

The Other Side

by Jennifer Poorbaugh

When my parents told me that my aunt was gay, they said it in hush-hush tones. "This is a family secret, Jennifer," they said, which meant don't tell your friends. Maybe they were trying to protect me from the fanatical Christian family on the street with whose children I was friends. Maybe they thought the children wouldn't be allowed to be friends with me anymore if they knew my aunt was a lesbian. I was only 10 or so at the time so I didn't think much about it, and I kept the secret. Why did I need to go around talking about my aunt, whom I didn't know very well anyway? She has always been on the back of my mind, though, and I have questions I want to ask. But I felt I was supposed to ignore the fact that her sexuality was different than mine. Never mind that she'd been out for years, it was still one of those

"family secrets."

I met Ian Palmquist several years ago, but only last year did I get to know him as a friend. Ian was the first friends of mine who was gay, and I think I knew Ian was gay before I ever met him (I have been friends with his brother for longer), and from what I could tell he wouldn't mind me asking questions. So I started up a long chain of email between us and got many of my basic questions about homosexuality answered. Still, my aunt remains out of reach.

And then I joined B-GLAD. Many people, especially my suitemates, began asking me why I had joined when I am straight. My roommate, whom I have known for three years, even suddenly questioned my sexuality. Never mind that she knew many of my boy-friends; maybe she thought I had just hidden a bisexual side from her. Many of the people I met in B-GLAD assumed I was lesbian or bisexual, and when they discovered I was straight, they also asked

me why I had joined the club. I never had a good answer.

Now I am thinking that I joined B-GLAD for several reasons. One could be that I am trying to get to know my aunt by meeting a lot of different homosexual people. Another is that if I weren't straight, I would want support from the straight community. My sexuality is not completely set in stone, either. While I am sure I will ultimately spend the rest of the my life with a man, I am still open to new experiences. I joined B-GLAD because I have friends in the club and going to meetings was one way to spend time with them. I get to be one of the co-editors for *Lambda*, too. Mostly, though, I joined B-GLAD for reasons unknown to even myself. If you were to ask me why I joined B-GLAD, even after I have had a lot of time to think it over, I would still only be able to shrug my shoulders. So, now I ask, why did you join? λ

Another Ophelia

by Kristen Williams

*Love makes a mockery of me:
love gained,
love lost,
leaves me caught between.
I dance on the edge,
seeking sweet simple release from the
pain.
And aren't the flowers beautiful
on the other side?
Blooming despite the weather.
The blue reflects images,
distorts,
swirls around me,
and I am another Ophelia,
drowning. . .
drowning.*

*"I like dogs better [than people].
They give you unconditional love.
They either lick your face or bite you,
but you always know where they're
coming from. With people, you never
know which ones will bite. The dif-
ference between dogs and men is that
you know where dogs sleep at night."*

—Greg Louganis

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