

Martha and Belinda's Excellent Adventure: Part 6

Belinda Darcy

St. Louis, MO to Louisville, KY

A bit of a late start today, since we only had to do 4 hours of driving. During the planning stages of this ambitious expedition, we had decided to schedule one or two days of minimal driving for the sake of our sanity. Since I was the travel agent in the family, it was up to me to figure out where that would make sense. I'd always wanted to see Kentucky. I associated it with the Colonel's fried chicken, and the Kentucky Derby, and that song "Kentucky Woman" (Even in the jungles of New Guinea, we got Casey Casem's American Top 40 every Saturday via a radio station on Guam.) Actually I had managed to remember a song for every state that we'd passed through so far, much to Martha's amazement. I had also discovered, whilst poring over my copy of *Women's Traveller* late one night, that Louisville had no less than 6 gay bars, 3 of them designated as "mostly women", 2 "mostly men" and 1 "gay men and lesbians". Who knew it was such a hotbed of homo activity? I had decided then and there, that come hell or high water, we were going to check out this little Southern oasis.

Leaving the plains behind, we headed into woody horse-country. It was gorgeous. Fall hadn't yet touched the leaves, so we were surrounded by rolling green hills, farms and tobacco fields. I wondered aloud if perhaps we should have looked in to Louisville as a possible new home. Martha just smiled and assured me that this was "nothing" compared to Vermont's offerings.

We found our Holiday Inn, and Martha went off to explore the amenities, while I crashed for an hour. She returned, unimpressed, whining about wanting a

steak for dinner. Actually, she'd been craving meat for 3 days, and I'd put it off as long as I could. So I agreed, on the condition that she go downstairs and ask the male receptionist with the well-manicured hands for a recommendation. According to him, the best place in town was "Kunz's. No question, Kunz's".

Now, either he was on commission with them, or for some reason took a disliking to Martha - who knows - but we lasted at Kunz's for less than 3 minutes. The service was fine. We were shown to a table right away. Bread and water arrived almost immediately, along with 2 gigantic menus, but one look at Martha's crestfallen face and I knew we wouldn't be staying. Maybe it was the complete absence of music. Maybe it was the fiercely heterosexual clientele. Certainly it was the decor. It reminded me of an ancient Ramada Inn Convention Center gone to seed. Ugly low ceilings, bad carpeting, unflattering fluorescent lights and 70's furniture. Martha had been so looking forward to this, and I just couldn't bear to see her disappointed. I suggested we get the hell out of there. She wasn't sure that we should, since the bread was "already on the table and everything...". I volunteered to do the formalities, so she agreed. Feeling terribly big and butch in my role as temporary knight-in-shining-armor, I strode over to the maitre d' and calmly informed him that we would not be staying. When he asked why, I simply said that we were "looking for something a little more intimate and romantic."

We headed over to J. Timothy's (which had been recommended by the local gay hotline as gay-frequented) and had a

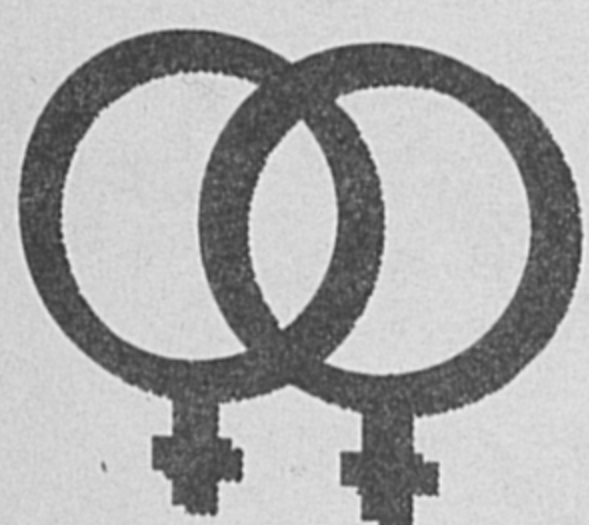
fabulous dinner in a lovely setting, served by an ever-so-cute gay waiter. Martha found steak on the menu, and I had mesquite grilled veggies and "Fallen Chocolate Souffle". We were very happy.

We decided to check out the huge (mixed) Connection Complex - 5 bars, a restaurant and a theater. It sounded like a mall. This we had to see. It had been renamed "The Missing Link" which I thought sounded rather Darwinian, and an odd choice for a gay bar. The restaurant and video bar were open but empty. We played a game of electronic trivial pursuit, and then moved to the main bar. It happened to be Country Western night (surprise, surprise) so we stumbled through a 2-step and then sat around people-watching for an hour. There's something very sweet about 2 big cowboys holding each other tight on a dance floor... And there's something very HOT about watching those line dancers slap their boots and sashay across the floor en masse. You can feel the energy from 10 feet back. Great fun. We left around midnight ears ringing, clothes and hair reeking of smoke, glad to be here and queer. ▼

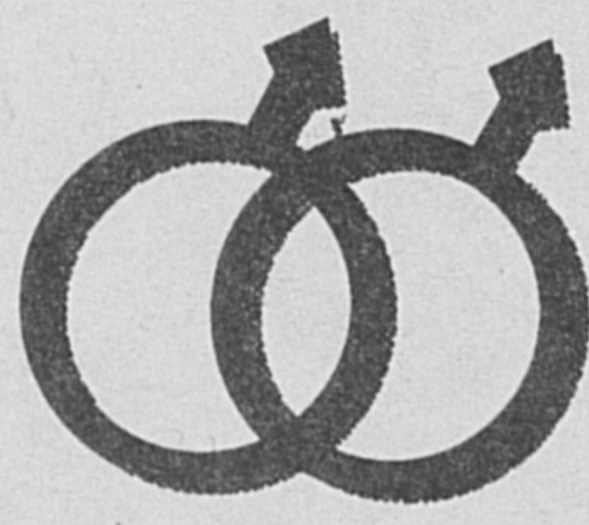
(to be continued).

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