

THE HOMOSEXUAL WOMAN

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Representing as it does an entirely different way of thinking and living, it is odd how easy it is to conceal homosexual tendencies. This holds particularly true where women are concerned because a masculine woman attracts less attention than an effeminate man. In many cases, she is respected and admired for her manly qualities. As a woman who is at the same time a homosexual and a member in good standing in her community and profession, I can vouch for the truth of this.

No doubt one reason for the ease with which we can conceal our attitude is that so few people are at all conscious of our existence. Homosexuality in men has been studied so fully that the general public is more aware of their problem.

To those whose sex life is based on heterosexual relationships, the homosexual is a grotesque, shadowy creature—a person spoken of with scorn, pity or lasciviousness. The person so spoken of is often in the audience. If you are not one of us, it is impossible to realize our feelings when this occurs. It is incredible to us that a well educated girl could make the following remark: "What do they look like? I wonder if I've ever seen one?" It is a perfect example of what the average person thinks, the few times he thinks about homosexuality at all. Fortunately for us, there is no identifying mark. Contrary to what some may think, we have no secret means of recognizing one another. Many women, not homosexual at all, wear suits a lot, cut their hair short and seem, on the whole, very unfeminine. The active homosexual often makes herself look very attractive in order to please the person she is trying to charm. Appearances have much less to do with it than most people assume they do.

What is it like to be this way?

You are always lonely. It makes no difference how many friends you have or how nice they are. Between you and other women friends is a wall which they cannot see, but which is terribly apparent to you. This wall represents the difference in the workings of your minds.

Between you and men friends is another difficult misunderstanding. Very few men desire platonic friendships, the only kind of which you are capable so far as they are concerned. The endless bitter disagreements with them cause many of us to renounce their companionship entirely. Very few men understand the need we have for their friendship and the aversion we feel for sexual love. Unable to find love or its most acceptable substitute friendship, we frequently become psychiatric cases. You cannot keep a healthy state of mind if you are very lonely.

The inability to present an honest face to those you know eventually develops a certain deviousness which is injurious to whatever basic character you may possess. Always pretending to be something you are not, moral laws lose their significance. What is right and wrong for you when your every effort is toward establishing a relationship with another which is completely right to you, but appallingly wrong to others?

How do homosexuals feel about one another?

One of the saddest facts in this entire picture is that we seldom like one another. On the surface this appears ridiculous, but there are good reasons for it. In order to make it more clear, let me describe the general categories into which we fall.

There are certain things which are characteristic of each type. However, it is important to remember that merely because a woman may have some of the following characteristics, she is by no means to be considered a homosexual or even one who has such tendencies. This is because the intelligent homosexual always adopts the manners and customs of the group to which she belongs. Physical build plays a large part in determining what type you are.

Type I is a large person, that is, tall although not necessarily heavy. She is successful in the business world. She is intelligent and uses her manly qualities to advance her in her work. Her clothes are good, she frequently wears tailored suits and dresses and does not care for fussy hair styles or frills of any kind. She is not drawn

to another like herself because she is the aggressive sort whose efficiency and capability make her desire a partner who would be emotionally dependent on her. In many cases her behavior with her friend can be likened to that of a mother with a helpless child.

Type II is small, feminine in appearance. She can be just as aggressive as the woman described above and, although the two types do mix, the relationship is not entirely satisfactory to either. This is because both would want to dominate.

Types I and II have certain things in common. They are both completely homosexual in their desires. They are always the active, aggressive partner. They cannot be satisfied unless they dominate, that is, assume the rôle of the man. That they associate at all is usually due to the inability to find another partner.

There is another more delicate factor to be mentioned. What we are considering here is something so intimate that few people have any idea of the contradictory elements present. To a homosexual there is something incongruous, embarrassing, about making love to another like herself. The entire basis of the friendship is the pretense that one of the women is a man. It is uncomfortable to have in the back of your mind the idea that your associate feels just as you do instead of as a woman would. It is so much a business arrangement that it seems rather indecent.

Type III is not a real homosexual, but has strong tendencies that way. This type of girl is a natural object for the attentions of the types described above. No homosexual woman would force her attentions upon another who was completely unwilling.

This third type is almost without exception a weak individual. She may have some strong characteristics but her craving for sexual gratification is so great that she will accept it from the homosexual woman if there is no man to satisfy her.

The fact that many of these women would be heterosexual if we let them alone is no deterrent to us if they appear at all amenable to our suggestions. Education, breeding, all those things do not prevent the homosexual from drawing such a woman into her orbit of dominance if she possibly can. Her need

for relief from sexual tension and loneliness is too great. Yet, so weak are most women who yield to an aggressive homosexual, that this situation often becomes a tormenting one for the latter. This is because the weaker individual cannot break off the relationship nor can she reconcile her conscience to it. Unlike the complete invert, she often feels it is wrong but can neither accept it nor end it.

Who is aggressive and who is passive?

The active homosexual always initiates the relationship. Usually the other woman is too shy to do so. However, when the two are finally on terms with one another, the aggressive type does not always take the active part. With another like herself, she would feel she had to dominate. With one whom she had drawn into it, she knows that she has the stronger personality and, therefore, can permit the other to assume the aggressive rôle. Some homosexuals retain just enough femininity to want to surrender themselves to another from time to time.

On the whole, the Type III individual becomes involved without realizing just what her friend wants. Needing the sexual relief, she permits the homosexual to love her. Type III's entire background having produced the feeling that this sort of behavior is wrong, and, lacking the more urgent drive of a completely homosexual development, she seldom wants to take the initiative. The feeling that it may not be so wrong if she doesn't take an active part comforts her and makes her unwilling to assume such a rôle unless she is implored to do so.

Type IV hardly deserves mention. They are those who capitalize on the curiosity of people who are willing to pay to see something disgusting. I refer, of course, to those whose activities in night clubs in the larger cities attract many people looking for a thrill. The entire matter is much too personal to be exploited in such a way. The behavior of commercial inverts does much to color the public's ideas of us.

What happened to me? Why do I have to be this way?

No doubt every homosexual has pondered these questions, searching for an answer that will bring her peace of mind. Realization of the tendency comes slowly. It is not a question of waking up some morning and

thinking: "Why, I'm a homosexual." I was nineteen before I ever heard the word, a sophomore in college at the time. The way in which it was mentioned in a conversation made me wonder if that was what was wrong with me. A quick look at the dictionary told me immediately that not only was I a homosexual, but that I was a most unpleasant individual, a person whom anyone decent would avoid like the plague. The next impressions I received of myself through reading were equally terrifying. I had heard of degenerates, but never realized that many would think me one if they knew a little more about me. Puzzled, bewildered, I could find nowhere a single kind word being said. Most of the writers of the books could not seem to understand that a homosexual is not a *term*, but a *person*. She has feelings just as anyone else. She has an additional burden—the necessity of being quiet about her troubles, the inability to tell her friends anything about herself. What is her position? She must occasionally be present when her friends talk about her and those like her in the most unpleasant terms you can conceive. Yet her friends and her employer, not knowing, like her a lot. If she were to say—and it is often a temptation—"I am a homosexual," the repercussions would be all that anyone could imagine.

I was unhappy in my high school years. I did not know just why at the time, but I was. I never had dates because I did not bother to make myself attractive to boys. I never thought about them at all. If I didn't like them, neither did I really dislike them. They just failed to interest me.

My parents were in their fifties at this time. Instead of wondering why I never complained about not having dates, they were very thankful that I wasn't "boy crazy."

In college I lived in a dormitory for four years. I was content most of the time. I became more reasonable about my appearance and conformed more to current fads. Every year I developed a terrific crush on some new girl, always an older one. My raving about her at home only provoked my mother into saying that she wished I wouldn't idealize my friends so much. She never thought that there might be more than met the eye in my behavior.

Almost without exception, I lost these friends because I did too much for them. I would have waited on them hand and foot if I dared. Before friends, I restrained myself just enough and talked about boys just enough, to keep them from being too suspicious. Had we known more about homosexuality, my friends probably would have recognized my situation. As it was, they never did, any more than my parents did. The girls on whom I had the crushes enjoyed my infantile adoration and, realizing that to say anything would be to draw themselves into it, they made no remarks. When they became tired of it, they dropped me. Some of my blackest hours were those in which I realized that they no longer wanted me around. It was several years, however, before I ceased to rush headlong into such situations.

When I became a senior, I met a boy whom I liked rather well. We went together for three months, the longest I have ever gone "steady" with any man. At the end of that time we were both bored and so broke it off. I felt a definite relief from the strain.

This made me realize something very fundamental. In the back of my mind, I knew I should not feel as I did about other women. However, and this is important, I was convinced that it was only because I had not met the right man. Who is the right man? Knowing now how odd my conception of this man was, I can still reproduce him in all his unreality because the concept has changed very little.

His outward appearance does not matter. The thing I wanted most was friendship; definitely not a sexual relationship. The readers of this article will have no delusions about a homosexual being prudish. The fact of the matter is that a man's attentions bore us to such a point that we cannot even pretend to enjoy them. The necessity of kissing a date several times during the evening becomes a real ordeal.

The search for a perfect man is part of the psychology of homosexuals who marry. The woman who does this brings only misery to herself and her husband. She is invariably a cold wife and frequently her nerves go to pieces under the strain. Probably many who marry never had relations with another woman, and therefore do not realize how strong the homosexual tendency is. There

is one exception to this: the few times that the woman marries a man who is also homosexual. Many men can obtain more satisfaction out of this sort of arrangement than they could from the other type of marriage. This would give both the companionship they crave without the sexual obligations they cannot fulfill.

I kept thinking I had not had enough experience with men, had not really given them a chance. After I left college, however, I became more attractive to them and learned how to handle them better. It just didn't work. I froze up after a while, became bored because none of them offered me friendship—only sexual love. When I had proved to myself that there was nothing in it for me, I decided to have no more dates. I have had very few since then.

How do I fill my life?

I am well-to-do financially and can go places and travel. I take underprivileged children on outings, to circuses, etc. This satisfies my need for someone to be dependent on me. My energies, thus diverted, do not travel always in the same channel: that which develops sexual tension.

Do we feel we have an advantage over the heterosexual person?

From the point of view of leading a full and happy life, we are definitely at a disadvantage. No one is content who is so very lonely. No one is content who has to exercise so much will power to subdue sexual desire.

However, there are advantages. We are frequently able to build successful careers in professions that are concerned with working with people. We are two-sided, often understand others better. Many of us are artistic, can act or write.

The moods of depression to which I am subject may be brought on by seeing someone very attractive who is equally unattainable. Then I feel frustrated and at a disadvantage. On the other hand, when feeling good, I am more than equal to anyone else, not at a disadvantage at all.

One pitfall to be guarded against is alcohol. If you are lonely, depressed, it is very easy to cure the feeling with some drinks. It is easy to feel sorry for yourself, to convince yourself that no one is as unhappy as you. The liquor always puts you on top of the world. This is no problem that can be

easily solved. You have moments of introspection in which you see your life dragging out and you worry for fear you will not always be able to control yourself. It scares you to think that your physical requirements might become such that you would do something terrible or degrading in order to satisfy them. If you do not act in some way to help yourself, your mind may not be able to bear the strain and you will wake up some day in a psychiatrist's office. Liquor helps us fight down the urgent needs of our personality. If you can limit yourself in what you drink, it is better to relax this way than try to fight it alone. It is something that must be watched, of course, and I know that not all of us watch it carefully enough.

What can be done to correct our situation?

Hardly anything has appeared in print which would warn parents of such tendencies in their children. Almost without exception, they ignore any warnings which appear in puberty. Instead, like venereal disease and other hush-hush subjects, publications that deal with this problem are often banned. Therefore, many are almost completely unaware of its existence.

The rapidly developing science of psychiatry, by bringing this out into the light, could help us by making available more facts of why we are as we are. Some of us torment ourselves with the idea that we are "evil." We are not degenerates, yet many refer to us in such terms. We are considered a sort of sex criminal. Not only should people realize that there are lots of us, but they should have their attitudes toward us changed. Then the parent, instead of being horrified, will be able to help his child to adjust to a rather hard world.

Self-examination is not enough to resolve the confusion in our minds, a confusion arising from our idea of ourselves *vs.* the idea voiced by the heterosexual person. The best way to keep us from compensating our loneliness and sense of inadequacy at the expense of weaker individuals is to provide us with knowledge about our place in the order of things. There will be fewer homosexual women in mental hospitals and psychiatric offices if we are recognized as human beings instead of as material for a chapter in a book on abnormal psychology.