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# Diary From an Intern: How I Almost Turned Straight This Summer

BY JOEL NICHOLS

In eighth grade, my friend Danielle and I dated for a weekend. We have been friends since she moved to my town in the fourth grade—I was even the first friend to call her. We were roommates for the summer, too, because she had a free room in her Burlington apartment. Being domestic is a great time. My summer internship at *Out in the Mountains* was low-stress while she worked full-time. I woke up in the morning often thinking what I was going to have ready for her when she came home at dinner time. When we go cruising for guys together, some-

times we just end up strolling with linked arms instead of trolling.

In the grocery store last week, we happened upon one of the funniest things we had ever thought of—we can pretend to be married in public. Middle-aged couples look at us with this glint in their eyes that makes us look like the hope for the future. Danielle and I pretend to squabble over whether or not I get sweets or what kind of food to get the dog. We look at babies like we're about to go home and try for one. If the summer were longer, we would probably have had a joint checking account.

Danielle also turns guys gay. All of her high-school boyfriends (including me) have since come out or are strongly suspected. It's a big joke for us that if I ever meet a guy who might be straight, I can send him to her for a few days to take care of it.

The trouble is, I think she almost turned me back at the beginning of the summer. I was bisexual and I can't deny that sometimes I'm sexually attracted to women, but I prefer men. To be clear, attraction to women does not a bisexual make: for a primary sexual partner, I'm looking for a man. I like men more.

She and I went shopping once and identified the men on the street who could "get

it" from us. There were some nice-looking ones, but astonishingly, my head was turned by a woman. Without even knowing it, I said "she could 'get it.'" Danielle gave me a weird look and I said, "I don't know where that came from." I did! Was all that grocery store playing getting to my head? I wondered if we should start to pretend we're brother and sister.

In the beginning of the summer, Danielle was out of town visiting her mother and our other roommate, Kim, was out with friends. I was alone in the apartment, watching the news. The anchor told how a man under observation at the state hospital had escaped and may or may not be dangerous. I am always a little paranoid, so of course, I assumed that he was headed straight to my house to kill me. I was worried because Kim had not locked the front door before leaving. I was upstairs and was convinced that if I went down to lock up, he would already be in the house and kill me. Of course, the man was not even anywhere near our house or even considered dangerous enough to murder, but it did not stop my imagination.

Danielle came home the next day and I told her about my paralyzing night of fear alone in the house. Our next-door neighbor is a single woman. I realize that if given the choice of which apartment to pillage, the crazy man would have chosen the old woman living alone with a cat instead of the three twenty-somethings with a huge beagle who are constantly coming and going and having guests. I said to Danielle, "especially when the one resident home was a big burly str—" and I froze. I was about to call myself straight! I absolutely could not believe it. First the woman on the street and now calling myself straight. I was converting!

Luckily Danielle helped convince me that I meant I could look straight because I'm tall, not that I am straight. I am glad we don't have a Will and Grace dynamic of secret codependence, bad hair and clothes, and annoying banter. Instead, Danielle cheered me up, reassured me that I'm a fag, and brought me downtown to see if the guy I like at Border's was working.

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