

Although she was supportive of me, I also feel like she shouldn't have said that I shouldn't tell my dad, because I should have. I did need to tell him; I was living with him then. And I was at a stage where I was out at high school and I was ready to start getting politically active and become involved with the gay community on that level, do speaking panels and go around with schools and stuff like that. So there was one night when I stayed at my boyfriend's house. I lost my virginity to him a couple weeks before that, and so I stayed at his house, and I was feeling good when I went home the next day. It was the first time that I actually spent the night there and stayed the whole night. So I went home and I was in a great mood. I guess my dad had called there and talked to my boyfriend, because I had left the number of where I was staying. He asked, "Is Steven gay?" And I said, "No." I left and I went to work, and I called my mom; I was really freaked out, but I just knew I had to tell him. I had actually planned on coming out to him that day, but this was even before he asked me if Steven was gay. I had been planning it. I thought, "Omgod, he's gonna ask me before I can even tell him!" So I called my mom and she came and met me on my lunch break; then after my lunch break, she went over to his apartment and told him that I'm gay. So he had the chance to calm down and adjust to it until I got off work.

Then, that night, my mom, my mom's husband, my dad, and myself met at IHOP, or someplace like that, and we talked. I was crying. I was really scared. My dad was being very supportive, and he was saying, "It's okay." Just totally the opposite of what I expected. My dad's girlfriend didn't come though. He said that she was mad at me because I hadn't told her and I hadn't opened up to her. But everything I would say to her in confidence, she would repeat to him. I couldn't risk telling her first. She betrayed my confidence right after that when I sat down with her and talked to her about it all, but asked her not to repeat certain things to my dad; then later I found out that she had told him things. I went to my house and I got some clothes and I went out to my boyfriend's house and hung out there for a while. Then I went down to my mom's house to stay with her.

My dad was being a little weird, saying, "Well, you don't have to flaunt it," and all this stuff. He was really just being down on me being totally *out*. I lied when I went to the Sonoma County Gay Pride Parade. I marched in it. That was my first parade. But I didn't tell my

I'm glad that he's cool with it. Heidi and I are a lot alike, and so it's really nice to have someone like that. And I think it was just that—snap!—you know what's going on and you know it's right.

Todd Fay-Long

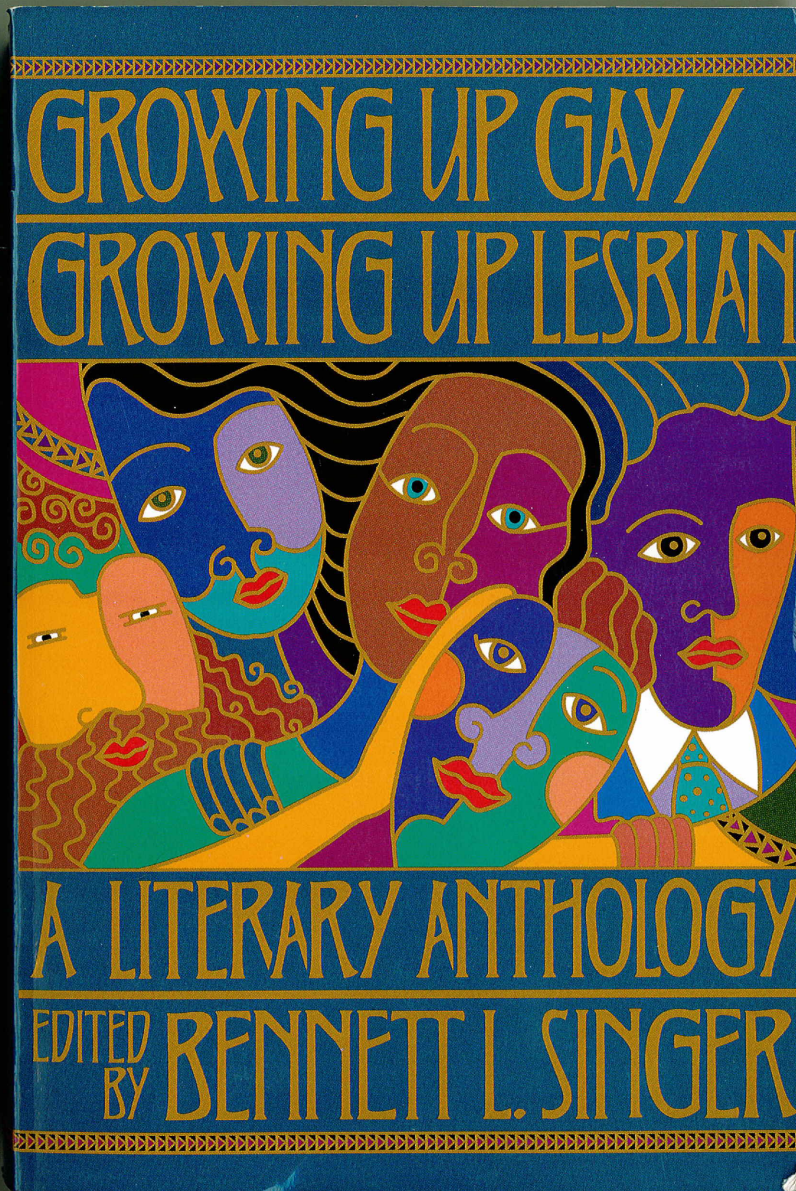
I was dating this twenty-five-year-old guy. But then we broke up, because I was messing around with this other guy who was a friend of his, this twenty-seven-year-old, and I was only sixteen. It wasn't really a right thing, I don't think, because I knew they were only attracted to me because I was young, and it wasn't even like they were attracted to me because of my personality or anything like that. So I dated the twenty-seven-year-old for a little bit, and then we broke up, and I got back together with my old boyfriend, and then we broke up again.

When I was with my first boyfriend, we went to a rave; I felt like we could dance together and stuff, and we could kiss and it was cool. But I still felt kind of weird. I used him. And when I was with him, I was really out. I would hold hands everywhere, kiss in public. But it wasn't so much that I wanted to be kissing him as much as I wanted to be able to be that out; I wanted to get comfortable with it.

I met this one guy in the city, and he came up with us, back up to Petaluma, and we hung out that night. We just totally talked. He was this really cool person. We had sex, and it was really good—five hours of foreplay. That was rad, and I just felt like I could talk to him, like we could really relate. So he came back down to the city, and then I called him that night, or I called him the next day or something, and asked him to come up, and so he rode the bus up, stayed at my house that night, and we had sex again.

He was just rad; he had the body type that I like, a little pale and kind of scrawny—kinda skaterish, like a toned-all-over body. Anyway, so then he went back to the city, and I was supposed to come down to the city and stay at his house on Friday. I called his house and his roommate said, "Maddy doesn't live here anymore; he went back to Michigan." He never called me, and he's never called me or written me since then. It was really fucked. I even think that I am in love with him because I just think about him every day. I don't even know if I've ever been in love before this.

I've set an age limit of twenty for myself, and I'm gonna try not to date anyone over twenty, because I don't feel like anyone older



Copyright © 1994 by Bennett L. Singer

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher and author.

Published in the United States by The New Press, New York
Distributed by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.,
500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110

ISBN 1-56584-103-4 (pb)
ISBN 1-56584-102-6 (hc)
LC 93-83622

Originally published under the title *Growing Up Gay*
by The New Press in 1993.

Permissions acknowledgments appear on pp. 313-317

Established in 1990 as a major alternative to the large, commercial publishing houses, The New Press is the first full-scale nonprofit American book publisher outside of the university presses. The Press is operated editorially in the public interest, rather than for private gain; it is committed to publishing in innovative ways works of educational, cultural, and community value that, despite their intellectual merits, might not normally be "commercially" viable. The New Press's editorial offices are located at the City University of New York.

Printed in the United States of America

94 95 96 97 98 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

from

Take Off the Masks

Malcolm Boyd

With the autobiographical book Take Off the Masks, Malcolm Boyd—a prolific author, civil rights activist, and Episcopal priest—came out of the closet and publicly acknowledged that he is gay. In the passage that follows, Boyd talks about a summer vacation he took as a boy and of the young men he met.

One summer when I was about ten, my mother and I spent several weeks at a big resort hotel in the Adirondack Mountains in northern New York State. . . .

Up there in the Adirondacks was my first time among mountains. Later in Colorado and California I would see peaks far higher, crags and canyons more dramatic, but Mount Marcy—a mere five thousand feet—holds a mystery for me, a sense of wonder in its mass and presence that stays with me still. I wondered what it looked like, snowcapped in winter. Was it like Mount Olympus? Did strange Indian gods live up there? Would they descend, like Zeus and Aphrodite, Ares and Hermes, to mix their divinity with mere humans? Looking at Mount Marcy, I felt even less than mere human. I'd retreat into the nearby forests to find my scale.

My favorite place was a flat rock beside a stream. I was reading Howard Pyle's *Robin Hood* that summer, and all around me was Sherwood Forest. I'd leave the hotel after breakfast, clutching my book, and wend my way along the crunching forest floor and between the overhanging trees till I came to the flat rock, and the Merry Band. I could imagine, just up the stream, that bridge where Friar Tuck established the primacy of churchly virility.

But mostly who I waited for was Will Scarlet, sauntering through the woods, sniffing on a rose. I felt a surge of excitement, just

Who else?

I stared about the dining room in a kind of panic. No, it couldn't be! It was just us two. That was all. No one else. . . .

Strange how all foreboding vanished when I first caught sight of Jamie checking into the hotel with his mother and father. The desire I felt for him was sudden and electric. Maybe it was those eyes, big and watchful and direct, that answered my look at him and held steady for a long moment. I wanted to go over to him right then, but there was such a bustle of clerks and bellhops and luggage I held back. But I knew I'd know him and I wondered how long he would be staying at the hotel.

I watched him cross the lobby to the elevator. He was about my age, but slightly built, and he walked with a spring to his step. His hair was dark and he wore it somewhat longer than people did in those days. I wanted to tousle it. Just before he got onto the elevator, he looked at me again with a hesitant smile, and I smiled back.

At dinner that evening I watched for him in the dining room. By the time we were halfway through the main course, I was beginning to panic. He hadn't appeared. My eyes kept prowling the dining room, checking one familiar face after another. Why didn't he come? Maybe he was sick or something. Maybe they had gone someplace else to have dinner. Maybe . . . Maybe . . .

The waitress was clearing the main course at our table when Jamie and his mother and father came into the dining room and were directed to a table just two tables away from ours. I saw Jamie maneuver himself so that he could see me out of the corner of his eye.

I ate my dessert slowly and peacefully. Things, I felt, were going to be all right.

That night after dinner, I skipped being page boy to the hotel manager's royal progress to the veranda and ghosted around the lobby, listening to someone play the grand piano. The next thing I knew, Jamie was standing beside me, his eyes intent on the keyboard, his shoulder brushing, ever so lightly, against mine. I felt a lightheaded rush of excitement, my mouth went dry, and I

couldn't think of anything to say. But in a few minutes, Jamie shifted on his feet. His voice was low and close to my ear. "C'mon, let's go down to the playground."

"Sure," I said, and we looked each other full in the eye.

It wasn't much of a playground. Just a slide, some swings, and a jungle gym. But we clambered up to the top of the jungle gym, sat there under the panoply of the evening sky, and talked about things, just like we'd been friends for years.

For the next week Jamie and I were inseparable. We went hiking in the woods and discovered caves. We swam in the hotel's outdoor swimming pool. We went fishing where the stream became a deep pool in a forested area just behind the hotel.

All the while, I was acutely conscious of Jamie's body. The wiry tension of his muscles. The bony structure of his face. At the same time, his cherubic lips and the gentle fleshiness of his buttocks. As we changed in the dressing room by the swimming pool, I glanced very quickly to find out what his genitals looked like, but his back was turned to me as he slipped on his trunks. Still I knew I'd find out, somehow.

At the end of the week, it happened. It was a warm day, and in the late afternoon we decided to go fishing at the stream, promising our parents we'd be home before supper. We got out our rods, lines, and hooks and settled down by an overhanging embankment by the pool to wait for a Big One. We waited and waited, but the Big One was not hungry. Not even the little ones were hungry. Overhead, the trees seemed heavy in the heat, and the silence surrounded us like a cloak. I felt us inexpressibly isolated, as if Jamie and I were the only two people in the world. We could share whispered secrets and no one would know. I wanted to tell him. . . . What did I want to tell him? I wanted to touch him. . . . Why did I want to touch him? And I didn't dare think of where I would touch him, or what would happen if I did. Yet he was sitting there, just inches away from me!

Jamie stirred, and pulled up his line. "There aren't any fish in the pool today. C'mon, let's take a swim."

"At the hotel?"

"No. Right here. It's deep enough."

"It's getting late."

"We got time."

I felt my pulse quicken. "We don't have trunks."

"Who needs trunks? There's nobody around." And he looked at me with those big eyes. Panic surged in me. The secret? Did he know? Could he tell? Would it show?

I tried to sound reluctant. "Okay. If you want."

His voice was soft. "C'mon, let's do it."

I remember the fright I felt when there was no more to take off but my underpants, the strange sense of relief when I stood naked by the shadowed pool, the throat-tightening excitement of seeing Jamie's slight lithe body, as naked as mine.

We tucked our clothes under the embankment. Then, with a whoop, Jamie dived into the pool. I stood on the pool's edge, watched Jamie's body squirming beneath the water's surface, and felt my penis begin to harden.

Jamie broke surface with a splash and looked at me. A quick grin crossed his face. "Dive in! It's great!"

I glanced down and saw that my cock was fully erected. I began to swim. The chill of the water mercifully shriveled me. But he'd seen me; I knew that. Was that why he'd grinned? And what was he thinking when he grinned? Or was he just enjoying the swim?

We swam around for a while. Jamie would do surface dives in the deep parts of the pool, his buttocks rearing above the water as he plunged down and then disappearing beneath the shimmer. I'd never know where he was going to come up. Once I felt a light touch on my leg and he came up right beside me, laughing in a burst of spume.

The chill of the water was beginning to get to me. I got out of the water and sat on a little patch of sand by the embankment.

"What's the matter?" Jamie asked.

"I'm cold."

Jamie swam over to where I was sitting and started out of the water. But he stumbled on a rock and fell sprawling across my knees. He looked up at me, his eyes mischievous. "C'mon, we'll wrestle. That'll warm you up." He grabbed me around the neck and pushed me back on the sand. The warmth of his body sent chills through mine. I struggled (although not very convincingly,