

From 1991 to 2021

Episode 2

Transcript

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A gay man's account growing up

with a sex and drug addiction



Episode 2

1993

So, 17, not quite 18 I did celebrate my '18th birthday' I couldn't wait another year of NOT drinking in my gay local! I did come clean when I celebrated my 19th though!

One of the guys I met in one of the public loos, we got to know each other outside of the public loos, and we frequented London bars. This is where I first came across drag queens and cabaret artists. Cabaret Artists such as Regina Fong, Katrina and the Boy, if they are still on the circuit, 'the boy' is now probably 'the old git' something Katrina said herself on stage once. Regina Fong had such a repertoire that the audience simply asked HER what to, there was plate waving a singing something about a mouse... 'Where? Under the stair' - there was a reason why it was picked in 'It's a Sin!' She was a brilliant artist who we lost at the age of 56, from cancer in 2003. Little did I realise watching these artistes on stage, that I would become one 4 years later!

I remember going back with London lads many a time, and my friend going home on his own a lot. I also do remember the discussions around this too. I would like to say this was a one-off, but it's something I have ALWAYS found myself doing, if a guy looks at me a certain way, or smiles at me a certain way - that's me gone. That's me drinking up, going back to his flat, and do what gay men do best. This is possibly why, when I go to London on my own, I do it alone, so that I don't leave a group because a cute guy in the corner has been eyeing me up, and I cannot say no... something else that gets me into trouble - more on that later!

Even at this age, I have NO CLUE how many guys I have met, who I went back with but I was taking precautions - I was HIV/AIDS awareness trained - I was a stickler for safe sex. I loved the attention I was getting, even though I don't class myself as 'good looking' even though I have been told many times that I am. I think it's because that due to the fact I was bullied at school, I was getting positive attention from guys, I wasn't getting punched/kicked. I was getting hugs, intimacy and a LOT more.

I was still frequenting the public loos, as it was an addiction, the chance of getting caught, either by a member of the public or the police. My sex drive was high then - still is now, it hasn't turned itself down one bit - that alone I think is why it has got me into trouble one too many times - this and coupled with an addictive personality - a dangerous combination!. But more on that later!

As I was constantly staying out overnight - I had a workable excuse - I would ring up my parents, and say I was staying over at my friend's house, which I NEVER DID! It only worked because my parents NEVER had their phone number - they trusted me I was telling the truth - sorry mum!

1993 was my first 'Pride' I went back with a few guys the Friday before from the pub, and we went up. This was in the days when it was FREE, all the bar tents were all the gay bars of London. But I was 17 - and only had a £5 for my drinks... coke was my lot. I lost the guys I went up with, and to this day, I have NO CLUE how I got home! This was the first time I found out that it was OK to be gay... BUT it also had a VERY dark undertone with it. Gay guys getting together in one public place, with the backdrop of a gay serial killer around London. So not only could you get AIDS, there was a high chance of being killed for being a homosexual. This WAS NOT the age to grow up gay in.

This is my message to the younger crowd of the LGBT+ community. This was the stark reality of the gay scene in the '90s. You had no access to gay sex education, there was an epidemic going around killing young gay men, and not only that you were being punched and kicked. On top of that, you also had a serial killer on the loose.

This was also the time where I first met transsexuals, mostly guys who had gender dysphoria wanting to be female, as at that time, there was nowhere for them to go, so before the gender reassignment surgery, they would meet up on the gay scene, as it was the of least unwelcoming of the communities. In those days, the gay bars would have gays, lesbians, bisexuals and trans, AND NOT ONE GROUP MIXED WITH THE OTHER. One particular late-night pub had a bunch of transvestites and transsexuals in one corner of the bar, they didn't mix to talk to anyone outside of their group.

As Douglas Murray eloquently put it, "gay men and gay women have almost nothing in common...Gay men often characterize lesbians as dowdy and boring. Lesbians often characterize gay men as silly and displaying a failure to grow up... meanwhile.... Bisexuals continued to be viewed as... gays in some form of denial...and there is...tremendous dispute on whether the T's are the same thing as everyone else or an insult to them" (Douglas Murray - Madness of Crowds). Remember, when I came out it was the GLB community. The G and the L got switched. The Trans only came along, as they needed a movement themselves and some of the rights we were fighting, they wanted too.

I'm going to be really upfront here. I have no issues with trans people at all, my brother is trans. I have friends that are trans, but when it comes to our rights, they are completely different. Let me also make a point, is that once a trans person has all their surgery in the 90's, they came off the gay scene and mixed back into 'normal society' - then shunning themselves away from the gay scene. This happened a lot.

This was also when I realised how bad HIV/AIDS was with gay men. Many a time I would ask in a bar 'where is so and so?' The answer was always 'pneumonia' or 'cancer' - code words for AIDS. Yes, we didn't like using that word ourselves, and I think it caused more harm than good.

1994

In 1994, I finally turned 18!! (For real - after the faux 18th birthdays I had!) - my friend who I first met in the pub in 1992 now knew it was OK for me to go to London pubs, which we did. These generally were in Soho and just out of the West End. So I knew there was a bigger gay scene on my doorstep. I did try further education again, but because I preferred to troll around the public loos around the towns surrounding me, I missed lessons.

I would ring and meet up people who I had phone numbers - remember I was using telephone boxes. I frequently met up with them. This is where I found gay porn. If you have watched 'It's a Sin' you know I'm NOT talking about PornHub! Yes, I was able to see men in their birthday suits standing to attention, or if you were able to get the foreign magazines - full-on sex WOO HOO!!!. Some of these men I visited had VHS porn videos that have been copied so often you just about see what they were doing. None of this HD stuff we have today.

Oh speaking of magazines - we had the Boyz magazine, not the small glossy thing we have today - oh no. This was a Broadsheet! I used to take them home, as the best porn material there was in there were the male escorts and adult phone numbers! (We had to make do in the '90s!) - I used to hide them under the bed (try hiding 10 copies of 'The Times' under your bed - and you will see how hard this was!) - more on that later! The Pink Paper was also like this too. But I vaguely remember that Boyz was gay men centric and Pink Paper was lesbian centric.

Oh yes, more men, some married with kids, some gay, some bisexual. I think this is where things started to get a bit murky in the safe sex department... remember I was a stickler for safe sex - I think, but can't be too sure, where I started to let my guard down. I cannot remember a day when I stopped using precautions - but looking back - as I was having more sex, the likelihood is that I was being less careful as we shall see in 1995.

1995

In 1995, I landed a job at our local leisure centre. One of the managers there I knew from my public loo days - so a slightly uncomfortable conversation was had there! This was also the time my youngest brother was at secondary school - and was getting bad treatment because his eldest brother was gay. I didn't know this at the time, so I asked my mum what the deal was with my brother. I would like to say this was at home with a cup of tea, or in a pub. NOPE, my coming out story to my mum was on the bus to work! My mum said that my brother heard some stuff at school, I asked what it was, finally came out, only be told that my parents had this conversation 18 months previous! I asked work to send me home as I told them what happened. As there was a bar at the leisure centre, they allowed me a Budweiser before setting me off home... yeah home...

As I was on a zero-hour contract it meant we got sent home some days. So if money allowed me, I went to London and one of the barmen told me about gay saunas. Without going into too much detail here, a gay sauna is NOT for health reasons. Your average gay sauna has a steam room, a sauna, and a couple of 'relaxation areas' - and if they were real upper class, they'd have 'videos' on! Let your mind wander for a second, and yes, they are exactly what they are! (...Yes home went via one of these venues, as I didn't want to have the coming-out discussion with my dad!)

I frequented these A LOT. There were about two or three I used to go to. I remember being in one listening to two older gents talking about us 'young twinks' and being told basically you cannot be too picky in a sauna. There were, of course, your usual type, the young gay man that thought he was drop-dead gorgeous, and no matter how young or good looking you were - NO-ONE was going to have him! Then you had guys around my age 18-25, we, of course, have just found these places out - and OH HELL YEAH we were going to have fun. Then we got to the 'oldies' basically anyone over the age of 26. The 'older guys' used to fall into two camps (pun intended) the first, would be they would want you to 'touch them' first, whereas the others would prefer to 'touch you' first...and second...and third...and wait a bloody minute I'M NOT A PIECE OF MEAT! This has always been a problem on the gay scene, there is a certain type of man that won't take no for an answer. In those days I thought it was the older gent. Nowadays I've seen guys younger than me do the same - This now is no longer ageist.

This was also the year I went to Pride (still free in 1995!). I so wished I was a fly on the wall at my parents. The news was on, and my dad said to my mum, 'Is that where our son is?' My mum said, 'Yes'. My brother who was in the room at the time looked at my mum, then my dad, then my mum again, and then my mum said 'Yes your brothers gay' - Apparently that was the end of the conversation!

This was around the time where I had my first HIV/AIDS scare, someone I went with just calmly mentioned to someone else that they had HIV, and it was unprotected. I didn't want to have the test in my home town, so went to London for it. I didn't know where I could go, but thankfully, down to the HIV/AIDS theatre productions we were taken to the London Lighthouse - a hostel for those with advanced AIDS to live less shamelessly in their last few days/weeks. The guy (who I remember was VERY cute!) gave me leaflets and details where to get tested. I got tested, and yes, like 'It's a Sin' I had to wait for 6 weeks! Trust me, that was six weeks of HELL. I did get my test results, and they came back negative.

I celebrated the only way I knew - and that was in a sauna! As my hours were being mucked about at the leisure centre, I left and decided to give holiday amps a go again. This time in Somerset. I was there for six weeks until my friend talked me out of staying there and I came back home. But during

that time there, I had a fling with the Entertainments Manager - we thought we were being coy on the first meet. Sneaking to his chalet, and then me sneaking back to mine ready for work. Imagine my horror at breakfast finding out you are the latest gossip of the holiday camp when people asked you, 'Had a good night' definitely inferring that you were up to no good!

So I went back, and I stayed with my friend (the first guy I met in the pub in 1992) at his house for a few weeks, but couldn't cope with the noise from the downstairs flat- I couldn't sleep at all. We went to see Sunset Boulevard, and so we didn't pay for the tickets to be sent to us. I went up to get them. To make it worth my while I trolled around London and missed the last train back. So I went to a gay nightclub and I met a guy and went home with him. This I hate to say, was the start of me 'going missing' in London. I suppose looking back, it was because I chasing something that was unobtainable - don't ask me what it was I'm still trying to work that out for myself!

I did have a fling up there, it came to an end when I went with his lodger, and that came to an end when I picked up another guy in Vauxhall - although he got the last laugh, as this guys house was 5 doors away from his mum! This was the start of my trips to London. I found saunas, clubs, gay adult clubs and I enjoyed myself. You may guess at the point me being monogamous wasn't going to happen...

This was also the time I found The Rocky Horror Picture Show, at The Prince Charles Cinema. I knew all the lines to through back at the screen and got myself a small cult following in the process. A few people came up to me at various times and said, 'We always come back, as you always seem to keep it topical. I know that film word for word. Even today I can sit and watch it, and come out with lines even topical today. This was a midnight viewing - so it meant that I was in London all night. This meant that most Fridays after the cinema I would go and get my end away at a number of clubs. There were also times I used to go back with guys too. Again, looking back, I seemed to be chasing something that was unobtainable.

From this point on safer sex was down to the other guy, my HIV/AIDS training started to dwindle away form me.

Now for a quick break!

An Update:

So, five years in. At this point, I will say I have had counselling for various issues, but the sexual side of my addictions was never taking up through any of my consultations. It is only now through writing this that I have found that things were escalating even at this early point in time. In just five years I went from cruising around public loos to gay adult clubs. Remember 1995 I was only 21. I suppose from the age of 15 the damage had already been done.

Being told by the media that your lifestyle was a death sentence, being told by a person in authority that 'If you carry on with your lifestyle you will be dead' and the fact that your first gay Pride had a serial killer on the loose is going to leave a lasting and damaging impression on a young gay man's life. This with the shadow of the real fear of AIDS, which did happen in 1995 in the guise of finding out I may have caught HIV showed how dangerous the lifestyle was to me and I suppose a part of me just got in love with that danger.

Let's also remember that the saunas and the gay adult clubs were illegal too. The 'no more than two in a room' part of the law was still in force - these places got raided from time-to-time. One club had a red light that flashed when the police called, the door staff would keep on talking to them, until the club members just looked like regular club members having a drink. - This happened a lot!

If I was 15 now, hell if I was 13 now, sex education for gay men would be a tiny bit more than regurgitating the law. I don't know if my first encounter could be counted as two boyfriends - we hid it in secrecy because of the taboo and the age of consent, even more reason, I suppose nowadays it would be less frowned upon and just maybe, we would come out at school as boyfriends - I just don't know. I know of children now being OK to tell their parents at the age of 13 that they are gay. This I never had - the law and the education of the '90s made that very difficult and VERY scary to come out, again not to mention the dark cloud of HIV.

As I thought public toilets were the only way to meet, and as the free gay press makes it easier to find adult bars than it is for their straight counterparts, for someone with a high sex drive and an addictive personality, this was the start of a very dangerous situation.

I am now at this point getting undeniably close to even more people I am in touch with. Please be assured, I will still keep names/places anonymous and I am only sticking to the sexual/drug addiction side of my life, everything else is unimportant here.

Now back to the 1990s!