

CHAPTER 23: REAL LOVING

While I hung out in Florida with the family musing on my now solitaire situation and contemplating the upcoming cusp, I made a New Year's resolution to be creative. Soon back home again, I started writing (still in long-hand on yellow pages) about an artist (water-colorist) named Jack, a bearded gay guy of my own advanced age, on a summer painting sabbatical at a plantation in South Carolina. Around my normal office work, arranging head-hunter interviews for a new boss, many happy runs in the park, and much meditative yoga, I wrote for several days on "Heyday," scribbling some twenty dense pages of my first authentic, literate fiction that addressed my changing (maturing?) attitudes about love and passion.

Meanwhile, that other Phil, my old arctic explorer/mountaineer friend from a few years back, invited me to dinner at his new place in Virginia. He was renting out rooms to the several guys at table on the model of the Four Bells and told them all about my fabulous gay household. I sadly advised that it had fallen on hard times and my glamorous career as a celebrated geisha was over and done with. Phil praised the Four Bells as the first historic gay household in the District, spawning a new generation of establishments—like his. Giving the credit for our famed "coven" of queenly geishas to Charles, I mentioned the new groups Dave and Rob had started in their houses and Nic's place up on Kalorama with its mix of gays and lesbians. It made me rather proud to think that the Four Bells really had been an historic institution for gay liberation.

Driving me back home, Phil again kindly suggested a relationship, but as a retired geisha, I declined with gratitude, wanting to focus on my writing. I jumped right back into my story and brought in a vivid pair of ephebes to test Jack's romantic mettle. But then I got distracted from my literary ambitions with a visit by Director David for boss-job interviews, by photographing bare winter trees in Rock Creek Park, by reading a bunch more books at the Library of Congress about Indian mounds, and by Charles's return from California.

With his hair longer than I'd ever seen, dear Charles was very like his old self. With no explanation, he brought with him a bear-like, straight, bearded fellow named Jaroslav with his left forearm in a cast for some mysterious reason. The Czech filmmaker, who went by Jerry, moved into two-front and made many middle-European dinners for a resurrected dinner crowd of residents and neighbor-friends. Since he spoke no English, there was curious table conversation. His mixed Czech and German comments I'd translate for our guests, and their English remarks I'd translate into Russian for Jerry, who had a bare understanding of that language.

Right around then, Little Lou came back from New Jersey to stay with Big Lou, and they were frequent dinner guests. I suspected that their family relationship had progressed to another level. Seeming much older and wiser now after the months away, Little Lou kept busy pounding the pavement looking for a job, but he and his kissing cousin spent a lot of time with us. As we had for the past couple years, Big Lou and I played a lot of chess, and Jerry often played too, winning most of the time. Meanwhile, Gene often came over—or I'd go to the Iowa—for dinner and matches, and Gary-Two also started learning the game, losing with good grace.

Happily, social life at the Four Bells enjoyed a revival, and with events, like "Star Trek" with the Lous and a Black Music concert with Chas, as well as frequent Russian runs with Jerry, I quickly forgot all about my story. When Charles took me to see "Being There," I was blown away by recognizing the house on M Street just down from where the ceiling fell on me—and while Chance was talking with the hoodlums on 14th Street, I caught sight of our Four Bells over his shoulder. A few days later I picked up a handsome Venezuelan named Carlos in Rascals for a weekend fling that emphatically ended my several weeks of amorous abstinence.

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Later in February Charles and I talked again about selling the house, and I agonized about how hard it would be to deal with our stuff and afford my own place. But we dropped the painful subject for more cultural events like going to see “Dr. Zhivago” with the Lous, suffering through an excruciating “Tristan und Isolde,” and getting distracted by pretty boys at the Kennedy Center during a lovely “Lucia di Lammermoor.” The Sunday after Tristan, I did a huge run in springy weather with Beethoven’s Fantasy for Piano, Chorus, etc., roaring through my head, and the next Saturday night after Lucia we got hit with a 12-inch March snowstorm.

Then President David came back to stay in two-rear for more interviews at the office, and Jerry advised that he’d be leaving soon. (Kenny’s dancer-lover Fred would move into two-front behind him for some weeks for a production at the National Theater.) David announced that a guy named Martin would start as boss at OPERA America at the end of the month. I went out many nights to the bars with little enthusiasm and no success, went to a boring party at my Ken’s in Alexandria, and suffered a romantic relapse over missing Chi. Other than doing more Indian mound research in the Library, early March wasn’t much fun at all.

My great New Year’s resolution went to hell in a hand-basket, apart from some silly Russian poems and a few pencil sketches of winter landscapes. However, it apparently infected Charles, who started painting pictures. They were too abstract for my taste, but I took it as a good sign for his mental state. Former Princess Patrick, now knowledgeable in real estate, came over one evening to discuss selling the place, and considering the depressed state of the market, he advised us to wait. I was happy to do that, meanwhile wondering about maybe some way to buy Charles out and keep the old manse. Of course, that was a totally unfeasible option.

One Sunday when Jerry and I were returning from a run together, we stopped for the light on 14th Street beside a bearded young fellow with red and yellow roller skates over his shoulder (obvious early twenties), who was going to skate in the Circle. He walked on in the street beside the imaginary sidewalk still muddy from recent snows, and I soon jogged after him. He stopped his course around the inner circle beside me smiling and said he was Kirk, worked at Brookings, and lived in the basement of the first house below 14th. I boldly asked him to drop in and see me sometime. Then I went to meet Gene to go to dinner at Martha’s with the visiting folks.

Kirk didn’t drop in, but it was just as good because I came down with a miserable cold. To make me even more miserable, Charles and Patrick talked again about putting the house on the market now, arguing that the situation had changed suddenly. But I’d heard and read that the market was still way down. They suggested an asking price far below my fantasies, and I argued for waiting longer. The cold had me down the rest of the week, like a reflection of my discontent, and to add to it, Jerry left. I was in no shape to welcome Kenny’s blond Fred properly, and to my consternation, that Friday Charles suddenly left for New York to visit some new friend named Lloyd for an undefined while. I felt like a default captain abandoned on a sinking ship.

Feeling better on Monday morning, on the way to work I left at note at Kirk’s wondering if he was busy that evening. He wasn’t, and I welcomed him to the Four Bells with a tour of the whole mess. We sat on my blue sofa with wine and got to know each other—until it came time to kiss, and things went from there, very nicely... We planned to see each other later in the week, but it didn’t work out. Martin arrived at the office that Friday, a rotund guy with a big black beard and gleaming, positive eyes. Talking about a thousand OPERA America things, I found I really liked him and was immensely relieved to turn over the helm of that fine ship to him.

That week and the next the weather turned beautiful, allowing me to make several great runs. Kirk and I met on Tuesday at Dupont Circle for lunch and a pleasant walk around talking. I was troubled by his concern that I was so much older, but there was nothing to be done about

that. The rest of the week we were both too busy to get together again. I had two full days of meetings (which I will expand upon a bit later), and prep for going to New York that weekend for a Board meeting to introduce Martin.

On Saturday in the city, Kenny and I walked in the drippy afternoon through stores like Bloomingdale's where I was overwhelmed by the sheer amount of stuff. I was pleased to see him looking so well and content. That night was the warm, comfortable affection of old lovers, and Sunday morning was a sunny run in Central Park past my favorite obelisk of Thutmose III. The afternoon was with Martin and David on the agenda and the evening with Kenny, great Chinese takeout, and early to bed. Monday morning was sleet on my walk to the Met for the meeting.

In the midst of the morning session I got called out for a call from former President John inviting me to come over to his house for lunch. I hopped a cab to E. 63rd and was ushered into the Opera offices on the first floor by the Peter I'd often spoken with about opera business. Of course, I looked forward to seeing the tall, attractive fellow next summer in Santa Fe.

Upstairs in his private quarters, John graciously welcomed me to his table, explaining confidentially his skipping the meeting because he couldn't bear to see all those old windbags again. Over our lunch of Vichyssoise and Salade Niçoise, John once again offered me the job. This time I indicated that with my circumstances now changing so much, it rather appealed to me, and I'd give his offer serious consideration. Then I cabbed back across the Park to Lincoln Center for the rest of the Board Meeting feeling tremendously disoriented.

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Kenny came back with me on the train to spend a week with Fred. That was the Easter week of long-awaited spring with cherry blossoms and forsythia gleaming around Dumbarton Oaks on my ecstatic runs. All week I mulled over the job offer, talking with everyone, including Mother, Gene, Barbara, and of course Martin, who were all very encouraging. I called Jim in Houston, and he urged me to "go out into the field" as he'd so happily done. I weighed so many factors, like selling the house and orchestrating the move, but overall was very inclined. I figured it would be optimal to wait till next January after the Annual Meeting in New Orleans, and for any interim after selling the Four Bells, I could probably stay with Lewis or the Lous.

As they spent most of the time at his rehearsals, I rarely saw Fred and Kenny, but one evening we arranged to go see "Nijinsky." I made a date with Kirk, and we all were thrilled and saddened by the story of the tormented dancer. I stayed the night with him in his little basement room, and in our early morning cuddle, I asked him about maybe doing something on Saturday. Kirk quietly declined and added that he didn't think we should see each other again. Clearly, he was referring to our age difference, and I didn't dare argue. Instead, I kissed him goodbye and staggered home to wash up for work, feeling acutely the burden of my years. My mood was much lightened by going out that evening to see Kenny's Fred shine in "Dancin'" and then on Saturday down to the tidal basin to view the cherry blossoms again in teeming crowds.

The next Wednesday Kenny and I took the train back to New York for a few days of junket seminars hosted by Theater Communications Group. Thursday evening I had dinner with John again and talked about my decision to start in January and many other "artistic" interests—leading up to a late night in his bed and a disjointed seminar Friday morning. After Saturday morning's final session, I spent the afternoon with a voice teacher arranging her seminar on singing in English, and then went with Kenny to see "Evita," in my humble opinion a work of staggering genius. Since Fred was getting home that night, I slept in the (empty) bed of the hooker who lived next door, and on Sunday morning I ran my heart out (with zillions of others) around Central Park again. With fond farewells, I caught the train home that afternoon.

There were a few spring days to run and rest from my whirlwind life before Thursday when dear Gary-Two moved out to a hopefully saner life in San Francisco—and Charles came home from New York, strangely subdued with no tales of Lloyd or anything else. He whipped up a small dinner for the two of us and Patrick, who brought great news that our mortgage could now be assumed. With that encouragement, we decided to sign it up soon with a realtor.

The inexorable course of change left me breathless and recharged my romantic juices for an energetic Saturday night date with lovely Carlos from Caracas, long Sunday afternoon strolls and talks with him in the park and along Rock Creek. Carlos was selling his house to go home soon to Venezuela and wondered if he might stay at the Four Bells for any interim. Relaxing afterwards in the parlor, he regretted not being able to go to the fireworks that evening, but a new friend (much more about him to soon follow) showed up and accompanied me to the spectacular Zambelli fireworks down on the Mall (for the 150th anniversary of Belgian independence).

The week before my birthday was mindlessly busy at work, pleasantly diverted by a new friendship just mentioned, and fantastic runs every evening, surprisingly joyous at the thought of the birthday. On Friday's run, Beethoven's "Für Elise" played in my mind, much the way I used to dance to music in my head. At P Street Beach I stopped by a clover patch, quickly found a four-leafer, and tucked it into my waist-band to ride the melody home. On my big day, a rainy Saturday, I had a fancy lunch with my new friend (wait for it) at La Brasserie on Capitol Hill, Charles made me a dinner with the Lous, and then we went to see the Academy Award-winning "Tin Drum." Passing on into my transitional 39th year was comfortably positive.

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Thus far in my tale of 1980, it has been fairly mundane minutiae, albeit with a few sexual encounters not to be knocked, more or less exciting trips to the Big Apple, a plethora of cultural events, major changes in my professional life, and unfortunate developments in the legend of the Four Bells. All of that is like background orchestration in a relatively minor key for a concerto, the solo instrument of which I will now introduce. It only sounds in the score briefly early on and then waits for a lengthy orchestral prelude to make its real entrance. Here we go...

In early January after rejecting explorer Phil's proposal, I got to thinking about the tall black fellow I'd sometimes seen walking up the Avenue—on the cracked sidewalk on the other, better side of the street. He was always elegantly dressed, which in itself was noteworthy, and statuesque, which was even more so. My last fall's fascination with black boys made me take special note and leap at the chance to meet him when he came to our December rummage sale. In those brief moments I was struck by his Nubian blackness, finely chiseled Ethiopian features, and soft-spoken manner. His name was Guy, and he worked at the Bethune Museum around the block on Vermont Avenue. I believe he bought one of my begonias and then disappeared.

My thinking about Guy in early January may have been caused by seeing him walk up the street that day, but I didn't encounter him again for some three months. In late March while I was "courting" young Kirk the roller-skater, there came a Wednesday and Thursday that I had to attend seminars with the US Department of Labor about (how boring!) labor regulations. At the Wednesday morning session I ran into the beautiful black Guy I'd met at the rummage sale, the one I'd been seriously but futilely tempted to pursue. We skipped the last half of the afternoon session and went for coffee at the café in the East Wing of the National Gallery.

Sitting with a fine view over the sunny Mall, we talked a good bit about Lord knows what and then took a cab together back to the Circle, he to his museum on Vermont and me home in a fluster. I wrote: "I found out he lives beside Ken's old house on Q Street. Suddenly being thrown in with Guy this way took me by total surprise, since I find him inordinately attractive. His dark

cheeks are like velvet, and his voice is distinctively smooth and almost tender.” Guy’s allure was of a whole different order than young Kirk’s simple corporeal attraction.

Thursday morning in the seminar room, I was saddened not to find Guy, but he showed up a half-hour late and sat across the room. Our eyes met often. In the break we talked about our busy evenings, and in the next session we sat by each other to share the oppressive presentations. I wrote: “To escape afterwards, we lunched in the courtyard at the Portrait Gallery, where it was truly spring with warm, bright sun—just to be together. We took the Metro, going through the transfer thing to get to McPherson Square, on the two brief rides our legs touching. We parted at my office and both looked back. Alack, the busy life that makes it so hard to find time.”

At that point my business was going to New York for the Board meeting and getting knocked for a loop by John’s repeated offer of the job. On my return there was the Wednesday outing with Kenny, Fred, and Kirk to “Nijinsky” and the cuddly night with the latter. Kirk’s rejection of the older man in the morning only bothered me briefly on Thursday, and by Friday I was fine, taking off from work for a long run past the forsythia at Dumbarton Oaks.

Then, to take up the pursuit, I walked over to Bethune to see Guy. We went for lunch at the Tabard Inn on N Street, walking there close and talking again about things I wish I could remember. Whatever it was, Guy revealed absolutely nothing of his personal life, leaving me to wonder about what mysteries he was hiding. Throughout our intimate communications now lost to history, I sat hypnotized by his fascinating charisma. I’m sure I regaled the poor fellow with esoteric information about Indian mounds (having already bored all my friends to tears with it).

We finally got back to the Four Bells around four o’clock so I could show him my ancient Squier and Thomas volumes. While we knelt by the book-box paging through the mind-boggling surveys, Guy leaned close and kissed me. When he drew back, we just looked at each other. A moment later, clearly embarrassed, he said he was late for something and had to leave. Wondering what that something might be, at the door I boldly kissed him goodbye on his velvet cheek and stood there on the porch feeling its warmth on my lips. And savoring the hint of herbal fragrance I’d caught in our close moments. Later I told Kenny, who’d met Guy in the vestibule and watched our parting, maybe I was really falling in love, and he said I looked like it.

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At lunch on Saturday with Gary, Kenny, and Fred, we talked about going on Monday to see the latter in “Dancin’,” and I realized that I’d intended to invite Guy to come with me. Right afterwards I walked over to Q Street to knock on his door but found no names on the doorbells. In desperation I proceeded to Vermont Avenue to ring the museum’s doorbell, and Guy appeared in the doorway. I immediately invited him, but he declined regretfully, remarking mysteriously that he wouldn’t be able to get away for a whole evening. To my curious question, he gave no explanation, just a cautious caress on my cheek. Guy took me upstairs to see his elegant curator’s office and then down to the basement to see the museum’s stored collection of Mary McLeod Bethune’s black history memorabilia and art.

Then we sat on the basement stairs in the holiday-empty house talking and holding hands. When I asked why he sometimes went out of his way to walk up Rhode Island to work, Guy said it was in hope of maybe seeing me—his usual route across Q, down Kingman Place, and along P to the Circle. I remarked on the old Kingman graffiti proclaiming, “Victoria is a common hoe,” and he said someone had repainted it—adding a period. Our laughter was interrupted by a loud dogfight on the sidewalk out front, soon ended by one of them running away. With his promise to stop by the Four Bells later, I left Guy to his overtime work, and when he kissed me in the doorway, I asked about his splendid fragrance. He said it was rosemary oil.

Disconcerted by the unknowns, I read in another volume by Velikovsky about geological history, “Earth in Upheaval,” until Guy arrived. We spent a good two hours sitting close on my blue sofa as it grew dark, and I shared the insights of that author into ancient history. I could tell he was dubious but didn’t argue. When I asked directly if he was keeping any secrets from me, he silenced me with kisses in the gathering twilight. For some reason I still didn’t mention my thoughts about the Santa Fe Opera job. We pushed no farther than this tenderness, keeping our hands above the waist, though lower was sorely tempting. Soon Guy was already an hour late for something, and Gary had our dinner ready. He promised to call me on Monday.

The Lous joined the bunch of us for “Dancin’,” and so I didn’t feel all that terribly alone watching Fred’s amazing performance. Guy had indeed called that morning promising to see me on Wednesday before my morning train to New York, but it was an hour earlier than I thought, and we wound up simply taking a cab to Union Station sitting close and sharing waiting minutes. When I got back home some days later, Guy came over that Monday evening, and we spent a couple hours on my bed necking like teenagers, our caresses still confined to above the waist. When we’d agreed to do dinner on Wednesday, he regretted that his situation was so complicated but volunteered no more about his “problems.” Thinking about the hot date I’d made with scrumptious Carlos for the coming weekend, I joked that my situation was complicated too.

Unable to wait till Wednesday, Guy also came over on Tuesday for brief company and affection, but he soon had to go with an unspecified somebody to see “If.” After putting him in a cab, I wandered over to Gusti’s for pizza and chats with old waiter friends. Wednesday evening it was all Guy and I could do to tear ourselves away for dinner at our favorite Tabard Inn, where he constantly looked about to say something important but didn’t. In our few minutes of close embraces at home, we had no time to talk about any important things. He left me with the distinct feeling that our next meeting would be a consummation—much to be desired.

Both of us busy on Thursday, it was late Friday afternoon when we went for a drink at the quiet Tabard Inn, where Guy divulged that he had a lover. Tit for tat, I told him about the job with the Santa Fe Opera to start in January. I made light of his complication, long used to being the other (wo)man. Back at the Four Bells, the inevitable happened. In the fading evening light in my jungle, we somehow lost our clothes, and I saw Guy’s real problem. Now, I’d met with some super-sized organs, but Guy’s was the longest and thickest I ever could’ve imagined, even semi-tumescent. Impressed but undaunted, I offered him the mezzanine.

We writhed blissfully on my bed, his lithe black body more beautiful than I could’ve imagined. On the very verge of his orgasm, Guy collapsed on me, motionless. I wiggled under him and tried to kiss him, but he was unresponsive, limp and heavy on top of me, though I still felt the throbs of his climax between my legs. Afraid that he was dead, I shook him to no effect but happily found a faint pulse in his neck. Some moments later, he came around and groggily started crying, confusing me tremendously. With a trembling kiss, Guy explained that whenever he got erect enough to ejaculate, his blood pressure would plummet, and he’d faint—never even feeling his orgasm. That was why he’d been so reluctant to make love with me. I wondered how his lover felt about that, but Guy said only that they were awfully frustrated. In consternation, I was left also fundamentally frustrated by the magnitude of his complicated situation.

Since I was supposed to be at the Lous for dinner at seven o’clock, and Guy’s frustrated lover was expecting him home, we quickly dressed and walked together up 14th to Q Street. The familiar hookers hanging out along the curb greeted us with congratulatory and appreciative comments. We made guesses which of them might be Victoria.

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On his way to more overtime work at the museum, Guy stopped by momentarily on Saturday morning to thank me for being so understanding. I joked (seriously) that he could make it up to me when next I got him into bed. On the gorgeous spring day I ran way up the park almost as far as Martha's house, and then to relax I sat in the sun in the Circle reading more Velikovsky. His iconoclastic theory of the origin of coal from rains of interstellar hydrocarbons both astounded and convinced me, and I couldn't wait to blow Guy's mind with it.

My date with hunky Carlos that evening was at his house on Capitol Hill to watch the TV movie of "La Gioconda" with Renata Scotto and Luciano Pavarotti. When I cracked up hearing "The Dance of the Hours," he was startled, never having seen "Fantasia," and I told him about Disney's hysterical hippopotami, crocodiles, and ostriches. Snuggling on his sofa, we missed several arias and choruses in amorous shenanigans, and in bed later I sincerely appreciated his rambunctious enthusiasm, calling him in dear Giovanni's term *sin peruenza*. Laughing, Carlos corrected my "low class Panamanian" Spanish to *sin vergüenza*. I showed him it didn't matter if it was "Po-tay-to" or "Po-tah-to." On Sunday morning we lingered long in bed *sin vergüenza*.

Later, we wandered the sunny Mall talking about him selling his house to go home to Caracas, where a rich fiancée awaited their wedding. I opined that such wasn't a good move, but like Giovanni, he was trapped in his culture. We walked up to Dupont Circle and by P Street Beach, where the Lous were sunning and duly surprised to see me with this lovely Latin. Down by the creek, we watched colorfully dressed East Indians fishing with a seine. On an idyllic walk up Rock Creek, I compared this intellectual, intimate, and exuberant physical connection with Carlos to my intense emotional relationship with Guy (and its dysfunctional sexual aspect), and wondered which of them was real love. Maybe neither—or maybe there was no such thing.

When we got back to the Four Bells around four o'clock, I found a note slipped under the door from Guy at three about maybe going to the fireworks. Over drinks on the sofa, Carlos said he couldn't go with me because he'd be going to evening Mass at St. Matthew's. I cringed at this further evidence of his cultural trap but kept my heathen mouth shut. Shortly, Guy showed up and was clearly taken aback to find the beautiful stranger with me. Carlos met him graciously, conversed sociably, and then called a cab to go home for supper and get ready for Mass.

Guy's relief was obvious. He grabbed me in a forceful embrace and then took me off to the Tabard Inn again for dinner. We sat outside in the balmy evening, where I easily calmed his jealousy with the tale of Carlos's trap, divulging nothing about our *sin vergüenza* night. Well-fed and calmed, we strolled down to the Mall to celebrate Belgian independence. To celebrate our gay independence, I held Guy's arm through the fireworks, brilliant colors, circles of gleaming jewels, and sprays of golden plumes. Guy flinched at each vibrating thump of explosion. He stayed with me late on the blue sofa but made no move to balance our sexual accounts.

All the following week was a blur of being with Guy. I learned that his lover was a white fellow also named Charles. (Over dinner on Tuesday, my own Charles and I signed the real estate listing and had splendid talks like old times.) Guy said they constantly squabbled at home, probably about his tardiness. Wednesday we heard a lecture by Barbara Tuchman on Thomas Jefferson, and Guy stayed till midnight necking tenderly but again without settling outstanding accounts, I'm sure causing another squabble at home. Thursday evening at a reception with Gene, Guy met and charmed Martha, and we had another Tabard lunch on Friday.

At our fancy lunch on my rainy Saturday birthday, Guy revealed that he was only 34, his birthday July 26—the same date I'd married Barbara fifteen years before. Later in my nearly empty bedroom, we napped chastely, cuddling and listening to gentle rain on my skylight.

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The first Sunday of my momentous 39th year, Gene took me in his MG convertible to the Arboretum for a bonsai club show in the Pavilion, which was staggering, particularly the young Japanese fellow who tended the tiny forests. Gene gave me helpful pointers about photography, and we went to see the dogwoods and cloudy view out over the Anacostia river, but the azaleas weren't out quite yet. Over a rainy lunch at the Dubliner, I got going on the Indian mounds and then at home amazed him with the Squier surveys.

Just as Guy dropped by, through my window we saw the sun break through clouds in the west making a double rainbow. Evening rainbows only made optical sense to me in the east, and I marveled at this miracle, the best birthday present ever. As a birthday present to myself, I took off work on Monday and spurred by the talk with Gene, indulged my growing obsession all morning in the fabulous Reading Room at the Library digging up more dirt on Indian mounds. I was thrilled to find several old books on earthworks in Alabama and Georgia.

The concerto for Guy in a major key continued with daily cadenzas and crescendos but no climaxes... Late in the again rainy Monday afternoon I met Guy at Kramer's bookstore, and we sat munching and talking. I wrote (without the specific subject), "Somehow he pushed my pontificate button and remained himself non-committal, quick to distort and obfuscate—an unsettling discussion as he blithely dismissed logic and drew non sequitur and unwarrantedly cynical conclusions." When I asked why he was being so aggressive, Guy said he was trying to find out more about me, but he'd actually revealed a lot more of himself.

After my run, Guy showed up on Tuesday around seven, still in an argumentative mood, but I wouldn't let him get my dander up—even with remarks about the oppressive ruling class and aspersions on meaningless exotica (referring to my research on Indian mounds). I figured it was simply intellectual play, though fairly heavy-handed—or maybe giving voice to reasonable repressed racial frustration. Wednesday evening we lay for a couple hours on my bed talking about whatever. Though supremely hot to trot, I didn't press him on sexual reciprocity and tried to be content with our simple platonic affection.

We missed each other on Thursday because I went to dinner with Martha and the kiddos to see her gorgeous azaleas. So I only got to see Guy briefly on Friday morning before taking the train to New York again. (He'd follow on Saturday night.) The trip was extended for no obvious reason by a two-hour stop outside the city, but I had a book called "Hanta Yo" about the Lakota Sioux with interesting stuff about male homosexuals. So I got in rather late to Kenny's and, since Fred was away, we spent a platonic night in each other's arms. Most of Saturday was another meeting with the voice teacher about her seminar in August, the main reason for my trip.

After three, I ran (in Kenny's sexy shorts) in the park and came on a demonstration at the bandshell with chants of "Give grass a chance!" My sentiments with them entirely, I left and ran shirtless in the hot sun around the huge reservoir and by John's house. He invited me to dinner, and after I ran back to Kenny's to dress, we had another casual evening over quail and carrots. He preferred for me to start work in October and suggested I stay over. Declining his hospitality, I promised to consider October and then cabbled it back to Kenny's for Guy's arrival.

Kenny had been planning to stay at Deborah's (the hooker) next door, but she came home with a boyfriend. So he slept on his sofa. Guy slept poorly because Sapphire the pug pup kept groaning. In the morning he and I met up with his friend Lynn, an art historian, for breakfast at the Cosmic on Broadway. I tried to be sociable, even entertaining, for the homely young white woman, though she radiated disapproval of me—or maybe of gay people in general. We took the subway to Brooklyn for the Belgian exhibit. I thought she was overly effusive about the ineffable paintings, and Guy considered them offensively euro-centric.



Guy at Brooklyn Botanical

We left Lynn to effuse at her leisure and wandered around in the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, breathtaking in the flowering riot of spring, amidst crowds and clouds of flowering crab-apples. Sadly, the vast rose garden wasn't yet in bloom. We walked the sunny paths hand in hand like enchanted lovers oblivious to public scandal. I'd brought my camera, and though Guy begged me not to do it, I made him stand still for a nice picture.

At a vendor wagon across from the Museum, we bought some hot roasted peanuts and then had a bite in the dingy cafeteria. When they closed the place, we found Lynn and hopped on the subway to drop them in the Village while I went on to Kenny's to run again. Guy and Lynn showed up fairly late, and we walked her back to where she was staying, afterwards strolling up Broadway to the Empire Hotel, that favorite hostelry of theater folk, for a private night without groaning pugs.

As soon as I got Guy into bed, I made him dispose of underwear and advised that I fully intended to sodomize his splendid black bottom. When he categorically refused, I traced his sensuous lips suggestively, asking what we were going to do then about my impatient erection. Guy declared just as categorically that he didn't do fellatio either. Stymied, I asked what on earth he did with his Charles, and he said he'd just jack him off. I allowed as how that simply wouldn't cut the mustard for me and applied my geisha ingenuity to find a solution.

Tossing a pillow onto the floor beside the bed, I made Guy lie on his back cross-wise to drape his body over the edge, head downward onto the pillow. While he giggled, I straddled his thighs and told him to keep his hands up on my knees. I grasped our cocks together using both hands with room to spare, my pale one literally dwarfed up against his black one, and a few strokes swelled us into a giant sequoia sprouting from our loins. We became a priapic idol, an ecstatic phallic archetype, and came in fountains of sperm, in a pulsing apotheosis.

When our moans had subsided, I looked down to ask Guy if he was still awake, and he thanked me for the first orgasm he'd felt in twenty years. I said he was welcome, and suggested he always have sex upside-down to keep the blood pressure up in his brain, like maybe on a trapeze. We laughed a lot at my inelegant, ingenious solution and then slept like blessed babes.

In the morning we strolled in the park and sat in the sun on a big rock outcropping where I told him about probably moving at the end of September instead of January and said nothing about futile fantasies of him moving to New York with me. Neither did Guy. We both knew that simply wasn't in the cards—gay love affairs didn't work that way when lives diverged. Back at Kenny's to pack, he came home from his Camelot rehearsals to lunch with us.

All afternoon was in the park again, embracing in the shade of the obelisk, strolling to the Castle, rambling in the Rambles, sitting close on a bench, as though we were actually real lovers. Once near a lilac bush, Guy suddenly held me and bit my shoulder; the fragrance of the wisteria was pure romance. On the train home we held hands and stole kisses like silly, passion-addled teenagers in hormonal love. But now I knew Guy wouldn't and couldn't ever provide me with the conjugal copulation I needed, and so we'd just have to remain affectionate friends, leaving the real loving, if there was any such thing, to other relationships. Anyway, Guy's affectionate attention and friendly caresses made me quite happy for the time being.

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