

# Naked Curiosity: Swallowing Reality

**O**The balloon tied to his bedpost was still bravely defying gravity but Bill's spirits were much less buoyant. The image of forty-five flaming candles covering his birthday cake burned brightly in his memory. Bill was in a foul mood.

"I expected to be in a long-term relationship by now," Bill sighed. "I expected to be managing my department, not working for some guy they hired right out of grad school who's half my age and makes twice the money I do. I am not living the life I envisioned for myself."

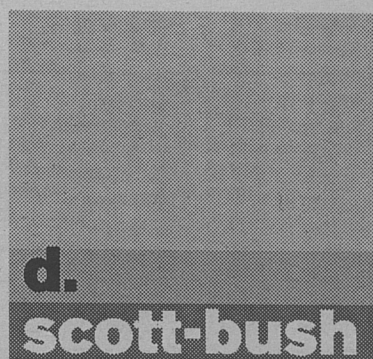
The reality of his situation was a bitter pill for Bill to swallow.

When Bill and I first met, in the early 80's, he was full of optimism. He was handsome and charming and attracted men of similar ilk with very little effort. He preferred guys who were slightly more than tricks but the liaisons weren't anything that resembled actual relationships.

**A passionate pursuit of practically anonymous passion didn't help to get his love life on track toward his long-term plan.**

Bill's steady stream of very-short-term boyfriends (or VSTBs as he called them) was a frequent source of teasing from his friends. We joked that he would run out of available gay men on the Eastern seaboard before he turned 30. He nixed that idea, claiming that his standards were far too high for him to consider even a small fraction of those guys. "And, anyway, I'll find Mr. Right and settle down way before I'm that old."

A passionate pursuit of



practically anonymous passion didn't help to get his love life on track toward his long-term plan. A dedication to goofing off and a plethora of strained relationships with co-workers put him on a pathway to professional purgatory, as well.

Friends tried to get him to see the big picture. Warnings were issued. Bill was used to having no trouble picking up whatever man he deemed worthy, when he was out cruising. He selected only the hottest young things in their 20s and 30s to accompany him back to his apartment. He boasted that, most of

the time, guys were happy just to have a chance to blow him and no reciprocation was necessary.

"They beg me to let them swallow," Bill reported, cocky as could be in the 80s. Mindful of safer sex and, in equal proportion, reveling in the power, he denied their requests. Times change. Age happens. Just before his recent 45th birthday, he told me that he'd agreed to let a trick ejaculate in his mouth, since it was the only way the guy would hook up with him.

The reality of his situation had made him a bitter Bill who swallows.

Bill was sick of being turned down by men merely because he was no longer under 40. "When did everybody get together and decide that, once you were over 40, you were no longer desirable," he ranted. "It seems like all the online profiles specifically say they aren't interested in anyone over 40!"

I reminded him that he'd had age limit parameters, when he was younger. He shot back that it was different for a guy in his 20s to exclude men who were substantially older. "What I'm talking about," he grumbled, "are guys in their 40s and 50s giving the thumbs down to other men their own age."

Bill's revved up the righteous indignation but his peers aren't the only ones giving him a failing grade on the litmus test of his sex appeal. Of course, admitting that one is now on the receiving end of rejection is harder to swallow. Standards and parameters are fine, as long as we're not who's being excluded.

Situations he used to greet with optimism are now met with seething desperation. He's frustrated that he gets turned down more than turned on. The erstwhile stud in the spotlight is, now, camped out in the dark corner of a chat room. He's begun to use the services of hustlers, but finds that his waning self-esteem is lower after the sex with them than it had been before.

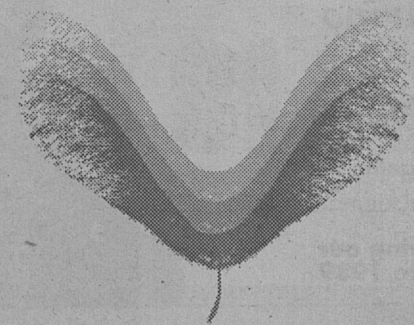
"And they are rotten dinner company," Bill kvetched. "I'd rather eat alone."

"This really isn't the life I expected to have," Bill whined. How closely our expectations resemble our reality depends on a lot of factors. The important thing to remember is that we have the power to create the kind of lives we lead.

What choices will we make? Will we have an enduring banquet of sumptuous relationships and happy associations? Or, at the restaurant of life, will we be dining solo: "Bitter, party of one." ▼

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## Our Mission

The Samara Foundation of Vermont is a charitable foundation whose mission is to support and strengthen Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities today and build an endowment for tomorrow.

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We offer weekly educational, social, and cultural classes that are free and open to the public. All events are held at R.U.12? Headquarters, 1 Steele Street, Burlington, unless otherwise noted. Drop-ins are welcome but pre-register is strongly encouraged.

[thecenter@ru12.org](mailto:thecenter@ru12.org)

[www.ru12.org](http://www.ru12.org)

### Earth Healing Workshop 7 p.m. Monday, March 1

Would you like to contact Nature spirits and clear negative energy from your home? Join Lynn McNicol for a fun Earth Healing session. Exercise your imagination and clear the air.

### Yoga and Creative Movement Workshop 7 p.m. Monday, March 10 at the Living Yoga Studio, 35 King Street

Mariah Freemole facilitates this workshop. Come explore basic techniques and exercises designed to stretch your mind and body. Move away from stress and toward inner peace.

### Direct Action 101: Goals and Tactics Workshop 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 26

Community activists S'Ra DeSantis and Doyle Canning discuss goals and tactics of organizing a variety of direct actions. Learn the effective activism to achieve your goals.

### 5th ANNUAL DINNER & SILENT AUCTION 6 PM Saturday, April 19 Radisson Hotel, Burlington

Featuring keynote speaker *Dykes To Watch Out For* illustrator, Alison Bechdel, and performances by the pop-soul diva, Yolanda

Cash bar and meat options available on the menu. Tickets cost \$25, on sale March 21st at R.U.1.2? ☆

OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS