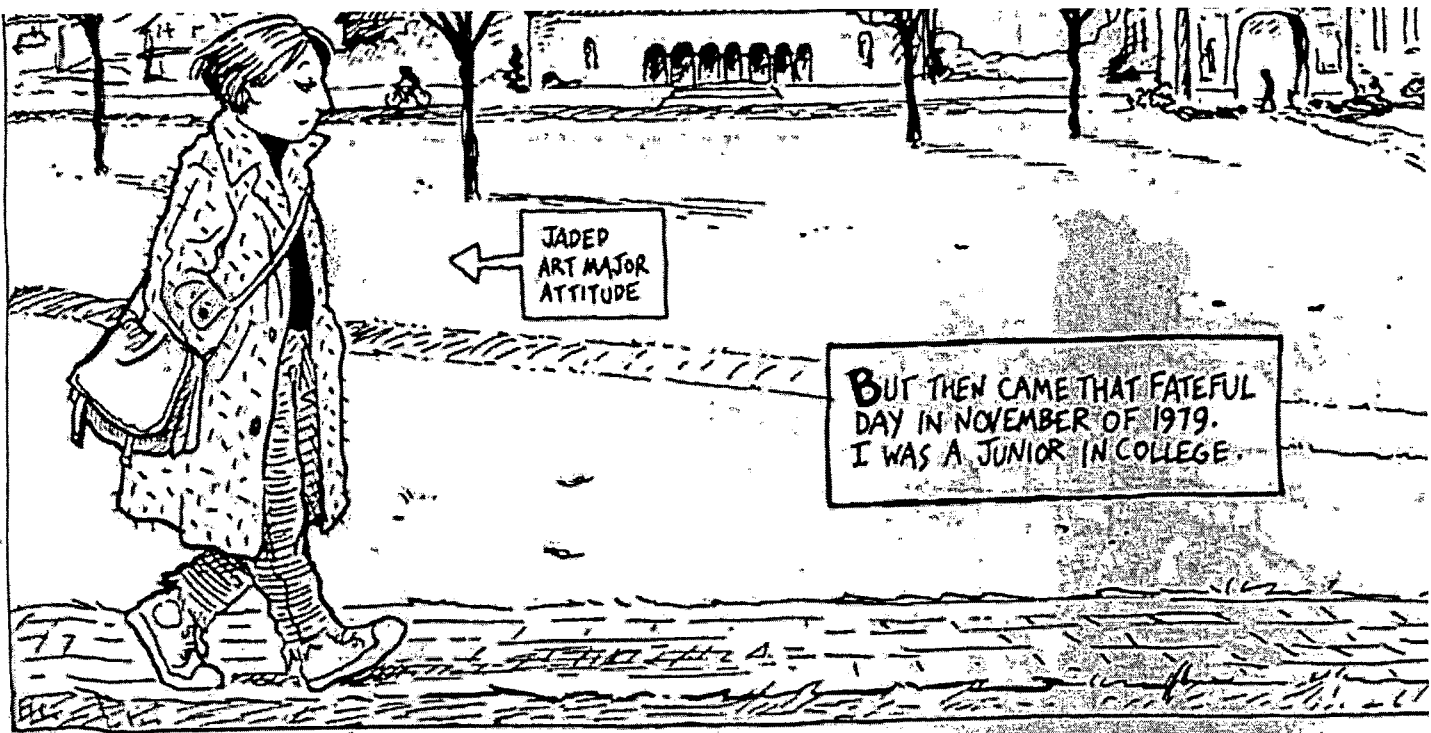




# COMING OUT STORY

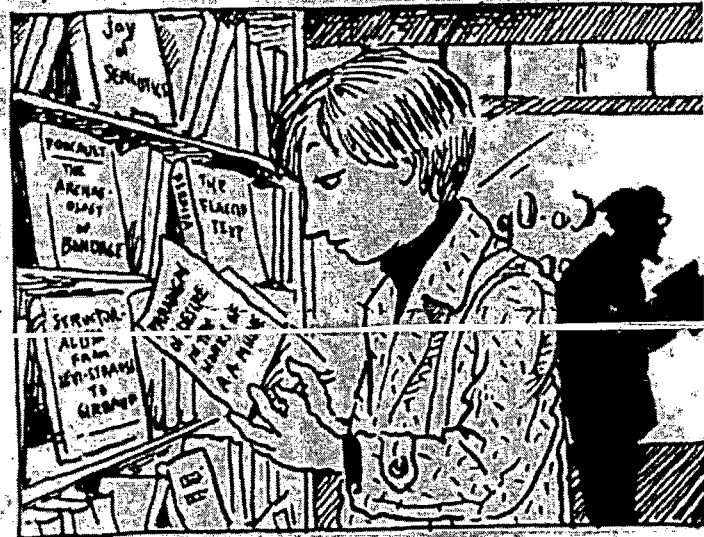




I HAD JUST BEEN BROWSING AT THE CAMPUS BOOKSTORE, SOMETHING I DID A LOT OF IN THOSE DAYS.



I WAS LONELY, A NEW TRANSFER STUDENT. BEING ENTIRELY ASEXUAL, APOITICAL, AND ASOCIAL, I HADN'T MADE MANY FRIENDS YET.



WHEN I WASN'T IN CLASS OR AT THE BOOKSTORE, I WAS GETTING HIGH AND GOING TO MOVIES.



MY CINEMATIC EDUCATION WOULD HAVE BEEN EXCELLENT IF I COULD REMEMBER ANY OF IT.



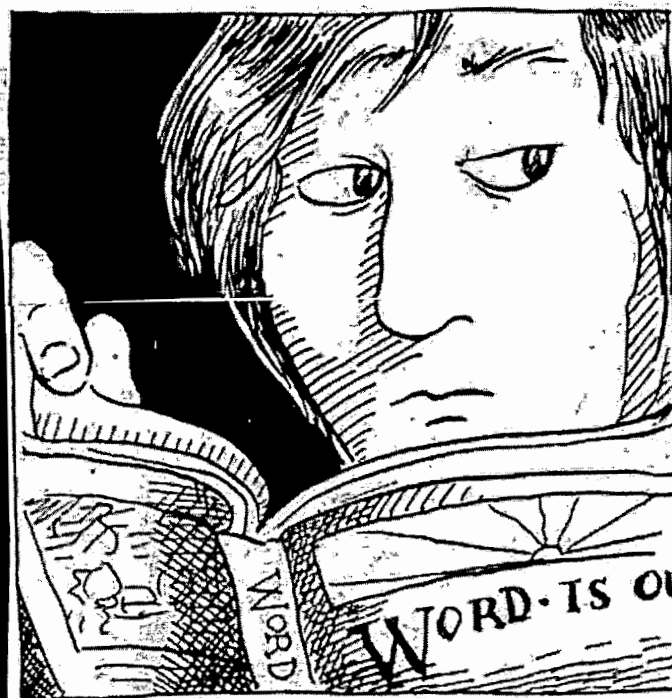
THE DRUGS, THE ENDLESS MOVIEGOING, THE HOURS OF BROWSING THROUGH BOOKS... I WAS TRYING DESPERATE TO DISTRACT MYSELF FROM A TRUTH THAT WAS SLOW BUT SURELY STRUGGLING TO THE SURFACE OF MY SOLIT SEX-STARVED SOUL.



ONE OF THE BOOKS I CHANCED TO FLIP THROUGH THAT PARTICULAR GRAY AFTERNOON WAS "ABOUT HOMOSEXUALS," AS I LATER NOTED IN MY JOURNAL.



VARIOUS PEOPLE WERE INTERVIEWED ABOUT HOW THEY HAD COME TO REALIZE THEY WERE GAY, AND WHAT THEIR LIVES WERE LIKE.



I READ FOR A WHILE, THEN AT MY USUAL TIME I LEFT THE BOOKSTORE AND HEADED BACK TO MY DORM.

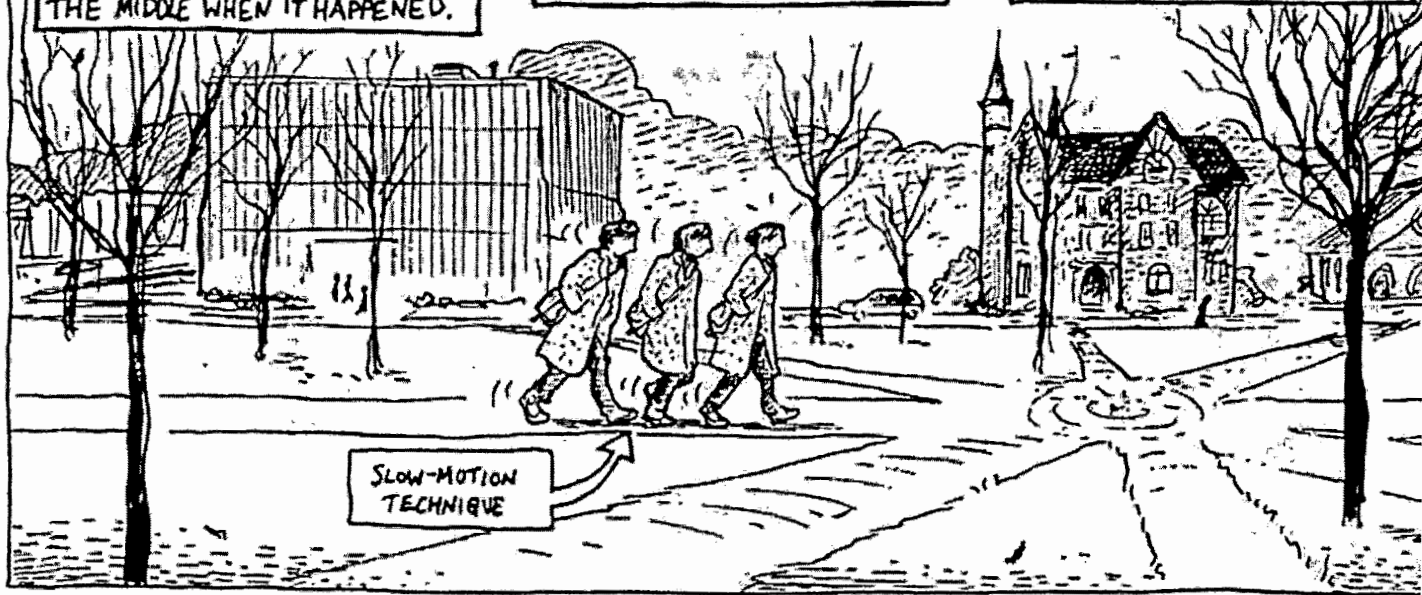




MY ROUTE LAY ACROSS A LARGE, SQUARE PARK. I WAS NEAR THE MIDDLE WHEN IT HAPPENED.

IT WAS AS IF I'D CROSSED SOME INVISIBLE BOUNDARY.

ON THE OTHER SIDE, THINGS WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME.



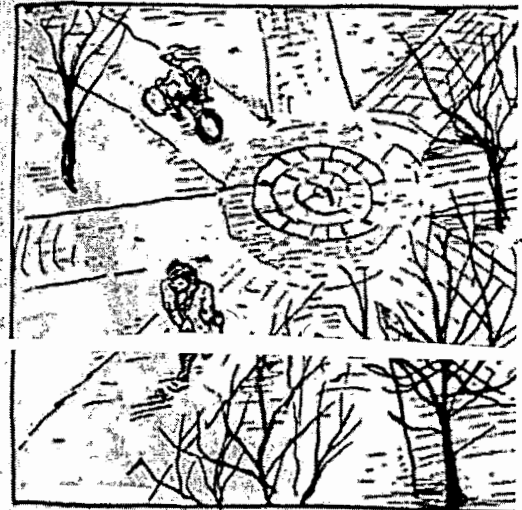
I'M REMINDED OF THE MYTH OF ATHENA'S BIRTH. YOU KNOW THE STORY. SHE SPRINGS, FULLY GROWN AND IN COMPLETE ARMOR, FROM ZEUS'S HEAD.



MY OWN FESTERING BRAIN, AFTER YEARS OF IGNORANCE AND DENIAL, HAD FINALLY ERUPTED!



BY THE TIME I EMERGED FROM THE PARK, MY ENTIRE CONFUSING LIFE HAD PASSED BEFORE MY EYES AND RECONFIGURED ITSELF AROUND A STARTLING NEW REALIZATION.



JEEZ, THIS EXPLAINS EVERYTHING.



I'M A LESBIAN.



YES, MY BURST OF INSIGHT IN THE SQUARE WAS A BIG STEP. BUT IT WAS ONLY THE FIRST OF A LONG, HARD JOURNEY.





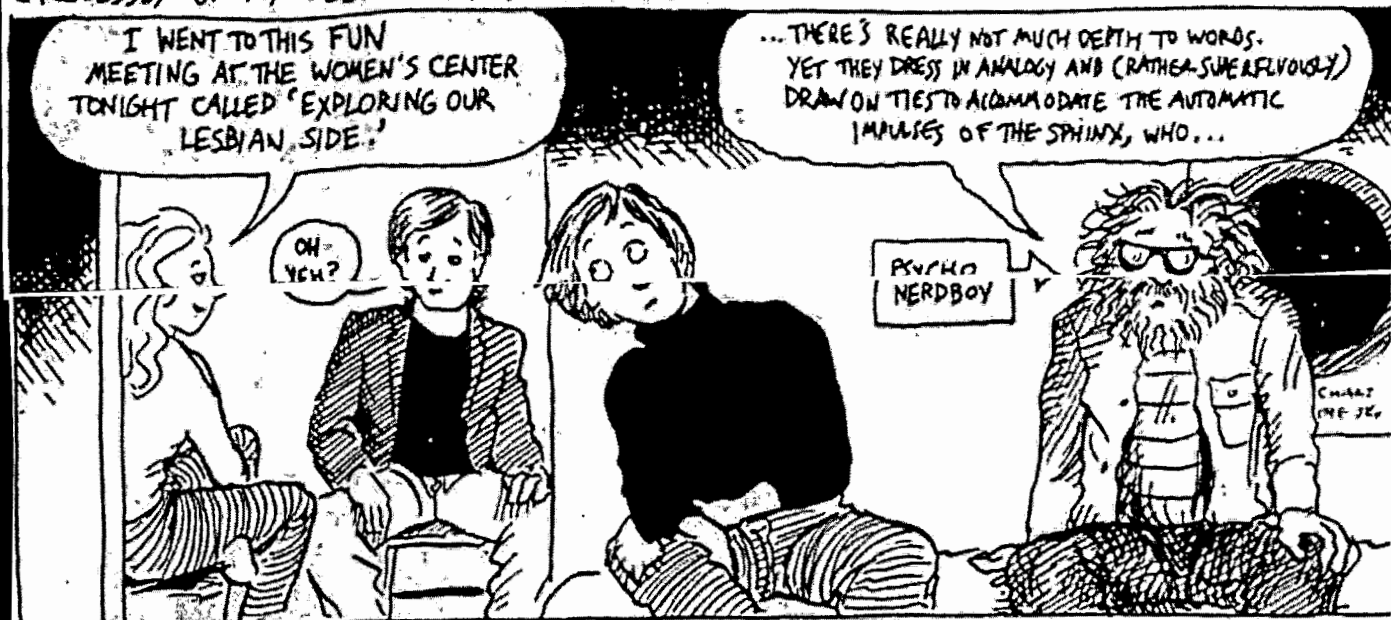
I DIDN'T KNOW ANY LESBIANS. I BARELY KNEW ANY **WOMEN**. MY LIMITED SOCIAL INTERACTION ALL SEEMED TO BE WITH **STRAIGHT BOYS**.



IN A CRUEL TWIST OF FATE, I FOUND MYSELF FENDING OFF **NERDBOYS** WHILE MY WILDLY POPULAR AND HIP HETEROSEXUAL ROOMMATE HAD DISCOVERED **REAL LIVE LESBIANS**!



SHE SEEMED TO HAVE ACCESS TO A WORLD I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW EXISTED... AND SHE SPOKE SO CARELESSLY OF MY DEEPEST HOPES AND FEARS!



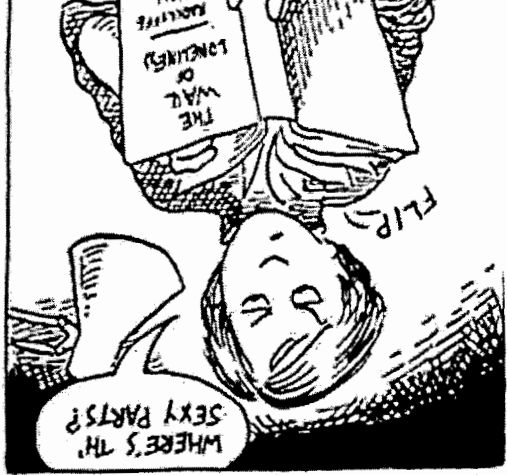
...THEY'RE LIKE "PRO-CHOICE"? IT COULDN'T BE CAUSE **EDINCE** POLITICAL GROUP!



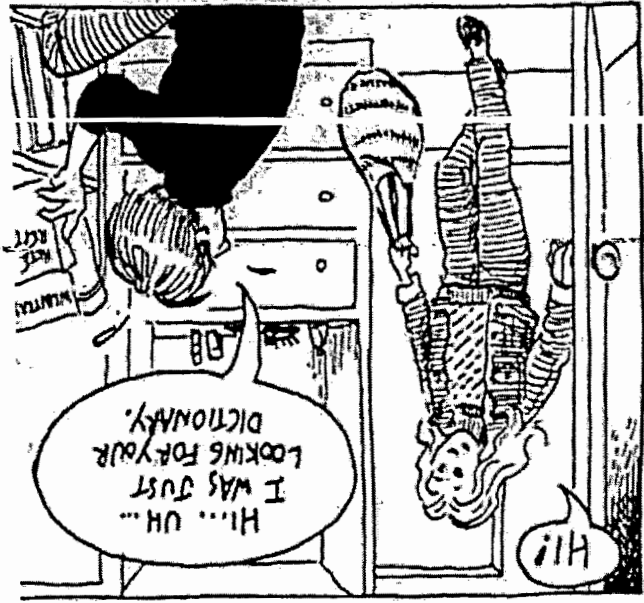
AT LAST I WAS BACK AT SCHOOL. I WAS ENROLLED IN AN INTENSIVE COURSE ON JAMES JOYCE'S ULYSSES. I SKIMMED IT...



CHRISTMAS BREAK WAS INTERMINABLE. MY PARENTS FAILED TO NOTICE THAT I HAD BECOME A THREAT TO THE NUCLEAR FAMILY.



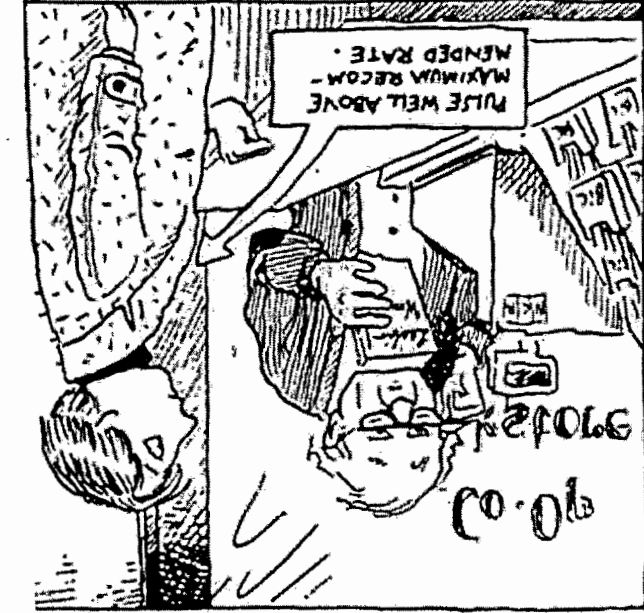
ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER, AND BEFORE THE SEWSTER WAS OVER I HAD DEVoured DESERT OF THE HEART, RUBBERFRUIT JUNGLE, AND THE WELL OF LONELINESS.



NEXT, I TOOK TO READING THE LESBIAN CHAPT OF MY ROOMMATE'S HITE REPORT WHILE SHE WAS OUT.



I READ THE WHOLE BOOK VORACIOUSLY, IT WAS VERY ENCOURAGING. WHEN I WAS DONE, I TORE THE COVER OFF, STUFFED THE REST OF IT IN A BROWN PAPER BAG, AND HID IT UNDER MY MATTRESS.



100 NEWBOD TO READ SOMETHING SO BLATANT IN PUBLIC, I BOUGHT IT.



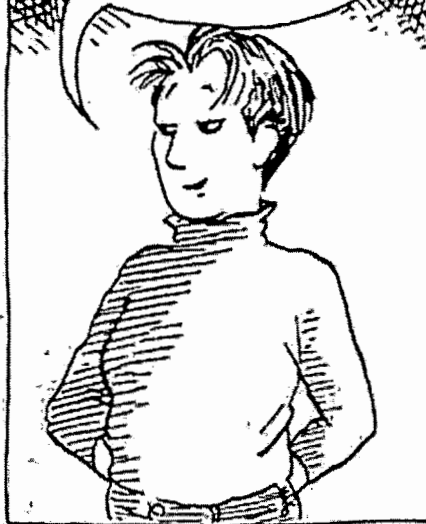
BOOKSTORE YIELDED ANOTHER HELPFUL VOLUME.



... MY FULL ACADEMIC PASSION WAS RESERVED FOR A DIFFERENT ODYSSEY... THE QUEST FOR MY PEOPLE.



WHAT A LITTLE BOOKWORM! I HAD AN INSATIABLE HUNGER FOR KNOWLEDGE.



YEAH, AMONG OTHER THINGS. DON'T FORGET TO MENTION THE LONG HOURS YOU SPENT WHACKING OFF.



WELL, YES... OF COURSE THERE WAS A DEGREE OF SEXUAL FRUSTRATION INVOLVED.

KOFF.



AFTER ALL, I STILL HADN'T MET ANY LESBIANS. AND IF I DID, WOULD THEY FIND ME AS ATTRACTIVE AS THE NERDBOYS SEEMED TO?



I WAS DYING TO HAVE SEX WITH A WOMAN. DYING.

I'M DYING.



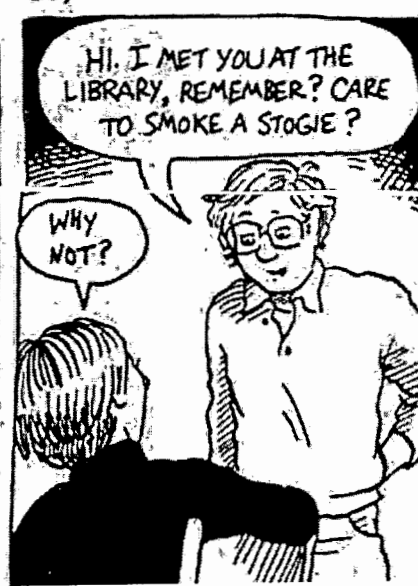
I PRAYED FOR A KINDLY, EXPERIENCED LESBIAN TO COME RESCUE ME FROM MY LONELY AGONIES.



BUT ALL I GOT WAS ANOTHER BOY.

HI. I MET YOU AT THE LIBRARY, REMEMBER? CARE TO SMOKE A STOGIE?

WHY NOT?



THIS ONE WAS DIFFERENT, THOUGH. WE REALLY HIT IT OFF AND ENDED UP TALKING ALL NIGHT IN HIS ROOM.

YOU DRAW? COULD I SEE YOUR SKETCH-BOOK SOMETIME?

YEAH / OH YEAH SURE.





WHAT HAVE I DONE?? WHAT HAS POSSESSED ME? YOU CAN'T JUST GO AROUND TELLING PEOPLE YOU'RE A LESBIAN UNLESS YOU KNOW YOU ARE ONE! DO I ACTUALLY THINK I HAVE THE NERVE TO BE A LESBIAN?? FUCK! FUCKING SHIT! I DON'T EVEN KNOW ANY WOMEN! WHAT MAKES ME THINK I'M ATTRACTED TO THEM??



FROM EARLIEST CHILDHOOD, I KNEW I WAS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER GIRLS...



IT WAS AS IF A THUNDERBOLT HAD SPLIT THE AIR! MY SECRET WAS REVEALED! I HAD COME OUT TO ANOTHER PERSON!



...I DON'T UNDERSTAND. I MEAN, IF YOU WERE MORE ATTRACTED TO WOMEN... THAT'S EXACTLY IT!

WE HAD A LONG, HALTING DISCUSSION ABOUT WHY I'D LEFT HIS ROOM SO ABRUPTLY. FINALLY, HE SAID SOMETHING SO REMARKABLE THAT I ANSWERED WITHOUT THINKING.



I COULDN'T SLEEP. I'VE BEEN WALKING ALL OVER... I WROTE YOU THIS POEM.



WELL, I'D BETTER BE GOING THEN. I HAD A LOVELY EVENING.



WELL, I FEEL LIKE IT'S ABOUT TIME TO LIGHT A CANDLE AND LIE DOWN. OH.

I RETURNED, NUM-LIKE, TO MY CELL. WHEN HE MADE HIS MOVE AT 4 A.M., I WAS OF FEELING REPULSED I JUST FELT SAD.

INTOXICATED WITH RELIEF, I Poured MY HEART AND SOUL OUT TO THAT UNFORTUNATE YOUNG MAN. HE WAS QUITE DECENT ABOUT IT.





I REALIZED I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN MY QUEST. I STARTED LOOKING AT WOMEN.



I LEARNED THAT THERE WAS A GAY ORGANIZATION ON CAMPUS!



I KNEW I HAD TO GO. I SPENT ALL TUESDAY AFTER-NOON PSYCHING MYSELF UP.



AS I ENTERED THE STUDENT UNION BUILDING THAT NIGHT, I FELT SURE EVERYONE KNEW WHERE I WAS HEADED.



WALKING INTO THAT MEETING WAS PROBABLY THE BRAVEST THING I'VE EVER DONE.



I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THE GROUP TALKED ABOUT. I SAT IN A CORNER, OVERWHELMED WITH THE SYMBOLIC WEIGHT OF SIMPLY BEING THERE, AMONG OTHERS. MY PEOPLE! I HAD FOUND THEM!



BUT NOW WHAT?



I COULDN'T TAKE ANY MORE STIMULATION. I NEEDED TO BE ALONE. AS I LEFT THE BUILDING, I HOPED EVERYONE COULD TELL WHERE I'D BEEN.



I WENT BACK TO THE GAY UNION DURING OFFICE HOURS. THEY HAD A TREASURE TROVE OF MAGAZINES AND BOOKS I HADN'T SEEN BEFORE.



NEXT WEEK, I WENT OUT AFTER THE MEETING WITH THE "UNION" CROWD. I WAS A LITTLE NERVOUS ABOUT BEING SEEN IN PUBLIC WITH THEM.



THEY WERE EAGER TO INSTRUCT A NOVICE, BUT I COULDN'T REALLY RELATE TO THEM. I WAS PLAGUED WITH DOUBT.

I KEPT GOING TO MEETINGS, THOUGH, AND GRADUALLY WE HIT ON SOME COMMON BONDS.



SLOWLY, I GAINED CONFIDENCE. I CAME OUT TO MY ROOMMATE.

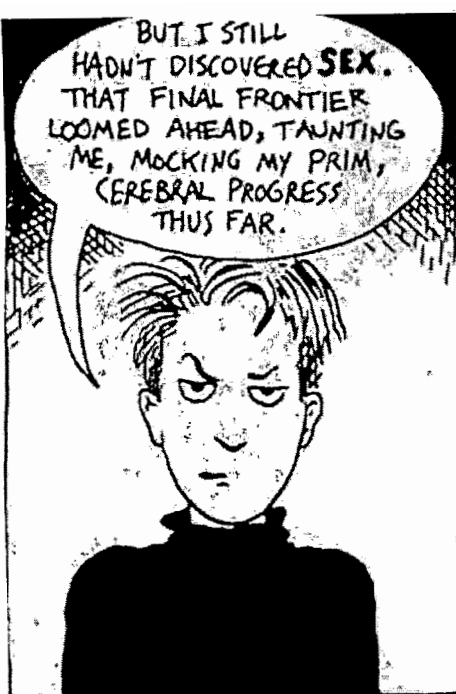


I DISCOVERED THE EXHILARATION OF SPEAKING OUT AGAINST PREJUDICE.



I DISCOVERED ALCOHOL.





FINALLY, AFTER A NIGHT OF DRUNKEN REVELRY, I BROUGHT TWO OF MY NEW FRIENDS BACK TO MY ROOM TO GET HIGH. I REMEMBER THE PIPE I RIGGED UP OUT OF AN EMPTY TOILET PAPER TUBE, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT.



I DON'T REMEMBER BECKY LEAVING, BUT I DO REMEMBER THAT JOAN STAYED.



I TURNED OFF THE LIGHT. WE REMOVED OUR JEANS AND GOT INTO MY SINGLE BED. STILL IN MY BRA AND WOOL SWEATER, I WAS PROFOUNDLY UNCOMFORTABLE.



AS WE LAY THERE, I BEGAN TO SHIVER UNCONTROLLABLY.



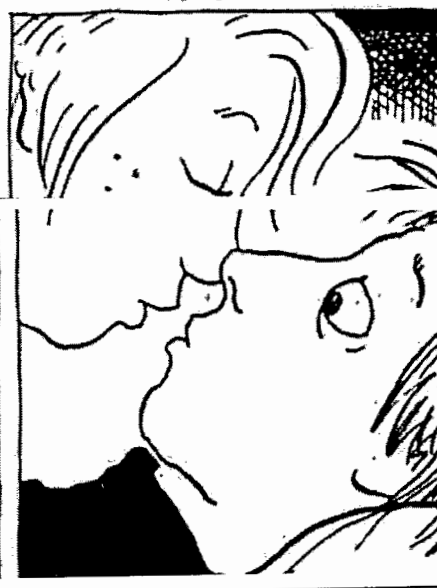
THE WHOLE BED BEGAN TO SHAKE, BANGING AGAINST THE WALL.



JOAN TRIED TO SOOTHE ME, BUT WHEREVER SHE TOUCHED ME, I WAS UNBEARABLY TICKLISH.



EVENTUALLY, I RELAXED A BIT AND WE KISSED.





... SHE SEEMED TO KNOW WHAT SHE WAS DOING, AND GOT US BOTH UNDRESSED.

TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST, I REMEMBER VERY LITTLE OF WHAT FOLLOWED, EXCEPT THAT SHE WENT DOWN ON ME...

... AND THAT I HAD ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA HOW TO TOUCH HER.



SHE SLEPT, BUT I LAY AWAKE ALL NIGHT, PINNED BETWEEN HER AND THE WALL. AT 9 O' CLOCK, SHE GOT UP AND LEFT AFTER A BRIEF CHAT.

THAT MORNING I WANTED TO BE ALONE TO SAVOR MY EXQUISITELY JARRING SENSATIONS. I FELT DEBAUCHED AND EXULTANT, MELANCHOLY AND HOPEFUL.

I WISH I HAD A MORE ROMANTIC, LESS DRUG-INDUCED **FIRST TIME** FOR YOU.



UNFAMILIAR WITH THE PROTOCOL OF SUCH SITUATIONS, I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW CHURLISH MY REFUSAL WAS. (IN SPITE OF THIS, JOAN AND I EVENTUALLY BECAME LOVERS.)

