

Sex Ed

Word count: 3600

“And if you pinch the top, and unravel the condom like so... You’ll prevent air bubbles from forming.” Mr. Weber demonstrated on a banana as if in slow motion. I looked around the room in search of comforting eye contact to confirm I wasn’t the only one who hated this, but everyone else’s eyes were glued to the phallic imagery in front of us. In real time, I watched half the class silently swear off bananas forever in their minds as their faces poorly masked disgust. Meanwhile, the other half of the class looked like they were ready to buy a banana at lunch so they could try it out themselves. That was precisely the problem with 9th grade: half of the kids were still in middle school and the other half pretended like they were already ready for college, desperate to leave the suburb and try something risky. Some of my peers were still embarrassed simply by hearing the word “sex”, and then others had plans to rawdog in the L building bathroom during lunch. Both types of my peers disgusted me.

Adults regularly told me I acted “very mature for a 14 year old boy”, a statement that always gave me conflicting feelings. On one hand, this felt like an honor and a confirmation of earned respect from my elders which felt good, I guess. On the other hand, I recognized that the adult definition of “mature” was different from the teen definition my classmates’ judged by. When adults told me I was mature, they really just meant obedient and nondisruptive. But when the other kids at school talked about being mature, they meant the people who drank alcohol and had sex. For me personally, the peers I actually considered mature were the ones who had more *emotional* experience than me. Not necessarily the ones who were raw dogging in the L building bathroom, but more-so the ones who were 6 months into their relationship and ready to start

experimenting with someone they genuinely cared about. I wanted that more than anything, but being the only out-of-closet gay kid in my class didn't provide me with much opportunity. With my first ever homecoming dance quickly approaching, I felt the weight of this lonely struggle growing exponentially. Everyone else was preparing to try on their own version of "maturity" that Friday night, meanwhile I was prepared to hide in the corner with my best friend, Isabel, laughing at my peers as they tried to figure out how grinding works.

I knew I'd get my chance to do all of that stuff someday, all I had to do was wait for someone else to admit they've been having the same thoughts I've had all along. Every day I prayed that that "someone" would be Jack Bateman. There were three signs I regularly referenced that always gave me hope he might come out any day now: 1.) No straight man would care enough to gel his hair so perfectly neat and sexy. 2.) He had a skinny, feminine, twink-like frame that reminded me of my own. 3.) He was in choir. All boys in choir are gay. Especially the tenors. It's like a rule.

In health class I would watch Jack pretending to listen to Mr. Weber's demonstrations, but I could always tell something else was happening inside that beautiful head of his. He surely wasn't interested in watching Weber's nasty softcore porn that day; I think he and I were the only ones. I stared at his foot tap tap tapping away beneath his desk and thought about what it'd be like to dance with (or maybe even grind on) him at homecoming. My eyes traced his silhouette back up from his feet to his perfect face, blankly staring into space. I wished I knew what he was daydreaming of, hopeful it might even be something about me.

Then, like an answer to all my prayers, some higher power showed me precisely what was on Jack's mind. I could see Jack's body tense a bit, but his face showed no change from the

profile view I had three seats away. He then cautiously and inconspicuously slid the textbook off his desk and placed it in his lap, holding it close to his body like a shield. Every teen boy knows exactly what that means: Jack was hiding an erection. An erection either directly or indirectly inspired by Weber's penis discourse I figured.

Suddenly, I was in the same predicament and feeling Jack's shame as the blood rushed to my dick too. To prevent the boner from developing any further, I had to return my attention to the cringy lesson plan.

"But remember, even condoms can't protect you 100% of the time. The only thing that is 100% effective is abstinence," Mr. Weber droned on, effectively deflating my semi. Mr. Weber was in his 60's with a beer gut and enough neck skin to connect his Adam's apple to his chin with a straight line. I couldn't help but question his authority on the topic of sex. "That's why it's important to wait until you're with someone you can see yourself spending the rest of your life with, someone you could raise a child with."

This, of course, was not applicable to me since accidental pregnancy would never be a concern. This thought led me to think deeper about all the things I was being lectured on in our health class's Sex Ed unit. Why should I stay abstinent until I'm ready to have children if gay sex would never give me children anyways? If Jack and I both felt comfortable and wanted to have sex at 14, were there really any reasons not to? I know STD's would be a concern if you're having sex with strangers, but I didn't want to fuck a stranger, I wanted to fuck Jack. And if Jack is also a virgin, he can't have any sexually transmitted diseases. So if neither of us have STD's, do gay men really need to wear condoms? All these questions piled up in my mind as if my brain were about to burst right then and there. But asking any questions aloud with genuine curiosity

would be social suicide. People would know I knew nothing about sex. I'd be outed as inexperienced and stupid about the only topic that matters to most 14 year old boys. For a moment I entertained the idea of dropping a question in the anonymous question box, but it wouldn't have taken a genius to deduce that the only gay kid in the class wrote down the question about gay sex. Plus, I truly didn't believe Mr. Weber really knew much about sex outside of a procreational context anyways, much less about gay anal sex. My leg bounced restlessly as if all my unanswered questions were being imprisoned in my heel and slamming it on the ground would set them free. I wondered if Jack was thinking the same things. I couldn't be the only one.

After the bell rang signaling our end of day, Isabel and I met at the birch tree to walk to my house as was our Tuesday afternoon ritual. Today she sauntered up the hill with even more confidence and energy than usual. A half inch of her maroon bralette was peeking out above her white tank top per the advice I gave her that morning.

“It HAPPENED. It WORKED,” she thanked me without thanking me. “I officially have my date to homecoming.”

“Ryan asked?!?!?”

“After the council meeting, we were talking and he just ASKED!” She was practically drunk off the attention and lust.

“Congratulations, I'm so happy for you!” I feigned excitement so I wouldn't destroy hers. The bar for straight boys was so low. He didn't even give her flowers when he invited her to homecoming?. He just asked.

“So are you gonna ask Jack or not? You’re welcome to third wheel with Ryan and me, but we might disappear to the L building bathrooms for a bit,” Isabel pressured.

“You’re gonna fuck Ryan AT homecoming?”

Izzy answered quickly: “No no no, absolutely not. Well, not yet at least. But I’d be down to make out with him a little. Maybe get to like second base? I don’t know, we’ll see. I’m open.” The questioning, unsure tone she spoke with hinted that she definitely did not know what second base was and also that she definitely was not open to going past a make out session.

“I’m not gonna ask Jack, he might not even be gay.”

“Are you kidding? He’s absolutely gay.”

“I know that obviously, but he doesn’t say he’s gay. He might not even know it yet.” I could feel my face getting red.

“Ok and? He probably just doesn’t want to have that awkward talk. I think as a society we’ve moved past the point of coming out, like these things don’t really matter anymore. People can just be gay without talking about it.” She had a point, I guess, but I still wished people *would* talk about it. It’s confusing as hell not to have any definite answers said out loud, and I’m sick of having to try to figure it all out on my own. Isabel interrupted my self-pitying inner monologue, “You should call him and ask. Call now!”

“Uh... You’re crazy,” I resisted. She was crazy.

“You’re not crazy enough. Do it-” she insisted.

“Absolutely no-”

“Do it or I’ll ask him for you.” Whenever Isabel spoke this concisely, I could tell she wasn’t bluffing.

“I’ll kill you, I swear to fucking God, I will kill-“

“Then do it, you pussy. Look I’ve got my phone out ahead-“ I had to cut her off.

“Fuck you, I’ll do it. You’re such a fucking bitch, Jesus Christ.”

“You’ll thank me later.” Part of me was hoping she was right.

I took out my phone and pulled up Jack’s contact. My heart swelled like a water balloon expanding to it’s most full and fragile capacity. I was gonna burst any minute. My thumbs dragged shakily along the the screen leaving a trail of sweat, moving in half my regular speed until I just said fuck it. I hit the call button. Maybe Isabel would be right. Each ring that passed filled my water balloon heart with more water, expanding the heavy dread in my chest. This wasn’t the romantic, flowery homecoming proposal I dreamt of, but it was happening.

“Hi, this is Jack.” His angelic, tenor voice was welcoming, easing some of my built up tension.

“Hey Jack! I was just wonde-“

“Sorry I can’t get to the phone right now. Leave a message and I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.” All that angelic sweetness no longer felt warm to me when I realized it was entirely impersonal. My heart and my head both crowded with a million feelings of simultaneous heartbreak and relief. Even if I wasn’t too intimidated to ask him to be my date over voicemail, I wouldn’t have had my answer until he heard it and responded. I couldn’t stand the thought of waiting any longer so after an awkward 15 second silent voicemail, I hung up. I don’t know if I felt more humiliated or relieved by how that went. Sensing my discomfort, Isabel changed the topic without any acknowledgement of what had just happened. I think she felt guilty.

Nonetheless she gossiped through her guilt the whole way home without leaving me room to

say a word. I had nothing to say anyways because I was too busy feeling my phone in my pocket waiting for a buzz or a response.

“Willie was telling me in homeroom about some website where you talk to strangers and you can just fuck with people. He pretended to be a cat until people got so pissed off they started yelling,” she explained suggestively. I knew she wanted to go on and I needed something uncomplicated to distract me from my miserable day of no answers. I pulled my laptop from my backpack and set it on my kitchen table.

“What’s the site?” I asked.

“I think it’s called Omegle?”

I put the name into the url box and the website popped up. Normally I’d be nervous about these kinds of things because I knew my parents would be mad about me talking to strangers online. But that day they were both working until 6, and I was desperate to reject the adult definition of maturity anyways. I felt a new urge to experience a real maturity by leaning into risk and defiance for once in my life. Isabel took control of the laptop and turned the webcam and mic on. When she clicked ‘connect’ we saw a pair of hairy moobs pop up on the screen and the words ‘You are now talking to a stranger. Say hi!’

“Hi, can you two hear me?” his voice rang through the laptop speakers.

“Meeeeooooowww” Isabel purred and fake licked her hands like paws.

“How old are you two? Are you a couple?” asked the headless torso. Isabel kept purring, not even paying attention.

“We’re 14 and I’m gay,” I answered with an attitude. He was stupid for assuming.

“How do you know you’re gay? Have you ever touched a girl?” prodded the stranger. Isabel and I couldn’t help but burst out laughing. This fucker was a total perv. The perfect target.

“He would never touch a girl, vagina is like his worst fear,” Izzy talked down to the man.

“I was just asking. Ain’t nothing wrong with asking questions.” To be honest, I felt jealous of the man’s bravery to ask questions. It was something I wished I had the balls to do. Granted my questions weren’t suggestive of pedophilia, but I wanted that kind of reckless self assurance. He was right though, there isn’t anything wrong with asking questions. Asking hard questions and getting real answers is a mature thing to do, I thought to myself. Isabel clicked disconnect and the moobs vanished from the screen.

“Ugh my mom is already on her way to get me,” Isabel gathered her things in a panic.

“Don’t forget to hide that bralette again or else, bitch, you are so dead. Your Mom sees you looking all sexual and I won’t be third wheeling you and Ryan at homecoming after all,” I teased.

“Don’t even joke about that. I NEED to be at that dance with Ryan.”

“Ok well you better fix yourself and get outta here, I don’t want to be alone at homecoming with your date.” I walked her to the door.

“Pray for me. Only 3 days without getting grounded and I’m in the clear. I can do this. I can so do this.” Izzy was clearly trying to convince herself to follow through in her plan, she was sneaky enough to hide anything from her parents if she really wanted to. Knowing her, she probably didn’t want to think about screwing up her chance to suck face with Ryan after waiting so long for him to finally ask her out.

“Good luck,” I bid her farewell and watched as the door shut behind her. With the house all to myself, I turned my attention back to the laptop screen. I observed my own face on the Omegle webcam. My face had a little stubble growing in on my upper lip and chin, and my jawline was pretty well cornered. Sure my hair wasn’t as perfect as Jack’s, but I wasn’t ugly. Jack and I would be so cute as a homecoming couple, why couldn’t he just come out? Was he afraid? Did he also have the same burning curiosities that I did, but feel too scared to speak up? I checked my phone and saw no response so far. I typed out six separate drafts of ways to say “hey whats up?” before giving up and feeling stupid. I couldn’t do it, I wasn’t brave enough. I needed help or advice or guidance but I had no one to turn to. Except the strangers on Omegle, I guess.

I hit the blue ‘connect’ button on the website again and another faceless torso popped up, this time with a shirt on. With no one else home and only a total stranger to talk to, I decided I would finally get my answers. I had nothing to lose.

“Hey kid,” the man said with a more casual tone than the last.

“Hey.”

“What are you looking for on here?”

“I don’t know,” I lied. I was looking for answers, I just didn’t know how to ask this stranger my questions about gay sex. He probably wouldn’t even know.

“How old are you?” The man talked to me like a person, not a child. It was refreshing not to be talked down to. I thought maybe I could actually ask him about sex, but if I revealed my immaturity to him he might just hang up on me. I couldn’t risk that yet.

“16,” I lied so as not to scare him off.

“You can tell me your real age, it’s okay if you’re younger,” he assured me.

“I’m 14, but I get told I’m mature for my age a lot.”

“I’m 56 here, is that okay with you?”

Hearing his age made me think of Mr. Weber. They could easily be the same age, but this man had a cooler air about him. This stranger felt easier to talk to, I guess. He asked me questions about myself and seemed genuinely interested. Mr. Weber always spoke with caution like he could lose his job if he revealed too much, but this man was just so casual. I felt like we were equals behind the screens.

“I know this is weird to ask, but are you gay by chance?”

“I am. That’s not a weird thing to ask.”

“Me too.”

“It’s great that you already know that about yourself. I wasn’t able to admit that until I was much older.” This felt like a true compliment of my maturity from an adult. It was earned respect without any regard for my obedience. This stranger was showing me more respect than any other adult I knew. “Do you mess around with the other boys your age? I’m sure they’re all over a cute boy like you.”

“No, I’m the only out person I know really.”

“Well now you know me too, boy.” His response made me smile. Maybe I could really talk with him. I’d never met another out gay person who was open to talking about it. I finally built up the courage and decided fuck it. This guy might’ve been my only chance and he could’ve hung up at any second if he wanted to.

“Can I ask you another question?”

“Ask away, kiddo.”

“It’s kinda inappropriate,” I warned somewhat worried I’d make him uncomfortable and I’d lose my only gay companion.

“Just ask. That’s okay with me.” He assured me it’d be fine.

“Where am I supposed to learn about gay sex? Am I just supposed to figure it out on my own or is there some website I can ask all my questions to or..? I don’t know, where did you learn? How did you figure it out?” I put it all out there. I needed to know how I was supposed to know. There were a few seconds of silence while the man thought and I was petrified it was all over. More questions with no answers.

“Well when I was first getting into the scene I was lucky to have someone a little more experienced be my guide. He showed me how to make men happy. What to do and how to do it.”

“Oh...That is pretty lucky. How old were you?”

“In my 20’s. You’re lucky because you’ve figured it out sooner than I did. Plus you’re one sexy kid. Anyone ever told you that before? You’ll probably make lots of men happy before you even reach the age I was when I was just starting.”

“Thank you. I hope so. I’ve never done anything with a guy before, I don’t really know what to do. Like I’m nervous I might just freeze when I finally get my chance.” I glanced at my phone recalling how I’d froze just trying to talk to the boy I liked. He still hadn’t responded to me.

“No need to be nervous, just relax and enjoy yourself. That’s what sex is for.” I couldn’t believe how honest and kind this man was being with me. He wasn’t judging me at all. We’d only been speaking a few minutes, but I already felt like I could ask or tell him anything. “I can

help you if you want. Give you some tips, show you how I do it. I can teach you a lot and you could test it out with me. Would you like that?"

I had no idea what this would entail, but I was getting excited and could feel the blood rush to my groin. It seemed like maybe this was getting to be too much, like maybe we were getting too comfortable with our age difference. I was fully hard speaking to an older man about gay sex, but who else could I talk to about these things? I was just excited to have my answers, I guess. The man on the screen spoke again. "Give me your number. I think we could be good friends."