I. Joe's, matchbox cars, and swords, I had Barbie dolls, Rainbow Brite, and nail polish. When you're a young kid with two working parents and a sister who's a year and a half older than you, most of your time is consumed by what she's into. Makeover party – check. Dress-up – check. And who's materials did we have to work with – my sister's. Or my mother's. But my father's suits were off limits. My mother loved the work my sister did, especially the pink barrettes to keep my hair out of my face. Mother didn't want to cut it because the jet black locks were so pretty and they reminded her of what my father used to have. People would always tell her, "Oh, what an adorable little girl you have." They weren't talking about my sister either. As they say, beauty's in the eye of the beholder.

We moved around when I was growing up, so friends always changed while the family stayed the same. New places made me nervous. Only one place to go: my comfort zone. Paint the polish, don the dress. Things that make you feel good. You don't share that with your family and when you're a teen you don't share that with your friends either. You just do it for you. For your spirits, for your sanity, for your smiles, for familiarity.

I went to college because I didn't know what I wanted to do. And that's where I found my outlet, that's where I found my cohort. Shaving head to toe,

shaving everything I've come to know. Only to become what I've always seen,
always been: a straight drag queen.

Biology Is Not Destiny

By Nick
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When I was born, the doctor looked between my legs and declared "It's a girl!" As I grew, I soon figured out, as did my parents, that my gender expression was far from feminine. I didn't understand why I couldn't walk around with my shirt off or pee standing up, or why my mom kept telling me to sit with my legs closed. I just figured that hopefully in my next life I'd come back as a boy so I could experience a life that made sense to me.

As puberty progressed, I found myself romantically attracted to women, not men. So, since I was fairly masculine for a female, and I liked women, I figured I must be a lesbian. The lesbian community afforded me a greater range of acceptable gender expressions than is allowed amongst heterosexual women -- being somewhat butch is almost to be expected if you're a dyke. However, as much as I enjoyed my success in finding women who wanted to date a butch, I never really felt at home in the lesbian community. Something always felt "off" but I didn't understand what it was. It wasn't just about being masculine, it was about being seen as a man and feeling at home in my body. I had been so brainwashed to think that my physical body defined my gender, I didn't think living as anything other than female was an option.

Turns out I didn't have to wait until reincarnation. Just until graduate school. There I met a woman who had been assigned male at birth but was transitioning physically and socially to female. She and I connected instantly but

at the time I didn't know why. From her, I learned that I could express my gender however I wanted. And if I wanted to live as a man in the world, I could. I had many options available to me, and I didn't have to let a socially constructed gender binary keep me from expressing my gender in the way that I wanted, both socially and physically. I started seeing her therapist and began taking small steps towards living as a man. I took out my Gina-Gershon-Corky-from-Bound-inspired earrings, used the men's restroom, and had people refer to me with male pronouns and a male name.

A year later I started taking testosterone to begin my physical transition. I was scared at first, but each day as I saw my body begin to masculinize I noticed a corresponding increase in my self-esteem. I felt nothing but excitement and anticipation as my voice deepened, my beard grew in, my skin grew coarser, and my jawline became more square.

My girlfriend was supportive at first, but as my physical transition began to manifest, it helped her solidify her own sexuality: she was a lesbian and did not want to be with a man. I should have seen it coming as she no longer wanted to have sex with me during the last few months of our relationship. I'll never forget the last time we made love, she suddenly shut down sexually and emotionally in the middle of me fucking her. I was doing everything as I usually did, but she no longer viewed me the same way. It was a backhanded compliment when she left me six months later, as it screamed loud and clear to me "You're a man now, Nick." As the great FTM activist Jamison Green has said, "during transition, some things get better, some things get worse."

I have since begun to explore my own sexuality all over again. I no longer feel forced to date only women as a means of affirming my masculinity. This is terribly exciting and terribly confusing at the same time. I have to say, that although there are many ups and downs, overall I know I'm finally expressing my authentic self, and nothing could be more worthwhile. I love being a man, I love being myself.

Not Gay Enough

By Jami R. Grosser

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Liz and I, we decided to call it my first day at camp. It seemed a lot better than referring to it as the first time we had sex or the first time I had sex with a woman. That night, that night changed my life. So to simply say that it was our “first time” wouldn’t have cut it. No, it seemed more appropriate to give it a code name. A name that she and I would both know signified something more, but somehow maintained the secret. I know it seems silly, but that’s part of our chemistry. We were silly together. That’s how we worked. This is a woman who introduced me to Frosted Toasty O’s while playing gin rummy until the wee hours of the morn, who dressed up as a cow for **Coming Out Week** (C-O-W), and who bought me an electric can opener for my birthday because she didn’t like my old manual one. That’s Liz. She even made me a homemade card complete with stick figures wishing me a happy first day at camp! She was funny like that...always liked an audience.

Not everything about “my first day at camp” was positive or silly. See, I was in a three-year relationship with my boyfriend when I met Liz. And my day at camp meant the end of that. I didn’t really plan for it to happen like that. Liz and I were RAs together in college and had become pretty good friends in the almost two years that we had known each other. I had known for a while that she had a crush on me, and frankly I found it flattering. What she didn’t know, is that I had developed something of a crush on her as well. I didn’t know what it meant or really what to do about it at all. I had never been attracted to a woman before,

and didn't really know where the attraction came from. But I can't tell you how much I wanted to kiss her. From the first moment she half admitted to crushing on me that late night on spring break where we stayed up 'til 5 in the morning, something just hit me. Gosh, I wanted to kiss her so bad. I had a hard time NOT thinking about it. Liz had this vulnerability that only came out on rare occasions, like 5 in the morning, that smoothed down her masculine, edgy, sarcastic exterior into something that was unbelievably irresistible. And yet I couldn't. I had a boyfriend, a boyfriend I loved. A boyfriend who was in the army and away in Korea, and good god what was I thinking? Clearly I wasn't...wasn't thinking. Somewhere, at some point in time, my brain peaced out and just let other things take over. I think it surprised her too. I really don't think she thought there would be a first day of camp. I think she was sure that I didn't go to camps like these. No, my camp was clear on the other side of the...you know, way over there. Well, not that night. No, I found myself in uncharted territory that night...and I kind of liked it.

Gay? Lesbian? Nay, not me. I just like Liz. I wasn't gay. I didn't have all the "gay" pieces. I didn't have a crush on a girl in second grade, I didn't want to shave off all my hair, and I couldn't see myself with a woman forever... yes, I liked kissing her, but I wasn't gay *enough*. Wasn't there more to it? Plus I still like men. That didn't go away. What did this mean? What the hell was going on with me? Was I bi? Was I straight? Gosh, I better get it right. It seems like a big thing to mess up on. But how do I know? Liz sure wasn't any help. She was practically born a lesbian. But who do I ask? Who do I compare notes with?

Maybe this was all a mistake. It was just this one person. I'm not gay. I'm just not going to think about it anymore.

[thinks for a moment, laughs softly and shakes head] I think I miss camp.

Memories

By Janelle Crane

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I'm five years old. Daddy and my brother and I are working outside in the sun. It's hot and everyone's sweating. I want to take my shirt off like my dad. My brother takes his off and mimics Daddy wiping his face. I want to take mine off but just can't. It feels wrong. Mommy never takes her shirt off in the sun. I guess I shouldn't either.

I'm six years old. I kiss my friend Robin on the lips. We like to say goodbye with hugs and kisses. I teach her how to braid her hair. Her famous football daddy is never around. Her older siblings are always in trouble. She steals my lunch and makes me cry. We aren't friends anymore.

I'm ten years old. Kate and I tickle and chase each other during lunch. The cool kids snicker and ask my brother why I'm so weird and why I'm touching her.

I'm twelve years old. My first period. Reddish brown crusty stuff. I'm afraid everyone knows and is laughing. I don't want a period. Why now? My breasts are also growing. Size A or B. I hate bras. They feel so stifling and hot and itchy.

They make my breasts and shoulders hurt. I never want to wear one. I can get by. But during gym class Jessie rips my shirt off my shoulder and screams at me, "You're not wearing a bra! Why are you not wearing one? You have to wear one!" I wear a bra everyday after that.

I'm fifteen years old. Mom gives me *Ourbodies, Ourselves*. I read the chapter on masturbation. I decide that I have no G-spot but I definitely have a clit. I come for the first time under the bathtub nozzle. My body quivers and tightens and relaxes and sighs. I start to take more baths.

I'm sixteen years old. I think Andie's really cute. He's friends with my college neighbors. He's got long hair and a feminine face and plays the guitar. I don't care that he's 21. He tells me he likes me and wants to date. My parents agree after very little convincing. We go for a hike. He kisses me and I curl up in a ball and tremble uncontrollably. I'm so scared but ecstatic. My body is saying no but my mind is so curious. He tells me he's bisexual and I say that's okay but I really don't know what to think.

I'm seventeen years old. It's my first time. Andie and I use a condom and birth control. I don't like how Andie kisses and he smells funny especially when he smokes pot. We've already fooled around a bunch. I hate it when he comes in my mouth. I'm so curious though and I don't care at the moment. I straddle him and sit down real hard. It hurts and there's blood but it's an amazing feeling, having something alive inside me. A few months later Andie tells me he wants to be in an open relationship. I agree. I really don't know what I want. He's living 10 hours away now anyway. I hate it how I get scared and tense when he visits once a month to hang out. We always have dinner and then fuck. I dread fucking. He

looks at my clit like it's kinda gross and sighs and licks real fast to make me come quick. Then he puts his cock in me and I get dry immediately. We never use enough lube. He tears me once and after that it always hurts. I don't know how to say no. I break up with him and rejoice. The last time I see him he has a boyfriend and is hitting on my brother. I think sex is painful and to be avoided.

I'm seventeen years old. I can't stop thinking about Deanne. My hands shake and I twist up my words when she's around. She a vet at the animal hospital I work at. She rides a motorcycle and has this hot femme girlfriend and swing dances professionally. She always wears button downs and slacks with Doc Martens. Her hair is super short and slicked back and her cologne smells so good. I love to watch her write the prescriptions for the animals. Her strong hands move effortlessly. She's so kind to me and confident like I wish I am. She takes her button down off once to show us all her new tattoo on her bicep. I'm squirming as I admire her arms. I can't decide if I want to be with her or just BE her. I ask her if she knows of any, you know, queer support groups. She's the first person I tell. She just smiles and says she'll ask her girlfriend.

I'm seventeen years old. The boys in Spanish class ask me to raise my hand so they can laugh at my armpit hair. They call me and Alicia "lesbos." Alicia just shrugs and holds my hand. I tell her I think I'm bisexual and she doesn't care. She still lets me sleep next to her at sleepovers and hold her arm in the hallways. The rest of my friends are cool too. They say they knew years ago.

"Why didn't you tell me?" I ask them. They just laugh and hug me. My mom thinks it's a phase. My brother and dad couldn't care less as long as I'm happy. But none of the girls at school turn me on. They all wear too much makeup and too tight clothes and swing their hips when they walk. I can't imagine kissing such a girl.

I'm eighteen years old. I first meet Becky at a queer bookstore. She's ringing me up and chatting with me. She throws her head back when she laughs and keeps smiling at me. I keep staring at her tight t-shirt. Her baggy jeans hang perfectly on her hips. I ask for her number. She gives me it. We go out to dinner and I keep stumbling over my words. I take her to the Renaissance Faire and kiss her under a tree. Her lips are so soft and inviting. So unlike Andie's. Later that night in her apartment she lights a bunch of candles and puts Sarah McLaughlin on. There are swaths of colorful fabrics and melted candle wax everywhere. She touches me gentle strength. Her mouth and fingers are everywhere, biting my nipples, tickling my back. She smells warm and musky. I bury my head in her and make her squirm with my tongue. She pushes all her body against mine, mingling our sweat and scents. She moves her hands on and in me and shows me that I do in fact have a G-spot. I desire more of this protective quivering sensations that flood through me. This feels so right inside like the puzzle pieces finally snapping in place. She curls around my body to sleep. I open my eyes in the morning and know I am a lesbian.