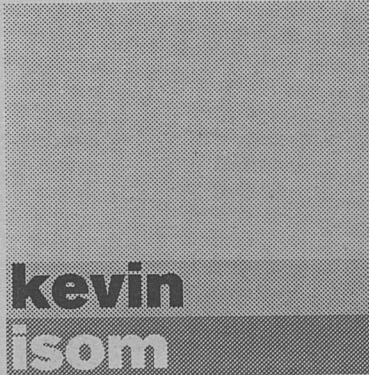


Tongue in Cheek: Homo Interruptus

It was a case of homo interruptus. My holiday season, that is. I didn't even have time to think about best-of-2003 zingers, because I was too busy dodging holiday hoo-hah.

First there was the non-gay and non-family related part. My sewer line failed. Yes, I always knew I was full of crap, but I have conclusive proof now. Two days before Christmas, the tree roots that have been feasting off the sewer line of my 50-year-old house (I bought it when the realtor described the 1950's ranch as "mid-century") finally blocked it in perpetuity. Suddenly, I found myself with no facilities – and a new friend in the form of a plastic cup (any relations of a heavier nature I saved for my morning Starbucks run before the office).

I did at least get to trickle-shower – that kind of clear water would simply soak into the soil in the huge hole in my pipe made by Roto-Rooter. Being the cost-conscious gay man I am, I immediately sought quotes, so as not to pay the highway-robbery rates of the first plumber who discovered the root infestation and who must have felt he had me over a barrel (or perhaps I should say, over a cup). Being the resourceful gay man I am (I offered finger foods), I managed to get three quotes before I'd left town for



end of a divorce case, but apparently, we were wrong.) My mother immediately refused to go. My aunt followed suit. And I wondered if I should tell the fiancée that wifey was there the night before (my sister and I did just that). I also wondered if I could book my dad as a juggler with Barnum & Bailey.

Still, supreme get-his-tail-out-of-a-crack artist that he is, he managed to smooth things over with fiancée, and we all (including my boyfriend, who flew in the day AFTER Christmas – hmmm ... he flew out of Atlanta just as the plumbing festivities began – do I detect a trend?) met for dinner and drinks and everything was reasonably hunky dory.

At the other end of the spectrum from my dad's personal soap opera (but at the same end of the moral spectrum) is my

boyfriend's family. While my family is very gay-affirmative, his family is bigoted. They are part of the Christian nutcase homophobe portion of society – the kind that is actually willing to reject a child because that child is gay. In other words, these are people I don't think deserve to have children.

My boyfriend had told them (when they made clear again that I was not welcome any time any place) that if they did not accept him as a gay person and treat him with the same degree of respect that they accord his heterosexual siblings, then he would not be seeing them again. This was a very

tough, principled stand for him (one which I made years and years ago – "I don't have room in my life for anyone who thinks I'm a disappointment because I'm gay," followed by hanging up the phone was, I think, my meek and mild way of getting that point across – and which had the desired effect. But then, my parents have always believed that you love your child. Period. So it wasn't the extended pain that many gay folks have to endure.)

After months of him hearing nothing from his parents, I had sent them a letter myself. I couldn't stand by and watch them hurt him. Having grown up Southern Baptist, I knew how to co-opt the terms ("May God's grace touch your minds and hearts"), and more importantly, I wanted to quietly point out that they were choosing to lose a child, and that doing so was the least godly choice they could make. Not to mention the most wrong-headed. There was, from them, a resounding silence.

Until Christmas, when they sent him a box of cookies and a card, with notes like "Come home any time" and "We'd love to see you over the holidays" – but nothing about the issue that was preventing him from doing just that. My sister, even more direct than I if you can imagine it, suggested a note in reply saying, "I won't be seeing you until you accept me as a gay person and stop being bigots. Thanks for the cookies." But he replied with the more diplomatic, "Has something changed? If so, let me know. If not, then I will not be seeing you. I am spending Christmas with Kevin's family, where both Kevin and I are accepted and welcomed." (And where there's a soap opera at no extra charge if Kevin's dad has been getting busy. Okay, so he did not add that last part.)

Upon my return home, the plumber replaced my sewer line, I said goodbye to Mr. Cup, and I ate the delicious cookies sent by a homophobe (hope they weren't poisoned). Then I promptly made a year's worth of appointments with my therapist to discuss a serious case of homo interruptus. ▼

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home on Christmas Eve. And did I mention that the sewer line runs under the driveway? I'd planned to replace it with Queer Eye for the Straight Guy approved stained concrete, but not quite this soon.

When I flew home, there was a drama of a new sort awaiting me. My dad, who has a certain something that women cannot resist (not his six-pack abs, I can safely guess), was hosting Christmas day, and we were all going to his house, including my mom. Until, that is, we discovered that he was inviting his fiancée, and that his second wife was getting his house ready. (We had thought she was on the other

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