

Tales from the dark hole

Being gay sometimes means hiding for safety



while, so we would camp out in a booth and talk about whatever was on our minds.

Mike's a shorter fellow, his black hair frames his dark brown eyes, reminding me of sitcoms from the '50s — he has that same, gelled-back look. Chris is a taller, skinny type, his hair a platinum fake-blond, his ears pierced repeatedly, and his tongue, too. He frequently juts his tongue-bar through his lips and pulls it back — that familiar nervous gesture that most people with tongue piercings share.

My friends consistently invested the money they saved by avoiding the cover in the first pitcher for the night. In the dark blue light of The Station, the cheap, brown liquid took on a smooth, appealing look. That pitcher would be replaced at least twice through the evening, though I would drink none of it.

We talked about various things, but one day our histories came up. Mine wasn't too interesting or eventful, so I listened as they related.

Mike's from a small Nebraska town. He came out and met his first boyfriend about eight years ago. Their parents kicked them both out, and they lived in a car together for a few years. The relationship ended when Mike's boyfriend was killed in a car accident. He was driving the car the two had financed together at the time.

Chris never was kicked out but has lived without a mother since she divorced his father. His life had become a familiar, well-trodden cycle. He would work at a bookstore in Omaha, then on the weekends, he would come down to Lincoln to visit his friends here. A weekend of having fun, often visiting The Station, would follow, trying to dance away from the stresses that overburdened his kind soul.

Both were unapologetically out. "One time, I was at this convenience store," Mike said, his voice made rough and deep by an unending smoking habit. "And I saw this guy, and he was hot," raising his eyebrows, for emphasis. "So I whistled at him, and he just kinda turned and smiled this cute little smile."

Mike grinned to himself as he ashed with a faggy flick of the fingers.

"Doesn't always work like that though," he said, looking at me, the youngest and most naive of the three. "I've been gay bashed once, or I should say, I've straight bashed once." He chuckled.

"This one guy was like, 'I'm going to break your nose,' and so I let him try. When I was done, I was like, 'Should I pick up your teeth or should I leave that as evidence?' The guy never had a chance; he was all skinny and crap."

And certainly, no skinny guy had a chance against Mike. He sipped at

his beer, while I tried to glean some sort of reaction from his face. He wasn't one to let a guy in deep emotionally, so there wasn't the faintest glimmer of regret or fear in his eyes.

"Yeah, in high school, I got crap all the time," Chris chimed in. "This big kid wanted to fight me, and there wasn't no chance in hell I'd win in a fight with him. So I started to act all crazy. I just looked at him and smiled real crazy. I said, 'Go ahead, hit me, I want you to hurt me.' And I took the cigarette I was smoking and put it out against my arm."

He paused, as we put the image together.

"And the whole time, I was looking at the guy and smiling this crazy smile. It hurt like a mother, but I just smiled and stared right at him. Eventually, he said, 'This guy's crazy. Let's get out of here.'"

They sat silent for a moment, letting their cigarettes burn and letting the beer go stale. I sat and watched them, with no cigarette or beer in front of me, and tried to imagine the lives they'd led in Nebraska.

I am a thoroughbred Nebraskan, after all, and I pass easily as a heterosexual. Being perceived as straight in this state isn't difficult when everyone assumes you are anyway. I haven't been gay bashed because I've kept my mouth shut (until recently). Who knows what

the future will bring?

There's a current of fear that flows through the veins of every man or woman in Nebraska who is more attracted to people of the same sex than the opposite sex. It's a fear for their jobs, a fear for their homes, a fear for their lives. While the "gay issue" seems distant when it lies in the headlines, this nervous fear flows even as closely as the desk next to you in history class.

We don't necessarily choose lives lived in dark holes or in silence or in flabbergasting flamboyance. In the darkness, one finds peace. In the silence, one finds invisibility. In the flamboyance, one out-shouts one's fears. In a world flooded with hatred, is it any surprise we take to the driest ground?

So sitting in that bar, covering my ears as the music's volume steadily increased, I wondered about what life would be like without this constant apprehension. What would it be like, to be able to ask any guy out, without worrying about being sent off with a kick in the pants? What would it be like to be able to use the word "gay" in a conversation without having to keep the volume level down? What would it be like to be able to refer to your boyfriend or girlfriend without drawing a whole classroom's attention?

I wondered what it would be like outside the deafening, dark hole.

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announcement.

I'm going to introduce to you a concept so revolutionary, so astoundingly unbelievable, that you'll probably want to stab yourself with a common marmot. Go ahead, but your eyes aren't deceiving you; the Mexican National Land Appropriation and Burrito Company is open for business.

Let me explain the concept. Rich Americans (of which there are plenty these days) always want the newest fad or gadget they can get their hands on. So, they send their butlers off to Best Buy or The Sharper Image to purchase it, and they find satisfaction in how advanced they are compared to John Q. Public.

Eventually, however, this technology will wear off, and what then? Technology is amazing, but everyone knows it breeds geeks and nerds and their ilk, and that's not desirable. The rich of this country soon will want something more permanent and fulfilling, an acquisition that just keeps on giving. That is the service we intend to provide.

Think how much more satisfying (and profitable) it would be to rule a sovereign nation. No environmental standards. No child-labor laws. Nothing but sweet, sweet profit.

A good friend of mine and I, being the smart fellows we are, realized this is the trend of the future. And, to use an incredibly stupid but catchy phrase ... the future is now!

The Mexican National Land Appropriation and Burrito Company will lead military expeditions, providing supplies, effective corporate leadership and soldiers, if requested, to commandeer the plot of land that will become one very lucky investor's personal kingdom.

I'm sure many of you are dying to ask, "This sounds like a fantastic opportunity, but is it legal?"

Technically, no. But I checked with the U.S. government, and thanks to the efforts of the World Trade

Organization and others like them, corporations now wield supreme power on our shiny little planet.

Our expeditions are 100-percent-satisfaction guaranteed. We will not fail, and we will not be undersold by our competitors. No one can stop us from successfully setting up our corporate nations.

Sure people can fire at us, try to kill us, sic dogs with bees in their mouths on us, but there is little to worry about because private citizens in the United States have almost unlimited access to the highest quality firearms in the free world.

I like to believe I know a thing or two about Mexican culture, and ruling the natives should prove quite easy. Apparently, Mexicans are mad for small, annoying dogs, and Dale Chihuly. We will provide our customers with a large starter quantity of both to be handed out in times of trouble.

Obviously, Mexicans can be used for cheap labor, but we also will be sending expeditions into Canada to round up our northern brethren for additional bodies. Once the Canadians realize how dreadfully monotonous their desolate nation is, they undoubtedly will be more than happy to come with us to Mexico, and if not, we lay into them with the nightsticks.

By now, I'm sure most of you can't wait to sign up before this company skyrockets, taking everyone associated with it on a wild, opulent ride.

The job opportunities with the Mexican National Land Appropriation and Burrito Company and our

subsidiaries, Canadian Roundup, Ltd. and the Midget Ranching

Corporation, are limitless. We have positions open that encompass the abilities of every individual on this campus, from field marshal to town drunk. (I'm sure many of you would be perfect for this job.)

So join the revolution while you can: Getting rich by exploiting Mexicans is the wave of the future!



Megan Cody/DN

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