

How I Lost My Gay Virginity

(An Unsexy Sex Story)

By Alan Bennett Ilagan

New Orleans, May 1997. My parents invited me to accompany them to a convention in New Orleans. Having always wanted to visit the Big Easy ~ Bourbon Street, Mardi Gras, all that great music and food ~ I jumped at the chance to go. The Jazz Festival was taking place that same week, so it looked to be a relaxing trip South with the folks.

The city had always lived in my mind as a magical realm: the French Quarter and its ornate iron balustrades and quaint balconies ~ the hint of danger, of haunted places, of voodoo, of the mystical and the mysterious ~ and it was all imbued with a romantic aspect tinged with lust and hidden desires.

Everything in New Orleans seemed heavy ~ the thick, sticky air, the gooey pralines, the delectable muckiness of jambalaya ~ and an almost-palatable carnality that pervaded the steamy nights. Ladies in lacy underwear beckoned along Bourbon Street while shirtless men called out from dim dancing bars. It was the perfect place to get lost ~ to lose oneself in the madness of any number of tempting maladies. And at twenty-one years of age I was ready for that giddy loss.

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Sitting at the bar in Oz, a gorgeous stripper in white briefs is undulating his wares above my head, expertly treading between glasses, ashtrays and piles of cocktail napkins. He leans down and shouts over the pounding music into my ear, "I like your shirt!" Smiling, he senses there is no tip here and moves along. I finish my drink.

Upstairs I walk drunkenly along the balcony overlooking the dance floor. The lights sweep across the empty expanse and the music throbs incessantly. A few men gather at the edges, waiting for someone to start, but it is still early. Making my way to the bathrooms, I grasp at the doorknobs. The first is locked, but the second opens when I pull. Two guys are going at it in the cramped space, kissing madly in a frenzy of fleeting passion. One of them quickly slams the door shut. The brief glance becomes a still-life in

my mind ~ underwear pulled half-way down, heads angled and tongues entwined, hands groping and fumbling and caught in annoyed surprise.

Back on the street I fall prey to the hurricane vendors. Swallowing the monstrous amount of cheap liquor, my head spinning wildly in a lovely haze, I weave shakily across cobblestones towards the river. It is difficult to focus, and the effect is both scary and welcoming. When a sailor on shore leave strikes up a conversation, I allow him to lead me closer to the water.

He hails from Greece and has to be back on his ship that night, affording him a few hours of fun and decadence in New Orleans. He tells me that he has a young daughter, but that he likes to fuck guys sometimes. His limited English allows for such bluntness. We are at the bank of the river now, leaving the well-lit streets and searching blindly for some small, secret, unseen space.

We walk for a bit, climbing over fences and scrambling across large boulders on the riverfront until we reach an empty warehouse. One of the garage doors is open and we sneak inside. In the eerie absence of light, big pieces of machinery watch us and wreckage of industry looks on as our hurried exchange takes place.

The floor is dusty and a large breadth of darkness echoes on endlessly. We kiss a little, but I can tell he doesn't really want to. Facing the wall, I move my legs apart to steady myself. He is behind me now, hands racing roughly over my body, stopping suddenly to undo his belt. My hands hang onto something ~ a wooden beam, some bit of support structure, anything to keep me standing ~ and now he is pushing from behind. My pants are around my ankles ~ *when did I unbutton them?* ~ and the thin fabric of my underwear is all that separates us now. He tries to pull it down, but I stop him.

His voice is husky, his face prickly against the back of my neck. I lower my head and try to keep from falling as waves of drunken oblivion wash over me. "Let me just stick it in a little, just a minute," he says. The words don't repel me, nor do they turn me on. But the desire ~ the panting, desperate want ~ *that* is hot. I would do anything to be desired like that. My only want is to be wanted. In that moment I forget the short, skinny wisp of a kid I was, the vision I will always have of myself. He pulls my underwear down and I don't stop him this time.

It is quick. A few thrusts and he is done. I was expecting pain but there wasn't any. Or maybe there were too many hurricanes beforehand and I simply didn't feel anything. It was the first time I had sex with a man and it was over.

The next day I wander the riverfront, searching for the sacred spot. I take a photo of the building I think it happened in. Seen in the daylight there is nothing remotely romantic about it ~ just some expansive low warehouse with faded aluminum siding, looking out onto the muddy river.

While the idea – the *fantasy* – of getting pounded by a hunky Greek sailor in an abandoned warehouse on the shore of the Mississippi river in New Orleans is hot to some, the reality is that it was rather lonely, and more than a little bit sad. I don't even remember his name or what he looked like. From that moment sex became something from which I separated and detached myself. It would take years before I could reconcile it with love. The loss and regret I felt but never admitted were determining factors in the man I was to become. My gay virginity had come to an end and I left New Orleans forever altered.