

HOW I REALIZED I AM . . .

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As a child I remember being thrown into the company of Cecille, the daughter of my mom's friend. I can still remember how my mom would garb me in fineries so I would look presentable and be liked by this girl. Back then I did feel excited whenever the girl came a-visiting. And each time she left I would ask myself: Was I attracted to her or what?

Time has a way of answering my question. One day, a family moved right next to our house. There was a boy in that family. He was about my age, and oh so cute. He had fair and flawless skin. At first sight of him I felt something tremble inside me. I wanted to get near him and tell him that I liked him for reasons that I did not even know. Time passed by and Christian, the boy, and I became the best of friends. It was during this season of friendship with this boy when I realized that I am and could never be what my parents would have wanted me to be. Like George.

George is my godmother's husband. He is a military officer. According to my mom, I was named after him. I guess because my parents thought highly of him and wanted me, their son, to be like him: brave, strong, and virile. Often I have wondered if my parents did not also want me to emulate this man by pursuing a career in the military as an officer. But one thing I am sure of: my parents would not mind it at all if instead of a military officer I would become a hotshot

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basketball player like their idol, Henry Tuadles, who was one of the most renowned basketball players in the 70s.

When I reached school age my parents sent me to an exclusive boys' school where the opportunity for comparing myself with so many boys presented itself. I soon realized that I was different from the rest of them. While they enjoyed listening to Bon Jovi, playing with toy guns and running around the campus, I enjoyed belting a Whitney Houston song, playing with dolls when no one was looking, and reading romantic novels in the library. At home I would wear my mom's shoes and other accessories, and dab my face with her makeup whenever she was not around. I also hated boys' toys like toy guns and strenuous sports like basketball. In fact, I refused to get enrolled in a self-defense class. The idea of being hit by boys in the course of learning self-defense was repulsive to me. At any rate, by that time I already know for sure that I am not straight, and activities like these were definitely not for me. I am not like them. Besides, I am convinced that a strong mind was more powerful than a well-toned physical body.

Much to my relief and joy I soon found out that I had no monopoly of being different. There were others. In the schools where I studied I came across persons with whom I could relate so easily. There were the female teachers and some classmates whose preferences were not so different from mine. Our favorite pastime was going to the movies as a group. After the show we would talk about what we saw. Invariably, the focus of the conversation would be on the actors' physique. We asked ourselves who grabbed us most: The one with the muscular body or the one without it? Always we concurred on who was the gorgeous one. It felt so good to be in groups such as this where common sentiments on sexual preference existed. Freedom existed. I could express my indi-

viduality without fear. I could be me, the son who will never be a military officer nor a basketball player, but the gay one.

There was never really a problem in accepting my sexuality. My parents know the truth about me. So do my relatives, friends, colleagues and classmates. Because I know who I am I cater to the needs of this person. I collect video tapes that show he-men at their best and gay magazines. And, yes, I am now more focused on males as sexual objects. And, yes, I don't feel guilty at all when I wake up being all wet. The dream experience with a beautiful hunk and I kissing, petting, and even going all the way is something I relish and enjoy without a sense of guilt or shame.

Movies dealing about homosexuality fascinate me. I have noticed that the gays in movies such as "My Best Friend's Wedding" and "The Object of My Affection" are both named George. By George! They've got it. I am so relieved for them.

And Cecille? Recently she came back from abroad. We saw each other a month ago. She has grown more beautiful than ever but my childhood attraction to her as a member of the opposite has been laid to rest.

"How is your love life?" She asked.

"Still unattached," I told her and after a meaningful pause added, "but I must tell you that I find your ex-boyfriend handsome and I like him."

I expected her to smirk or even break into peals of laughter of derision. But she didn't. Looking at me straight in the eye, she said without batting an eyelash, "Don't worry. I know." Boy! was I relieved to know that Cecille, the girl of my childhood and now a woman, understands. She is indeed a friend.

I am now twenty years old and a junior student at the University of the Philippines taking up a degree course in Computer Science. I believe I am now mature enough to know what I want, and how to get what I want. I might have disap-

pointed my parents for not fulfilling their dreams for me. But what can I do? I love myself. And no one can keep me from becoming what I want to be. At any rate, I really have nothing to fear. Unlike straight men and women, I can have the best of two worlds. Who can ask for anything more?