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# I Could Tell You... A Letter Unsent

Author's name withheld by request

G,

You wrote me a very brief and stiff sort of letter, the type I would not have expected after our eight-year friendship. We have been so close and yet I feel a great chasm has developed between us since a year ago when I told you I am gay. You promptly wrote me one of those liberal and understanding letters containing words that I have since heard many times: "I can accept your sexuality but I am uncomfortable with it and don't understand it." To me, understanding is the crucial part of acceptance but I will not argue that point right now. The letter I am responding to now is much briefer and much closer to the truth about your real feelings. Written on stationary I would reserve for condolences or holiday thankyou's, it tells me volumes in its very lack of any information. For the first time in eight years you do not sign off with "Love." Rather, you put in the obligatory "Let me know how you are doing." Shall I give you the socially appropriate answer of "Fine"? I feel that is the answer you want and need. But there are things I want and need that perhaps only time will give to me, to us, to our friendship. I suppose for right now what you need to hear and what I need to say are two very different stories.

There are many things I could tell you. I could tell of nights of fear so deep and all-pervasive that it was all I could do to keep from screaming. I could tell of wanting more than you've ever wanted ANYTHING just to be like everyone else, just once to feel the feelings you do everyday, and to feel them honestly. I could tell of hopelessly made-up crushes on boys and of getting down on my knees every night before I tried to sleep to pray to a God who I thought had condemned me to make the crush real. I could tell about being head acolyte at church, the cross-bearer, holding that golden cross in a hand-over-hand, tight-fisted grasp, walking down the aisle at church...bearing the cross of my own oppression. I would hear overpowering voices in my head telling me that I was bound to make a mistake and drop that f-- cross, and then EVERYBODY would know they had a queer in their midst.

I was very religious. I could tell you of not just leaving my faith but of turning my back and running away from communion as fast as I knew how. I could tell of scars extending all the way to the bend of the elbow, cuts inflicted upon me by myself, a 14 year-old loner in massive pain, because I simply could not EXPLAIN, could not find the words to say why life just didn't seem to fit right, just didn't seem to work. I could tell of knowing I have a gay uncle and of being horrified when he visited. I would hide from him because he would certainly be able to spot me and call me out to a reality that I just knew would drive me to the edge or right over it. I could tell of watching this same man, a good man, die of AIDS. I could tell how AIDS jokes hurt, and of the bile that rose in my throat when I would hear people say "Faggots and queers are only getting what they deserve." I could tell of lying to this man on his deathbed, lying to a man whose eyes told me every time I looked at him that he knew the truth about me. I could tell of the sad and resigned disappointment I found there when all he wanted, all he needed, was to hear was the truth. I could tell you about funerals and words unspoken.

I could tell you also of words that were spoken, of a mother who often voiced fears that homosexuality just might be genetic. I could tell of being beaten bloody by my father for calling my brother a "little faggot," beaten by a father who would look at my feminine-appearing brother and scream that I better not feed him any more ideas about being gay lest I make it an actuality.

Yes, I could tell you about homophobia. I could tell about being horrified of playing with other little girls and of "hanging out with the guys." I could tell of my first school dance in the seventh grade, of being the first girl asked to dance with a boy because it was better than asking one of the GIRLS to dance. I could tell of my laughter then, of all the strained laughter over jokes that simply weren't funny. I could tell of jokes that were much too close to home, too close to the bone.

I could tell you of being terrified of two girls who were trying to help me salvage my life in my ninth-grade year. I could tell of loving one as one only loves a lover, but of being too scared to tell her. I had no name for my feelings. I could tell of the deep-set knowledge that the other girl, you, my friend, could never understand or accept the simple truth that I loved you both but in fundamentally different ways. I could tell of the poison of middle-

See LETTER, page 22

## Teen Stories Wanted by P-FLAG

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG) is asking gay and lesbian young people who have attempted suicide to share their stories with the organization.

P-FLAG is soliciting the stories as part of its "Respect All Youth" program designed to help prevent gay and lesbian suicide. "By telling us your story, you will help us teach counselors, teachers, youth workers and clergy how to help the kid you used to be. Isn't it about time?" asked P-FLAG's program coordinator, Lorrie Coburn.

She says that the narratives provided by the young people "will be used in preliminary research that will lead to the design of materials to draw attention to" the issue of gay and lesbian youth suicide.

Specifically requested are stories of youths between the ages of 16 and 24 who have attempted suicide because of issues related to their sexual orientation or problems they faced in dealing with such issues. No signature is required. Narratives may be sent to P-FLAG at PO Box 27605, Washington, DC 20038--7605. ♥