

The Real Problem?

I am stressed out a lot. I don't have a steady dealer, so three times a week I have to go into the seediest parts of the city. The places you see in movies are real but much worse. The whore with the disease that is eating away her flesh from injecting bad junk into her muscles is real, and the pimp beating her up in the alley is really happening. I'm looking away because no one here cares, and I need junk. I am trying with all my strength to ignore what I'm seeing. Still, the tears well up in my eyes. I despise this place, that any of us are here. Sometimes it is not easy to score, so I get into strange predicaments, at times even dangerous, but it does not matter. I'm not going home empty-handed. I'll get sick. I'm doing things I would never do because it isn't that I want heroin, I need it. There are two other people at home waiting that need it. I hate when it is my turn to come here.

I'm watching the needle in her arm. I'm watching the dope slip in and mix with her blood; I see the bruises. She pulls the needle out of her arm, and I'm holding my breath waiting until she opens her eyes. And in that moment when 30 seconds feels like 30 years, her

eyes open and she is alive and she is high.

Her stepfather fucked her, tied her up in the basement as a child and fucked her. And that isn't even the worst part of it. Unspeakable things. Things that make you gag and cough and bring tears to your eyes. That pain will never go away. Maybe she shoots heroin to forget, to feel numb. I want to hold her and squeeze all that sadness out of her. And squeeze all the dope out of her veins and look into those beautiful bright eyes again. I sit here preparing my needle remembering us laughing. I shoot up.

His mother is selfish; his father is absent. He tries to hug his mother, but she will not hug him back. She rejects him because he is different. She did not nurture him as a child. She brought a new man into the house every few months. It seemed like every time I was over at his house, she had a new boyfriend and he was living there. Really strange men. Drunks. These men were not nice to him and were certainly not loving. They were there to help pay the bills. Maybe he shoots heroin to simulate that warm feeling you get from a hug. He shoots a lot of dope.

When I was thirteen my mother took me aside and told me that she was cheating on my father with a man she had met at work. I was instructed not to tell my father. He eventually found out, and I had to deal with the guilt of knowing all along and not telling him. It was a strange predicament for a 13-year-old boy. On a Friday afternoon, my mother asked my father for a divorce. She went away for the weekend and when she returned home that Sunday she had "found Jesus Christ". She no longer wanted a divorce. Through the help of god she was hell bent on righting the wrong she had done, and taking the whole family along for the ride.

I was thirteen in the midst of adolescence. I knew I was gay and that I was attracted to boys, and suddenly I was being forced, literally physically forced, to attend a Pentecostal church. Born Again Christians. I remember my sister and myself on a Sunday morning running through the woods, my father chasing us and screaming physical threats. We were not going to church and he was not going to make us. He never found us.

There was all the usual: a grueling church sched-

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ule, speaking in tongues, miracle working ministers slaying folks in the spirit, and plenty of sermons about sodomites and damnation. My parents' already homophobic stance coupled with their new religion did wonders furthering my self hate.

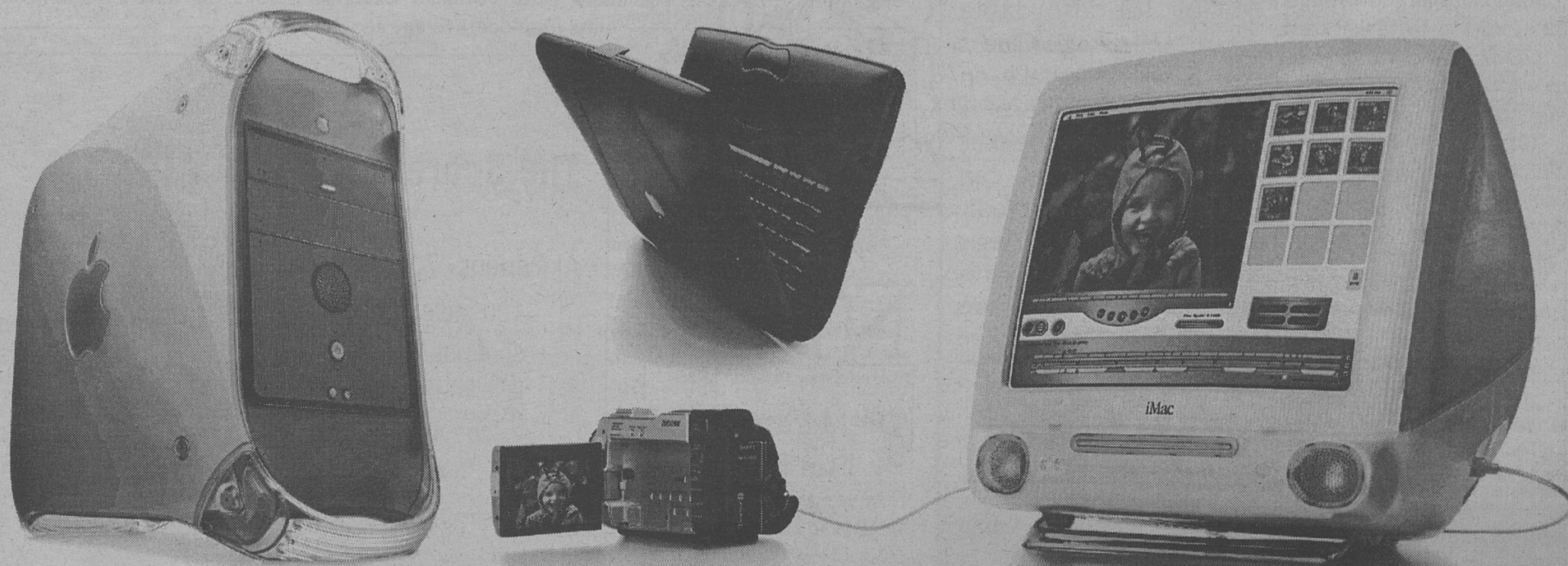
I believe that my parents knew I was queer when I was very young. I only understood years later that what they were doing either consciously or subconsciously was to inflict a belief system upon me that clearly said I was an abomination unto god, furthering their own selfish agenda. I doubt any parent hopes for a queer child, but to what ends are they willing to go to avoid that reality?

My parents obviously saw no boundaries. It left me with a twisted base to start constructing my life. I shoot heroin for many reasons. I shoot Heroin because I don't know how to be anything but self-destructive. I have spent so many years attempting to smother my self hate, my homosexuality.

Everything becomes madness. Everything becomes heroin. Every dollar is another dollar closer to a bag of heroin. All the minutes are minutes closer to shooting up again. It is everywhere in everything. My eyes open on a new day, and it is heroin. It is in my dreams. It is my hopes and fears. It is on my mind all the time. It runs through my veins. It is part of me. I embrace it. I spit on it. I watch what it has done to friends. I see what it is doing to friends. I see what it has done to me.

Is heroin a bandage for our sadness and self hate? What is the real problem? Why are we addicts? What is the propaganda? What is the rhetoric? Is this what I think or this a public service announcement being replayed in my mind? What are your thoughts? How do you feel? Do not dismiss people as two-dimensional beings. There are so many sides to a story.

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