

2000: My First Time

I lost my virginity when I was 18. Or, to be more truthful, I finally found the courage to give it away. I didn't feel lonesome at first. I felt wonderful. Bill 28. I met him ten minutes before the occurrence; he wasn't in love with me, but I was fully prepared to fall in love with him. I needed to get laid, but I needed to fall in love with him first. Or, maybe I just needed to love his body. Either way, I had to give up, rather than give away, something of myself in order to have sex with Bill, and I did.

I saw him as I drove around one night trying to get up the nerve to offer myself to a man for sex. I saw an opportunity as Bill walked towards a driveway. First, I rolled down my window so that I'd be able to speak to him without interruption. Then I drove my mom's car into the driveway, crossing Bill's path on the sidewalk, and in a French-American accent asked him if he "won-ted to get een." He was surprised by my frank suggestion. He took a look to see if there was anyone in the back seat. Then he smiled. I looked young and cute enough for him, I supposed. "Sure," he said, and he walked around the front of the car where my headlights confirmed for me that he was young and cute enough for me, and he jumped in. [I already had the passenger door unlocked to make just such an entrance as smooth and cool and possible.]

"Do you want to get in?" Those were the first words I ever said out loud that revealed I was gay. I gave Bill no indication how pregnant those words were with meaning for me. I was busy pretending that this was not my first time. It saddens me to think of my 18 years of childhood that had been filled with loneliness and yearning. I hoped desperately that all that would end when I uttered the words, "Do you want to get in?" I hoped that the first man I came out to would fall in love with me and adopt me, marry me, kidnap me - anything to continue my maiden flight out of the closet.

My first sexual experience was the most meaningful experience of my life up to that point, and to this day remains one of the most important moments of my life. It was a bridge from falsehood to truth. It made the first hopeful claim that it was possible for me to be me regardless of anyone's opinion of me. I didn't let the person I was with know the terror and exhilaration I was feeling because I couldn't fully admit it to myself, and I surely couldn't admit it to a stranger, not even a gay stranger. I was eager and willing to touch a stranger with my body, but I had no ability yet to translate that into a political or psychological stance.

Bill might have been able to identify with my struggle that night, but I never gave him an opportunity to try. A butterfly might appreciate the pain of a caterpillar as a butterfly liberates itself from its cocoon, but the caterpillar must admit to being what it is. I would have preferred if my first man could have recognized my transformation and helped me in some way. But, for me, the road to understanding proved long and lonely, and I can't blame chance for that. I feel I've been given as much from life as I could accept at every step of the way. The connecting of my body with another's was the greatest connection I could make then. But I had to lie to conceal my soul. I was just too young and raw to hold any greater truths. I was hardly ready for more that night, despite my lonely life. I wasn't even French.

As a small child, my homosexuality had crept up upon me like fog, or like steam. When I was no more than four or five, I watched the fights on TV with my father. He looked at the blows to the face; I stared at the sleek, smooth muscled bodies glistening with sweat, and I squirmed uncomfortably as waves of hot flashes caught in my throat.

At night as a child, I dreamed I slept with firemen, sliding with them down their pole to a fire, then holding on tight to their long, red truck. I'd cuddle up with my teddy bear and cover us with the sheet and the blanket, slipping into sleep with the thoughts of strong, kindhearted firemen who took care of me, who let me sleep with them in their cot - letting myself be loved. I'd get erections at night, but I never let anyone know. I never talked about my dreams, believing that if they gave me comfort, they were surely wrong.

"Wrong" was a powerful word in the 1950's. To me, it meant different, unacceptable, weak, unpopular, punishable and small. Reduced to its essence, wrong meant queer and unlovable. I hated to be wrong. It exposed my secret, my attraction to men. To be wrong meant that my homosexuality was visible to all. I needed to be right in order to look straight. It was an imperative. "Right" meant smiles, high grades, table manners, spotless clothing, gifts from Mummy and staying close to home. Right was a secret, too, because it covered up my real secret, and was, therefore, doubly suspicious in my own eyes.

By the time I'd reached my early teens, I was drunk on the fumes of my own imaginings. I wanted sex so much, but I constantly had to hide my desires. Whenever I found myself alone in the house, I'd close all the curtains, strip naked, and dance madly to classical music from room to room, gripping the furniture in a bizarre pas de deux. Exhausted from the thrill and joy of music, I'd go to my room and examine my body with mirrors to anticipate yet more thrills my body could elicit. My erections were painful because I knew no relief. I wasn't sure if other males could get erections like me. I thought I was a medical freak.

At 16, my father gave me a book on sex. In it, masturbation was described and I followed its directions faithfully. I was amazed at what followed, a pleasure I had no conception of. My body responded with 16 years of penned up power. My penis, my back bone and shoulders ignited like fireworks above a city. Sticky, warm sperm discharged everywhere. I was dazed at what my body had done for me. I felt like a ride at Disneyland, full of new sensations. I lay there in a stupor as my semen ran down my sides. I tasted it, expecting it to taste like some exotic, tropical juice. Then I explored my body for other possible pleasure rides. What other delights had I missed? I admitted that I didn't know myself as well as I thought.

I tried to repeat my first performance and was surprised that my penis was unwilling to cooperate. What a pity. I'd have been willing to do that all day. But in the months to come, I repeated my new found pleasure often. With practice, I was able to reach down far enough to get my penis in my mouth. With a mild erection, I could get it into my anus. I used soap and toothpaste to masturbate with, cold creams from my mother's vanity table, and cooking oil. I had to stop masturbating for nearly two weeks when I'd rubbed it so raw that it bled. I put knitting needles in my urethra and handballs in my anus. I continued to dream of sex with men. I dreamed passionately, but I told no one and no one suspected so far as I could tell.

The night I met Bill, my mother was on vacation in Mexico, my sister in Vancouver. I was alone. My parents had divorced when I was six, and my father lived three thousand miles away. It had to be that night. I was free to stay out all night if I had to. I felt desperate. I wanted sex, but I couldn't bear to let anyone know that I was gay, a contradiction in terms that I didn't know how to resolve. It was beyond midnight by the time I got up nerve to take a drive.

Bill was a tourist in Los Angeles. I picked him up near Hollywood Blvd. He came to town to see the sights. It was his first trip to California. We drove around and continued to talk about common things. Then he told me that he had a room at the Franklin Hotel and invited me over. I eagerly accepted. We drove to his hotel. I found it difficult to speak. I'd put on a French accent because I didn't want him to know that I was American, but it was getting in my way of being real with him. I saw my virginity like my nationality, something I hadn't chosen for myself, something that spoke for me and represented me without my permission. I pretended to be of a different nationality to maintain my distance. As I gave up my virginity, I had a new lie ready to unfold.

Bill was untouched, or, at least, he appeared to take me at my word. We arrived in his nicely furnished room and he began to strip off all his clothes. I thought the experience was going to be more like a honeymoon, and I expected him to be romantic and slow. I took off my clothes, feeling more like I was stripping in gym class with the exception that I had an unconcealed erection. I moved to him and, standing together, we kissed. I wanted to hug him longer, to feel the fireman against me, but his penis began to rub against me, throttling me with unspoken pressure.

"I want to fuck you," he said.

"Eet would be so nice eef you cood, but you are just too tall foor me," I told him. [I'd always thought that in order to have anal intercourse, two men had to be the same height.] He pushed me over the side of the bed, lubricated me and plunged into me.

I was embarrassed that I didn't know how to do it, and then, a moment later, in pain at his penetration. He wasn't touching me with his whole body. His body stayed above me. He must have been looking down while he thrust into me. I was too refined to turn around and look. I would have preferred to feel the weight of his body on mine. I ejaculated on the bedspread. I had no idea that it would be possible for me to reach orgasm that way. I had discovered another pleasure ride that I didn't know had existed. He continued for quite some time. I tried to wait patiently for him to finish, although I'd lost interest by then.

He finished and pulled himself out of me and asked me if I had come. He seemed surprised that I had, although I don't know why. Perhaps because I'd been so quiet. I thought it would be rude, if not melodramatic, to speak or make sounds during intercourse.

We cleaned up and then lay on the bed smoking. I caressed his testicles and the space between them to his anus. I fondled his penis and it began to grow again, and I sucked another man's penis as I had always dreamed of doing. I loved what I was doing, and he enjoyed it, too. He pressed me to him, and in the silence of our night together, he burst out groaning, breaking the hymen of my lips, his sperm rushing into my awaiting mouth.

I really wanted to learn more about gay life. I saw it as if it were a place, like Oz or Glocca Morra. I hoped that Bill would take me there, first in his description of gay life, then, perhaps, he'd take me back with him. But that, too, didn't happen. Bill was on vacation from Indiana, not Oz. He had nowhere to take me. In fact, he'd come to Hollywood in the hopes that he'd find *his* magic there. We were of no further use to one another. He asked me to leave.

I drove home tired, but anticipatory and eager to try this again. My closet was right beside me, easily available to me. I could jump in and out of it like some superman who changes in a phone booth. I thought I could have it all.

The next morning, I arose with the Bill's smell on me. I loved it, and inhaled it deeply. I wanted to pretend that he was just nearby. Although I'd only slept about three hours, I was eager to get to ballet class. I felt that I could soar.

The events of the next day happened like thunder, in a quick, loud, unexpected and spine-chilling clap. Katania, the Russian ballet mistress, was giving her usual warm up grands battements. The old barn she taught in was frigid every morning and steamy by night. Grands battement aren't meant to be a warm up exercise, and everybody knows it. I'd only studied ballet for about a year by then, but I was willing to do any exercise given to me. If Katania asked for waist-high kicks at 9:00 A.M., I would give them to her. When she asked for tour jetes to the other end of the "barn" and back, I gave them to her. But, when she asked for the men to continue doing it a third and fourth time, my body gave out. With a "crack" my whole body collapsed onto my left foot. I dropped out of the sky like a wounded bird.

As quickly as I fell, I was up again. The music continued, but I limped weakly over to the side. Then, all eyes fell on me, and Katania spoke to me in her Russian accent, giving me advice of bandages and ice.

I heard nothing other than the voice inside me that loathed attention. "Get out of here, now. It's nothing. You just sprained it. You'll be back tomorrow. Now, get out."

Like the night before, I pretended not to be in pain. My body could go through its own experiences, but my feelings and my soul lagged sadly behind. I hopped down the stairs to my car and drove away. My sweaty tights were still on. Steam rose forth through my tights and clothes. I carried one shoe in my hand. I drove towards home, then I drove towards my doctor. Then I drove to the emergency room. The pain was excruciating.

The foot was broken. Two firsts in two days. First, I lost my virginity. Then I broke my foot. Was I trying to punish myself for having sex? Was this the price of freedom in some strange fate? Was my foot some cosmic hymen that broken with my first sexual encounter? Or, was it just a broken foot caused by too little sleep and poor preparation?

For the next six weeks I was stuck at home. I would have run away with the first man that came into my life, but I couldn't because I had a broken foot. I was still afraid of flight, despite my eagerness to fly. My foot kept me shackled to my mother's house for three more months before I left home for good. Once the cast was removed, like some discarded cocoon, I was ready to look for Mr. Right, feeling quite confident that I'd find him anywhere except in L.A. And, I was pretty much right about that.