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Robby : a Gay Short Story

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Robby

I lost real contact with my university boyfriend, Jon, a few years after I graduated from Boston University and he graduated from Harvard. We sent cards, or made an occasional telephone call but for all intents and purposes, we were not a part of each other's life anymore. There wasn't a day that I didn't think about him, but I tried to move on with building my own future and I did.

After teaching all week, Friday night was the time to go out with colleagues and have a few drinks and relax. We usually ended up at the Barnside, an upscale tavern in a town near to where I was teaching high school social studies. My friends and I became regulars and as a result, we all made new friends from the group of young professionals who gathered at the same watering-hole. We all had different occupations, but on Friday nights, we all came for the same reason, to relax.

It was a "straight" bar. That's not to say that I didn't find men to focus my attentions on, but it would never have been a good place to find a partner even if I had the courage to make the attempt. It was generally good fun, though. We arrived in time for the "Happy Hour" and usually stayed through until the place closed. There was a great restaurant in the building, and there was dancing in the bar. We drank. We ate. We met people. I met Diana there.

Diana and I were never to become lovers, just good friends. Diana was a small, attractive woman and most of my male friends thought she had a very attractive body. Diana wasn't interested, though. She was having an affair with a married man. She really loved him and quite unexpectedly, he really did love her. Years later they married. They are a very happy couple to this day. In those days, however, Diana was living in a large Victorian house with three men. The men were all gay. They were airline flight attendants. It was indirectly through them that I

saw some of the gay life of the Seventies. I saw it but did not participate as I now wish I had. I wanted to part of the action, but something was always in the way. I think it was Jon, or rather the memory of Jon.

The others in the house were Kris, Robby, and Dell. Robby owned the house and rented the others rooms. It really was quite an impressive place. Diana had a suite of two rooms in the house. She shared the upstairs with Kris and Robby. Dell's room was on the first floor. Once Diana had introduced me to her friends, it became a place to go to have fun, no matter the reason. People came and went frequently at this oasis for gay and gay-friendly people. With four young people in their mid-twenties to their late-thirties one could hardly expect otherwise. The parties which this group put together were outstanding.

The house was enormous. It had all kinds of little rooms and alcoves. Kris reported a ghost living in his room. One night we tried to entice this "old woman" to join us. All the lights in the house were shut-off. Everyone—probably five of us—scattered to various places in the house. We were to yell if we found her. We never found her, but we did scare the hell out of each other. People were jumping out from behind doors, grabbing people by the leg as they walked up the staircase, or the like. Screams came from everywhere. When we tried to put on the lights, they wouldn't work. Somebody had removed fuses from the box. Do I need to say that the box was in the basement?

No one would go down there alone. We agreed to all go together. I didn't go first. Diana did. She was the brave one. The rest of us including me, Robby, Kris and Dell followed her. Robby was making comments about the mice in the cellar as we descended the rickety, old stairs. It had a dirt floor. It occasionally flooded. It was very damp and cold down there. It smelled musty. I was barefooted and noted with a scream that the floor was muddy. I wanted to

leave. They wouldn't let me. I had to stay in the group as it nervously moved towards the far wall where the box was supposed to be. Robby was cursing whomever removed the fuses. Everyone denied it.

"Who the hell of us would be brave enough to come down here alone to do it?" I queried.

We couldn't find the box. We moved along the wall of large granite blocks until we hit the wooden frame to which the fuse box was attached. Actually Dianna hit the frame with her head as she led us in a line down that wall. We opened the box. It took Dianna some time to get the courage to feel into the fuse box in the dark. Sure as hell none of us were going to do it.

"You are all damn sissies," she half-laughed, half-screamed.

"I'm not putting my hand in there, honey," Kris camped.

"You've had it in darker and more dangerous places," Dell retorted sarcastically.

Everyone laughed. Dianna found the fuses. They were unscrewed but not out of their sockets. She screwed them back in tightly. When done, Robby turned to find the string for the bulb which lit this part of the basement. He found it and Dell yelled, "Thank Christ!" We all turned and began walking toward the stairs when two shadowy figures jumped out at us, each wielding knives in up-raised hands. "KILL THEM!" screamed one of the attackers.

We all jumped back in horror and began screaming and running. We didn't stop until Dianna pointed out that the "attackers" were Paul, Robby's lover, and a friend of Paul's. They had snuck into the house (Paul has a key) and when they realized what was going on, they decided to have their own fun.

Once we realized what was happening, our screams turned to gales of laughter and epithets, "You fucking asshole, I nearly had a stroke," Dell yelled as he pushed Paul against a wall.

“There’s only one way to make up for this,” he said to Paul.

“Oh, yeah, what might that be?” Paul already knew the answer as he smiled widely.

“You should fuck me, of course,” Dell smiled back just as broadly.

“Not on your life!” Robby said as he grabbed Paul by the arm and began leading him upstairs.

Christmas Eve at “THE house,” as it became known, was a must. Everyone was invited to a wild open house. There was a grand piano in the living room along with a beautifully decorated Christmas tree. Each of the rooms in the living area of the house had stone fireplaces. They were all lit. Candles of all shapes and sizes were burning everywhere. They were the only source of light except in the kitchen area where there was a fully stocked bar. The dining room was a fantasy of foods. Everyone brought something, and they brought their best. Music—disco—was playing in the library which had been emptied of furniture and rugs to create a dance floor. On the ceiling was a revolving lighted ball which shot mirrored light all around the room. Couples filled the room all evening.

Many of the people there were gay, but not all. In fact, Robby’s family was invited, as was Dianna’s. They came. None of them supposedly knew that Robby was gay. He tried to tell his father once, but his father stopped him and said, “You know that if I found out a kid of mine was gay, I’d kill him.”

The remark stopped Robby from proceeding with his father’s enlightenment. His father knew, but if Robby didn’t actually tell him, there would always be some place in his father’s mind where he could remain in denial.

The party didn’t really begin until all those people who had been invited and who didn’t know the truth about the happy family who lived in this house were gone. Usually around

midnight, “the orphans” as they were called—people who moved to Boston to hide their identities or to avoid persecution of some type in a small town or to find others of their kind—remember is was the 1970s and early 1980s—gathered around the Christmas tree and swapped presents. Some were humorous, but most were given in all sincerity. It was a warm loving scene. People gathered to create a family of their own. It worked. For most of them, this house became their home. They all had someplace to go on Christmas Eve where they knew they would be loved and accepted unconditionally.

The real fun began in the wee hours of the morning. Dancing, games, drinking, eating and lovemaking were happening everywhere. I realized that I wasn’t shocked by what was going on. Everyone seemed to be having a wonderful time. They were certainly not having a traditional Christmas, but they were enjoying the holiday season after their own fashion. I was a bit jealous that I had a family to go home to for the traditional Christmas Day festivities. This group made for a very, very merry Christmas. They were a community of supportive, loving individuals.

Robby asked me to dance. It was one of those Christmas’ he and Paul had separated for a time. He had been sitting in a high back chair all night with a beautiful young man at his feet. Robby was an attractive man. He was tall, muscled with hair I would die for. The young fellow at his feet was fawning over Rob all night and I was surprised when Rob got up and asked me to dance. Believe me, in the looks department, I was no competition for this young Ganymede.

“Let’s go into the other room, it’s too crowded to dance in here,” Robby said.

I agreed. We went to the foyer at the front of the house. It was isolated and no one else was there. A slow tune was on the player. Robby began to dance all the while pushing his body rhythmically against mine. He really began to dry hump me right there.

“Hey, I was taught to leave room for the Holy Ghost,” I laughingly feigned protest. While laughing and dancing, I slipped and fell on my butt with both legs under me.

“That’s a great position,” Robby smiled as he sat on the floor next to me. He began to massage my crotch right there on the floor of the foyer.

“You’ve got ten minutes to stop that,” I said unconvincingly.

I really was uncomfortable, at least emotionally, with what was happening. “Please stop, I might begin to enjoy this,” I said as I sat up.

Robby just smiled as he looked at me and said, “O.K. Let’s go back to the library.”

A few minutes later Robby was dancing with his handsome Ganymede and not very long after I saw them climbing the back staircase hand-in-hand to Robby’s bedroom. I felt good inside about that. I liked the idea of two men making love on Christmas Eve. The image made me feel good about myself and my own sexuality.

The group kept the house for at least the next six years. Robby decided to sell the place and buy a condominium in the South End of Boston after that. He still had parties for the orphans on holidays, but there was something about that Victorian which was heartwarming. It was a home. In my own home there was always the hiding and the pretending. I was always watching every word so as not to let anyone know that I was a man who loved other men. The group in Robby’s Victorian helped me to understand that not all people felt negative about that issue.

The Victorian housemates and their friends showed me something of the gay culture of the Seventies. I was a voyeur, of course. I could not participate because of my own narrow hang-ups, but only watch. The same would have been true if I were heterosexual, too. Picking

up people in bars, indeed anywhere, was not my style, but I did love to watch and it was in watching that I learned quite a bit about myself and those brothers who, like me, were gay.

michael vocino

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