

From 1991 to 2021

Episode 3

Transcript



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1996

This was the year I found a gay household in the town I was in. I got to know the landlord and was introduced to 'gay parties' - I think by now if you have got this far into the blog - they weren't just about drinks. so even now at 22, if I put notches on the bedpost on the number of encounters I think my bed would just be sawdust! I was still going to watch Rocky Horror, and I did land myself a small, but limited full-time job at one of our local hospitals.

My weekends were very simple then, Friday night, go to London, watch Rocky for the 'nth' time, go to a club and then to a sauna. It was at this point I found my now familiar haunt - at this time it had a disco with a couple of alcoves for people to get intimate with. I was also frequenting other places - thanks to the gay press for showing me new clubs that opened. As this was the time that gay adult clubs were illegal, it made more sense to be a promoter than a venue manager, as venues always closed, promoters just moved their night to a different venue.

The promoters always had what could be described as 'themed nights' for want of a more sanitised version of what they are. These places had dress codes, Military, Leather, Rubber, some had 'less restrictive' dress code - with the emphasis on the word LESS!

I went with military - for the simple and easiest reason - is we had an army surplus store in town - it was also the cheapest. For me, it only served one purpose - get through the door, and have fun. Sometimes when I was doing Rocky I would dress up as Riff Raff - so meant THREE changes of clothing! One for Rocky, one for the club and one for the trip home - Go organised me!

I was also doing 'disappearing trips' at this time. I would be found 'unavailable' for a weekend - I would either stay around a person's house at the time over the weekend, or I pulled an all weekender in London. Some saunas were open all night over the weekend - made it very easy.

This was also the time I 'think' chemsex started for me. I do remember taking 'G' around this time and having serious issues with it, either being sick or passing out. You'd have thought in 1996 this would have stopped me, wouldn't you...but like I said, the damage was already done by now.

So if I take a pause for thought here, I was still trolling around public loos, I am now actively going to saunas AND gay adult bars AND having short term relationships. I was being careful though - I was getting checked up for HIV during this time. HOW I do not know, I was lucky. I am still negative.

1997

This was the year of a new job, it was also the year I had a short term relationship with a guy that lived near my haunt, and it was also the year of discovering cruising grounds and another party. It was also the year that it was when I had a tonsillectomy and circumcision (not at the same time!). 2 days before the tonsillectomy was a gay party to raise funds for HIV/AIDS and was science fiction themed. There were places around where you could get more friendly with other party-goers. As I was frequenting different bars/gay adult clubs/gay parties, I knew A LOT of people there. This was also the place where I met a dear friend of mine.

So, let's begin with the tonsillectomy - I obviously had it done, I went home, and the guy I was seeing said I could stay for a couple of days at his to rest. Yeah.... rest... 48 hours after the operation, I'm in a gay adult club and doing things one SHOULD NOT be doing straight after a tonsillectomy! I think it's fair to say, in 1997, ALL that HIV/AIDS stuff I learned has been thrown out of the window. Looking back, what the HELL was I thinking. The place I worked was good, they allowed me time off to go to London to spend time up there with said guy. Things changed there so moved to another branch.

It was at this branch I was due for my circumcision, there was a local gay bar near it too, so sometimes I used to go there either before or after work, it made sense. Anyhow, back to the circumcision. I had it done, and once I was ready to be discharged - the first thing I asked was 'So when will I be able to have sex again?' I forgot how many weeks I 'should' - All I can tell you is that I went with a couple of HIV+ guys with a healing organ... AGAIN... WHAT THE HELL WAS I THINKING.

It always boils down to this. My sex drive is naturally high, cute guy/s take an interest in me, and I oblige. Absolutely bizarrely - with these TWO activities - I still had a negative result. Remember, in these days no PREP, no anti-HIV tablets that made you undetectable - and I'm KNOWINGLY going with HIV+ guys. I will give myself some credit though, I didn't and still don't care what a person's status is. before these two occasions - I was basically of the assumption that if the other person was HIV+ we'd take precautions. Now that didn't really matter from this point onwards apparently and if you think these two dangerous occasions weren't enough - there is more to come.

This was also the time I was almost at the end of a short term relationship, and starting a new long term relationship. Yes.... they both overlapped! I did say monogamy WASN'T my thing! So from the age of 15 through to 21 I have no idea how many encounters I've had, I have been with multiple HIV+ guys with and without protection in the days it was dangerous, and things are going to get a whole lot worse before they get better.

I'd be a fool if I said I didn't enjoy myself at the time I was doing it - but let's also be fair, there was guilt every time I stayed out too long, and so I didn't have to share that guilt with family/friends stayed out longer. Originally this blog was to basically be a perspective of the gay scene in the '90s, but it became apparent that there was something else at play that I have never EVER discussed with ANYONE. The reason why I've never discussed these issues is the fact that I never thought I had a problem, and just by saying you have a sex addiction is still taboo and shameful. Also on the gay scene, have conversations such as, 'So when did you last have sex' - 'Oh two months ago' - 'Oh THAT LONG, my God you must be gagging!' - So if by chance you came out saying you have a sexual addiction, you'd either be laughed at, or have a queue of men wanting your body!

Because I was accustomed to hiding my gay life away, I just kept hiding it. thinking back, it's partly shame, and partly guilt - Although, and I keep emphasising at this point I was enjoying it, but I did

have the sense of guilt and shame with some encounters - symptoms of addiction, which simply went unnoticed. Possibly, like in 1991, it wasn't talked about, and being a gay man saying you have a problem with sex, is like saying you have a problem drinking water....

1998

With the short term partner, I moved to another branch of work to London and lived there for a few weeks. During those few weeks, my dear friend of mine kept coming up to see me, I was clubbing nearly every night, I was only 10 minutes away from my haunt AND there was a trolling area nearby too - needless to say, EVERYTHING was on my doorstep. The short term partner went away for a week, I had no money even to get to work, and this is where my depression started to sink in. I rang my dear friend, and said, 'If you don't get me now - I will be in the river'. I was that low. I was low because I saw that my actions of moving up to London and the lifestyle I was chasing was not a good thing. I know that now, so I came back to my home town.

I came back with depression, sleep issues AND scabies. I did get checked out for HIV whilst back and was of course still negative.

This was the year I started a drag act with a friend of mine. This was also the year I moved into the house of gays that I mentioned earlier. The house of gays gave me access to more parties on AND off-site. Sometimes when I finished work, there were some in full flow. I also was in a relationship at this point - again monogamy wasn't really on the agenda, but then really this particular relationship wasn't built that way anyway.

This was also the year of me finding THE INTERNET!!!! I must say, I have fallen in love with the World Wide Web. because if technically inclined, you can build your own website.

I do admit though, to coin a Spiderman phrase, 'With great power comes great responsibility' – I missed that memo when it came to the internet! - Our Internet Service Provider was with AOL, that thing came with chat rooms... OH BOY... There was one called 'Utopia Gay n Lesbian' - I spent hours on that thing.

Just like the public loos days, you had the same to and fro:

- Age?
- Likes?
- Do you have a place?

But as this was the internet - you also had the opportunity to send a photo!!! These were usually scanned and about the size of a postage stamp.

So, you knew exactly what you were getting if you got him home.... aye but remember, this is the internet, even in the AOL days, you never quite got what you asked for.... So there were a few mishaps I had, one was that one guy was simply gagging for it, another one just kept on stringing us along with no chance of meeting, and a third, well, let's say the photo/description didn't Exactly meet up to standards, but as he travelled by taxi, felt sorry for them, but tried to get them out the house ASAP.

At this time, I had another job, this one lasted for two years, things were more or less stable, I was again, still trolling the public loos, I was still going out to London, there were parties at home too, 'G' happened every now and again, but I never chased that....yet.

Something else I found on the internet too, that was PORN! - I'm not talking of Xtube/PornHub et al, I'm talking about static images. Thumbnails you clicked on and got a large photo... You could right click and save... needless to say, I was right-clicking a lot. I spent HOURS online looking for the next cute photo. I missed waking up to go to work, and this became more and more of an issue.

But it's now to the last year of the Millennium!!!

1999

This was the year I was juggling a drag act, a full-time job, a part-time job and my sex life – along with a relationship too. Mostly it was stable. Which made a change. But getting up was always a problem. I think this is where my sleep issues started to show. I was working shifts, I was staying out late, and I was also looking on porn sites as well.

Coupled to the fact that the act meant we were out a lot until 4 am or longer in the morning. If I was doing ONE of these or even a couple, I think my sleep wouldn't be in the bad state it's in now. I think the worst ones that have made my sleep be the way it is, is the late London trips and surfing the web for adult sites.

Work was good with both the act and me going out. This was the year of the gay nail bomber – so when I got into work, people asked me if I was OK, as they knew I went to London a fair bit. Again, the gay scene had yet another thing you could die from. I will admit, I was taking regular HIV tests at this time, all came negative. But safer sex was always down to 'the other guy' this time around, whether Poppers, 'G' or weed was around.

This seemed to be the year I got everything together for once. It also seemed that as we were close to the Millennium it looked like that the 21st century was looking rosy. I mean we were booked for Dec 31st 1999!! This was definitely the Millennium of new beginnings....OH, HOW WRONG I WAS.

Things from 2000 onwards, the next sixteen were going to take me to places and events that have made an everlasting impact on my life.

2000

First of all, let me tell you of MY Millennium celebrations. After the gig, we were going home. Most people had large parties, some saw the river of fire in London, some went to clubs. Where were me and my other drag colleague? In a lay-by on the A21, still in drag and makeup - with a bottle of Budweiser and a couple of party poppers we nicked from the gig. Yup. That is my sum total of the celebrations!!

My 2-year stable job came to an end because of differences - mainly because I was getting anger issues. I was angry and tired. Possibly because of the late nights with the act, the shift work, not to mention the late nights in London AND surfing for more photos to add to my ever-increasing collection of scantily dressed men on my hard drive.

I jumped from one job to another. I landed another job. The hours were somewhat better. One shift I had a few hours to kill between the shift and a show, so I did what I always did. I went to the local public loo to 'kill some time' before going home.

I was standing at the urinal, saw this 'cute guy' next thing I found my head was bashed to the wall, I was punched and kicked, and was told to give over money or he'd walk behind me telling everyone what I was doing. I had no money, so he was going to continue with his threat. I said bravely I thought, that it was no point, as I was already 'out' and didn't care if he did or not. I ran to the bus stop, got home and started to pack everything up ready for the gig.

I was on autopilot, THE SHOW MUST GO ON. Everything was set up, we got there, we did the show, all I remember of that gig is going through the motions - but felt that the people were not just watching me, but judging me also. I remember the lights being too bright, and the music too loud. Possibly because I was on high alert. This might be the reason why I have difficulty today with loud noises/bright lights and crowds. I don't know, it's just writing this today, it may shed light on the how and the why I have difficulty with places.

I came off stage, and I collapsed, I told my drag colleague what happened - but the official story I gave at the time was that I was mugged in my local town - but didn't say where. For people hearing this the first time. I am so so sorry I never told you the truth sooner.

While I was working, I suffered seizures every shift. Something was up - and it happened at various gigs too. I left the job amicably as it was obvious I needed help. Problem is, these seizures happened anywhere and everywhere.

I had a crush on one of the guys at home, which went no-where. I was at an all-time low. I'm having fits that could not be described, I was 'in love' that wasn't being reciprocated, and I just had enough. I had enough of what I was doing, there were enough pills and enough alcohol in the house to just end it. So I did. The ambulance came and picked me up. This was the height of the petrol crisis - so I was taken to the local mental health lock-up ward. Two weeks later I was moved to another one. I wanted help.

But I didn't want to be in the lock-up ward, as I couldn't get to sleep, because at least three people were talking to their voices. It was awful. When I got to my consultation, I acted well enough to be moved to a more related part of the hospital - I knew I needed help. I acted so well, I ended up discharged.

I got home and learned the truth about the guy I had a crush on. So I took another overdose, ambulance called and I was back in A&E. This time, however, I was given 'help'. I did have three weeks with a CPN (community psychiatric nurse). They were as helpful as a condom in the Vatican.

Apparently, I wasn't mentally ill to warrant any services. My comeback to that was 'So how many times do I need to try and kill myself before I get admitted?' can't remember the answer, but whatever it was, I was discharged.

There were many 'missing' (i.e. I went missing) trips to London, also many times I tried to end it too. There were other things happening in the house of gays too, and things got too mu